



# PEACE LINKS

News and Views  
from the  
Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Summer 2025

Cross of Nails presented

IFOR President Tour

Prayers for Ukraine

European branches news



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# PEACELINKS

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***"We are one in Christ  
and can never be at war."***

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We are always looking for news and events for Peacelinks and our website. Please send your articles and images to [office@for.org.uk](mailto:office@for.org.uk)

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Digital edition.

## Directors Diary

2025 is a year in which the world has become even more dangerous. Military spending increased. More weapons and nations got actively involved in Ukraine. The global space for civil society, which often holds people to account, continues to shrink.

Yet somehow, there are signs of hope throughout. As we move through the fourth year of the War in Ukraine, our pan-European, often global, weekly peace prayers continue to create community. Through a short gathering, they provide a space for encouragement and support. They have also enabled us to listen more deeply to many different perspectives, and I'm pleased to say we have had some new guests this year.

We look forward to peace returning to Ukraine and the global arms race being slowed. Until then, you can join our weekly gathering at 7.30 on a Friday. Register (or even re-register!) at [www.for.org.uk/ukraine](http://www.for.org.uk/ukraine).

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In a world of violence and conflict, it is often overwhelming to think about where 'I' begin. For many

people, they wish to start with their own lives. I thought of this again when the Government wobbled over banning smacking in England. It's already happened in Scotland and Wales, yet for some reason, the Government needs re-convincing that it needs to happen in England. Violence and the cycles of violence can only be broken when we are forced to invest time and energy in the alternatives. That includes finding new ways to discipline your child, no matter how frustrating or complex they may be!

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Recently I decided to work in a café. A moment to escape the usual workspace and think clearly. However, I hit a problem, the free public Wi-Fi wouldn't allow access to the For website or the grant funding application I was trying to access. Why? It was banned because it was viewed as an 'advocacy' website. As with demonstrations in shopping centres being banned, this highlights the increasing challenge of privatising public space.



*John Cooper*

**PEACE PILGRIMAGE**  
OXFORD TO LONDON  
SEPTEMBER 1 — 8 2025  
PEACEPILGRIMAGE.ORG.UK

Sunday 21st September  
2025  
**Peace Sunday**  
Special worship resources, childrens activity sheet and Schools Assembly  
[www.for.org.uk/peacesunday](http://www.for.org.uk/peacesunday)  
**Make Time for PEACE**

### **FOR Director Challenges English Churches to consider 'the fierce urgency of peace'.**

Earlier this year the triannual Churches Together in England Forum met. John, Director of the Fellowship, was given the opportunity to deliver a keynote address challenging the church to take more seriously the 'fierce urgency of peace'. In a broad address, mixing paintings and reflections on the Easter Story with information about conscientious objection and the climate cost of war, he left listeners in no question that the church did not simply exist to lament war but to promote peace.

### **Bumper Month of Membership**

2024 was a record year for new members and 2025 is already coming close to beating it! June 2025 saw 15 people join the Fellowship, taking membership close to 900 and who knows, maybe upto 1000 people by the year end? This continues to turn around years of decline.

### **Methodist Member visits Japan on Peace Pilgrimage**

Liddy Buswell, a member of the Methodist Peace Fellowship, was chosen to join an international Youth Delegation to Japan. Her visit is the start of a multi-year focus from the World Methodist Council on supporting young people to engage in issues of Peace.

### **International Fellowship engages European Council**

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation has long held and cherished its representative status in various UN bodies. Thanks to membership of the European Bureau of Conscientious Objection, Christian Renoux, IFOR vice President will represent EBCO (and through that IFOR) at the European Council.

### **Communities Rise up Against Arms Fairs**

The continued presence of arms fairs around the UK raise serious moral and ethical questions. Not just the basic principle of private profit from the sale of weapons, but more and more concerns of where and how the weapons have already been used. Residents in the West Midlands have continued to rally local and visitor opinion outside the Telford International Centre and everyone is invited to make a stand for peace outside the DSEI in London on 8th September.

