

**Community of the Cross of Nails
at St Martin Coney Street, York**
Friday Prayers for Peace and Reconciliation
Friday 12th June 2026

Bible Reading: Luke 17.1-2; 18.15-17

Jesus said to his disciples, “Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble.”

People were bringing even infants to Jesus that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

Reflection

Today, 12th June, is marked by the United Nations, as it is each year, as World Day Against Child Labour. This year’s theme is: 2026 Theme: Red card to child labour: Fair play for children, decent work for adults. As the official website states:

“The 2026 World Day comes at a decisive moment. The 6th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, held in Marrakech, reaffirmed the urgent need to accelerate action and translate commitments into concrete results. The Marrakech Global Framework for Action against Child Labour provides a concrete roadmap and indicators for tackling child labour through integrated responses that address root causes and protect every child’s rights.

Under the slogan “Red card to child labour: Fair play for children, decent work for adults”, the 2026 World Day Against Child Labour campaign calls for reinforced action on the policies that prevent child labour and withdrawn children from it: quality education, universal social protection, decent work and adequate livelihoods for adults, stronger laws and enforcement, better data and monitoring systems, and responsible action in agriculture and supply chains.

This action is urgently needed. Despite progress, 138 million children remain in child labour worldwide, including nearly 54 million in hazardous work.”

The following statistics remain a matter of great concern, despite some improvements: “Since 2000, child labour has almost halved, from 246 million to 138 million, yet current rates remain too slow, and the world has fallen short of reaching the 2025 global elimination target. To end it within the next five years, current rates of progress would need to be 11 times faster.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to carry the heaviest burden, accounting for nearly two-thirds of all children in child labour – around 87 million. While prevalence fell from 24 to 22 per cent, the total number has remained stagnant against the backdrop of population growth, ongoing and emerging conflicts, extreme poverty, and stretched social protection systems.

Asia and the Pacific achieved the most significant reduction in prevalence since 2020, with the child labour rate dropping from 6 per cent to 3 per cent (from 49 million to 28 million children). Although the prevalence of children in child labour in Latin America and

the Caribbean stayed the same over the past four years, the total number of children affected dropped from 8 million to about 7 million, the report notes. According to the data, agriculture remains the largest sector for child labour, accounting for 61 per cent of all cases, followed by services (27 per cent), like domestic work and selling goods in markets, and industry (13 per cent), including mining and manufacturing.”

Children played a special part for Jesus, as reflected in our two Bible passages above. Children are very much our future and need to be valued and nurtured. They are particularly vulnerable and any exploitation or abuse of them must be vigorously challenged and opposed. It is our duty to protect children and give them the best opportunities to enable them to live fulfilled lives in peace and security.

(Kingsley Boulton)

Prayers

A prayer for World Day Against Child Labour

Lord, we lift up children from around the world. We ask that you will protect them and that they will have the freedom to play, learn and enjoy their childhoods. Give them hopes and dreams for the future, we pray. We ask that you comfort children who are currently working in dangerous jobs and provide them with a way out of exploitation and poverty, so they can flourish in life. We pray for healing for any trauma they have faced. Bless them Lord, we pray. We lift up to you families who are having to make desperate decisions in order to survive. We ask that you equip them with the tools they need to earn an income and thrive. Let there be no barriers in sending their children to school Lord, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. *(Tearfund)*

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 Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Eswatini.

Community of the Cross of Nails Prayer Cycle:

We pray today for partners in:

Sierra Leone:

in Freetown: St George's Cathedral.

Slovakia:

in Modra: Lutheran Church in Modra.

South Africa:

in Amanzimtoti: KwaMakhutha URCSA / South Coast Dutch Reformed 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.**