

The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Julian T Henderson

25th February 2022

A letter to all clergy in Blackburn Diocese regarding the situation in Ukraine

Dear friends

Like you, we have been horrified by the events of the past few days and the unprovoked and violent assault launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. This invasion is a gross abuse of power and a criminal act, and it has rightly brought upon the aggressor condemnation and heavy sanctions.

Many people will feel a deep sense of fear about where events may now lead, for if a heavily armed aggressor acts in a way that is so outside of international law and the rules based system it is hard to tell where things may stop.

As Christians we may feel powerless in the face of such appalling violence. But as always, our response is to hold high the cross of Jesus Christ. On the cross Jesus died because of the violent abuse of power by those he came to save. But in that moment of seeming powerlessness, the power of sin was destroyed through his abundant grace. 'For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.'

The power-mongers, the tyrants and the bullies may appear to hold sway in this damaged world, but their rule can only ever be temporary. One day they will be judged by the one whose wounds redeem us to know the perfect freedom of the children of God.

As we wait for that day, so we must pray with all our hearts for peace and for the people of Ukraine. The Archbishops have written to invite us:

- To make this Sunday, February 27th, a day of prayer for peace
- On Tuesday March 1st at 6pm to pray with the Diocese in Europe for the chaplaincy in Kyiv and the churches that serve Ukraine
- To participate with the wider church in Pope Francis's call to offer our customary prayer and fasting on Ash Wednesday, March 2nd, as a prayer for peace

Liturgical resources for this time of crisis can be found on the Church of England's website.

This letter comes of course with our prayers for you.

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

The Bishop's Leadership Team of Blackburn Diocese