

BRIDGE

July 2022



**For the United Reformed Churches in
Bewcastle and Carlisle**

**Part of the
Cumbria URC Missional Partnership**

Contacts and Sunday Service Pattern

THE MINISTER

We are pleased to announce that
Lisa Wilson has accepted the call to be a
Minister with the Cumbria Missional Partnership.

Please continue to direct enquiries to the
principal contact of one of these two churches
as appropriate.

THE KNOWE CHURCH

BEWCASTLE

Services: 1.45pm on the first Sunday in the month

Contact: Mrs Doreen Telford

Telephone: 016977 48447

ST. GEORGE'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

WEST WALLS

CARLISLE

CA3 8UF

www.urccarlisle.org

Services: 10.30am every Sunday

Contact: Mrs Rosalind Fearon

Telephone: 016973 44892

Email: rosrayfearon@talktalk.net

When there is a fifth Sunday in the month
the Service is for both Churches
usually at 10.30am at St George's

Social distancing and singing into face masks
are still suggested and largely practised

Northern College

Revd Dr Adam Scott to be the next Principal at Northern College

Adam comments:

I am delighted to have been appointed to serve as the next principal of Northern College. Like many, I have a deep affection for the college, and am grateful for all Northern has done to equip and prepare people to serve God within URC, whether this be in lay, commissioned or ordained roles. We are all aware that the church in Britain is facing significant challenges as it seeks to relate to our changing society, and I believe Northern College has the resources and imagination to creatively respond to these challenges. As a minister I am convinced the Spirit calls us 'to continually be reformed'.



So, as Northern College looks to the future, I am confident in our ability to honour our history, while discovering new and innovative ways of equipping the 'whole people of God'.

Rosalind Selby comments:

I could not be more pleased that Adam has been appointed as the next Principal of Northern College. I am pleased for him, I am pleased for the college, and I am pleased for myself because knowing the role and the college is in strong and capable hands will enable me to leave as well as I can. Adam will bring his strength of character and leadership ability, and the very particular insights of his experience and training (as a Pastoral Minister and as a Chartered Psychologist). He's already a strong part of the staff team here, and his appointment will enable the best possible continuity for Northern College.

From St George's Secretary

"The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men gang aft agley."

These words seem especially pertinent to describe the last couple of days in the Fearon household. Ever since January we have been inspecting our house and garden with a more critical eye, and making slight improvements, all in anticipation of the visit of our American friends who were due to arrive yesterday. They had been on a trip to Norway and were going to spend a few days in Edinburgh before coming to stay with us. But two days ago, I received a phone call to say they had tested positive for Covid and so were unable to visit us after all; they just wanted to get home. Needless to say, we are all very disappointed, not least because this is the fourth consecutive year that they have had to cancel their visit. Now we have an immaculate house and garden (not for long!), fridge and freezer stocked with food, and deflated spirits. Fortunately, our friends do not appear to have severe symptoms, and we are going away ourselves in a few days.

Of course, our disappointment is nothing compared with that of people who cannot afford to heat their home, fill their car with fuel or put food on the table. This morning we went to Keswick and noticed several businesses with a notice on the door to say they were closed because they could not get staff.

Ian Cumming

It was a great pleasure to welcome Ian Cumming from New Zealand to Carlisle last weekend, and I hope many of you were able to view the magnificent tablecloth that his family have donated to us. Thank you to everyone who helped to welcome and entertain him. I am hoping that one of you will have written something for this month's Bridge. Ian Moonie is going to make a list of the names on all 5 tablecloths so that we have a record of past members. I have been in contact with the Curator at Tullie House to see if they are interested in receiving the cloths as exhibits, but I am still waiting to hear from her.

Revd. Alistair Smeaton

Two of Alistair's children have had serious health issues recently, and as a result Alistair was granted two weeks 'extraordinary leave'. He should be back with us on 3rd July, a special communion service when Pamela Martin will be ordained as an elder.

Ordination and Induction of Lisa Wilson

This joyful event will take place on Saturday 30th July at 10.30am in Carlisle Cathedral. We are all invited, but we do need to know numbers for refreshments which will be served afterwards in St George's. Please put your name on the list in church, or let me know. This is a Cumbria Missional Partnership event, and catering is being provided by the Skitby Hotel. We will however need volunteers to act as stewards.

