

**Community of the Cross of Nails
at St Martin Coney Street, York**
Friday Prayers for Peace and Reconciliation
Friday 31st October 2025

Bible Reading: Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

“Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

Reflection

Today the Church of England commemorates the reformer Martin Luther, and Lutheran and some other churches celebrate this as Reformation Day. This day was chosen since it was on 31st October 1517 that Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

The Reformation was a reaction to church practices and teachings at the time which some believed to be at odds with what the Bible taught. Luther's greatest contribution was arguably his translation of the Bible into German, allowing people to read it for themselves in their own language. The development of printing enabled German Bibles to become more widely available then.

Luther's theology had an influence on the English Reformation. The Lutheran and Anglican Churches, although they developed in their own way, had, and do have, much in common. It was perhaps natural that eventually the two confessions should subscribe to formal agreements of mutual recognition, with the Nordic Churches in 1992 (Porvoo) and with the German Church in 1991 (Meissen).

The many divisions in the Church are very painful and clearly give the wrong message to those outside. We cannot even agree amongst ourselves, others will say. For a long time Reformation Day only highlighted those divisions. Yet in more recent years there have been formal discussions between Lutherans and the Roman Catholic Church. A special landmark was reached in 2016 when

Pope Francis attended the commemoration of Reformation Day in the Lutheran Cathedral in Lund in Sweden.

There remain deep divisions within the Church, and yet nowadays they are as much if not more so within than between denominations. As Christians we very much need to learn to live with difference and celebrate diversity. There will probably always be matters on which we will disagree. It is how we disagree that matters. It is very possible to do so with mutual respect and an open mind, with courtesy and grace.

The same applies to the wider world where we continue to witness violent conflicts, brutality, fear, injustice, all of which when seen objectively are quite senseless. Ultimately war and aggression achieve nothing.

Our Bible reading is Psalm 46, the first verse of which inspired the opening line of Martin Luther's great hymn, "Ein feste Burg is unser Gott" ("a safe stronghold our God is still". It is a psalm of confidence and trust in God. It also offers a promise of peace, peace that is so much needed today in the Church and in the world. Our prayer is indeed that God will make wars to cease in all the world.

(Kingsley Boulton)

Prayers

A prayer for the Holy Land – praying that the current ceasefire will lead to real peace and justice

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: In your mercy, provide for all those in Gaza and beyond who suffer from hunger and starvation, that they may be given both physical bread to nourish their bodies and heavenly bread to sustain their souls. By the power of your Spirit, bring a speedy end to this cruel war, the release of all captives, care for the sick and wounded, comfort for those who have lost loved-ones, and the opening of a pathway for a just and lasting peace here in the very homeland where your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ministered during his earthly life; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. *(The Most Revd Dr Hosam E. Naoum Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem – August 2025)*

A prayer for Ukraine

Holy God, we hold before you all who live close to war and conflict; and all who live close to the threat of war and violence. We remember especially at this time, people in Ukraine and Russia. We pray for nonviolence and peaceful resolutions of conflict. Give us hearts of hospitality and sanctuary, forgive us all our hostility and hatred. Bring all people to the humanity you give us, and to the reconciliation and healing for which you gave your life. Strengthen us all to work with you to build justice and peace, reconciliation and healing, in our hearts and homes, in our streets, in all communities, neighbourhoods and nations. Bless all who live lives for the peace and wellbeing of others, and make their service fruitful. In the name of Christ. Amen. *(The Revd Inderjit Bhogal, Honorary President, The Fellowship of Reconciliation)*

A prayer for peace throughout the world

Lord, you have taught us that the world is yours and those who dwell on it. Hear us therefore as we pray for the life of the world; that every nation may seek the way that leads to peace; that human rights and freedom may everywhere be respected; and that the earth's resources may be ungrudgingly shared among all people. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*A Christian's Prayer Book*)

A prayer for refugees

Almighty and merciful God, whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own; look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger, homeless and hungry. Bless those who work to bring them relief; inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts; and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Church of England prayers*)

A prayer for the Community of the Cross of Nails

Almighty God, you have committed to us the ministry of reconciliation of your Son, Jesus Christ; give us the confidence in your power to forgive, as your Son forgave us from the Cross. Enable us to be witnesses of your forgiveness at work and where we live. Unite us in a sacred fellowship to heal the hostilities we see, and give us the grace to love one another, rejoicing in this life together. Amen.

A prayer for all those affected by illness:

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

World Council of Churches Ecumenical Prayer Cycle:

We pray this week for the peoples of the Caribbean.

Community of the Cross of Nails Prayer Cycle:

We pray today for partners in the whole world and for Coventry Cathedral. We pray for the Dean, his leadership colleagues and all the staff at Coventry Cathedral, especially those in the Reconciliation Team. Help them to strengthen the ministry of reconciliation to flourish the flower of hope and reconciliation throughout the world.

We pray especially for the partners in **Israel/Palestine**:

in Bethlehem: Mar Ephrem School;

in Jerusalem: Musalaha;

St George the Martyr Cathedral;

St Mark's Church and Monastery; and

Tantur Ecumenical Institute;

in Ramallah: Arab Evangelical Episcopal School;

in Shefar'Am: International Peace Centre (House of Hope); and

St Paul's Episcopal Church.

We pray too for the partners in **Ukraine**:
in Odessa: St Paul's Congregation;
in **Russia**:
in Kaliningrad: the Evangelical Resurrection Church;
in Moscow: St Andrew's Anglican Church;
in St Petersburg: St Catherine's Lutheran Church;
and in **Belarus**:
in Minsk: the International Conference Centre IBB.
And we ask God's blessing on our own ministry of peace and reconciliation at St Martin.

Coventry Litany of Reconciliation

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,
Father Forgive.

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own,
Father Forgive.

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth,
Father Forgive.

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,
Father Forgive.

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,
Father Forgive.

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,
Father Forgive.

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,
Father Forgive.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**