

“Pray for Ukraine”: Religious leaders call for peace, God’s protection

by [Bob Smietana](#)

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Pro-Ukraine demonstrators carry signs and Ukraine flags in New York's Times Square on February 24. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

At the top of the website for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA is a simple, three-word message: “Pray for Ukraine!”

“May God hear our loving petitions and soften the hearts and minds of all, those within and outside Ukraine, during these dangerous times,” wrote the UOC’s Council of Bishops, in a statement responding to news of the Russian invasion on February 24.

The bishops of the UOC, founded by immigrants, were among a host of religious leaders asking God to intervene on behalf of Ukraine. The prayers asked for an end of hostilities and for the protection of civilians—and, in at least one case, for a defeat of Russian forces.

“Send your heavenly legions, O Lord, commanded by the patron of Kyiv, Archangel Michael, to crush the desires of the aggressor whose desire is to eradicate our people,” the UOC bishops wrote in an online prayer.

Calls for peace echoed from the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Washington, DC.

“Lord Jesus Christ our God, look down with Thy merciful eye upon the sorrow and greatly painful cry of Thy children, abiding in the Ukrainian land,” read a prayer on their website. “Deliver Thy people from civil strife, make to cease the spilling of blood, and turn back the misfortunes set against them.”

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops asked Catholics to fast for peace on Ash Wednesday, and David J. Malloy, chairman of the USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace, also called for a day of prayer.

“In this time of fear and uncertainty, we stand in solidarity with the Church in Ukraine and offer our support,” Malloy said in a statement. “We call on all the faithful and people of good will to pray for the people of Ukraine.”

Leaders of the United Church of Christ began their prayer, posted online, with a quote from the book of Proverbs: “There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

“Hear our prayers for all those who will die today because of war in Ukraine and other war-torn countries all over this world. Grant them an end to the suffering of this world and eternal peace that is only found in You,” the UCC officers wrote.

A number of faith leaders took part in an online vigil for peace this week—including Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church; Elizabeth Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Jonah Dov Pesner, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; and Mohamed Elsanousi, executive

director of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.

“The drums of war are beating louder with each passing moment,” said Tarunjit Singh Butalia of Religions for Peace USA during the vigil. “We must stand up as people of faith and people of peace to speak truth to power.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community, prayed that world leaders would try to de-escalate the situation in Ukraine before it can spread into a wider conflict.

“I pray that the world’s leaders pay heed to the need of the hour and value, above all else, their obligation to ensure the peace and stability of the world. May Allah the Almighty protect all innocent and defenceless people and may true and lasting peace in the world prevail,” he said in a statement.

Prayers for Ukraine were offered during a recent meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee in Nashville, Tennessee, and Southern Baptist leaders and other influential evangelicals offered prayers via social media.

“Christ have mercy. Pray for Ukraine,” tweeted Adam Greenway, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The World Evangelical Alliance and the European Evangelical Alliance called for an end of hostilities in Ukraine and withdrawal of all Russian troops.

“We are gravely concerned to yet again witness armed conflict that will inevitably lead to tragic loss of human lives, including innocent civilians who only desire to live in peace,” the WEA’s secretary general, Thomas Schirrmacher, said in a statement. “We call for an end to the hostilities, an immediate ceasefire and respect for Ukrainian territorial integrity.”

The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker peace organization, urged US leaders and the international community to pursue diplomacy and de-escalation rather than a military response to the crisis in Ukraine.

The group also passed along a message from Quakers in Ukraine calling for peace. “It is very important for us to convey that Ukrainians are peace-loving people and very kind. In the last two months, when we got together and started our meetings, we agreed that there is no one among us who would see war as the answer, or believe that violence is the way out,” the message read. “We categorically condemn

any aggression, expansion, and pressure.” —Religion News Service. Claire Giangravé, Adelle Banks, Jack Jenkins, and Emily McFarlan Miller contributed to this story.