Projection

We are very grateful to Deborah who has volunteered to take over from Trevor and project the service and notices on to the screen. This will not happen every week, but we are glad that we still have the facility if the preacher requests it.

Saturday Coffee Mornings

Many of you will be pleased to hear that we have resumed our Saturday coffee mornings. Deborah has produced a rota. Please put your name down if you are able to help.

News of Members

Some of our members are frail and vulnerable, and it is good that we can look out for each other. We so often talk about being a caring community, and it is important that we do put it into practice when required, without intruding.

Please remember in your prayers all those who are no longer able to come to church regularly, especially Jim, Dorothy, Betty, Jean G, Kath, Margaret and Jean F.

Rosalind

Ordination of Lisa Wilson

The Ordination and Induction of Lisa Wilson to the URC Cumbria Missional Partnership will take place on Saturday 30th July at 10.30am in Carlisle Cathedral, and be followed by refreshments in St George's URC.

Preachers Leading Services at St George's

3rd	July	(Communion) Rev. Alistair Smeaton
10th	July	Mr David Foster
17th	July	Rev John Millard
24th	July	(Communion) Rev Janice Faris
31st	July	Mr Alan Christian
7th	Aug	Mrs Rosalind Fearon

Ordination of Elder

The Communion Service on Sunday 3rd July will include the Ordination of Pamela Martin as Elder.

Door Duty

3rd	July	Moira Wales & Deborah Usher
10th	July	Pamela Martin & Michael Overs
17th	July	Rosalind Fearon & Tony Wiseman
24th	July	Marian & Will Lindsay
31st	July	Marjorie Lawson & Deborah Usher
7th	Aug	Moira Wales & Jessie Overs
14th	Aug	Pamela Martin & Tony Wiseman

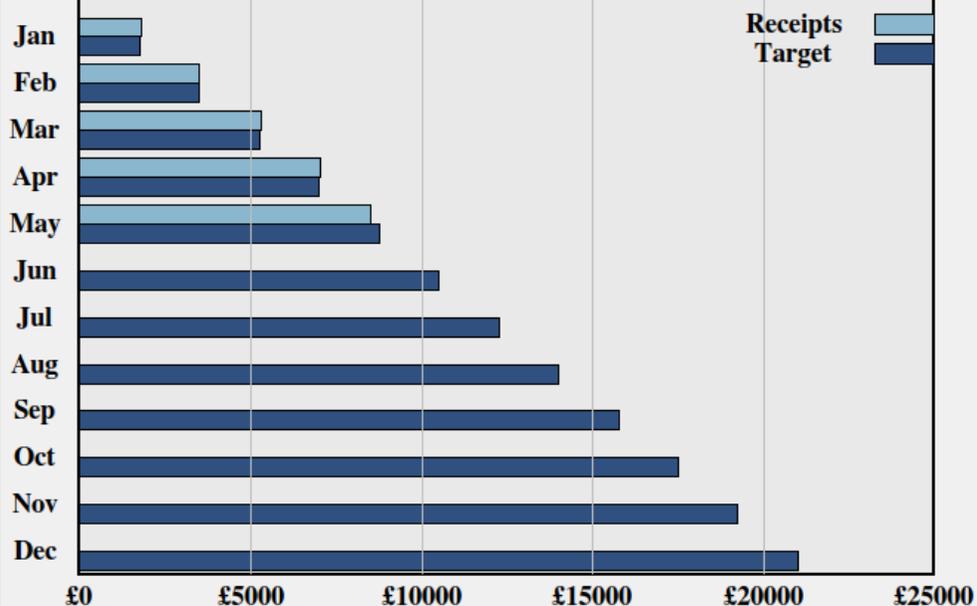
Refreshments after Services

3rd	July	Jessie & Michael Overs
10th	July	Elizabeth & Iain Mackenzie
17th	July	Tony Wiseman & John Robinson

