

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

*'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.'*

John 14.27

Many of us will have troubled hearts as we watch with horror the attack by Russia on Ukraine. As we have already said, this attack is an act of evil, imperilling as it does the relative peace and security that Europe has enjoyed for so long. The attack by one nation on a free, democratic country has rightly provoked outrage, sanctions and condemnation.

We lament with the people of Ukraine, and we pray for the innocent, the frightened and those who have lost loved ones, homes, and family.

We continue to call for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Russian forces as well as wide-ranging efforts to ensure peace, stability and security.

These events remind us powerfully that peace is precious and it is fragile. In Chapter 14 of John's Gospel, Jesus speaks to his disciples at the Last Supper and he leaves them his peace. This is not a mere greeting, but rather something deep and abiding. This peace is something that only Jesus gives; for it is a gratuitous gift, a way of living, something to be received for the gift of peace is the gift of Jesus himself. That is why the Lord is able to offer reassurance to our hearts, why those who receive the gift of the peace of Jesus Christ at the deepest of levels should not be afraid.

Peace, therefore, is so much more than the absence of war. It is a gift, and it is also a decision, a gift that must be received. It is a choice we make that shapes the way we live well alongside each other. It characterises our relationship with God. It comes into being by seeking justice.

In these days of uncertainty and fear, we pray that each of us might again turn to the Lord and receive God's gift of peace, work for God's justice, know God's reconciliation and love, and choose paths not of hatred or destruction, of violence or retribution, but God's way of justice, mercy and peace. As Christians, our response to a crisis must always be rooted in prayer. And so we invite you to join with us in praying most earnestly for an outpouring of the Spirit of God, that the world may once again choose peace, strengthening those international bodies that enable us to work and live together as one humanity inhabiting one world.

We pray for those in Ukraine who suffer grievously, for all who take decisions around the world, and for the people and leaders of Russia too.

In practical terms we invite you:

- to make this Sunday, 27 February, a day of prayer for peace;
- on Tuesday 1 March at 6pm (GMT) to pray with the Diocese in Europe for the chaplaincy in Kyiv and the churches that serve Ukraine; and
- to participate with the wider church in Pope Francis's call to make Ash Wednesday, 2 March, a day of prayer and fasting for peace.

You can find liturgical resources on the [Church of England website](#).

However and whenever you pray, pray that the world may choose peace, and be assured of our prayers for you.

With every blessing,

The Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby  
Archbishop of Canterbury

The Most Revd & Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell  
Archbishop of York