

A Joint Pastoral Letter for Ash Wednesday 2022



Dear Friends in Christ of the Indiana-Kentucky and Heartland Conferences,

As we begin the Lenten journey on this Ash Wednesday, our hearts are heavy with grief for the people of Ukraine as they seek to defend themselves against the war of aggression that has invaded their lives under the direction of Russian President Vladimir Putin. We hold all God's people who are suffering in this situation in our prayers hoping that even at this late date hearts may be turned and that a new way forward may be found. Because of the long-standing relationship carried by many of you in the Heartland Conference with Ukraine through the ministry of [S.A.R.A. \(Sharing America's Resources Abroad\)](#), this war is one that affects people who are personally known and loved by many of us.

Many have asked if there is a way in addition to our prayers that we may be of aid to those who are suffering. The answer to that question is "yes"! The Heartland Conference [S.A.R.A. partnership](#) will serve as a conduit for aid to partners in Ukraine who are suffering as a result of the war. Daily, our partners are bringing food and water relief to displaced Ukrainians in Transcarpathia. Those wishing to make a donation via this channel may do so by [clicking below](#). Please know that your gifts of any size make a difference in this critical time.

Additionally, yesterday, the national setting of the United Church of Christ released a message outlining ways in which individuals and congregations can [make donations through our Common Global Ministries](#). This money will be shared with our global partner, the Reformed Church of Hungary, which is already engaged in ministry with those from Ukraine who have fled their country. More information about giving through this channel may be found by [clicking the link below](#).

Finally, because we are people who believe that God is at work in all seasons, as we enter this Lenten season we offer the following prayer and invite you to use it throughout Lent as part of your personal and shared discipline of spiritual deepening in God and for the good of the world.

**O God of all nations
image bearer of every living soul,**

**We turn our hearts towards you
in this hour of yet another step
towards the alluring love for power
and military might over peace,
compassion, or justice.**

**We have been here before, God...
on the brink of human lives
created in your image
being destroyed.**

**We have been here before, God...
where attempts to work
towards peace and diplomacy
have been met
with defiance and violence.**

**We have been here before, God...
where children will grow up
without parents,
where families will be displaced,
and where trauma will live
in memories and bodies
for generations to come.**

**It is not enough for us
to express to you
our being brokenhearted...**

**We need a true Just Peace
that begins with our lives.
Use us in our communities,
Empowering God,
To embody justice, compassion,
and peace in our relationships.**

**Embolden us to urge
those with influence
in our global policies
To embrace a vision
of liberation and hope
that will ensure the safety
and peace of all.**

**O God,
Make us instruments of your peace,
In our lives, in our churches,
in our conferences,
our ecumenical partnerships,
in our global missions,
And in all of our relationships.**

**Through your ways of peace
made known in Jesus,
We are called
as the author of Ephesians reminds us
To live "with all humility and gentleness,
with patience,
Bearing with one another in love,
Making every effort**

Even though we are.

It is not enough for us
to shed our genuine tears
on behalf of those living in Ukraine...
Even though we do.

It is not enough
to offer a post on social media...
Even though solidarity is needed.

to maintain the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace.”

Let there be peace on earth
and let it begin with us.

May it be so. Amen.

Please know that we hold you in our prayers in this and every season, even as we hold the world and especially our Ukrainian siblings.

Lenten blessings,



Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott
Conference Minister
Indiana-Kentucky Conference



Rev. Dave Long-Higgins
Conference Minister
Heartland Conference

S.A.R.A. Ukrainian Emergency Relief Donations

UCC Ukraine Emergency Appeal

