

**Community of the Cross of Nails  
at St Martin Coney Street, York**

**Friday Prayers for Peace and Reconciliation  
Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

**Bible Reading:** Luke 4.16-21

When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

**Reflection**

Today, 20th February, is marked by the United Nations as World Day of Social Justice. This year's theme is: Social Protection and Decent Work for All. To quote the official website:

“World Day of Social Justice calls for concrete action to advance poverty eradication, achieve full employment and decent work, promote gender equality, and ensure access to social well-being and justice for all.

In 2026, the theme “Social Protection and Decent Work for All” focuses on practical policies that help build fairer and more resilient societies. These include strong social protection systems, the protection of labour rights, the promotion of social dialogue, and inclusive public services. Together, such measures enable people to adapt to economic, climate, and technological transitions with dignity and genuine opportunities, in line with a human rights–based approach to economic and social policymaking.”

Justice is a precondition for real peace. Where there is injustice conflict in one form or another is often inevitable. The need for justice is indeed a powerful theme throughout the Bible, especially for those who are vulnerable. This comes out particularly in our Bible reading, where Jesus acknowledges and reinforces that long tradition by citing the prophet Isaiah. Particular categories of vulnerable people are referred to: those burdened by poverty; captives, which implies those who are imprisoned unjustly; those suffering disabilities; and those living under the pain of oppression. I am sure we can think of very many others too.

There is indeed much suffering in our world. Yet the message of both Jesus and Isaiah is one of hope, of liberation, of freedom. Not only that, but Jesus declares: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” That hope, that liberation, that has already in a real sense come about in the person of Jesus himself. That is the hope that we as Christians hold and offer to others.

That is the hope of well-being and justice for all that not only people of faith but the United Nations and other bodies are working tirelessly to make a reality for people's lives. There is much work still to be done but for all those efforts, thanks be to God.

*(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 Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland.

### *Community of the Cross of Nails Prayer Cycle:*

We pray today for partners in the **United Kingdom:**

in Banbury: Brailes Church of England Primary School;

in Bedworth: The Canons Church of England Primary School;

in Belfast: Corrymeela Community.

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

in Bethehem: 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.**