



# Unitarian Peace Fellowship Newsletter

*For all within our denomination who witness to the  
belief that war and preparation for war are  
failures of humanity*

**Issue 21, Christmas 2022/New Year 2023**

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[www.ukunitarians.org.uk/peace/](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/peace/)

## **A plea for peace and an end to this murderous war**

*'Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.'* (Jerusalem Talmud, Sanhedrin 4:1: 22a)

*'Whoever saves one life saves all of mankind.'* (The Qur'an)

We reproduce below the inspirational and prophetic statement, inspired by the Friends' Peace Testimony, issued by Quakers in Britain at the start of the current disastrous war.

If only such wise counsel had been heeded and acted on how many thousands of lives would have been saved, so many life changing injuries averted and billions of pounds of environmental and economic damage prevented. The cost of reconstruction of Ukraine's infrastructure will cost, we are told, well in excess of 70 billion dollars.

As the people of Ukraine are now facing a terrible Winter with threatened temperatures as low as minus 20 degrees Centigrade the World Health Organization and UN Refugee Agency have warned that millions of Ukrainians, including 7 million people displaced within Ukraine, will endure appalling conditions. Many clinically vulnerable people, the young and the elderly may die. Hundreds of hospitals and healthcare facilities lack fuel, water and electricity to meet basic needs. The longer the war continues the worst this humanitarian crisis will become.

The wisdom of Quakers worldwide and of other peacemakers, notably Pope Francis, has surely been utterly vindicated by all disastrous events since the outbreak of this tragic war?

Is there not clearly a moral imperative not only to bring desperately needed humanitarian, especially medical, aid to all those in acute

need but end the ever increasing toll of death and destruction we witness daily?

Inspired by our Quakers friends with the sure moral compass of their Peace Testimony, Pope Francis, the Dalai Lama and others, may our Unitarian Peace Fellowship continue to work and witness for an end to this murderous war, pledge ourselves to dedicate ourselves to support the lifesaving mission of the Red Cross and others giving aid and succour to the victims of the war and may we above all do all we can to help prevent more deaths.

**Feergus O'Connor**

### **Unitarian Peace Fellowship Ukraine Peace Appeal**

More than 200,000 Ukrainian and Russian troops have been killed. Over 40,000 Ukrainian civilians have lost their lives and many more are suffering life changing injuries.

More than 13,000,000 Ukrainians have fled their homes, millions internally displaced and millions of others living as refugees. Numerous homes, schools and hospitals have been damaged or destroyed. Water, electricity and other essential facilities have been badly disrupted. Landmines and other devastating weapons are killing many innocent civilians, including innocent child victims. At least 18,000,000 people in Ukraine are in acute need of medical care, food, water, heating and other essential humanitarian aid. Right now the people of Ukraine are facing the worst disaster and Europe and the world as a whole our most dangerous political crisis since the Second World War.

In response to this unprecedented international crisis endangering so many lives the Unitarian Peace Fellowship, in the spirit of the Charter for Compassion, which it has embraced, and acting in its longstanding commitment to Red Cross lifesaving appeals, is

launching this Christmas and New Year Appeal as part of its 2022-2023 Annual Appeal in aid of British Red Cross global humanitarian emergency responses to succour the victims of war.

By donating to the British Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal you will help Ukrainian victims of war by assisting the Ukrainian Red Cross, its sister charity, give desperately needed aid to hospitals and primary healthcare facilities, fire fighters and civil protection units , help it repair homes, schools and community centres and enable the rebuilding or replacement of Ukraine's vital infrastructure damaged or destroyed by this devastating war.

If you wish to respond to this urgent appeal please call  
0300 023 0820

or visit [redcross.org.uk/Ukraine](https://www.redcross.org.uk/Ukraine)

or send a cheque made out to the British Red Cross and post it to  
British Red Cross, 44 Moorfields, London EC2Y 9AL.

