

## FLAG

Isn't it amazing how emotional we can get over a piece of coloured cloth? You know those markers of national identity – the ones we see raised up on special days, held up at protest marches, or even set on fire - I'm referring to flags of course.

Think of the tears at the recent Commonwealth Games as flags were raised during medal ceremonies. It wasn't just the athletes that cried for joy. Our flag has the ability to unite us and make us feel connected.

It works the other way too. Flags can also make us feel disconnected and on the outside.

Flags have also been in the news lately, causing many a heated reaction.

There was the decision of Glasgow City Council to raise the Palestinian flag saying it was as a mark of respect for all those who are suffering in Gaza in the recent fighting.

There was the decision of Councillor David Meikle, to stand on the rooftop on George Square waving the flag of Israel. He said that flying the Palestinian flag would not save any lives. And that's true enough. Of course neither would he with his flag.

It's possible to argue both ways about these decisions.

On the one hand, it can be seen as an act of support and solidarity – showing care and concern to people in distress.

On the other hand, given the amount of trouble and pain spread all around our world, how many more flags would need to be raised to show our concern for other groups?

The Bible paints a picture of people of all nations being equal in worth and value – this is a picture I hope that most human beings of goodwill would agree on.

The nationality of victims isn't the most important fact about them.

It's their humanity.

Wherever people suffer we should care. What we need most in these situations are not flags but action.

As one of the wealthiest countries we could take a lead here - in delivering aid, in questioning the trade in weapons, by encouraging and supporting peaceful and humanitarian work.

All of this we can do. Flagpoles are optional.

August 13 2014