### **Who do they serve?**

Military Chaplains have played a central role in meetings of the Methodist Conference and Church of England Synod in Summer 2025. The content of their reporting was both operational and theological. Operationally they asked for loosening of criteria so the number of military chaplains can be rapidly increased if required. Theologically they used near identical language to the Security Review to suggest that current theology of war and peace reflects a 'peace dividend' of the end of the cold war and not the current global geo-political situation. While the first operational issue is a right and proper issue to bring, the challenge to church theology makes you wonder if people are listening to the voice of God or the MoD.

### **FOR highlights role of European Church in supporting Conscientious Objectors**

John, Director of the Fellowship (England and Scotland), attended a pan-European meeting of the Council of European Churches in December 24. Through participation and engagement in the seminars he was able to ensure the final statement of the meeting highlighted the need for all European Churches to support and advocate for those fleeing Ukraine and Russia as their conscience challenged them to resist taking part in the war.

### **Expanding the Team!**

The team of staff and volunteers who help bring to life the vision and mission of the Fellowship is changing. Last August we were very sorry to say goodbye to Kathryn McNeil as Finance and Administration Officer. She was invaluable in her work and we look forward to being able to replace her role. We are expanding with some specialist volunteers. Erin, who is helping with the Zoughbi tour. Matthew, who is working on key briefings and topics and Olivia who will be looking to increase our media presence and impact. We are also grateful to Symon, Bonni-Bell, Mark, Judith and Teran who are volunteering time at the Greenbelt Festival. The Methodist Peace Fellowship will shortly be recruiting a Co-ordinator and more on that in the next issue.

## Building Peace in a World at War

FOR's joint weekend conference with Pax Christi, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship and CHIPS was held last September at Yarnfield Conference Centre. We had 45 participants and 30 more online for some sessions.

One of the highlights was on Saturday when the Very Rev'd John Whitcombe, dean of Coventry Cathedral, inducted FOR into the Community of the Cross of Nails.

On Friday evening, Ariel Gold, director of FOR USA, joined online to lead and reflect our concerns. CHIPS director Alex Cameron led a 'getting to know you' session.

Saturday began with a reflection by Pax Christi's director Andrew Jackson. Then Bill Marsh joined online from Switzerland and spoke about his work as a professional mediator who had worked in central Asia, and with the Turkish government, the Church of England, and Grenfell Tower survivors. He gave us 4 words to consider - Encounter, Spaces, Unseen, and Lament - that can be used in mediation.

Workshop choices included Global Military Spending, Compassionate Listening, Spirituality of Peacemaking, How to start a peace project, and Bible Journaling.

Rev Dr Helen Paynter and Dr Maria Power gave a presentation about 'The Church, the Far Right and the Claim to Christianity'. Later FOR hosted a quiz.

APF and CHIPs led us music and prayers each evening, and on Sunday, we had communion, led by Rt.Rev Peter Price. Andrew Jackson challenged us to consider 'Where Next?'

### RESISTING EXTREME RIGHT POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

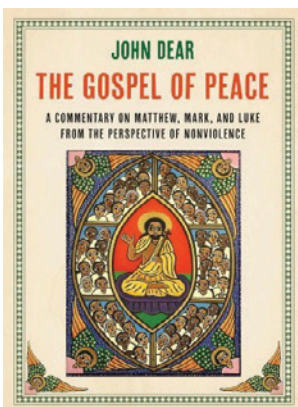
Recommendations for churches in Britain taken from *The Church, the Far Right and the Claim to Christianity* by Helen Paynter and Maria Power (SCM Press 2024)

1. **Speak Humbly.** Acknowledge Christian complicity (historic and contemporary).
2. **Disavow violence.** Speak clearly at senior denominational level.
3. **Avoid stereotypes,** e.g. of Muslim illiberality or White working class racism
4. **Promote dialogue** but be attentive to hijacking by bad actors.
5. **Be curious.** The causes of far-right ideology are complex and nuanced.
6. **Tackle key drivers** such as deprivation and marginalisation.
7. **Be prophetic.** Demonstrate radical love; practice creative nonviolent protest.
8. **Fund youth work** to help prevent the radicalisation of young people.
9. **Build biblical literacy.** Theological education and the training of ministers matters.
10. **Learn from history.** Draw on the wisdom of dissenting traditions.

