

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

**Friday Prayers for Peace and Reconciliation  
Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2026**

**Bible Reading:** John 20.19-23

When it was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

**Reflection**

This coming Sunday the Church celebrates the great feast of Pentecost. We recall the gift of the Holy Spirit on Jesus's disciples, empowering them to preach boldly the Good News of God's love and liberation. Pentecost is traditionally understood as the birthday of the Church, and from that moment on, from small beginnings, the Church grew from strength to strength.

This event is described vividly in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Our Bible reading is the Gospel reading for Pentecost this year. It appears to reflect a very different timeline, but the actual effect on our Lord's followers is the same.

Jesus had told his disciples that he would be leaving them, but promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable them to continue his work and mission. St Luke relates the ascension of Jesus and the momentous event at Pentecost. St John squeezes that into a much shorter time period. In his account it is on the very evening of his resurrection that Jesus breathed on his disciples and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit".

I would suggest that this apparent discrepancy does not contradict the underlying message. Jesus hands on the baton, as it were, to his disciples, and gives them the resources they need to continue his work. Indeed he will still very much be with them, not physically but through the Holy Spirit.

There are two keywords in our Bible reading that are still powerfully relevant to our world today: peace and forgive. The fact the Jesus repeats those words "Peace be with you" strongly suggests that this is no mere standard greeting but something far deeper. Jesus gives them, gives us, real peace, true peace. Peace in the Christian sense is not simply the absence of conflict but God's peace, something that can permeate our very selves, and, if we let it, our world too. It indeed starts with being at peace with ourselves, and it is that deeper peace in the hearts of humanity for which we earnestly pray as to the genuine way forward for our world.

The other keyword is forgive. In a sense forgiveness is tied up with peace. If we forgive others then that can help us be at peace. The same applies if others forgive us. Not least is that the case if we accept forgiveness from others. Forgiveness is indeed an important element in the process of peacemaking and reconciliation.

There are those who promote a harsh, even belligerent version of Christian rhetoric. That is not the Good News we are called to proclaim, the Good News of love, peace and forgiveness. May we be given the courage and the strength by the Holy Spirit to proclaim, like Peter and the others at Pentecost, that Good News to a world that desperately needs to hear it.

*(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 Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal.

*Community of the Cross of Nails Prayer Cycle:*

We pray today for partners in **Germany:**  
in Weimar: The Church of St Peter and St Paul);  
in Witten-Annen: The Evangelical Church Community;  
in Würzburg: The Ecumenical Cross of Nails Initiative;  
in Zinnowitz: The Cross of Nails Centre, Usedom.

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.**