

Archbishop Justin Welby writing in the Church Times urges others to join a campaign for peace.

Unprecedented destruction calls for unprecedented cooperation. The creation of the United Nations in the rubble of the Second World War is a prime example. Yet, as we face another global crisis, the UN will not be enough to steer us through. We need new cooperation, within and outside the UN, to serve humanity and save lives.

This week saw a remarkable glimmer of hope. After months of division, the United Nations Security Council agreed a resolution which demands immediate ceasefires in conflicts across the world.

These will allow relief to reach the most vulnerable — in countries already ravaged by armed conflict and crippled by humanitarian crises — potentially sparing them the worst effects of Covid. It shows the Security Council recognising its responsibility to model courageous leadership in the interests of peace.

I have written to the Permanent Five Members of the Security Council to commend the resolution. As a servant of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, I recognise the power of what they have resolved. As a member of the Secretary General's High-Level Board for Mediation, I also recognise the challenge of achieving united action, as national interests threaten to derail cooperation.

There is also the challenge of implementing it, as resolutions on paper meet the blood and dirt of the battlefield. In the letter, I have committed myself, as is the Christian calling, to working with the UN in each of the areas affected by conflict. I have invited other Churches, faiths, and spiritual leaders to do the same.

The hope this resolution creates is fragile, and will fade with time. In the wake of the pandemic, poverty, hunger, and economic collapse threaten huge swaths of the world's population. The Horsemen of the Apocalypse ride out among us, bringing pestilence, war, famine, and death. The interconnected nature of these threats requires nations to focus on more than their own, limited interests, and instead to act in solidarity and common humanity. If they cannot, the severity of threat will only increase in the years to come.

The UN will be essential, but not sufficient, to create peace in this crisis. Each nation and armed group faces a choice: to turn inwards and seek only their own good, or to recognise what this global pandemic has laid bare: our interdependence and our reliance on one another, as human beings, as communities, and as a world.

That's why I'm now calling on other Churches, faith leaders, and those across civil society to join in every possible effort to work with the UN in each of the areas affected by conflict; to seek peace and pursue it. It's also vital that the UN continues making courageous decisions to choose unity, and to recognise the vital significance of faith communities in achieving peace and reconciliation.

Increased cooperation between the UN and people embedded in communities experiencing conflict will be essential. In most of the world, that means communities defined and motivated by faith. They are the people who will transform well-meaning appeals and resolutions into changes of behaviour, hearts, and minds.

Christian leaders and groups in many countries are already working to create opportunities for dialogue with armed groups, disseminate Covid messaging, and support communities with humanitarian and economic recovery. New partnerships between these groups and political, civil-society, and diplomatic entities can amplify and spread cooperation in ways we have not yet seen. That will, together, give us the best chance of meeting the greatest needs and hopes of a new world.

Amidst the darkness and the suffering, I see opportunities for healing and reconciliation. Christians believe that, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God shows us that, even after great wrong has been done and great darkness experienced, restoration is possible.

This is a time for us all to be courageous, to reach across chasms of difference, and emerge into a post-Covid world with relationships, systems, and institutions that serve humanity.

We must not, in this country or internationally, establish identity by making enemies of others or renewing old hatred and rivalries. Let us do the opposite: valuing diversity, disagreeing passionately, but with respect and care. In the words of St Paul in the Epistle to the Romans 14.19: “Let us pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding,” working together during this crisis for more than our own safety.

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