

THE
Episcopal
CHURCH



Office of Public Affairs

A statement from the House of Bishops on the Conflict in Ukraine

To the faithful in Christ Jesus throughout The Episcopal Church,

We are gathered at a moment of profound jeopardy to the principles of international law and peace. As we meet and pray together as a House of Bishops, Ukraine—an independent, sovereign nation that has posed no threat to others beyond its borders—has been invaded by military forces of Russia, without provocation and without justification.

On December 1, 1991, the people of Ukraine voted in a nationwide referendum on the question of their future. Nearly eighty-five percent of the electorate took part in that referendum. The question set before them was simply this: “Do you support the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine?” More than ninety percent of those casting a vote voted yes. The independence of Ukraine was, and remains, an act of clear, principled self-determination. In the thirty years since then the people of Ukraine have, through challenges and difficulties, forged a strong sense of national purpose and identity.

There is a direct link between our baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of all people in Christ and the demand to respect the will of nations to determine their own destiny—the rule of *jus cogens*, in international law—when expressed freely through the ballot box. We acknowledge and lament the failure of many of the nations where The Episcopal Church lives and gathers to respect and defend that fundamental principle in their own policies and actions in the years since the founding of the United Nations.

Yet that acknowledgment must not stay us from denouncing the utter depravity of the war now unfolding in Ukraine. It is evident that Russian military forces have directly and indiscriminately attacked civilian residences, medical facilities, even agreed corridors for the humanitarian withdrawal of civilians in areas of combat. These actions are a fundamental violation of the rights and dignity rightly accorded all people, and a flagrant breach of international norms.

As the bishops of The Episcopal Church, we pray:

- That the nations of the world call upon the Russian government to cease immediately this unjustifiable violence, especially against the innocent;

- That our siblings in the churches of Russia and Ukraine remind their leaders of Christ's commandment that we love our neighbors as we love ourselves—a commandment we believe provides no justification for violent conflict unless in the defense of women, children, the elderly and those otherwise vulnerable;
- That God protect and defend those who, with great courage, have stood and spoken against the choice for war in the counsels of their governments, their churches, and in the public square;
- That God support and encourage our churches in Europe, and our sister churches of the Anglican Communion present there as well, who even now are receiving refugees in the cities they serve, and helping them rebuild shattered lives;
- That all refugees, regardless of the reasons for their flight or the country of their origin, be received with equal dignity, equal hospitality, and equal treatment;
- That the work of diplomats and peacemakers and the voices of all those in authority labor without ceasing to bring a swift and just end to this conflict, and the preservation of Ukraine's independence and autonomy under conditions of security and tranquility;

And that the Prince of Peace, whom we know also to be the Judge of Nations, will work through us and all followers of Christ to build a more peaceful and just world—where all people can live in safety, where the will of all for their nations can be freely expressed and fully lived out, and where God's dream of a Beloved Community of all people and nations is realized through the works of mercy and compassion.

We urge all faithful members of the Church to support the relief of the Ukrainian people as it is being carried out by Episcopal Relief and Development and by the Convocation of the Episcopal Churches in Europe.

Camp Allen, Texas
March 19, 2022