**Save the Date: 'Healing from Conflict' Friday 24th – Sunday 26th April 2026. Kents Hill Park, Milton Keynes.**

## The Fellowship of Reconciliation Book Club

The FOR book club met online during July to discuss John Dear's latest book, *The Gospel of Peace* (Orbis Books). It is a commentary on the synoptic gospels from the perspective of nonviolence. While a commentary is not everyone's idea of a book you can read cover to cover, nonetheless Dear's book is worth the effort. Using the example of Jesus, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, John Dear develops a theology of nonviolence, which he believes should be practised by all followers of the Way. It is a revolutionary approach to Jesus' life and ministry, which has animated discussion. The book club examined a gospel each week and the themes developed were discussed by those taking part. Extracts of were read and formed the basis of discussion. Although reading the book is recommended, the conversation was rich



and there was opportunity for all to contribute, whether they had read the book or not. The final session on 22nd July considered some of Dear's thoughts on Luke's gospel and our own responses to some of the issues raised.

We would welcome suggestions for other books on peace, reconciliation and nonviolence that would provide interesting book club sessions in the future.

Professor Lee Marsden who hosted the online book club commented: "It has been a real privilege to meet together with fellow peacemakers to learn together and share our experiences. The book club provides an accessible format to discuss the complexities of seeking peace in a violent world, and be encouraged by others seeking to walk the same path in different contexts".

## Global Updates

### Make Peace Possible

#### President of International FOR to visit UK

This Autumn, we expect to host Zoughbi Zoughbi, a remarkable Palestinian peace activist who has dedicated his life to nonviolent resistance, reconciliation and peacebuilding.



We are already starting to plan the visit. If you are interested in your organisation hosting Zoughbi, please contact the FOR office.

It had been hoped for him to be here in the Spring but there was a delay in obtaining his visa.

Through a nationwide speaker tour and targeted meetings with politicians, we will enable more people to imagine how to Make Peace Possible in the Middle East.

Please check the FOR website for more information about dates.

#### Can you help make Peace Possible?

We still need your donations to help bring this voice for peace from Palestine to the UK and to start an online training course in faith shaped peace and nonviolence.

To donate online, visit <https://for.org.uk/donate>

### European IFOR branches write to Mark Rutte about NATO

This year's EUFOR conference was held in May in Cardiff. Twenty representatives of FOR branches or affiliates came together to reflect on the increasingly violent world and the proposed answers to instabilities and insecurities..

The representatives wrote to Mark Rutte, Secretary General of NATO, and government leaders of 32 allies and partner countries. This was ahead of the organisation's June summit in the Netherlands.

The letter affirmed that existential threats to the

## Warrior of Peace

Each drop of morning dew,  
That shades the misty dawn,  
Each bird that sings each note,  
This smile, this child we love,  
This tenderness we share,  
This Warrior of Peace.

Each timeless ray of light,  
That drives the dreams of hope,  
Each turn of every page,  
This quiet tranquil strength,  
This warmth we need to shield,  
This Warrior of Peace.

Each silent wind of change,  
That melts each frozen soul.  
Each brick upon each brick,  
Each hand upon each hand,  
This sword we lay to rest,  
This Warrior of Peace.

Each sacrifice of self,  
That frees another fear,  
Each knowing glance of truth,  
This knowledge absolute,  
This wisdom once forgot,  
This Warrior of Peace.

Each discarded feeble lie,  
That guides the mind from reason,  
Each move, each word, each sign,  
That leads beyond this line,  
To walk awhile beside,  
This Warrior of Peace

*Chris Roe*

planet and people are being increased by the use of guns and arms, not decreased.

NATO governments were urged to listen to young people's voices as they are the ones whose lives, prospects and mental health is most impacted by a pervading sense of fear and hopelessness for the future.

Finally, they were urged to ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, commit to disarmament and deal with the legacy of bombings and tests.

# Volunteering at Greenbelt Festival

*Reflection by Bonni-Belle Pickard*

I had been intrigued by Greenbelt for several years, hearing about it from a wide variety of Methodist friends. So this year, when I saw a call for volunteers, I signed up without really thinking – not sure what festival life would be like, what I'd be doing with FOR, or how I'd survive in a yurt!

As it turned out, the time I spent on the muddy/windy/sunny/rainy outdoor site was brimful with adventure and interesting encounters.

Official attendance was 10,500, an impressively wide variety of people, all somehow feeling they 'belonged.' I met fifteen folks I knew and made several new friends.