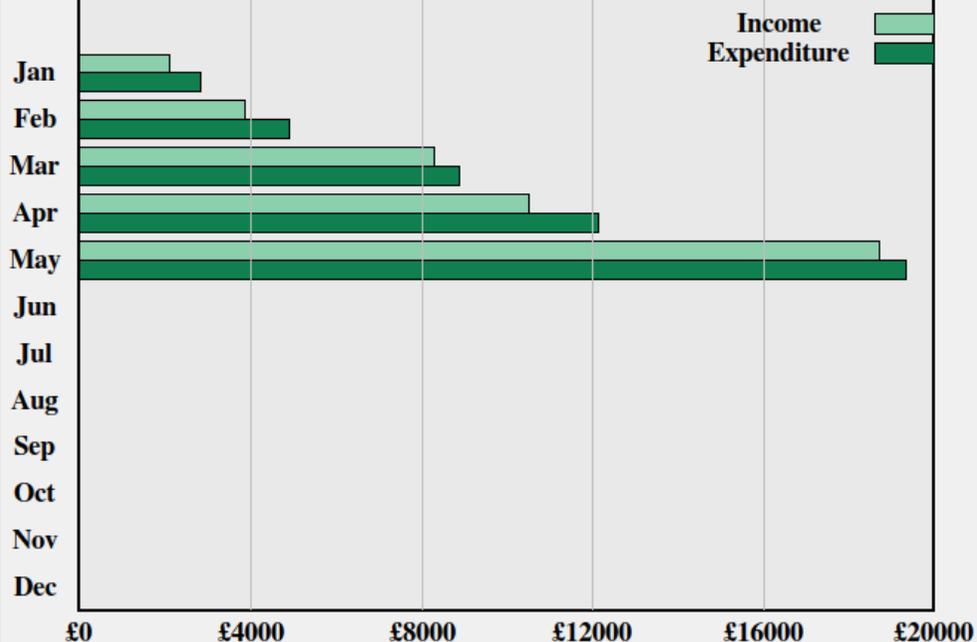
Bridge for July

Please note that the claiming date for articles for the August edition of Bridge is Sunday 17th July.

St. George's United Reformed Church 2022 Cumulative Weekly Offerings



2022 Cumulative Total Income / Expenditure



Ernest Wrennall - Retirement

Yesterday I took my final service as a URC Lay Preacher in a special service in my home Church, Leyland URC, which was entirely based on my call to preach, my experiences as a lay Preacher and how others might, in their turn, respond to their 'call'. My decision to retire was based on my Age (88+) and the absence of demand since Covid came on the scene.

There was a good attendance at the service with some representatives from other Lay Preachers and from some of the churches which I had served. The service was split into these sections.

- My background in the church leading to my call to preach;
- My experiences as a travelling preacher.
- The way that there are many other sorts of calls to serve the church.

The final hymn for the service was one that I had written some time ago and which had appeared in a denominational "Vocation Sunday" booklet some years ago. It began "Listen, God calls us and says "I need you for there is a task that none other can do.""

Following this there were two tributes from members of the church about my other local church activities and a set of personal photographs on the screen before everyone went for a buffet lunch in the church hall.

I preached my first sermon in the Leyland church on the first Sunday in May (Youth Sunday) in 1957 so my final one was on May 29th 2023. In that time I had conducted 1,625 services in a total of 62 different churches, mainly in central and north Lancashire but as far away as Southport, Kirkheaton in Yorkshire and Kirkby Lonsdale in Cumbria. The most services taken in any one year was 53 in 2008. The total could have been considerably more, but due to Covid restrictions and church shutdowns, I have only led worship as preacher four times since the end of 2019. As a former geography teacher I like maps, so I have estimated that I covered about 45,000 miles to get to and from these preaching engagements.

For some years I acted as Secretary of the Fylde Lay Preachers Fellowship which met three times per year and also acted as District Lay Preaching Commissioner for a period, and I also never missed the old Windermere Centre weekends.

Ernest Wrennall

The Adventure of the Tablecloths

Earlier on in the year Rosalind received an email from a gentleman in Christchurch, New Zealand to say that his sister had found a tablecloth which had started life in Warwick Rd. Presbyterian Church. Dated 1903, it had been embroidered with the names of people who attended the church at that time. This gentleman called Ian Cumming was sent this cloth from his sister in York knowing that he would be coming over to visit his family in London this year. The wonders of the internet - and so it was duly delivered to St. George's by Ian.

Four more cloths appeared, having been looked after by Ian Moonie, two from Fisher St. Church, one from Charlotte St. Church and another from Warwick Road. They were all gathered together and put on display in church for the first Saturday coffee morning since the dreaded covid changed things.

They were welcomed with great interest by all who came, looking for names of past family and friends all embroidered with care to form a memory of times gone by. They will be available to see for a few weeks before we decide what to do with them and where to keep them all together. Hopefully friends will be able to come on Saturday mornings for coffee or to church on Sunday to look at them.

