

## UKRAINE

### **Statement by the Most Rev'd Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church**

We have listened to the pleas from the people and leaders of Ukraine for aid, for assistance, and for safety. We have spoken out as the President of the Russian Federation has warped reality around his own priorities to justify these deaths.

We have written to religious leaders in Russia, we have written to political leaders in Russia, and we have written to friends in Russia. But nothing has changed. We have supported Government initiated investigations, international isolation, economic sanctions, but nothing has changed.

The machines of war roll on, the bombs continue to fall, the misinformation and single-mindedness of President Putin continues to disrupt international peace efforts, and people continue to be killed.

As long as this war persists, we must be counted amongst those who oppose it.

Our voices were raised in unison to condemn the outbreak of the war, now we must keep speaking out until it ends: "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute" (Proverbs 31:8). Our prayers rang out for the people of Ukraine, now we must not let our compassion falter. "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his presence continually" (1 Chronicles 16:11). As those who spread hate work hard to dominate the lives of others, we must work to show the love of God to those in peril, and all those caught up in war across the world. We have been given a new commandment: to love one another. As Jesus said: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" and "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."

This involves work: the work of opening our borders and our homes to those seeking shelter, the work of providing aid and support where it will be useful and is sought, and - come the day - the work of helping rebuild the shattered lives and homes of all who have been affected by the conflict.

We have not been able to do all we know we can. As the Scottish Episcopal Church, we join with voices from across the United Kingdom in calling on the Government to urgently scale up our response to the Ukraine crisis. While others around the world have opened up to welcome refugees into civic life and safety, our Government has put in place unnecessary complexities. We call on our Governments and Local Authorities to make safe all routes into this country, to welcome those who flee here from danger, and to urgently increase the speed and capacity of our support for refugees.

We must not be complacent. Let us welcome all who wish to come, let us speak out against tyranny, and let us pray for peace.