There were exhibition tents proclaiming welcome and inclusion, justice and peace for planet, nations, refugees, LGBT, the disabled, and everything in between. The FOR booth fitted in well. A steady stream of folks stopped by to chat and find out how the group fosters better relationships, from the personal to the global political.

We had standing banners to start the conversations; mine ranged from 'I went on a trip to Zimbabwe with FOR as a teenager, and now I'd like my own daughter to do the same' to vegan concerns about 'reconciliation' with animals used for food, to what resources could be available when dealing with a safeguarding complaint. Sometimes we signposted folk to other resources, whilst those interested signed up for more information.

When not 'on duty,' I visited other venues. I hovered on the edges of the full-to-overflowing

**Boughton House, Kettering  
August Bank Holiday Weekend**

Hope and Anchor tent of the Methodist Church for several sessions which included Baby Loss, LGBT and 'queer' scriptures, singalongs, interviews and stage shows, there was always something interesting. The URC had a café tent serving delicious food that was otherwise destined for the bin. I experienced two excellent monologue dramas at the Playhouse tent – one on Henry Nouwen, another in which a woman actually baked an apple pie from scratch while talking about her son on death-row for whom she was making the pie. Both dramas made me a bit tearful and definitely more aware!

There were also craft and family activities, justice and peace speakers, food and tea stalls, a book tent, shops selling ethnic clothing, toys and soaps, and even a wool shop to enhance my knitting supply.

The weekend's climax was the Sunday morning communion service led by members of the Iona Community, bringing to mind an image of Jesus-Feeding-the-Five-Thousand-plus-Women-and-Children. Gluten-free bread from a local baker soon materialised with loaves tossed extravagantly into the crowd. We were satisfied – even as we were humbled by a live video link with Daoud Nassar from the Tent of Nations in the West Bank telling us of how their family farm of generations was under threat of encroachment from settlers. We sang and prayed and repented.

There is much more to tell, but perhaps you'll visit for yourself. And oh yes, my overnight in the yurt with seven (female) strangers was the best night's sleep I'd had in months.

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## Updates on Fellowship Life

### **Arrested at DSEi update**

FOR members Diana and Nick Francis were arrested at the No Faith in War day when they sat down in the road leading to the DSEi arms trade fair on 7th September 2023. They were two of nine arrested that day.

Although the prosecution case was heard in May 2024, it was not until this January that the defendants could put their case at Stratford Magistrates Court. Summing up, the judge said she had to go by the law and any personal feelings she had could not prejudice her judgment, so

.6.

## News in Brief

they were found guilty and given a conditional discharge for 6 months, plus £300 costs each.

The next ExCel arms fair meets in September. There is a 'No Faith in War' day planned for 8th September 2025. Details from the FOR Office.

### **Online Worship Community Explores Peace**

Annie Sharples, an FoR member (and Trustee) living in Yorkshire spoke online about Peace. She joined the Shoreline Methodist Community for a time of reflection and worship. You can watch the session, click [here](#).

## Conscience in Exile

A Report on the Meeting with Russian Conscientious Objectors, July 2025.

Hosted by the Peace Pledge Union with support from FOR (among others).

As followers of the Gospel of Peace, we are called to listen, accompany, and act in solidarity with those who resist violence. In that spirit, Members of FOR were honoured to attend a closed and deeply moving gathering with Russian conscientious objectors (COs). The meeting offered a rare opportunity to hear directly from those who have risked their freedom, safety, and homeland to live out a commitment to peace in the face of war.

The Ukraine War continues to devastate lives on all sides. As states tighten conscription laws and punish dissenters, courageous individuals from both Russia and Ukraine are saying “no” to war. In doing so, they often face imprisonment, exile, or worse. Estimates suggest hundreds of thousands of people have fled both countries to avoid conscription, yet their stories are seldom heard.

### Georgia: A Place of Transit and Uncertainty

The gathering began with reflections from peace workers based in Georgia who help to coordinate support for COs fleeing the war in Ukraine. Georgia has become a hub for both Ukrainian refugees and Russian COs. In the six months following Russia’s 2022 mobilisation order, an estimated half a million Russians passed through Georgia. As of January 2025, around 80,000 remain there but life is precarious. Many COs and deserters are forced to leave due to unaffordable housing, local hostility, and insecurity from Russia’s far-reaching surveillance and intimidation efforts.