Ian Cumming was warmly welcomed at St. George's for the weekend before travelling back down to London to carry on his trip. He was an interesting gentleman who, in his early eighties, had lots of stories to tell and I think he will go home with happy memories of his visit to Carlisle. Thank you to those who helped in any way with the weekend special, bringing us closer together in friendship and fellowship.

Moir

Not Just a Tablecloth with Names on

On Friday lunch time, 10th June, members of the social committee met Ian Cumming at Carlisle Station with his precious cargo of the beautifully embroidered, Warwick Road Presbyterian Church, 1903, table cloth, with many embroidered over signatures on, which he had brought from New Zealand. Having taken him for lunch and to his hotel, they then returned to the church to set up the cloth alongside the four other cloths they had set up in the morning. Because of the large size of the cloth, it was not an easy task. Having seen the display on the Saturday morning I can only congratulate them for doing such an excellent job. On the Saturday evening a small group of us took Ian for a meal and fellowship at Amato's restaurant. At the service on Sunday morning he thanked us for our hospitality and we reciprocated by closing the service with his favourite hymn, 'the day thou gavest Lord is ended'.

With regard to the cloth: we know for a start that it has been in New Zealand since Ian's mother Molly was given it by an aunt during a visit to Yorkshire in the 1930s. However, how the Bellerby family in Yorkshire came into possession of it is not known, especially as there is no known connection between the family and Carlisle. It remains a mystery. What is certain is, that now that it is back home, we will treasure it and in doing so maintain strong memories of Ian's visit and of him and his sisters Margaret and Heather in New Zealand.

Of the other four cloths pride of place must go to the expertly made patchwork cloth made for the Fisher Street bazaar in 1899. It was made up from little squares of cloth either made available, or sent, to people for them to sign at the cost of a shilling, the equivalent of £6 in today's money. Included among the signatures were that of the Earl and Countess of Carlisle, the Speaker of the House of Commons, various Carlisle councillors and three well known Scottish authors of the day; all long forgotten. The other three although just simple embroidered over signatures on a plain table

cloth, were of most interest to the current members as they included many of our own names. They were Charlotte Street, c1954, St George's c1980 and Fisher Street 1986.

I re-iterate our thanks to all those involved in setting up the display and to Deborah and Douglas who were in charge of the coffee on the Saturday morning and to all those who came. It was an excellent turn out. Don't forget we will be holding a coffee morning every Saturday morning from now on; available from 10.00am.

Ian Moonie



Financial Conduct Authority Advice

By popular request here is some information and advice from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Ofcom, to help you to avoid falling victim to scammers whose sole purpose is to get their hands on your hard-earned. Scammers and Fraudsters are very clever and know how they can keep conversations going and will do everything they can to sow seed of doubt in your mind. They will always have an answer, usually logical, to your question. If you are in doubt don't worry about asking for time to think about it and get their number or address. Remember a Bank or Building Society will never ask you to disclose passwords or confidential information relating to your account and if you are in doubt don't phone them back on the number given but look out the advertised number you have for them and use that number, preferably using a different phone, or else after a delay to make sure possible scammers are not still connected.

Banking and online account scams

Telephone scams

Vishing

It's not easy to spot a telephone scam. Fraudsters may call you and claim to be from your bank, the police, or a similar organisation. They might pretend to be doing a 'fraud check' or calling to discuss a problem with your account. To convince you that their call is genuine, they may tell you to hang up and call your bank. They may even tell you to use the phone number on the back of your debit or credit card. However, when you try to end the call, the fraudsters don't hang up. Instead, they remain on the line to intercept your call when you try to contact your bank. This tactic is called 'vishing'. Fraudsters will try to get you to:

- give them your account details (especially if they already have some of them)
- transfer money to another bank account
- hand over your cash or card to them via courier

Number spoofing

A similar scam uses a tactic known as 'number-spoofing'. If your phone (mobile or landline) allows you to see the 'caller ID', it will show the number fraudsters are calling from, or it will say the number is withheld. However, fraudsters may be able to change the number displayed on your phone to suggest they are calling from a genuine bank. They will then try to trick you into revealing information about your account.

