

The Bishops' Conference of Church of Norway presents the following statement:

The bells are ringing for peace

When the church bells around the country are ringing a little extra on Sunday at one o'clock, and for seven minutes, it is something very unusual. At present, the crisis is so grave that it is time to use special means. The bells are ringing for peace. The mission of the church is always to call for peace, reconciliation and justice, as we have been taught to do by the words and example of Jesus.

We are shocked and upset by the actions of war in Ukraine, and they are escalating day by day. People flee from their houses and homes to save their lives, and this is especially true for women, children and elderly people. It is terrifying to witness all the destruction, of human lives, of relations and of material values.

We condemn the attack on Ukraine. We protest against the Russian war force invading its neighbouring country and initiating a brutal war contrary to international law and basic human rights. The Russian president carries the responsibility for starting the war and must take responsibility for ending it. But all who are in power and authority, in all countries, must do their utmost now, so that the actions of war can be stopped and do not spread and escalate any further.

The bells are ringing for peace for all of us, in Europe and in the world.

Now is the time to show compassion and solidarity with all who are affected of the acts of war. Millions are fleeing from the brutal devastations of the war. Many of them have already come here, or will come here, to our own country.

The church is present in every local community, and we have volunteers and employees who now want to make an effort to receive the refugees. We remind you that it is the authorities who are responsible for the reception and integration of refugees, but they do need the collaboration of civil society. The local church should therefore contact the local municipality to let them know what the church can offer the local community.

The parishes have churches and other buildings where people can come together for prayer and candle-lighting, but also for talks, meals and for playing with the children. Refugee children and young people need a sanctuary away from fear and longing. The church has hands to hold for those who are scared. Several places it can also be relevant to offer spaces owned by the church to our sisters and brothers of faith for their worship services and prayers. The church should welcome the refugees into our local communities and neighbourhoods, our houses and our fellowships. This demands something from us, in the short term and the long term. We have to contribute to acute emergency relief, as well as being perseverant in our care and support.

We must be clear that we are not against the Russian people, and we are not against Russians who live and work in Norway. Harassment and

exclusion of ordinary Russians are totally unacceptable. We shall live together as fellow human beings and good neighbours.

We rejoice in the great engagement by the many people in Norway who wish to help Ukraine. The financial support should be channelled through established humanitarian agencies, such as the Norwegian Church Aid. This will ensure that the help arrives where it should, and that it is handled in a responsible manner. The Lenten campaign this year will also convey support to Ukraine, and we encourage all parishes and individuals to be generous.

The Lenten season we are in calls us to pray and work for the good and well-being of others. Now, it is about someone who are close to us.

Kyrie Eleison – Lord, have mercy!

The Bishops' Conference in Church of Norway,
March 12, 2022