Most express a strong desire to relocate to a country with a robust rule of law, such as those in the EU, the UK, USA, or Australia. Yet while some nations theoretically welcome COs, the reality is far more complicated. Asylum is rarely granted; Germany, for instance, has accepted only around 5% of such claims. Argentina, by contrast, has been more accommodating.

### Stories of Resistance and Faith in Conscience

Each speaker exemplified the power of individual conscience resisting the machinery of war. One former Russian military officer, now in Argentina, attempted to resign his commission after the war began, only to be trapped by a decree preventing

officers from stepping down. On the front lines, he witnessed and was ordered to partake in acts that violated his moral convictions, including looting for food. He deserted, first finding temporary refuge in Georgia before moving to Argentina, where he now lives under temporary legal status and works as a software developer.

Another young man, a web designer from Moscow and anti-corruption protester, hid at a friend’s house. He was eventually apprehended in the metro using facial recognition technology, detained without warning, and forced into military service. After several harrowing months, he escaped through Armenia, eventually to Croatia, where he remains in legal limbo, having been denied safe passage to other EU countries.

A father and former Russian officer, shared his ordeal of attempting to formally resign before fleeing. After settling in Armenia, he was arrested at the border when Russian authorities placed him on a search list. He now lives in Germany apart from his children still in Russia, navigating a new life amid ongoing fear for their safety.

Another young man, whose compulsory military service was extended due to mobilisation orders, recounted how his views on the military changed following Russia’s assault on Ukraine. Facing the prospect of being sent to the front lines, he escaped to Armenia, and now seeks asylum in France, determined not to become “cannon fodder” for what he called a “dictator’s war”.

### A Call to Compassionate Solidarity

The courage of these individuals is a powerful reminder of the human cost of militarism and the moral clarity that can arise even in dark times. As people of faith committed to peace and justice, we are called not only to listen but also to act by:

- Advocating for fair asylum processes for COs and war resisters.
- Supporting organisations working on the ground in Georgia, Armenia, and elsewhere.
- Lobbying our own governments (FCDO or equivalent departments) to offer protection and sanctuary to COs fleeing persecution.
- Praying for those who risk everything to follow their conscience.

In sharing their stories with us, these brave objectors invited us into the moral heart of resistance to war. May we respond with compassion, advocacy, and unwavering solidarity.

*Matthew Bittle*

## A Prayer to mark over 1000 days of war in Ukraine & Russia

Holy God,  
We hold before you all nations trapped  
in deepening, endless and relentless conflict, violence and war.  
We share the cries of people pleading before you,  
How long, dear God of justice and mercy, how long?  
Enough, enough, mercy, mercy, why should anyone have to be  
killed in war anywhere, anymore?  
We join with them and plead for an end to the destruction and  
deaths of conflict, violence and war.  
In hunger people long for bread, we pray for an end to  
investment in the manufacture of bombs and all weapons of  
harm, and investment instead in instruments of healing.  
In thirst people long for a sip of clean water, give us all a hunger  
and thirst for righteousness and justice.  
As homes are destroyed, people seeking sanctuary long for  
human warmth, bring us all to build communities of welcome  
and hospitality.  
With people unjustly detained, strengthen us all to seek amnesty  
and freedom.  
Naked we come to you, clothe us all to stand up and speak up for  
peace and reconciliation, and train for war no more.  
Bless us and all people with the gift of your deepening, endless  
and relentless peace.  
In the Name of Christ. Amen

*Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal,  
Honorary President  
Fellowship of Reconciliation*

### Remembering Carole Crompton



The Fellowship were saddened to hear of the death of former Vice Chair of the Fellowship, Carole Crompton, earlier last year. She first became a member after visiting our stall at the Greenbelt Festival.

As she lived close to our former national office base, she became a regular visitor and volunteer, and was soon elected to the Board of Trustees. Serving for over a decade in various roles, latterly as Vice-Chair, she was always willing to do whatever was necessary whether that was setting out and clearing away rooms for meetings, deputising for the Chair, making name badges at events, or representing us at national and international events.

