

A Special Prayer for Peace

Acknowledgment of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

As we watch the unfolding developments in the Ukraine we remember and acknowledge the First Nations Peoples who have walked upon and cared for these lands, seas, and waterways for many thousands of years. We pay our respect to the elders, past, present, and emerging as we continue to walk together on the journey towards reconciliation.



Image Bec Burns 4.3.22

Context of This Prayer

Media images of the war unfolding in the Ukraine are flooding our screens. Last Friday saw the World Day of Prayer, celebrated in over 170 countries. The intentions on this day were offered to the people who have been displaced due to war, both current conflicts and conflicts of the past. On Ash Wednesday, Pope Francis urged all Catholics to 'Fast and Pray' for the Ukraine and this Tuesday, International Women's Day, will allow space for reflection on how women can be and have been impacted by tragedy of war. Prayer is one of the cornerstones of the Lenten Season and this prayer is offered for all impacted by the current situation, that they may feel God's presence during these dangerous and uncertain times.

Scripture Reading from the World Day of Prayer Service 4.3.22

I have Plans for You [Jeremiah 29:11]

For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Reflection by Bec Burns

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The words above were written at a time when the Israelites had been expelled from their land and were living in exile in Babylon. They did not know how long they would be there, and one can only imagine how hopeless and lost they may have felt. It can be frightening to think that with all the gains our world has made, we are still forcing people out of their homes and experience mass displacement because of power struggles and war. We have seen this in Syria, Myanmar, the Middle East and Africa and now the Ukraine.

Sadly, war is not the only cause of displacement in our world. As we bring to mind International Women's Day this week, we find that 72,000 women in Australia sought homelessness services due to family violence in 2016 – 2017 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare).

These statistics can make it difficult to connect with the words from Jeremiah. Yet during Lent we are asked to love more, and as shared in our previous prayer, we asked to open our hearts to those who we do not know, so do not love. When we look through this lens, then maybe it is time for us to be a part the plan of hope that Jeremiah announces. Perhaps it is time we come to know the stories, to stop wishing we knew what to do to solve the big problems, and focus on what we can do with what we have so we can contribute to a future

of hope. We can do this through prayer, and we can do this through action. Peaceful action, simple action. One of these actions could be as simple as discussing peace with our children. Our language is powerful and our children (as much as we may think they ignore us completely) are watching and copying the words and actions we use daily. How do we act when we are upset with someone, what words do we use, how do we express frustration? Peace does certainly begin with us and the way we act in stressful times and during conflicts is one way we can promote a future of hope.

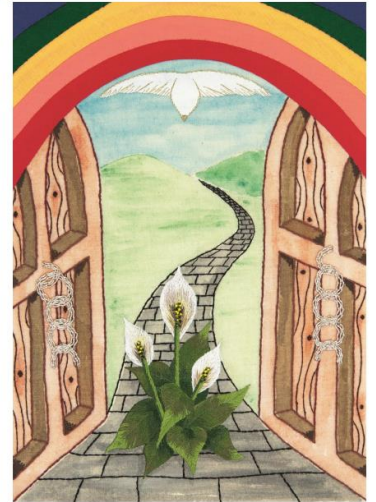
Secondly, we can support the work of Project Compassion this lent. As we learnt last week, the theme is "For all Generations" and by giving to this campaign we do assist those impacted by war.

[Rosalie's Story](#), which is featured in the campaign this year, is one example of a hopeful future for a person, who as a child soldier saw little or no hope at all. Jeremiah's words are powerful, and they are challenging. They challenge us to be a part of the plan, to work for

Peace and to understand our connection to each other as a part of the human family.



World Day of Prayer 2022



Prayer

Image by worlddayofprayeraustralia.org

Dear God, the world seems so dark and foreboding.

Where are the signs of hope?

What are you calling us to do?

Wars, uprisings, displacements, hunger, poverty, and disease continue to claim victims by the millions around the world each year.

Our ears do not want to hear their stories and our eyes do not want to see their plight because the suffering and destruction is so massive and cruel.

In our hearts and minds there is a desire to help somehow, but the crisis seem so overwhelming that we shake our heads in dismay and we wonder what the point is for us even to attempt to be witnesses for healing and hope in this hellish morass.

We beg with the song writer to open our eyes that we may see glimpses of truth you have for us.

Help us to follow the path of Jesus, the Suffering Servant. Give us the courage to be willing to walk the path of depression and pain with the victims of injustice here at home as well as abroad.

Help us to seek ways to light candles of hope, however small, through our words, our deeds, and our prayers, to encourage our sisters and brothers to hold onto the faith in spite of the pain and suffering they are facing.

And help those of us who are among the fortunate ones, who have enough bread to eat, good health, and who live in relative peace, to open our heart to learn from our sisters and brothers who are living lives of grace and forgiveness in the horrid circumstances which surround them. O God, help us to light one candle rather than to curse the darkness.

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who knows what being a light in this dark world is all about.

- Larry Kehler, Mennonite Central Committee, Canada, 2009

Call to Action

Discuss with your family the term Peace. What does this look like in your home, at school and when you are out and about?

Pray as a family for Peace in all the world examples of prayers for peace can be found [here](#).

Light a candle for peace.

Read more about the [World Day of Prayer](#).

Talk about the women in your life you are grateful for and the gifts they bring to your family.

