

The remarks of Faith Simon, FNP, a Mendocino Institute Associate, at the March 2022 rally in Rotary Park, Mendocino Village.

It's an honor to be here with our brave visitors [from Ukraine]. Thank you for being here.

I'd like to just say two things.

First, I don't need to remind you that our community has a long history of being for peace. In 2003 in the run-up to the Iraq war I helped form Mendocino Parents for Peace. We held our first rally in Friendship Park that winter.

Since then, a highlight has been our annual contingent in the 4th of July parade and all the wonderful support we got – on easy issues and tough ones.

We only stopped when Covid stopped the parade. Our theme was always peace.

I think we need to talk about peace, about ending the war in Ukraine -- this terrible inexcusable war and the death and destruction it has wrought.

When a war is going on is absolutely the time to talk about peace. We need to stop this war. We don't need escalations, threats, the widening of the war – these will just bring more death, more destruction, more refugees.

We don't need the talk, real or not, of regime change, of permanently weakening the enemy, of no-fly zones or nuclear war. We don't need the billions and billions spent on weapons pouring into the war.

We need to demand peace, an immediate ceasefire followed by a Russian troop withdrawal and an agreement between Russia and Ukraine on future security arrangements. That's how wars end, with a cease fire and negotiations. We need to demand that now not later.

It's important to remember that this war is fast becoming a proxy war between the US, NATO and the Russians, one with political advantage for our politicians, one with spoils for the NATO generals, one in which the Ukrainians suffer death and destruction while the arms makers reap a bonanza.

Second, let's also talk about our humanity. The people in Europe, especially Poland, have shown us how to greet refugees – that is with warm blankets and food and shelters and love – not with detention camps and cages, dividing families and dumping refugees back across the border.

More war isn't the answer, peace is.

This is a perilous and dangerous time. Watching the horror play out and then preparing for more conflicts in the future will not help us ensure that the climate crisis, the poverty crisis or food supply is addressed.

It's up to all of us to build and support movements that can chart another course for peace, security and justice for all.