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Expected Hope

My youngest son was baptised at the weekend. Our family practice ‘believer’s baptism’, viewing baptism as physical statement of belief in God.

Half of our church, along with family and friends, travelled to the beach at Hayling Island on a cold Sunday afternoon. Several people prayed for my son before he made a statement of belief in Jesus and was then briefly plunged into the chilly, November sea. Then we celebrated together, enjoying this momentous occasion in my son’s life.

This was all possible because my son was able to make a decision on his own faith. He’s been informed of his options and has made a choice to have faith, based on his hope for a life spent worshipping the God whom he believes to be real.

But tonight, as I sat to write this article, I heard about the on-going struggle for survival for the inhabitants of eastern Aleppo. Stuck between the rebels and Government forces, civilians continue to attempt to flee the fighting that has already ended or ruined so many lives. Lyse Doucet, the BBC’s reporter from the Middle East offered this assessment:

‘But for many in East Aleppo, hope and life have been ripped away.’

It is difficult for me to sit here and write about the faith choices of my son (in his early adolescence, attending school freely, with his family and friends reliably protecting him, without fear of the regularity of traumatic events in his town) without casting my mind to his contemporaries in eastern Aleppo. They are unlikely to be able to make such a simple choice to have faith based on hope, because hope cannot reach them easily.

And yet, somehow, faith – even faith in Jesus – remains alive in Aleppo. The God who became a baby in a cow shed plants hope in unexpected places.