Since retiring from the Trustees she had kept a keen interest in the affairs of the Fellowship.

*Richard Bickle*

## Poems

### Ukraine

In the market place  
Where the few stalls left  
Are flanked by the rubble  
Of shopping centres, a gutted  
Apartment block and a still  
Smouldering maternity clinic,  
The longest queues  
Are for seeds.

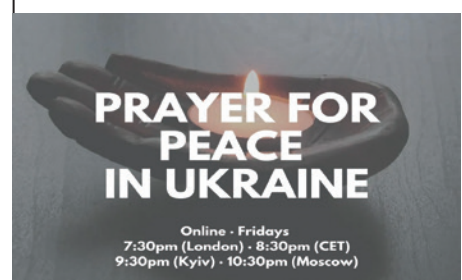
### Not Only Blood

They have survived  
The dull thud of bombs  
On crumbling roofs,  
The callous sniper  
Picking off water carriers,  
And the busy market reduced  
To a rubble of blood.

But now, hidden  
In a damp cellar  
They submit to  
The ultimate agony,  
Tearing page by page  
The library of a lifetime  
To feed the flames  
Of a feeble fire.

And did they try  
With numbed hands  
To read the pages first,  
Commit them to memory  
Against a better time,  
A time when words  
Of beauty and truth  
Would once again  
Nourish their famished land?

*Richard Stewart*



church and peace

The Methodist Peace Fellowship  
Peace together

## Diary Dates

### Every Friday: 7.30 - 8pm Prayers for Ukraine

on Zoom, to register now:  
[www.for.org.uk/ukraine](http://www.for.org.uk/ukraine)  
(until the war ends)

### Last Saturday of each month Vigil, RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk

12 noon, main gate,  
to protest the return of US  
nuclear bombs. Details:  
<https://lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk/monthly-vigils/>

### August 6 & 9 Hiroshima & Nagasaki Days

### August 9 - 15: "Peace building in a world of conflict"

A week on the Isle of Iona with  
FOR, Christian CND, Rethinking  
Security and Ulster University  
<https://iona.org.uk/events/>

### August 21 - 24: Greenbelt Festival Arts & Activism

theme: Dream On  
Find our stall, and  
John on the programme.  
Boughton House, Kettering.  
[www.greenbelt.org.uk](http://www.greenbelt.org.uk)

### Stop DSEi Arms Fair

ExCel Centre, London

### September 1 - 8: Peace Pilgrimage

Oxford to London  
[https://peacepilgrimage.org.uk/  
events/pilgrimage-to-dsei/](https://peacepilgrimage.org.uk/events/pilgrimage-to-dsei/)

### September 8:

No Faith in War Day.

September 9 - 12: the fair

### Autumn Tour by Zoughbi Zoughbi, IFOR President

Dates, times, venues soon  
- see page 5 -

### September 21: Peace Sunday

[www.for.org.uk/peacesunday](http://www.for.org.uk/peacesunday)

### September 24: 10am - 3pm Remembering Peace? A study and learning day for preachers and worship leaders.

Museum of Primitive  
Methodism, Englesea Brook,  
Alsager, near Crewe  
<https://engleseabrook.org.uk/eventspage/>

### October 11: AGM Methodist Peace Fellowship

10.30 am - 4 pm  
The Warehouse, Allison St,  
Birmingham

### October 12 - 19: Week of Prayer for World Peace

[www.weekofprayerforworldpeace.co.uk/](http://www.weekofprayerforworldpeace.co.uk/)

### November 20: George Lansbury Memorial lecture,

by FOR's Director, John Cooper,  
more details to come.



**I enclose a donation in support of the Fellowship's work**

[ ] (please write) £.....

**I enclose a donation in support of the International Peacemakers' Fund**

[ ] (please write) £.....

**Total Gift enclosed** £.....

**Make Your Gift Go Further: 25p more to FoR for every £1 at no extra cost to you.**

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. FOR is charity number 207822.

*giftaid it*

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- [ ] to update my contact details
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- [ ] to receive information about becoming a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation
- [ ] information about the International Peacemakers' Fund
- [ ] to receive a direct debit form so I can give regularly to support the Fellowship

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**FREEPOST PEACEMAKER FPN 3264**  
19 Paradise Street, Oxford, OX1 1LD