

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

**Friday Prayers for Peace and Reconciliation
Friday 24th April 2026**

Bible Reading: John 10.1-10

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Reflection

There are many issues in our world today that doubtless cause us great concern. This is exemplified by a number of United Nations and other commemorations this week.

Wednesday, 22nd April, was International Mother Earth Day, when the focus was on the damage to the natural environment and ecosystems by climate change and by human activities that disrupt them. The image of the earth as our mother is a powerful one, and a reminder of how much we need to care for our world and allow it to be restored and to heal.

Today, 24th April, is the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace. This reminds us how important it is for states to work together to establish and maintain peace. That need is all too clear in view of the continuing conflicts in so many parts of the world, where a desire for peace is not always apparent amongst those who hold power, but which is the earnest longing of the ordinary people who are suffering. Why can we not cooperate and work together for the good of all, we may well ask.

Today also marks the beginning of World Immunization Week, with its aim to highlight the need to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease. Health is so important to human wellbeing and much can be done through vaccines to prevent diseases and consequent suffering.

Nearer to home, yesterday was St George's Day. It is right to celebrate our heritage and culture. Yet an important part of that is our diversity. Diversity is indeed something to be celebrated and not seen as a threat. The misuse of our patron saint and the symbols associated with him for a narrow nationalist

agenda is to be challenged. St George was himself from another country. As the patron saint of a number of other countries and cities he is an international figure, transcending purely national boundaries.

Our Bible reading is the Gospel reading for this coming Sunday, often referred to as Good Shepherd Sunday. This offers a very different, and indeed positive, perspective on the many issues our world faces.

In this passage Jesus is not just the shepherd but also the gate. Jesus has absolute care for his sheep, for all of us. He has the wellbeing of the sheep, all of us, as his priority. He protects them/us, keeps them/us safe. He is the way to freedom and fulfilment.

He warns against those who do not have the interests of the sheep at heart, but who are only interested in stealing them, in exploiting them. There were those in positions of power and wealth who did that in our Lord's earthly lifetime, and sadly there are people like that in our world today. It is in Jesus only whom we can trust fully. He is our real hope, our true joy,

(Kingsley Boulton)

Prayers

A prayer for Iran and the Middle East

Ever-loving God, who hears us in our anguish and distress, and longs for us to be free. We pray for the people of Iran and the wider Middle East, at this time of fear and uncertainty. Be near to those who are anxious; bring comfort to all who are suffering. Guide those with the power to make decisions, and lead them in the ways of wisdom, compassion and moderation: that people of goodwill would seek harmony and reconciliation. Join us with our Christian brothers and sisters in all places, in praying for peace with justice, through him who is the prince of peace, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *(The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford)*

A prayer for the Holy Land

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 Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine.

Community of the Cross of Nails Prayer Cycle:

We pray today for partners in **Coventry:**

All Saints Church, Allesley;

Bablake School;

Barnabas Fund (hope and aid for the persecuted Church)

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.**