

The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Julian T Henderson

Tuesday 22nd March 2022
Sent by email only

Prayers for Ukraine

Dear brothers and sisters

Last week I wrote to you regarding a possible practical response to the situation in Ukraine following the release of the Government's refugee settlement scheme. I have heard with great interest of a number of people and places who are already lined up with families whom they hope will come in the weeks ahead, particularly around Preston, and I know many more have offered their homes and may be contacted once further applications are processed.

It may be that not everyone that who has kindly offered to house refugees will be able to do so, with many choosing to go near our big cities like London and Manchester where there are already Ukrainian communities. If you are keen to assist but do not find yourself with a person/family to support in this way, please do think of other ways you can support those who are.

It is likely that more refugees will seek shelter as this Thursday marks one month since the Russian invasion, and still the shelling and the suffering increases by the day. With the Russian military advance having stalled and the diplomatic efforts also having stalled, now is the right time to step up our prayers for divine intervention. Prayer changes things, and perhaps only God can turn the heart of the President of Russia to bring an end to this terrible war.

As we seek to redouble our prayers for the people, churches and leaders of Ukraine, I would like to suggest three possibilities that you may find helpful.

First, the Diocese in Europe are holding a half-hour Vigil and Service of Prayer for Ukraine via Zoom each Wednesday until 13 April, at 5pm GMT, to which all are invited. Each vigil will include testimony from some part of the diocese affected directly by the crisis. Full details can be found at: [Prayers for Peace in Ukraine - Every Wednesday - Latest News \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org/news/prayers-for-peace-in-ukraine-every-wednesday)

Second, there is an international initiative for Christians in different countries of the world to stop at different hours of the day to pray for peace, so that there is a continuous chain of prayer through the day. Christians in the UK are invited to stop what they are doing at 3pm each day to pray. This idea is based on an initiative by an adviser to Winston Churchill during the dark days of the Second World War. You may like to use my prayer, repeated at the end of this letter, at this time.

Third, many of us fasted on Ash Wednesday, keeping Ukraine as a special intention as we began our Lenten discipline. This Thursday, 24 March, seems a significant day to keep as a day of fasting – marking as it does both a calendar month since the start of the invasion and also a day of intense diplomacy around the world, with meetings of the European Council and the G7 and other world leaders to discuss the crisis.

Fasting from food for a day (or part of a day) can offer a small way to enter with the people of Ukraine into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and to pray with them that amid their sufferings they might know Christ's presence and the power of his resurrection (Philippians 3.10).

Despite long years of persecution during the Soviet period Ukraine is a deeply Christian nation, with around 70% of the population identifying as belonging to the Orthodox faith. Our hearts go out particularly to those congregations unable to meet at this time because of the extreme danger. St Paul reminds us that when one member of the body of Christ suffers, all suffer together with it (1 Corinthians 12.26).

Whether or not either of these suggestions are helpful to you, please continue to lead your people in prayer for Ukraine in whatever way works best for you. I thank God for your partnership in this ministry, and the generous response of so many churches to the needs of refugees.

With my continued prayers for you and for the people of Ukraine.

*Almighty God, seated above all the affairs of humankind
and sovereign over nations and leaders,
hear our prayer for Ukraine at this time of war,
that lives may be spared, that national boundaries be respected
and that forces of aggression be restrained.
Grant, Lord God, peace in your world in our time.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen*

+ Julian