

## Prayer Vigil at the Home Office for Victims of Global Migration January 2024

*Leader invites a few moments of silence and contemplation before the 'barbed wire icon'.*

### Opening Prayers

Leader We pray for those who will spend time during our service handing out leaflets to the public. We ask that our message will reach the hearts of people of good will on this street today.

Creator Spirit, wellspring of our lives, as the refreshing rain falls on the just and unjust alike,

All **Refresh us with your mercy, you who know our own injustice.**

Leader As the stream flows steadily on, defying all the odds of stone and water,

All **Flow over every boundary and border that separates us from each other.**

Leader As the waters of our baptism washed us and welcomed us,

All **Renew us now in newness of life and unity of love.**

### Hymn – "When I Needed a Neighbour"

When I needed a neighbour,  
Were you there, were you there?  
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

**(Refrain:)** And the creed and the colour  
And the name won't matter,  
Were you there?

I was hungry and thirsty,  
Were you there, were you there?  
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there? **R**

I was cold, I was naked,  
Were you there, were you there?  
I was cold, I was naked, were you there? **R**

When I needed a shelter,  
Were you there, were you there?  
When I needed a shelter, were you there? **R**

When I needed a healer,  
Were you there, were you there?  
When I needed a healer, were you there? **R**

Wherever you travel,  
I'll be there, I'll be there.  
Wherever you travel, I'll be there. **R**

*Sydney Carter  
Words © 1965, 1969 Stainer & Bell Ltd*

### Psalm 118

**A** I find no fault with your sacrifices,  
your offerings are always before me.  
I do not ask more bullocks from your farms,  
nor goats from among your herds.

**B** But how can you recite my commandments  
and take my covenant on your lips,  
You who despise my law  
and throw my words to the winds.

**A** You do this, and should I keep silence?  
 Do you think I am like you?  
**A** sacrifice of thanksgiving honours me  
 and I will show God's salvation to the upright.

### Prayers of Repentance

*Leader:* Loving Jesus, as a child, and in fear of your life, you were forced to seek refuge in Egypt. You know what it is like to be rejected, and to be an outsider. You call us to love our neighbours as ourselves, but we have hardened our hearts against strangers.

**All: Forgive us, and help us to change.**

*Leader:* You told us not to judge, yet we listen to rumours and fail to check facts. We hear what is best for us and not what is good for those in need.

**All: Forgive us, and help us to change.**

*Leader:* You said we must welcome everyone, those speaking different languages and with different beliefs and cultures, but we have turned our backs on opportunities to widen our experience. We have shut out foreigners from our communities.

**All: Forgive us, and help us to change.**

*Leader:* Today we are called more than ever to welcome those fleeing from war. Open our hearts, and those of our neighbourhood, of our city, of our country and of our continent, to those who need our shelter.

**All: Forgive us, and help us to change.**

### The List of the Dead

The names and details which follow are those of people who have died trying to obtain sanctuary in Europe or the UK. We read them so as to honour their lives and mourn the injustice of their deaths. Many are unknown, but as Pope Francis said, 'Every one has a name, a face and a story'. Today we mark those who died in January 2023.

After each entry, *Leader* says: Lord have mercy.

*All* respond: **Christ, have mercy.**

Date	Details
1/1	One person died in a traffic accident on Egnatia Highway in Northern Greece; 3 others were injured.
2/1	8 people drowned in a shipwreck off the coast of Libya on the way to Europe. 49 were rescued, including Abubacarr Leigh, a man from Gambia, who later died of unknown causes in the custody of the Libyan Coast Guard.
3/1	A 29-year-old Sudanese man threw himself in front of a train in Calais; he waved goodbye to a local volunteer from the tracks.
3/1	Tony Moses Oviri, a 33-year-old from Nigeria, died from suicide after 3 weeks in Lagnon reception centre in Bernex, Switzerland. He was confused and disorientated.
6/1	1 person from Morocco drowned after an inflatable boat overturned off Idi Ifni, Morocco; their body was found off Mirleft 7 days later. 24 were rescued.
6/1	A man and woman, both aged 38, and Sara, a girl one and half years old, all from Ivory Coast, drowned when a boat, 7m long, sank off Lampedusa on the way from Sfax, Tunisia. 32 rescued.
6/1	15 people from Sub-Saharan Africa drowned when a boat sank off La Laouata, Sfax, on the way to Italy. 5 bodies were found, 20 people were rescued.

