



The Prince of Peace and the Question of War March 15, 2022

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and/or equip you to work for justice.

Our monthly small group resource is sent on the third Tuesday of each month; you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current/past JFM small group to join you in-person or via video conferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page – [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that these resources will inspire and nourish your community, for a more robust experience, consider one of our longer programs. Click [here](#) for more information. This week's resource speaks to themes found in our Nonviolence program, "Cultivating Nonviolence, Harvesting Peace," which you will find [here](#).

This week's small group experience relies on participants having read three short statements/articles: click 1) [here](#), 2) [here](#), and 3) [here](#). Please share the links in advance so that all participants can come prepared to discuss; you can find the full links in the "Reflection" section that follows.

Last but not least, JustFaith Ministries is a nonprofit organization. All of our work is a collaboration with people like you. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out.](#)

Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family! In fact, we urge you to do so. We want this resource to reach as many people as possible.

Thanks for all you do in the name of love and justice,
The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you. Today we'll begin with an opening prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation about a podcast we listened to, before closing in prayer. This a time to care for one another and to be inspired to grow and act.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer. In advance, assign someone to read aloud the following poem:

A Prayer for Peace in Ukraine

Christ of Peace,

The first words you spoke to your disciples
after your resurrection were "Peace be with you.
With us and with all of creation, groaning for peace,
we implore your mercy and forgiveness
as we listen to earth lamenting and people crying,
made poor by humanity's acts of aggression.
As your disciples of peace and nonviolence,
May our first words be
at this time of war in the Ukraine:
"Peace be with you."

Peace be with you, people of Ukraine,
whose suffering is our suffering,
whose cries unite with our cries for peace.

Peace be with you, leaders of countries,
whose use of force and aggression
be transformed into justice that is restorative.

Peace be with you, protestors in the streets of Russia,
whose courage puts you at risk of your lives,
inspire us to stand up for nonviolence.



Peace be with each one of us,
that as we cry with our Ukrainian kin,
we may be moved to proclaim,
“No more war, War never again.”

Come, Christ of Peace, be with us!

- Sr. Pegge Boehm, PBVM

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you are with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this our reflection, let’s take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you’re struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**

Other optional questions include: What is something you’ve learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a “thin place” in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you’d like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection (25 minutes or so)

Participants should have read these three articles prior to the gathering:

- 1) <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/wests-moral-calculi-become-more-fraught-genocide-looms-and-oil-prices->



[rise?utm_source=NCR+List&utm_campaign=1c3273beb2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_03_08_09_53&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-1c3273beb2-230643738](https://www.justfaith.org/2022/03/08/09-53&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6981ecb02e-1c3273beb2-230643738)

- 2) <https://paxchristiusa.org/2022/02/24/pax-christi-usas-statement-on-russians-invasion-of-ukraine/>
- 3) <https://paxchristi.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Pax-Christi-International-on-Ukraine.pdf>

Discussion questions

1. The three articles that you read all speak to the aggression against Ukraine and the possibility of peace, but with different emphases, all drawn from the same faith tradition (Christian and Catholic). Which reading was most compelling for you? Why?
2. If you have read other articles or statements that you found even more powerful, feel free to share them with each other, and why you liked them.
3. What do you understand to be the moral obligations of citizens of the United States in the case of Russia's war on Ukraine?
4. What is realistic to hope and pray for?

Announcements (5-10 minutes)

- This resource is a small sample of the kinds of conversations had in our 8-session programs. For a more intensive experience related to matters of peace and nonviolence, see our Nonviolence program; click [here](#).
- On Thursday, March 17, 7:00 p.m. ET, JustFaith Ministries' "Acting for Justice" Series will continue with international expert, Bill O'Keefe of Catholic Relief Services. Bill will address the topic, "Conflict in Ukraine." For more information or to register, click [here](#).
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries; click [here](#).
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups advocating for peace, working for justice or caring for the environment.



Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Then say: Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.

Pause for 30 seconds. Then share the reflection below.

A Prayer of Grief

On this day, there are children on the Mexican/Texas border, held in sadness and fear, and the heart of this world says, “Come home.” Come home where you are welcomed and loved.

On this day, there are children in our city who wake up hungry and with no prospects for breakfast, and the heart of this world says “Come home.” Come home where you are fed and nourished and secure.

On this day, there are children in Kiev who wander, dazed by bombs or loss of parents. And the heart of this world says, “Come home.” Come home to where war is no more, where your family may grow up secure in peace and friendship.

On this day, there are children in Somalia who wield guns and are forced to kill in the name of desperation and war lords. And the heart of this world says, “Come home.” Come home to where there is sharing, abundance, and love. Where desperation and guns are long-gone and distant memories.

On this day, there are children waking up in homes across the street wracked by alcoholism, drug abuse, hopelessness, and distraction. And the heart of this world says, “Come home.” Come home to life, to possibility, to dreams, to recovery and engagement and good work.

On this day, there are children—grown children—who are now looking at each other on a computer screen, and we are concerned about parents who are sick, and children who struggle, and mortgage payments and wobbly marriages and wondering how to best live. And the heart of this world, says “Come home.” Come home to the quiet, to inspiration, to consolation, to wisdom, to community, and to a great love that can heal.

Come home, come home. All who are weary, come home. Amen.



Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Pause

We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world.

Amen.