Please kindly earmark it for the British Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal and ask for it to be recorded as a donation to the Unitarian Peace Fellowship Ukraine Peace Appeal. Thank you.

Signatories to this appeal:

**Rev. Sue Woolley, President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and Secretary of the Unitarian Peace Fellowship**

**Elizabeth Slade, Chief Officer of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.**

**Marion Baker, GA Executive Committee Convenor**

**Rev. Michael Allured, Unitarian Peace Fellowship committee and LDPA Chair**

**Joyce Ashworth, former GA President**

**Diane Bennett, chair of the Inquirer Board and Rochdale Unitarians**

**Rev. Stephanie Bisby, minister of York and Bradford Unitarians**

**Dawn Buckle, GA Honorary Member and former GA President**

**Rev. John P. Carter, Chair of the Unitarian Peace Fellowship**

**Rev. Dr Rory Castle Jones, minister of Gellionnen Unitarian Chapel**  
**Joan Cook, former GA President**  
**Rev. Jim Corrigall, LDPA District Minister**  
**Rev. Joy Croft, Unitarian and Quaker peace advocate**  
**Rev. Laura Dobson**  
**Lis Dyson-Jones, former GA President**  
**Rev. Dr Peter Godfrey, GA Honorary Member and former GA President**  
**Rev. Winnie Gordon, co-President, Unitarian Ministerial Fellowship**  
**Rev. John Harley**  
**Rev. Elizabeth Harley**  
**Dorothy Hewerdine, former GA President**  
**Rev. Peter Hewis, former GA President**  
**Rev. Andrew Hill**  
**Ann Howell, GA Social Action Officer**  
**Robert Ince, Global President of the IARF and EC member**  
**Dr Lizzie Kingston-Harrison, GA Congregational Connections Lead**  
**Rev. Margaret Kirk**  
**Rev. Art Lester, Croydon Unitarians**  
**Derek McAuley, Chair, IARF British Chapter**  
**Rev. C.J. McGregor, minister of New Unity, Newington Green**  
**Rev. Celia Midgley, former GA President**  
**Rev. John Midgley, former GA President**  
**Anne Mills, former GA President**  
**Rev. Feargus O'Connor, Unitarian Peace Fellowship committee and the Gandhi Foundation**  
**Rev. Dr Ann Peart, GA Honorary Member and former GA President**  
**Rev. Lynne Readett**  
**Rev. Cliff Reed, GA Honorary Member and former GA President**  
**Alan Ruston, GA Honorary Member and former GA President**  
**Rev. Matthew Smith, minister of Bury St Edmunds and Framlingham Unitarians**  
**Rev. Dr David Steers, NSPCI minister, Belfast**  
**Rev. Sarah Tinker**  
**Rev. Geoffrey R. Usher**  
**Rev. Charles VanDenBroeder, former GA President**

## UPF HIGHLIGHTED CHARITY FOR 2022/23

UPF invites you to support the Red Cross by friending them on social media as well as with financial contributions.



Webpage: [https:// www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/donate](https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/donate)  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BritishRedCross>

### **Quakers in Britain peace statement issued on the outbreak of the war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022**

‘Our belief in the preciousness of all human life leads us to oppose all war’, said Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of Quakers in Britain.

Quakers have always held peacebuilding as a core principle for life:

‘All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.’ (Quaker declaration 1660)

This sentiment applies as much today, in a world of nuclear weapons, as it did then.

Quakers call for a cessation of fighting and for all parties to observe international law, including international humanitarian law. This prominently includes the Geneva Conventions, which regulate the conduct of war, and to which both Russia and Ukraine are states

parties. All sides should take the earliest opportunity to halt hostilities and to resume negotiations.

Protection of human life should be of primary importance.

‘We know war leads to unimaginable suffering. In particular, exposing children to violence can have lifelong damaging effects’, said Paul Parker.

