



ynod in a debate where members heard of the suffering and terror

Members backed a call for Christians and people of all faiths to pray for an end to the war in Ukraine and for parishes and dioceses to work towards providing long term refuge and hospitality for people fleeing the war.

The Government was urged to work to secure a peace that provides for the flourishing of relations in Ukraine and between nations in Europe.

Members also called on the Government to provide a 'generous' response to refugees from the conflict.

Introducing the debate, The Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, said the conflict was affecting the whole world through rising energy prices, problems with food security and migration.

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine constitutes an act of evil that cannot go unchallenged. Ukraine has a legitimate right to self-defence and a right to seek assistance from others in doing so," he said.

"The Government and the wider international community must stand with Ukraine and provide financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support as part of its broader efforts to uphold international law and the norms underpinning the international community.

"Yet, as the MOD suggested last week, such support cannot realistically be unlimited and this war cannot be waged without restraint.

"The focus of our efforts must be bringing this conflict to an end in a way that respects Ukraine's independent sovereign status."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, in an intervention in the debate, spoke of his meeting last week at Lambeth Palace with the head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Metropolitan Epifaniy.

"Over the course of three and a half hours of prayer and discussion we heard the most heart breaking stories of atrocities against civilians and against Orthodox clergy in occupied territory yet amidst it all the Patriarch spoke of love for all, especially enemies," he said.

"Of course, like all Ukrainians, he feels passionately about the terrors and horrors visited on his country, the lies told and the remorseless fear and attack, but the passion is not showing itself in hatred, nor is it showing itself in weakness, but in faith and determination and a plea for support for the church in its humanitarian work and for Ukraine.

"Let us give that support as a church as best we can. Let us also be determined in seeking peace."

The Bishop in Europe Robert Innes, warned against the 'demonisation' of the Russian people in the face of the actions by the Russian regime.

He told the Synod: "We surely all want to condemn the illegal and unjustifiable actions of the Russian regime in Ukraine. But that cannot and must not mean the demonisation of Russian people or Russian culture or our brothers and sisters in the Russian Orthodox church.

“We are in an extremely delicate and dangerous point in European history, it is imperative that we find ways of keeping dialogue with Russian people and the Russian Orthodox Church open.

“As a Church, we must hold the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church to account, unhesitatingly condemn Russian leadership aggression and at the same time, be very careful, in our actions and words, of feeding into a narrative that the Russian regime itself propagates, and which can only undermine the cause of peace and reconciliation.”

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Bishop Robert told the Synod that the appeal organised by USPG and the Diocese in Europe has raised more than £300,000 for humanitarian work in Ukraine and amongst Ukrainian refugees.

Here is the full text of the motion, as amended, passed by the General Synod:

‘That this Synod, committed in Christ to support peacemakers and to work for the reconciliation of humanity to God in a world marked by division and conflict:

- a. lament Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine, the suffering and terror experienced by Ukrainians and the repercussions and anxiety felt globally for our common future;
- b. urge all Christians and people of faith to pray that the war in Ukraine be ended justly, that the risk of strategic miscalculation between conflicting parties be avoided and that the Russian people find respite from an authoritarian government;
- c. call on each diocese and each parish to work towards providing long term refuge and hospitality to refugees from Ukraine and other conflicts and forms of danger, and to contribute to the Disasters Emergency Committee’s Ukraine Appeal or the appeal organised by USPG and the Diocese in Europe;
- d. call on Her Majesty’s Government to work to secure a negotiated peace that provides for the flourishing of relations in Ukraine and between nations in Europe and to provide a generous response to those seeking refuge from the conflict.’

*The debate was opened on Friday July 8 and completed on Monday July 11.*

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