

**April 2022**

**Theme: Refugees and the Displaced People of the World**

*Welcome.*

*30 minutes of prayer. Periods of silence throughout, for your own private prayer.*

We meet in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus said: "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

*As we take a few moments to become aware of God's presence, we listen to the Taizé song: Be still; know that I am God (2.41)*

*We know that the world is not as it should be; it is not a reflection of God's heavenly kingdom.*

Lord, we give into your hands our world – your world.

A place that is fragmented and fractured;  
where some greet each day with joy and delight,  
    while others cry in sadness and despair;  
where some families live in loving unity,  
    while others are broken and dysfunctional;  
where some know luxury and plenty,  
    while others are on the brink of starvation;  
where some live in peace  
    while others fear death on a daily basis.

Lord, we hand this all to you. Show us how to respond and help to create communities and nations that are at peace with themselves and a reflection of your heavenly kingdom.

*Our televisions, radios and newspapers constantly remind us of the vast numbers of people who flee their own countries, in search of safety, a better life and fairer opportunities. This is not a new issue, confined to recent centuries. It has happened throughout history.*

*If we think back to the bible readings we hear at Christmas, Matthew records this:  
(Matthew, chapter 2)*

Now after the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.

*And centuries before that the Old Testament records the Israelites living in exile and then fleeing from slavery in Egypt.*

*Throughout the ages people have been persecuted, because of their race or their religion, or perhaps simply because they didn't fit into what some considered the norms of society. People have been driven from their homes and their homelands by natural disasters, starvation, or war.*

*At the moment the war in Ukraine is making the news headlines.*

*And so we pray*

God of all peoples and nations, who created all things alive and breathing, united and whole, show us the way of peace that is your overwhelming presence.

We hold before you the peoples of Ukraine and Russia, every child and every adult.

We long for the time when weapons of war are beaten into ploughshares, when nations no longer lift up sword against nation. We cry out to you for peace; peace between Russia and Ukraine, and peace across the whole world.

*We've all seen the haunting images; of buildings reduced to rubble, of people desperate to escape the constant bombardment, taking with them only the few possessions they can carry. We've seen images of children clinging to their favourite soft toy, not understanding what is happening and fearful for what the future holds.*

*According to the United Nations, more than 11 million people are believed to have fled their homes in Ukraine since the conflict began. As well as the 5.2 million who have left for neighbouring countries, another 6.5 million are thought to be displaced inside the war-torn country itself.*

*And so we pray*

God of mercy, look with compassion on all who know the terror of living in war-torn countries. Walk beside those who leave their homes, their possessions, their livelihoods, to find a place of peace, safety and security. Help them to find what they so desperately seek.

Be with those who, through illness or frailty, cannot move to a safer place.

Give comfort to those who have been forced to leave loved-ones behind, knowing they may never see them again.

*As we think of the millions of displaced people, we also remember those who come to their aid, offering them practical help, and hope for a better future.*

God of hope, we give you thanks that many people try, through their actions as well as their words, to live out the commandment to love your neighbour. We give you thanks that nations have opened their borders, and individuals and families have opened their homes, to offer sanctuary to strangers. From these actions of kindness and compassion we pray that a greater spirit of understanding and co-operation will develop; that barriers that divide and set people apart will be broken down, and that peoples and nations will learn to work together for peace and justice.

We give thanks for the aid agencies working not only with the displaced people of Ukraine, but around the world, to provide food, shelter and medical supplies for refugees and displaced people. We pray for their safety and well-being, and that there will always be people willing to fulfil those vital roles, despite the dangers and hardships that this work entails. And we give thanks for the generosity of those who provide the financial support that allows this work to continue.

*At this time we think also of world leaders and those in positions of power and influence. For it is largely they, backed by the support of their people, who have the power to change the course of history.*

*And so we pray*

God of justice, we give you thanks for those leaders of nations who have the courage to stand firm against tyranny and oppression, and who have a passion for justice to prevail. Change the hearts of those set on courses of violence and aggression, those seeking domination and personal power and riches. We pray that you will fill all leaders with the wisdom that leads to healing and peace.

*Many of us feel powerless as we watch the latest crisis or disaster unfolding around the world. But the one thing we all have the power to do is pray, as we have here today. And so we ask that God will hear these our prayers, using the words of the Taizé song: O Lord, hear my prayer. (4.00)*

*Please feel free to join in if you wish.*

*And finally we'll say the grace together*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,