‘All sides should commit to establishing and respecting humanitarian corridors allowing civilians to flee the fighting. We also appeal for conduct that avoids embedding grievances and injustices that will become the seeds of future violent conflict. Crucially, this means doing everything possible to avoid and resist the creation of enmity between peoples. It also means persevering with efforts to engage in dialogue and preparing the ground for the return of people to their homes.’

Although war makes dialogue and peacemaking far more difficult, it does nothing to diminish the need for courageous peacemaking efforts. We know there are people in both Russia and Ukraine working tirelessly for peace. We continue to uphold and stand in solidarity with them at this violent and perilous time.

### **Overcoming a global catastrophe: a pandemic and war**

No truly sensitive, reflective and caring religious believer can have failed to be profoundly affected and not felt anguish and sorrow at the millions of deaths and the unprecedented suffering we in our generation have witnessed as we have lived through the world’s worst health crisis in over a century caused by this global Covid-19 pandemic. Now we are living through a war which is causing even more death and destruction on a massive scale and in which the danger of nuclear escalation is an ever present danger. Our Peace Fellowship has responded to both these emergencies through our urgent appeals for the British Red Cross.

The pandemic itself has caused at least 15 million deaths worldwide. Many millions of people of all ages have been infected with the

debilitating effects of long Covid, with its symptoms of chronic fatigue, ‘brain fog’ and shortage of breath, and it is estimated that over 2 million in the UK are known to suffer from this distressing and disabling condition.

Moreover, the mental health of many millions more, especially the young, elderly and the clinically vulnerable, has been adversely affected.

The crisis has thrown into sharp relief global health and wealth inequalities. This has been particularly stark in the inequitable distribution of clinical care and vaccines worldwide. It is scandalous that so many died needlessly because PPE care equipment and vaccines have not been available to them because of political incompetence and worse. The pandemic has had an alarming effect on the economies of every country in the world and this has been most devastating for people in the poorest and most economically vulnerable countries in the Third World.

Not only has the education of school children and university students been seriously disrupted but health systems worldwide have been put under unprecedented strain.

This pandemic has brought the best and the worst out of people: the spirit of empathy and kindness on the part of so many millions of caring fellow citizens but also selfishness, callousness, greed and reckless disregard for others on the part of irresponsible and menacing ‘anti-vaxxer’ crowds and populist demagogues in the US, Brazil and elsewhere who encouraged their followers to ignore the relevant scientific evidence and so put so many millions of lives at risk.

In the spirit of the Charter for Compassion, which was adopted by UK Unitarians following a Unitarian General Assembly resolution in 2011, and of another General Assembly resolution (2012), honouring our co-religionist Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross and instituting a special administered by the British Red



Cross to support its life saving emergency appeals UK Unitarians have so far raised £201,143 for such Red Cross crisis appeals.

In April 2020 an emergency national appeal was circulated calling on Unitarians throughout Britain to contribute to the British Red Cross Global Coronavirus and UK Coronavirus Crisis Appeals. We can be heartened that thousands of pounds were donated from April 2020 up to the present time. This was arguably the single most significant humanitarian response by Unitarians in this country in response to this emergency.

We responded with practical compassion to send medical and other humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of millions of people in Yemen, Syria, Gaza and other Palestinian Territories, Somalia, Afghanistan and Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, where we witnessed a surge in coronavirus infections devastating those countries and spiralling out of control.

The Charter for Compassion, which UK and US Unitarians embrace, embodies the Golden Rule, which is at the heart of all the great world religions and ethical philosophies, East and West.

That spirit of empathy and compassion which, as Dr Albert Schweitzer and others religious humanitarians have proclaimed, is surely the hallmark of all authentic and engaged religion?

That same spirit of empathy impelled Unitarians to act to help save precious human lives during the pandemic by supporting Red Cross emergency appeals, not only the Global and UK Coronavirus Appeals but those launched for the suffering people of Yemen and Afghanistan and now for victims of the war in Ukraine. Was this was not our most significant act of practical compassion expressing our core religious and ethical ideals?

