

Please read and forward this to the members of your unit. I am forwarding two articles; one from Bishop Christian Alsted and one from Bishop McAlilly. Plus I have added a little something at the end.

From Bishop Alsted:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27

There is war in Europe; Russia has invaded Ukraine, which is a free independent democracy.

War and violence are evil and always entail considerable human costs. The Christian message points to the path of reconciliation and never to war and violence as a solution to conflicts.

In the face of this evil, we pray for a logic different from the one based on geopolitical competition. We pray for a change of hearts and minds of leaders; we pray for de-escalation and dialogue instead of violence and war.

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church say:

We deplore war and urge the peaceful settlement of all disputes among nations. From the beginning, the Christian conscience has struggled with the harsh realities of violence and war, for these evils clearly frustrate God's loving purposes for humankind. We yearn for the day when there will be no more war and people will live together in peace and justice. —2016 Book of Discipline, Social Principles, ¶ 164

Our central conference consists of Nordic, Baltic, and Eurasian countries, including Russia and Ukraine. The Christian church is not nationalistic, and our relations with our brothers and sisters in other countries are not limited by nationality or culture. We have deep relations with Methodists in Ukraine and in Russia, and although we are influenced by our culture and the political realities, we must never allow this to hinder or break our unity in Christ.

We stand with the United Methodists in Ukraine in prayer for protection, reconciliation, and peace. We pray for pastors, leaders, and congregations in The United Methodist Church in Ukraine; may God grant that their witness of reconciliation and peace will bring strength and hope to the Ukrainian people.

We pray for Bishop Eduard Khegay, bishop of both Russia and Ukraine; may God give him the wisdom and grace that he needs in his ministry and leadership under these challenging circumstances.

In the Nordic and Baltic episcopal area, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania all have borders with Russia; and in addition, Latvia and Lithuania have borders with Belarus. In the Baltic countries in particular, the invasion of Ukraine causes great concern.

The United Methodists in the Nordic countries stand with the Methodists in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in prayer for protection and peace. May the church's testimony of reconciliation and peace in Christ offer hope and strength to the people in the Baltic countries.

In the coming week, we will enter the season of Lent, which, in the church, is a time for prayer and soul-searching. I call on all our congregations to intercede for the people of Ukraine and for the leaders in the world who have the power to bring an end to war. I call on all our congregations to pray and fast for reconciliation and

peace in the world. May God, in his grace, open our eyes to the things that make for peace, may he protect us all from the escalation and spreading of war, and may we follow him on his path of truth and peace.

May Christ have mercy on us all

Christian Alsted
Bishop

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Now a word from Bishop McAlilly:

Ash Wednesday

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Matthew 6.1-16, 16-21

In a sense, the 40-day Lenten journey upon which we embark today is a journey of spiritual preparation. This season is about death and resurrection, brokenness and redemption, endings, and beginnings.

It is a time to take stock, to reflect, to come clean before God. There is a remarkable prayer of confession in our hymnal that says: We confess, O Lord that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

So, in the words of the prophet Joel appointed for today, “Return to the LORD, your God, with all your heart for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. “

Return to the Lord, praying as King David did, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

The Christian faith, of course, is not just a collection of ideas to be believed; it is a way of life to be practiced. Lent is a time when we commit to come clean before God.

And there is no sense pretending with God. God knows that you don’t have your act together. God knows who we are. God knows the confused motives behind the seemingly innocent remark or gesture. God not only knows the real you, but God also loves you. Today our scripture teaches us to “Rend your hearts and not your garments” are both counseling us to pay more attention to the content of our hearts as we enter this season of preparation for Easter.

In the words of the prophet Joel, God is telling us, “Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart.”

May this Lenten Journey guide your heart and your steps as you draw near to Christ.



Let today be the day you give up who you've been for you who can become.

—> **Blessed Ash Wednesday** <—

What to Give Up...

Give up complaining ...	focus on Gratitude
Give up pessimism ...	become an Optimist
Give up worry ...	trust Divine Providence
Give up bitterness ...	turn to Forgiveness
Give up hatred ...	return Good for evil
Give up negativism ...	be Positive
Give up anger ...	be More Patient
Give up pettiness ...	become Mature
Give up gloom ...	enjoy the Beauty all around you
Give up jealousy ...	pray for Trust
Give up gossiping ...	control your Tongue
Give up sin ...	turn to Virtue
Give up giving up ...	Hang in there!