

International understanding



St Clare's, Oxford celebrates the 70th anniversary of its foundation next year. The college was founded by an idealist, Anne Dreydel, whose vocation was to re-establish good relations between the peoples of Europe and build international understanding in the aftermath of World War 2. One of our founding governors, Professor Gilbert Murray, was an original and active member of the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, founded in 1942, which later became Oxfam. He was deeply affected by the First World War, and after it he became one of the leading figures in promoting world peace through the League of Nations and later the United Nations.

The promotion of peace and international understanding is therefore woven into the texture of everything St Clare's, Oxford stands for.

Crisis in Ukraine

Events now unfolding in Ukraine following the invasion by Russian forces fill us all with horror. Our hearts go out to all our current and former Ukrainian students and their families, and we fervently hope that they will remain safe, and that peace will return soon.

All our students, including our Russian students, can be reassured that St Clare's will remain a safe environment for everybody.

We also realise that the Russian invasion is not an expression of the will of the Russian people. The many Russians who are standing up to Putin's bullying and publicly disowning his actions are incredibly brave and face violent intimidation by state security forces. It was inspiring to hear defiance from Dimitry Muratov, Nobel Prize-winning editor of Novaya Gazeta and champion of free expression (and a former St Clare's parent), on British television news last week. Muratov said that last Friday's edition of his newspaper would be published in Russian and in Ukrainian, "because we do not recognise Ukraine as an enemy, or the Ukrainian language as the language of the enemy". He also said that the unprovoked assault on Ukraine has effectively pushed Russia towards nuclear war and only a Russian anti-war movement could save the planet.

In the light of this sober assessment which takes the world back to the darkest days of the Cold War, St Clare's Oxford will continue to act as a force for hope. We will continue to welcome students from all countries, encouraging them to listen to each other and to try to understand and respect different perspectives. We will also inspire young people to have the courage to stand up for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Support to those affected by the conflict

We will be putting in place the following practical measures for the welfare of Ukrainian and Russian students:

- External counselling.

- Individual conversations with every Ukrainian and Russian student by members of our pastoral care staff to gauge their feelings and reassure them about St Clare's commitment to care for them.
- All students to be addressed by the Principal to remind them of Anne Dreydel's original vision and St Clare's continuing mission to build international understanding.
- The establishment of a working party to include students and staff, the remit of which is to consider the best ways forward for our community during this international crisis.

Liberal democratic values have been hard-won in the 20th and 21st centuries. We must uphold and defend them once again. As Gilbert Murray argued in an essay about international relations published in 1948: 'In a contest between a sane man and a madman, the greatest weapon of the former is his hold on to the truth... Face even your wrongs with reason and not with rage'.

Andy Rattue, Principal