You should also be wary of text messages to your mobile phone that encourage you to visit a specific website. It might seem genuine but it could turn out to be fake. We have been told that fraudsters are making the FCA's switchboard number - 020 7066 1000 - appear in the caller ID of people they contact.

Scam calls pretending to be from Ofcom

Ofcom explains how to avoid 'caller ID spoofing' and why you shouldn't give any information to these people or call them back. Ofcom has received reports from people who say they have received phone calls or messages claiming to be from us. These are scam calls and they don't come from Ofcom. We have been made aware of two types of call that are currently happening.

The first is a call from an agent in a call centre. They tell recipients there is an outstanding bill or payment related to their phone or broadband service, and that their service will be disconnected unless the payment is made. The recipient is then encouraged to hand over their bank details in order to resolve the issue. This call appears to be an attempt by scammers to illegally obtain people's bank details. It has nothing to do with Ofcom - we would never call you out of the blue like this, and would never ask for your bank details. This scam also involves recipients receiving a voicemail saying they have missed a call and encouraging them to press a button to call back - this connects them to the scammers.

The second type of call is automated, and can also be left as a voicemail message. In both cases, the recipient is told there is a

problem with their phone or broadband service, and is encouraged to call back so they can discuss the issue further. However, this results in the recipient being connected to a high-cost premium number, leaving them liable to pay a high cost for the length of the call. Again, this is not something Ofcom would ever do. These calls are solely made to generate revenue for scammers by encouraging people to call premium-rate lines.

These calls are the latest version of scams that have been around for some time. Scammers can pretend to be calling from a range of different organisations in order to persuade the call recipient to hand over personal details or call them back. In the past we've been aware of calls claiming to be from HMRC, Royal Mail, BT, or high-street banks and the Scottish Parliament. (We have also become aware of telephone numbers belonging to the Welsh Assembly being spoofed, so please exercise caution if their numbers appear on your caller display.)

If you receive a call like this, from somebody claiming to be from Ofcom, please do not hand over any personal details or press a button to continue the call. Instead, hang up and report the calls, including the number from which they're calling, to Action Fraud. Action Fraud is the reporting centre for fraud and cybercrime in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Reports of fraud and any other financial crime in Scotland should be reported to Police via 101.

Online banking scams

Website scams

Bank websites can be copied ('cloned') by criminals. These sites use a similar address to the genuine bank website and use it to trick customers. One way to reach a cloned website is to click through to it from a spam email. To protect yourself, carefully check the address of the bank website you are using. Look for subtle differences. Be especially cautious if you clicked through to it from an email that could be spam. Remember, it is always better to bookmark the website address or type it in each time.

Email scams

Fraudsters also send emails and text messages that pretend to be from a bank. These ask you to verify details such as your online banking passwords, PIN, or account or card details. This is known as 'phishing'. The email often comes with a story about why your details are needed, such as for a refund, a security and maintenance upgrade, or even to stop fraud. Always remember that a bank will never email to ask for your personal information or account details. Be especially wary if the email does not include your proper name or contains spelling mistakes or poor grammar.

If you think an unusual email could be from your bank, phone them to ask about it. Use the number on your card, bank statement or in the phone book, rather than a number in the email.

If you're sending money using an account number someone has sent you by email, call them to double-check it's correct and hasn't been intercepted

Supplier scams

Fraudsters may contact consumers and businesses, pretending to be regular suppliers. They may say their bank details have changed and ask you to update your payment details to direct the money to them. Alternatively, they may email you pretending to be a senior member of staff and try to persuade you to make an urgent transfer. Remember, always check that the email address is the same as previous correspondence with the genuine contact. If you're suspicious, call them back on a number you're sure is genuine or speak with them in person.

Card scams

Card details are sometimes taken by copying the information from the magnetic strip of a bank or credit card at a cash machine or in a store. This is known as 'skimming'. By doing this, fraudsters are aiming to access your account or create a fake card that has your details on it. You can protect yourself against skimming by taking the following steps:

- never share your PIN
- be discreet with your PIN
- look for signs of tampering on ATMs
- if possible, avoid outdoor ATMs
- check your credit card statement
- report suspicious activity
- notify your bank when you go overseas

There are many other scams that aim to steal your credit card details, either by taking the card itself or by tricking you into giving out the details, such as the security code (the 3- or 4- digit code on the back of your card). In each case, the fraudsters intend to access your bank account, take money from it, or charge items to your credit card.

