

# PASTOR'S PATCH



The riots began in Southport (following some tragic stabbings) and seem to be spreading across the country. At the time of writing the nearest ones had been in Weymouth and Plymouth. A Baptist Minister friend of mine went to the Plymouth gathering on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2024 to stand with the “Unity” group and against the Far Right protestors. At first he was shocked by the aggression and hatred of those who were willing to adopt many ways to spread fear in the community. However, he then began to also be concerned by the provocative actions of the Unity group who appeared to be goading on the protestors. As a result he decided to withdraw and go home, not wanting to add to the chances of a conflagration (which unsurprisingly flared up soon after he left). Between the two groups were the Police (the Peacekeepers) who bore the brunt of the aggression. We should thank God for their work and pray for their safety. They also sought to protect those people and buildings who were the target of violence. Now it will be down to the Courts of Justice as many of the perpetrators are rounded up and tried for their actions.

As followers of Jesus we are not called to be Peacekeepers but Peacemakers, a far greater calling. Jesus says “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God*” (Matthew ch5 v9). The apostle Paul encourages believers saying “*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification*” (Romans ch14 v5).

To be a peacemaker we first need to put effort into examining our own hearts with the Holy Spirit’s help and pray for transformation to root out any hatred or bias there. Then we need to step out as peacemakers and gently but firmly challenge others who are “troublemakers”. A peacemaker will listen carefully to the concerns of others, especially if those concerns are strongly held, knowing that these always originate with fear. The peacemaker will also understand that this same fear makes people do many things, some of which are destructive and hurtful. The peacemaker will then point to Jesus who bore the sin and hatred of the world on the cross to give forgiveness and hope to all who believe.

Maya Angelou said “Hate has caused a lot of problems in this world, but it has not solved one yet”. God’s Word reminds us that “*Perfect love drives out fear*” so let us seek a greater fullness of God’s perfect love in our hearts and nation at this time.

**Darrell Holmes**