



STROUD CENTRE FOR PEACE & THE ARTS

Peace through faith, the arts, ecology & justice

The Essentials

(Statement of values & principles)

Peace

Making Peace, in its widest meanings, is at the heart of the mission of St Laurence Church: Stroud Centre for Peace & the Arts. There are deep roots in the teaching and purpose of Jesus and in the all-encompassing ancient biblical concept of Peace (meaning wholeness, including human and ecological flourishing). There is also openness to find Peace at the heart of other faiths and philosophies. But there is recognition too that to be peacemakers involves work that can be hard as well as deeply satisfying.

The Arts

The arts can provide moments of wonder and glimpses of Peace, and St Laurence's mission seeks to enable these to the greatest extent possible, from traditional Christian worship (including its music, liturgy and ritual) to spectacular circus events. No artistic genre is out of bounds, but at St Laurence's, the arts should point beyond the artists to greater things, in the domains of Peace, faith, ecology and justice.

Faith

St Laurence's Church is and will remain a Christian place of worship, yet one where people of all faiths and none should feel welcome. There is an aspiration to find shared experiences of God/the Divine/the transcendent, while seeking to recognise what the Quakers call "that of God in everyone". There is recognition of the unifying power of silence, and the mystical insight that the deepest experiences of faith go beyond what words can express.

Ecology

Ecology is a way of understanding and appreciating the interconnectedness of all life, including humanity. The Abrahamic and other faiths recognise the flourishing of the natural world as fundamental to human flourishing and an aspect of Peace (e.g. Psalm 104). St Laurence's mission seeks to promote this understanding with humility, recognising deeply ingrained societal attitudes of subjugation and extractivism towards the natural world.

Justice

There can be no true Peace without justice. In the Gospels, Jesus speaks of "the Kingdom of God", a vision of a world in which oppression and discrimination are overturned and all people can experience their equality before God and life in all its fullness. The mission of St Laurence's seeks practical expression of aspects of this vision, including by simply "being with" those who do not experience justice in their lives.

Centre

There is an aspiration for St Laurence's to become a Centre for Peace, not only in terms of what happens in its buildings, but also as a resource for the wider Stroud area and perhaps beyond. In time, links may be forged with other centres for Peace, be they faith-based or otherwise. There is also a strong sense of civic responsibility for the buildings, which occupy Stroud's foundational site and include the oldest structure in the town - the 14th Century tower and spire.