We are now confronting another global disaster: the most dangerous and destructive war since 1945 rages in Ukraine. We face the worst political crisis since the Second World War and the tragedies of the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I am reminded of words of the Quaker MP and peace campaigner John Bright, who in 1853 just before the outbreak of the Crimean War, gave a speech at the Conference of the Peace Society in Edinburgh. Taking a moral stand against another war involving Russia Bright condemned war itself as the ‘combination and concentration of all the horrors, atrocities, crimes, and sufferings of which human nature on this globe is capable...’ He warned of the perils of a ‘bloody, unjust, and unnecessary war... perils into which unthinking men—men who do not intend to fight themselves—are willing to drag or to hurry this country. I am amazed how they can trifle with interests so vast, and consequences so much beyond their calculation.’

In that war one of the soldiers enlisted in the Russian army was Leo Tolstoy, the author of War and Peace. Tolstoy’s direct experience of the irrationality and insanity of war with all its consequent tragic loss of life and destruction eventually made him a determined pacifist and passionate advocate of nonviolence. His example inspired Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and so many other peace campaigners who witnessed against what Martin Luther King called the ‘madness of war’ as well as its utter futility.

Unlike the Covid-19 unseen killer we combat in this pandemic war is a calculated crime caused by human evil, vanity and criminal folly. Those who on both sides pour billions of dollars of arms to perpetuate this disastrous war with all its resultant death and destruction, global food shortages and other often unforeseen disasters, coming as they do after the sufferings of billions still just recovering from that pandemic, are surely guilty of the gravest of sins?

Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Thich Nhat Hanh, Desmond Tutu and other religious apostles of nonviolence would surely have agreed?

Should not our Unitarian understanding of the interconnectedness of all living beings and the moral imperative to strive for the common

good make us heed and urgently act on the vital lesson which both the pandemic and the war in Ukraine teach us? Is there not a moral imperative for each of us to act now rather than pass by on the other side?

**Feargus O'Connor**

### **Peace within us, Peace around us**

Cross Street Chapel in Manchester, along with many other Unitarian churches, holds a special 'Peace Service' on the third Sunday in October. This year, we were honoured to invite Rev'd Sue Woolley, UPF Secretary and GA President, to lead our worship. Sue spoke passionately about Peace as the primary option in conflict, bringing in contemporary experiences and challenges faced in the world. She drew upon the wisdom of Gandhi, and led us in a Buddhist Meditation on Peace. She helped cultivate a peace within ourselves.

Following the tea and coffee, a group of us continued the reflection by walking along a 'Peace Tour' of the city centre. Manchester has an important – though often hidden – history advocating for peace and social justice, and if one knows where to look,

Our tour starts at Cross Street Chapel. When the council redeveloped St Peter's Square, no plans had been presented as to their new place. The 'Friends of Manchester's Peace Garden' was set up, with the chapel as a member. In lieu of the official Peace Gardens, Cross Street hosted a 'Pop-up Peace Gardens.' Although the new gardens are in place, our contribution remains popular with Mancunians.

Walking towards the town hall we see statues to Oliver Heywood and John Bright. Heywood helps us grasp the complexity of Manchester's history, as he was a keen abolitionist, but his wealth came from the slave trade. Bright was such a fierce abolitionist that a speech lauding him was found in Lincoln's coat pocket at his death.

Before we reach the official Peace Gardens, we stop by a statue of Abraham Lincoln. Though confusing for some, his inclusion in Manchester's statuary is apt: during the American civil war, the North's embargo on Southern cotton led to the 'cotton famine' over here. Many mill workers faced destitution and starvation because of this. However, a public meeting chaired by Abel Heywood (a Cross Street member!) affirmed the importance of abolition, and a letter was sent to Lincoln. He acknowledged the sacrifices faced here, and thus a bond was formed.

Next to Lincoln is the new Peace Gardens. Manchester declared itself a 'nuclear free city' in 1980, and the original gardens were installed two years later. Amidst the new growth is a Ginko grown from a tree that survived the bombing of Hiroshima.

