



The United Methodist Church • Dielmannstr. 26 • 60599 Frankfurt am Main • GERMANY

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Nordic, Baltic and Ukraine Episcopal Area

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The United Methodist Church
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*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.
(Isaiah 9:6.7)*

Dear Bishop Alsted, dear Bishop Kheday,
my esteemed brothers in the episcopal office,
dear Christian, dear Eduard,

I greet you warmly with these words from the book of the prophet Isaiah. We usually read this verse at Christmas, but it is a word for any season of the year. It reminds us that the Prince of Peace has indeed come and that the reign rests on his shoulder. What a promise!

Two years ago to the day, we were all shocked by the terrible news that war was raging again in Europe. All of a sudden, people's lives in Ukraine changed dramatically. Since then, destruction and death have characterized everyday life in many parts of the country. Hardly anyone has been spared the experience of loss and grief. More than six million people have fled abroad from Ukraine. Around five million people have left everything behind and moved within the country to places where they hope to be safer. Around 17 million people are currently in urgent need of humanitarian aid. The number of severely traumatized people is increasing. The inhumane war continues unabated to this day. There is no end in sight. The unspeakable suffering of the people in Ukraine pains us deeply. There are people in Russia also suffering from this war and its consequences. Their need is of a completely different kind. Nevertheless, it is there.

Both countries - Russia and Ukraine - belong to your episcopal areas. Along with the sisters and brothers of our Church there, you experience the terrible impact of war up close and personal. On behalf of The United Methodist Church in Germany, I assure you that we continue to be connected with you and keep you in our prayers. We want to continue to do our utmost to help alleviate the suffering. We are pleased to remain part of the sustainable network of help and support that has been created in our Church - in Europe and worldwide.

Painfully we are aware that the community within our United Methodist Church has also been affected by the consequences of this war. I pray that we as people of God's Kingdom will increasingly succeed in thinking and living beyond earthly and national borders. I pray for reconciliation and peace among us. May God help us to do this; only then can we become peacemakers (Mt 5:9) for our surroundings.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we share the conviction that "*war is incompatible with the teaching and example of Christ.*" (¶ 165 C, Social Principles of the UMC). We feel the harsh realities that we cannot avoid. We hear the arguments that seek to explain why war has come about. There are indeed many reasons that have contributed to it, but none of them justify war and the unspeakable suffering it causes. Let us together confront the harsh realities with the *belief* that Christ, the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6) is there even in the midst of suffering. Let us resist evil together with the firm *hope* that Christ, the Prince of Peace, who overcame death on the cross, is more powerful than anything that destroys life. Together, let us counter it with the *love* that the Prince of Peace enables us to exercise and alleviate suffering, bind up wounds, provide support, offer comfort and courageously advocate peace.

We pray for you, that God will grant you wisdom, goodness, and clarity for leading your episcopal areas.

We pray for the people in your congregations,
that God will enable both, them, and you to be peacemakers.

We pray,
that all those who are - away from the public eye - diplomatically struggling to find ways to finally silence the weapons will continue to have the hope, the breath and the imagination to do so.

We pray
for the people who are suffering and have lost everything.

We pray
for perseverance for all those in Ukraine and its neighboring countries who organize help and stand up for others.

We implore God's mercy and grace for you and for all of us.

May God's peace come true among us!

Grace and Peace,



Bishop Harald Rückert
The United Methodist Church, Germany

