

How can I help our Ukrainian brothers and sisters? Rector's Letter: April 2022

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the war started by the evil actions of one man have certainly turned the normal lives of Ukrainians on their head. Ordinary people, all going about their normal lives just a few weeks ago, now find themselves fleeing their homes, their villages, towns and cities, and their country. Jobs and businesses left behind. Loved ones left behind. Ordinary people, taking up arms, making petrol bombs, learning how to handle assault rifles. Totally unbelievable for them, I'm sure, and frightening.

The majority of us probably feel helpless, not knowing the best way to help fellow brothers and sisters. We can't fight to help Ukraine, but we can give financial support to aid agencies who, in turn, can help. We can't stop the war, but some might feel they are able to provide a home to a Ukrainian family. This must be a very personal decision depending upon your own circumstances. However, we can all pray; pray for peace; for a change of heart; for families whose lives have been turned on their head. We can also pray for the priests and chaplains serving God in that country: Orthodox priests and some Church of England priests serving in Ukraine and in Russia, as their lives and ministry have also been turned on their head. In addition, we can pray for ourselves, as world peace - which we have taken for granted for many years - is also threatened.

The idea of 'just praying' may not seem enough for some people. In which case, and looking ahead, Canterbury Diocese is expecting Ukrainian families arriving in Kent via the Ukraine Family Scheme route in the coming days and weeks. This scheme allows family members of British nationals, UK settled persons and certain others to come to or stay in the UK. The Diocese will be registering offers of support from churches and members of congregations who would like to be involved in welcoming them. Specifically, they would like to hear from those who:

- are Ukrainian/English speakers
- have teaching experience
- are work coaches or can help with employment links
- have a working knowledge of the benefit system
- are interested in befriending
- are interested in providing homework support
- can help sourcing emergency supplies

Do you feel you can help in any of these ways? If so, please get in touch, letting me know your contact details and how you think you might be able to help. I will coordinate this and pass the information on to the Diocese.

With all the uncertainty that is going on around us and in our lives, I encourage you to draw closer to God through the celebrations of all our services in Holy Week and Easter this month, and to use the church for private prayer. God bless.

Revd David Commander, Rector