Protect yourself

You should never give out your bank account or credit card details unless you are certain who you are dealing with. If you have already given the fraudsters this information, tell your bank immediately. Treat all unsolicited calls, emails and texts with caution. Don't be rushed into acting quickly. A genuine organisation won't mind waiting if you want time to think.

Check your bank account and credit card statements regularly.



First thoughts after the world has changed

*A sermon by the Revd Neil Messer shared at the United Church, Winchester
Sunday 13th March 2022
Isaiah 2:1-4; Mark 12:28-34*

Occasionally there are moments when you see or hear something on the news, and you know that for good or ill, the world has changed. I remember one of those moments in 1989, when I first heard the news that the Berlin Wall was coming down. In much more sombre vein, September 11th, 2001 was another. Many of you will remember more such moments than I do.

A little over two weeks ago we lived through another of those moments, when we learned that Russia had launched a military invasion of Ukraine. Since then, we have watched scenes not seen in Europe since the end of World War 2: scenes I for one never expected to see in my lifetime.

We know the world has changed, but we have very little idea yet what that looks like. We have barely begun to understand what is going on and what it means for the future. And as Christian people and churches, we have scarcely begun to reflect on these terrible events in terms of our faith or to discern what a Christian response looks like.

Through today's service I hope that we can make a start on that long task of making theological sense of this horror and discerning how we are called to respond.

1. Paying attention

Probably the very first thing we need to do is what I'm sure you have already been doing over the past couple of weeks: simply paying attention. Paying attention to the outrage, the horror, the pain and the suffering. And it's part of our moral responsibility to our neighbours, I think, to keep doing that: not to turn our eyes away even when it would be easier and more comfortable to do so; to pay attention and to go on paying attention.

2. Reactions and emotions

Having done that, I think the next step that is necessary is to name and acknowledge our reactions and emotions. I think somewhere near the beginning of this process of reflecting, trying to make sense of what's happened and discern what we are called to be and to do, is to name the whole complex mix of feelings that this catastrophe provokes in us. Now I don't know what you are feeling: I can't see inside your heads. What I can do is share some of my own reactions, which I suspect may not be mine alone.

First: shock and bewilderment that this could be happening in Europe – that the peace and security forged in the wake of two world wars could disintegrate so quickly and easily. Then, horror at the terrible scenes unfolding on our TV screens and news feeds. Compassion for the people whose suffering we witness – people so much like us, living lives so much like ours.

Anger and outrage: I feel I almost have no language to speak of the flagrant, cynical cruelty and disregard for any kind of moral restraint shown by Vladimir Putin and those who serve him. Shame and (again) anger at the lukewarm hospitality shown by this country towards those fleeing the conflict – so far at least. Fear and anxiety about what it all might lead to: it is quite literally too close to home.

These are some of my feelings and reactions, some of which at least I'm guessing you will share. It is important to name them. But they also invite critical – self-critical – scrutiny; some of them may call for a certain kind of repentance.

Why am I especially horrified that this is happening in Europe, especially outraged that it's people like me who are suffering in this way? We've seen plenty of this kind of suffering in other parts of the world: why is it a special shock when it happens to Europeans?

Or again: does my compassion have a certain detachment about it: am I distancing myself from the suffering and misery for fear of being overwhelmed by them? Is my compassion overshadowed by my fear and anxiety for myself and my nearest and dearest?

These are perfectly natural human feelings and reactions. But they might also disclose to me some of the limits of my own sympathy and solidarity with my fellow human creatures; they might teach me things about myself that are not entirely comfortable to learn.

3. Theological and ethical reflection

Having named and begun to reflect on our feelings, we also need to begin to reflect theologically and ethically on this changed world. How do we understand these events in relation to the loving purposes of God disclosed in Jesus Christ? As Christian believers and followers of Jesus, where do we find good and evil in this situation; how do we discern right and wrong?

The Bible does not speak with one voice about war. Some texts command it, others call us to love our enemies. But among these diverse voices are passages like today's reading from Isaiah; passages which unfold a vision of God's good purpose for humankind and the world. In God's good future, there will be no need for military academies or anti-tank weapons, because God will rule in peace and justice, and war will be no more.

It's in the light of that vision that we should interpret all those diverse scriptural voices on armed conflict. In our present broken and sinful world, war may be a tragic inevitability, but it is no part of God's ultimate will or purpose.

