

## Devotion – Week of February 27, 2022

### Rev. Jeanne Simpson

I have watched the events in the Ukraine over the past weeks with dread. It seems as though we are powerless to truly stop this war. I'm seeing suffering that saddens me. There was no reason to start this war other than that we have a megalomaniac who's decided that all the former Soviet countries should be brought back under his control, regardless of the death and destruction. I wonder if that's how Jeremiah felt as he watched the Babylonians coming, with Judah powerless to stop them. This behavior by a huge powerful country against a very small country is so distressing. What can we as American citizens do besides support sanctions and send armaments? I know what I'd like to do – and it's not a very peaceful thought. Many of you probably have the same thoughts. Go over there and bomb the living fool out of those Russians. But that's not a solution within our power. The diplomats and government officials will have to deal with those kinds of solutions. And that kind of escalation could lead to something worse – like WWII.

But we can pray. On Wednesday, members of the PCUSA joined an ecumenical and interfaith vigil at noon Eastern Time to pray for peace in Ukraine. This was before the invasion. Rev. Jimmie Hawkins, with our Presbyterian Mission Agency's Compassion, Peace & Justice ministries, gave this prayer, and I quote part of it.

May the words of your prophet Isaiah be realized as never before: "(God) shall judge between the nations and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4)

We pray that your wisdom might penetrate human hearts in order that there is a greater value placed upon human life than national pride. Most just God, you call for acts of justice, not only on the part of your people, but of nations as well.

We pray that the leaders of both nations might seek diplomacy, rather than war. Words over weapons. Truth over propaganda. For true diplomacy involves compromise and determination to do that which is right and just for all. We pray that political disagreements are not interpreted as intractable intolerance leading to hatred and violence.

Bless and be with those who did not sleep well last night, concerned about what the new day might bring. Concern over the wellbeing of their children and elderly parents who won't be able to get out of danger's way. Concern for the destruction of everything they know and care about: their way of life, their culture, their independence, their homes, and their faith.

Let people of faith around the world lift their voices to you for peace now and forevermore, in Ukraine and all around the world. Wherever people are divided by nationality, ethnicity, race, class, or anything that dares to separate us, bring forth your spirit of peace, that we may study war no more.

I will keep praying – that is all I know to do. The Russian people are beginning to realize that their leader is not who they thought he was, and that they have been fed lies about their neighbors in Ukraine. I pray the whole world makes its voices heard in protest of this massive injustice to our brothers and sisters. May Christ be with us all at this time.

*Jeanne*