



February 11, 2022

A Prayerful Reflection on the Protests of February 2022

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

When tensions grow, positions harden, and hearts grow cold, we call for Canadians to pause, step back, and reflect.

We see that today Ontario declared a state of emergency because of protests in cities, towns, and border crossings. Across the country, leaders at all levels of government are struggling to respond to protests.

When we are weary, longing for renewed human connections, impatient to return to the way things used to be, struggling with what is becoming, let us not allow fear or suspicion to erode our hearts, hearths, and communities, pulling us into isolation and distrust.

As our political leaders struggle with how to respond to changing healthcare realities and social tensions, may the health and well-being of all Canadians continue to be at the forefront of their considerations. May justice that safeguards lives and livelihoods be their guide, and may we together build a peaceful, loving society for all.

Canada is a country of many peoples. All people in Canada cherish the values of peace, order, and good government. Let us together pause, consider our histories, and soften our hearts.

We are deeply concerned that perceived freedom for some will have a negative effect on the freedom, health, and livelihoods of others, especially those who are vulnerable. Any society is best measured by how it prioritizes the health and well-being of vulnerable citizens and marginalized communities.

When longing for freedom from pandemic restrictions, may we remember the intimate connection between rights and responsibilities and begin first with the ultimate commandments:

The first is ... "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.

(Mark 12:29-31, NRSV)

At the same time, we must also speak out against the inappropriate and offensive presence of flags, slogans, and imagery that has appeared at the protests.

When Christian and other religious imagery, words, and organizations are associated with violence, a call to overthrow government, and vulgar reproach for elected officials and citizens alike, we call on those who are



Christians to stop and remember the witness and sacrificial love of Jesus. His life reminds us that worthwhile change comes through humble love of God and neighbour rather than force and coercion.

With leaders of [Mennonite Church Canada](#), we unequivocally denounce the symbols, words, and actions of white nationalism being expressed in Ottawa and across the country at “freedom” rallies.

Without reservation or hesitation, we join the [Manitoba Multifaith Council](#) in standing up to oppose the return of Nazi symbols, which have been seen at the truck convoy protest in Ottawa. We deplore any suggested equivalence or comparison of the effects of public health guidelines put in place by our democratically elected governments with holocaust victims or the victims of totalitarian governments. We call on protestors who have drawn on these symbols to stop, step back, and reconsider how their actions hurt their fellow citizens, past and present.

Rather, let us boldly reach out to one another and in confidence work to care for the needs of all. After all, our very humanity is inextricably bound up with one another.

May we be inspired by the words of beloved Canadian Ursula Franklin, who wrote that “*Peace is not an absence of war, but an absence of fear of not having what is needed to be fully human.*”

Listening is more than hearing. When we hear the voice of God, may we listen and follow. When we hear the voice of those whose experience is different than our own, may we be receptive and together discern the path ahead for the good of everyone.

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On behalf of the Executive Committee of The Canadian Council of Churches,

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