

March 25, 2022

## **An Open Letter to the Communities of Faith in The United Church of Canada Concerning the Invasion of Ukraine**

Dear friends in Christ,

We, the members of the Ethnocultural Networks of The United Church of Canada, greet you. The Ethnocultural Network includes the Black Clergy Network, the Chinese Association, the Korean Network, and the Filipino Network. We want to express our deep concern for, and extend our support to, the people of Ukraine as they endure an unprovoked war from Russia. At the same time, we want to articulate our deep concern with regard to the manifestations of racism being reported in the midst of this war.

We pray that God will protect everyone in Ukraine from the invading Russian forces and that justice will be attained for all who are affected by this war. We call for an end to the senseless loss of life, the separation of families, the dislocation of persons, and the destruction of property. We join with all members of The United Church of Canada to offer support to all people of Ukraine through our prayers and other tangible actions.

While we acknowledge that this war has displaced millions of Ukrainians to neighbouring countries, we are particularly concerned about the plight of racialized groups in Ukraine, i.e., African-descent and south Asian peoples, who have encountered racism while attempting to flee the same horrors of war. News media have reported that Black and south Asian students in Ukraine have been hindered from leaving the country to find safety elsewhere. Having learned that this treatment resulted primarily because of their skin colour heightens our concern.

Cases such as these only add further injury to those already traumatized by the dangers of war. We call for an end to all manifestations of racism at the borders of Ukraine. All persons, irrespective of skin colour, culture, or ethnocultural background, have the right to an equal opportunity to escape from a war zone. It is our hope and prayer that the discrimination being endured by these people will be stopped. Justice demands that equity be exercised in this situation.

We also want to draw attention to how coverage of the war in Ukraine by Canadian mainstream media has been prioritized to the neglect of other disturbing events and conflicts, both nationally and globally. Examples of media neglect are the ongoing wars and humanitarian crises in nations such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen. The selective coverage of the war in Ukraine over the equally dangerous and desperate conditions being experienced by racialized peoples in other parts of the world is an explicit expression of racial discrimination and hinders movements toward right relations and care for all people who face violence and humanitarian disasters.

We write to invite all members and friends of The United Church of Canada to join our call for racial justice. Ultimately, the existence of racism in the tragic and violent situation in Ukraine

cannot be ignored. It serves only to alienate some sectors of Ukrainian society at a time when united action is needed. We therefore encourage you, as individual members and communities of faith in The United Church of Canada, to write to your respective members of Parliament to voice your concerns and to ask the Canadian government to take concrete steps to end such expressions of racial discrimination. You can also offer a copy of this letter to your MP or include a link to this letter in an e-mail. We further recommend partnering with local Ukrainian communities not only to advocate for an end to the war but also for the elimination of racial discrimination against African-descent and south Asian persons seeking to cross Ukraine's border with Poland.

In the name of peace,

The networks belonging to the Ethnocultural Networks of The United Church of Canada:

- The Black Clergy Network of The United Church of Canada
- Chinese Association of The United Church of Canada
- The United Church of Canada Korean Network
- Filipino Network in The United Church of Canada
- Western Intercultural Ministries Network