In God's good future there will be no more war; but what about the here and now?

We cannot bring in God's good future, but we are called to live here and now in the light of it, in ways that witness to it. And some Christians argue this calls

for radical non-violence. The call in our Gospel reading to love our neighbour as ourselves – and even to love our enemies, as Jesus says elsewhere – forbids us from taking up arms, even in the face of injustice, oppression and violence. For some, this goes to the very heart of Christian identity. The theologian Stanley Hauerwas is well known for saying that Christians are ‘people who would rather die than kill.’

This seems to have been a pretty widely held view during the Church’s first couple of centuries, when Christians were a marginalised, persecuted group. But then the Church’s fortunes changed; and for some leading Christian thinkers of the time, this required what Paul Ramsey once called a ‘change of tactics’ in loving your neighbour. That’s how Christian just war theory began.

The reasoning goes like this. If I am attacked by an aggressor who is threatening my life, they are still my neighbour whom I am called to love. So I shouldn’t retaliate or defend myself, even if my life is in danger. But suppose I see an aggressor threatening someone else’s life? Love for that neighbour requires me to defend them, by force if need be. By extension, political leaders may be called to use force to defend their people, out of love and responsibility for them.

But if love of your neighbour is your reason for fighting, that should make a difference to the spirit in which you fight, and it places various restraints on when and how you go about it. War can only ever be a last resort. It’s only justifiable if the good it will do is in proportion to the harm it causes. You don’t target non-combatants. And you are still called to love your enemies, so there are some ways you must never treat them.

To put my cards on the table, I am a reluctant just war theorist. In the end I think that in a broken and sinful world, we find injustices and evils that just have to be resisted by force for love of their innocent victims.

In the light of all this, it hardly needs saying that Vladimir Putin’s aggression cannot be justified by any credible Christian ethic. The view I’ve outlined suggests that Ukrainian Christians who take up arms against it may be acting consistently with their Christian faith. It also suggests that other countries certainly have a responsibility to support the victims of aggression, but they need to be very careful how they do and don’t get involved. For example, NATO members are almost certainly right not to start World War 3 by imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine.

4. How should we respond?

For some of you listening to this sermon, these questions might be very close to home – because you’ve been involved in the fighting or the humanitarian effort yourself, or you have family or friends caught up in the conflict.

Many of us, I’m guessing, find ourselves at more of a distance: watching the horrors unfold, and wondering how we can and should respond as Christians. So, I’ll finish with a few very brief comments on what it might mean to be a community of Jesus’ disciples in the face of these terrible events.

Perhaps the most important thing a Christian community does is to pray. In our prayers we not only appeal for God's help; we also place ourselves in solidarity with those who suffer, and we open ourselves up to the possibility of being the answer to our own prayers.

A Christian community is also called to witness. To use a well-known phrase, the Church is called to be a 'sign, instrument and foretaste' of God's coming peaceable kingdom. So part of our response to this specific crisis is just to be that kind of community: in every aspect of our life together, to recognize and practice 'the things that make for peace' (Luke 19:42).

Praying and living in this way should shape our attitudes (which matter, because they in turn shape our actions). This goes back to what I said earlier about reflecting critically on our own feelings and reactions.

For example: Putin's action is evil; we should name it as such and oppose it however we can. But there's also something dangerously comforting about having such a blatant evil available to condemn.

I can luxuriate in my moral outrage; and that makes it easy for me not to notice the ways I may be entangled in the very evils I condemn. Many of us burn Russian gas to heat our houses, and so inadvertently help finance the Russian military. And there's nothing at all we can do about it, until the UK manages to phase out Russian gas supplies.

So for sure we should speak out and act against evil; but our speaking and acting need to be tempered with humility and penitence for the ways we ourselves are inescapably entangled in the sin of the world.

Conclusion

In the first part of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, there is an oft-quoted exchange between the wizard Gandalf and Frodo the hobbit, after Gandalf has disclosed to Frodo the terrible truth about Frodo's enchanted Ring. (Remember that these lines were written not long after the Second World War by a man who had lived through the horrors of the First.)

'I wish it need not have happened in my time,' said Frodo.

'So do I,' said Gandalf, 'and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.'

May God give us, and those for whom we pray, the grace to live faithfully and well in the times that are given to us. Amen.

Revd Dr Neil Messer
Professor of Theology, University of Winchester
President for the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics.