



# Anne Frank Day 2008

## **An Address in memory of Anne Frank**

Written in commemoration of Anne Frank Day, June 12<sup>th</sup> 2008

Dear Friend,

Sixty years ago this year, in 1948, following the realization of the horrors inflicted on millions of individuals during the Nazi Holocaust, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created. The governments of forty-eight countries came together to pledge to a set of principles about the value and dignity of all human life. The Declaration aims to protect people and keep them from harm, or death. It states that we all have freedom and rights, regardless of our colour, creed, race or religion.

On 12<sup>th</sup> June this year, one of the most famous victims of the Holocaust, would, if she had been alive today, been celebrating her 79<sup>th</sup> birthday. Anne Frank's now world famous diary, acts as a challenge to all of us to respect the dignity of others around us. It is a testament to the power of a child's voice and acts as a challenge to all of us to respect the dignity of others around us.

The following address has been written for the Anne Frank Trust UK by Rev Andrew White for use on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June, the nearest Sunday to Anne Frank's birthday on June 12<sup>th</sup> - the day on which she wrote the very first entry in her diary aged 13.

We hope that this text will move and inspire your congregation to do all in their power to be a voice for the voiceless in this World.

With our very grateful thanks for your participation.



**Gillian Walnes**  
**Executive Director**  
**The Anne Frank Trust UK**

# The Anne Frank Address

An address for June 15<sup>th</sup> 2008, following Anne Frank Day on June 12<sup>th</sup>  
Written by Rev Andrew White, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Thamesmead

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Introductory reading: Matthew 25: 31-40

*"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me"*

For those who seek to follow Jesus Christ, they know that they are also called to serve – serve God and serve those around us.

Just as Jesus' ministry on Earth exemplified a life of meeting the needs of those He met, so we too must respond to that calling in our own lives.

Serving the needs of those in our immediate area is a fairly easy and practical calling. Whether as a fellowship or as individuals, we can see a need, get involved in some way, and help to bring about positive change. However, the Church seeking change for a whole community, being involved in choices for a better society for the nation, or even engaging in issues that arise on the World 'stage', all have a much greater complexity. Indeed as individuals or a Church, we are sometimes challenged by issues that confront our moral convictions, and we can choose to act on these. In other cases our actions are in response to a natural or humanitarian disaster – perhaps giving aid, voluntary help, money, or even standing up in protest or lobbying government to bring about change.

Sixty years ago this year, in 1948, following the realization of the horrors inflicted on millions of individuals during the Nazi Holocaust, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created. The governments of forty-eight countries came together to pledge to a set of principles about the value and dignity of all human life. The Declaration aims to protect people and keep them from harm, or death. It states that we all have freedom and rights, regardless of our colour, creed, race or religion.

The principles it advocates seem so obvious, and yet fulfilling these seem to be a big challenge for the world community.

Are basic human rights difficult things to codify into one international 'law'? In more enlightened countries people enjoy many liberties, some of which might even challenge Christian and other faith communities as to whether they are comfortable with all such freedoms. In more oppressive regimes the need for basic dignity and the freedom of the individual are so far removed from those governments' policies and actions that, short of pressure from the international community, any Human Rights legislation for all does not even feature 'on the radar'.

So here is our dilemma: As Christians, are we called to be a 'voice for the voiceless' around the World? Are we to speak up in the political arena for the rights of all?

I believe that being a disciple of Jesus Christ challenges us to do just that. In Luke 4: 16-19 we read:

*"When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' "*

Jesus acknowledged that God's call was to seek freedom for the most vulnerable and to those who are oppressed, to seek well-being for the weak and sick, to seek justice in society. Jesus preached 'Peace' wherever He went, but sometimes this 'shalom' meant that oppression needed to be confronted.

On Thursday last week (12<sup>th</sup> June), an unknown teenager who went on to become the most famous victim of the Holocaust, would, if she had not perished in the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen, have been celebrating her 79<sup>th</sup> birthday. That person is Anne Frank. Schools around the country have been holding 'Anne Frank Day' assemblies, marking, more significantly than her birthday itself, the day on which she wrote the very first diary entry into that now world-famous book, the Diary of Anne Frank.

In the diary, written during World War II over a period of two years in hiding from persecution, we are challenged as to how we see others:

*"In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery and death."*

The back-drop for this remarkable statement is the Nazi Holocaust, a dark blot on the history of mankind, which led to the deaths of six million Jews and the displacement of many others. Rabbi Arthur J Lelyveld, a prominent figure in Reform Judaism, when asked about Auschwitz, the death camp where the Frank family were first sent in September 1944, stated simply - 'God wept over Auschwitz'. For it was here on a massive scale, as well as in a myriad of other places, some infamous and some largely unknown, that oppression of the weak and disabled, as well as the persecution of those of differing faiths, politics and lifestyles, took place on the orders of an 'evil' regime.

Although, when writing her diary, Anne Frank had yet to experience first hand the horrors of the concentration camps, the fact that her family hid in a small collection of rooms for over two years in fear of their lives, demonstrates the awareness that they had of their situation. She writes of their confinement:

*'I long to ride a bike, dance, whistle, look at the world, feel young and know that I'm free, and yet I can't let it show. Just imagine what would happen if all eight of us were to feel sorry for ourselves or walk around with the discontent clearly visible on our faces?'*

History and the World might have been forgiven for overlooking the views in her diary. After all, was she not just a young Jewish teenager, perhaps with an innocence and naivety about real life beyond her hiding place?

However, this setting gives power to Anne Frank's words about the primary importance of what we, as individuals or the Church, can do for others today.

*“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world”*

So as we remember Anne Frank Day, we must remember to praise God for the freedoms we enjoy in our country. We should acknowledge the need for Christians, both as individuals and the Church-corporate, to work for peace – that *‘shalom’* that God desires for His world. We strive for respect, justice, health care and religious tolerance to be available for all. As individuals and as the Christian Church we recommit ourselves to be the *‘voice of the voiceless’*. We do this because this follows the example of Jesus’ ministry on Earth. We do this because in desiring to be right with God, we see Jesus in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the sick the oppressed and the prisoner - “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” We also do it because, in this global community, we are commanded to *‘love our neighbour as we love ourselves’*.

In 1998, ten years ago, The Anne Frank Declaration was created. It was created to echo some of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also to honour the memory of Anne Frank. Anne Frank is one of millions of children who have been frightened, hurt or killed in wars and conflicts around the world. The Anne Frank Declaration is not as famous as the Universal Declaration, but it is a declaration that every single person – here in this room – and across the country can sign up to.

May we reflect with others on the words of the Anne Frank Declaration

*“We will stand up for what is right and speak out against what is unfair and wrong. We will try to defend those who cannot defend themselves. We will strive for a world in which our differences will make no difference - a world in which everyone is treated fairly and has an equal chance in life”*

Surely these are *‘Kingdom Values’*?

May we ever seek to uphold for all of humankind, the equalities and dignity that enables us to pray the Lord’s Prayer - “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on the Earth as it is in the heavens”.

It is a challenge to us all, to remember, to reflect and above all to react, but in doing so, we can be that voice for the voiceless.

Amen

## Background notes

In June 1947 there was a single word written in the day book of Auschwitz survivor Otto Frank. It reads “Boek” (the Dutch word for “book”). This is understood to signify the publication of the very first edition of his daughter Anne’s diary.

Anne Frank, her older sister Margot and mother Edith had all perished in the Holocaust. They had been arrested and deported to concentration camps after over two years in hiding for their lives in Amsterdam.

Over 40 million copies of Anne’s diary have been published in 66 languages. Burmese, Bengali, Belarussian, Kazakh, Khmer and Korean – imagine all these children sitting behind a diverse range of covers and being captivated by Anne’s words.

Anne’s diary continues to be one of the world’s most inspirational reads and a universal plea to humanity to demonstrate humanity. It is a testament to both the power of a child’s voice and the tenacity of her father Otto Frank - who was determined that this teenage diary should be used as a force for good.

The Anne Frank Trust UK, the British partner organisation of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, has created a special address for cathedrals and churches throughout Britain to be used on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June, the nearest Sunday to Anne Frank’s birthday on June 12<sup>th</sup> - the day on which she wrote the very first entry in her diary aged 13.

We hope that this text, created by Reverend Andrew White in association with The Anne Frank Trust, will move and inspire your congregants to do all in their power to be a voice for the oppressed in this World.

## **About The Anne Frank Trust UK**

The Anne Frank Trust UK was founded in 1990. The Trust draws on the power of Anne Frank's life and diary to challenge prejudice and reduce hatred, encouraging people to embrace positive attitudes, responsibility and respect for others.

As a not for profit charity, it raises funds to bring this message to as many people as possible each year. Its programmes include:

### ***Anne Frank and You – An exhibition to unite communities***

*Anne Frank and You* is a major multi-media touring exhibition that relates the story of Anne Frank to contemporary issues of violence and racism in Britain.

### ***Programmes for young people***

In June 2006, we launched a major new project to take Anne Frank exhibitions and workshops to schools, colleges and youth clubs. This project aims to bring together individuals from different backgrounds and religions in order to tackle racism in their local area.

### ***Working with Offenders***

Our prison education project was started in 2002 and has reached over 7500 inmates. At each prison, we display the Anne Frank exhibition for a 2 week period giving inmates and staff the opportunity to gain a far greater understanding of the story of Anne Frank and the contemporary social lessons that can be learned from the subject. The project is widely recognised as having a major impact in reducing the levels of racism in prisons.

### ***The Anne Frank Awards***

The Anne Frank Awards are given to young people and educators who have made a difference to those around them through their actions.

***Any support is welcomed and appreciated.***

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