More recent explorations of Peace-work can be found in the city: one stop for us is the headquarters of the Mines Advisory Group. MAG was founded in 1989 to clear land mines. Winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997, the charity continues its work of advocacy, education and action.

Continuing on our journey, we walk past the Free Trade Hall, which includes a plaque commemorating Christabel Pankhurst's contribution to the Suffragette movement. Objecting to the disenfranchisement of women, she and Annie Kenney were imprisoned for their protest in 1905.

The whole area we are now in is St Peter's Field, the site of the Peterloo Massacre. In 1819 60,000 people gathered to hear Henry Hunt speak on the rights of working people. The yeomanry were sent in, and the ensuing melee resulted in 15 dead and hundreds wounded. 200 years later, we consider the rights that must still be asserted.

We finally reach Manchester's grand public library, home to the Ahmed Iqbal Umma Race Relations Resource Centre. Named after a 13-year-old Bangladeshi boy who was stabbed in 1986, the centre seeks to provide information on and advocacy for racial justice.

Though affiliated with the University of Manchester, the centre is unashamedly outward facing, providing material to the general public.

The tour, for me, brings the past into focus. I can feel the weight of history wherever I step, and reflect on how the cycles of life mimic the past in new ways. But more than that, I can see how peace continues to be advocated, and justice affirmed, in the present day. Finding the peace within me, I can see the peace around me.

**Cody Coyne**

**Peace Fellowship matters  
Subscriptions and donations**

We immensely value the support of all our members and would warmly welcome your subscription for 2022/23 please. We have decided once again to maintain the current UPF membership rates: £9 for an individual; £15 for a couple, £18 for a small group, £27 for a large group. Donations to our Peace Fellowship funds are always gratefully received. All cheques for subs and donations to the **Unitarian Peace Fellowship** should be sent to our treasurer, Rev. Celia Cartwright, 5 Elmsfield Park Cottages, Holme Village, Carnforth LA6 1RJ. **Subscriptions are due on 1 January 2023.**





# Unitarian Peace Fellowship Vision



The Unitarian Peace Fellowship was founded in 1916 in the darkest days of the First World War to witness for peace and against the futility of war. Today we maintain that witness. Our vision includes the ethos and values of the Charter for Compassion. The surest route to peace is through the compassion of human beings for each other and for all living things. We support and encourage Unitarians in their witness for Peace and Compassion locally, nationally, and internationally.

## Unitarian Peace Fellowship officers and committee

**Chair:** Rev. John Philip Carter, 12 Richmond Road, Lincoln LN1 1LQ. Tel: 07966 304314, e-mail: [upfchair@gmail.com](mailto:upfchair@gmail.com)

**Treasurer and membership secretary:** Rev. Celia Cartwright, 5 Elmsfield Park Cottages, Holme Village, Carnforth LA6 1RJ.  
E-mail: [revcelia51@gmail.com](mailto:revcelia51@gmail.com)

**Secretary and Newsletter editor:** Rev. Sue Woolley, 5 Martins Road, Piddington, Northampton NN7 2DN. Tel: 01604-870746,  
e-mail: [revsuewoolley@gmail.com](mailto:revsuewoolley@gmail.com)

### Other committee members:

Rev. Michael Allured, 11 Claremont Square, London N1 9LY.  
Tel: 07775253520, e-mail: [alluredm@aol.com](mailto:alluredm@aol.com)

Rev. Cody Coyne, Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester M2 1NL. Tel: 07786 820 383, e-mail: [rev.c.coyne@gmail.com](mailto:rev.c.coyne@gmail.com)

Rev. Feargus O'Connor (**acting Newsletter editor**), 11 Claremont Square, London N1 9LY. Tel: 020 7837 4472,  
e-mail: [ggunirev@aol.com](mailto:ggunirev@aol.com)

Rev. Julio Torres (co-opted), email: [juliouu4equality@gmail.com](mailto:juliouu4equality@gmail.com)