7/1	Ibrahim Jaber Ahmed Dehya, a 36-year-old doctor from Yemen, died of hypothermia. He had crossed the Poland-Belarus border river as part of a group of Yemenis, after which his condition deteriorated. 3 of the group walked 5km to seek help, but when they encountered border guards were illegally forced back over the border; the guards refused to look for Dehya. A later patrol found him dead. He is buried in the Muslim cemetery in Bohoniki, and is survived by his wife and 3 children.
8/1	1 person from Morocco drowned when an inflatable boat overturned off Sidi Ifni. His body was found off Mirleft 9 days later. 24 were rescued.
9/1	An African man of about 30 was electrocuted by 25kV wires on the roof of a train in Menton Station, France, near the Italian-French border.
10/1	Oussama Ben Rebha, a Tunisian man of about 23, drowned after jumping into the icy river Brenta in Padova, Italy, to escape police; he was to be deported.
12/1	One person was found dead in the forest of Czerlonka, Poland, on the Belarusian border.
16/1	Some Tsiona Nzita, a 44-year-old Congolese man, died of Covid-19 in Ritsona Camp, Greece, due to a lack of medical facilities. For three days he asked for medical attention. When an ambulance was called, it took 3 hours to arrive, by which time he had died. He is survived by his wife and 16-year-old daughter
18/1	15 young people from Algeria and Morocco drowned on the way from Oran, Algeria to Spain, after 4 days at sea. No bodies were recovered.
23/1	Mamdouh Ahmad al-Mousa, a 38-year-old Syrian man, was shot dead by Turkish border guards near al-Aziziya, Syria, trying to cross the border into Turkey.
24/1	66 people, including 8 men, drowned when a crowded boat capsized off Garabulli, Libya, on the way to Europe. 8 bodies were found, 84 were rescued.
26/1	Tawfik Ali O. A. Al-Hughibiri, a 31-year-old man from Yemen, was found dead of unknown causes in Belarus on the border with Poland.
28/1	Manaf al-Owaid, a 30-year-old man from Syria, was shot dead by Turkish border guards in Ras as-Ain, Syria trying to cross the Turkish border. He was from Deir ez-Zor, which is controlled by Turkey-backed armed opposition factions.
29/1	13 people from Sub-Saharan Africa drowned when a boat on the way to Europe sank off Louata, Tunisia. No bodies were recovered; 14 people were rescued.

*List compiled by UNITED for Intercultural Action (<https://unitedagainstrefugeedeaths.eu/>). Data collated from the following sources, most of which are newspapers and NGOs:*

*AlarmPhone, ANSA, APnews, ASKA, Dawn, ENASS, Flucht, FOROYAA, Frasue, Gazzettino, GrupaGranica, GuardNatTN, HelCoastG, Hespress, InfoLibre, InfoMigrants, IOM, LaDep, LeManBleu, LRP, ME, Mediterranea, Migsol, NordLittoral, NPASyria, OKO, OpenMigratio, OpenMigration, Parisien, RAI, RefinLibya, Reuters, SolidarityMigrants, SouthAfricaToday, Swiss.ch, The News, TOKFM, TVXS, Wyborcza, YAB.*

**All: Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.**

**Hymn – “Wait for the Lord”**

by Communauté de Taizé

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord: keep watch, take heart! (x3)

## Reading

(Matthew 2:13-23) The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

"A voice was heard in Ramah,  
sobbing and loud lamentation;  
Rachel weeping for her children,  
and she would not be consoled,  
since they were no more."

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazorean."

## Reflection

### Prayers of Intercession

*Everyone present reads in turn. All say the **response** in bold.*

We pray for the thousands of men, women and children, known and unknown, who set out to seek safety and a better life in Europe, but who were drowned in the Mediterranean, the Aegean Sea or the English Channel. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for migrants who have met hostility or violence from authorities or vigilantes. We pray for those pushed back into the sea, and those forced into the desert. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for all those seeking sanctuary in the UK who depend on its adhering to the European Convention for Human Rights, and pray that our government will respect the agreement that we helped to draw up over 70 years ago. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for the former residents of the camp in Calais and for those who remain there. We pray for the protection of all people in refugee camps and the communities they build. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for refugees arriving in the UK and being placed in detention in poor conditions at arrival, and those made homeless on being granted asylum. We pray for their mental and physical well-being and for the recognition of their right to decent housing. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for the comforting of all who have lost loved ones in the course of fleeing from their home country, or who have experienced the trauma of watching others die. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for a resolution to the conflicts and oppression which are forcing so many to flee in desperation, and the realisation of the right of people to remain in their homes. We pray for the people of Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Eritrea, Sudan, and Ukraine, and especially at this time for all the people of Palestine. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for the end of the arms trade and militarism, which aggravate and sponsor these conflicts. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for those who are fleeing the effects of climate change, with rising sea levels, drought, flood or crop failure, yet who have caused little or no damage to our climate; for those who make decisions about compensation, and those who continue to exploit the earth for profit. We ask forgiveness for our complicity in this. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for the safety and success of those serving aboard the rescue ships: the *Sea Watch 3*, the *Life Support*, the *Aurora*, the *Imara*, the *Rise Above*, the *Nadir*, the *Geo Barents*, the *Wind Express*, the *Ocean Viking*, the *Open Arms*, the *Aita Mari*, the *Trotamar III*, and others; and of the volunteers of the Alarm Phone, and the reception teams on the Greek and Italian islands. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray that you inspire compassion in all those who work with migrants on behalf of governments, and that they recognise all those they come across as their brothers and sisters. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray that you create in all citizens the strength and resilience to continue to resist unjust immigration laws and to support one another in this struggle. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

*Leader invites those present to add other prayers if they wish.*

## **Act of Faith and Commitment**

*Iona Abbey Worship Book 2001*

*Leader:* Let us affirm our faith.

**We believe that God is present  
In the dark before dawn;  
In the waiting and uncertainty  
Where fear and courage join hands,  
Conflict and caring link arms,  
And the sun rises over barbed wire.  
We believe in a with-us God  
Who sits down in our midst  
To share our humanity.  
We affirm a faith  
That takes us beyond the safe place:**

**Into action, into vulnerability  
And into the streets.  
We commit ourselves to work for change  
And put ourselves on the line;  
To bear responsibility, take risks,  
Live powerfully and face humiliation;  
To stand with those on the edge;  
To choose life  
And be used by the Spirit  
For God's new community of hope.  
Amen.**

### **Hymn – "Amazing Grace"**

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come:  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright, shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise,  
Than when we first began.

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind but now I see.

*Words by John Newton, music by William Walker.*

*All introduce themselves briefly. Any announcements are given.*