**Monthly Christian Prayer Vigil at the Home Office
Refugee Week 2023***Prayer Vigil for Victims of global migration June 19th 2023*

**Welcome**

Before we start with the prayer vigil, I would like to welcome all of you here, especially today as we are in
Refugee Week, a UK-wide festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary. And also tomorrow is World Refugee Day.

Thank you to those whom come for a first time,
especially to the students, to Bishop Paul, to Ooberfuse, and the many who keep coming.
I know Barbara Kentish isn’t with us, but she will be thinking and praying with us from Thailand.

It is on-and-off ***ten years*** since we have been standing praying here at least once a month at the Home Office.

**Introduction**

**And why are we standing here?**

Last week on the 14th of June, we were reminded, why we are standing here, when a boat with several hundreds of people sank in front of the Greek coast of Kalamata. The boat, which left Tobruk, Libya, on the 10th of June, carried an estimated 750 migrants. Search and rescue resulted in a 104 survivors including Egyptians, Syrians, Pakistanis, Afghans, and Palestinians, and recovered 78 dead bodies, with hundreds missing.

Women, men, children risk crossing the Mediterranean Sea - because there are NO SAFE alternatives, there are no safe routes.

It is very often that refugees die and drawn in coming to Europe, sometimes a single person or a small group: women, men and children. Every now and then it gets into the media.

Since the *International Organisation on Migration* keeps records of these deaths and drowning, that is since 2014 – a **24.000** people have died or gone missing on this Mediterranean route. And according to UNITED, who started recording in 1993 in Europe – **52.760** people have died.

*One person drowning is an accident, but thousands of people drowning is a policy – or lack of policy!*

Each of these men, each of these women, each of these children are worthy of our attention.
They each had a story, a family and a community they leave behind. Each of them was or is a child of GOD.

We gather here for them in prayer, and to witness and to reflect on people dying at our borders,
in the hope that one day this will not happen no more.

**Prayer vigil**

Leader invites a few moments of silence and contemplation before the ‘barbed wire icon’

**Opening Prayers**

We pray together: ***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. Amen***

Leader: 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.***

**Opening song :** Our opening song is led by Ooberfuse: ‘***Show Me Love’***

**Psalm reading :** Psalm 30

Side A
I will exalt you, LORD, for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
LORD my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.
You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.

*Side B
 Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.
For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.*

Side A
When I felt secure, I said,
“I will never be shaken.”
LORD, when you favoured me,
you made my royal mountain stand firm;
But when you hid your face,
I was dismayed.

*Side B
To you, LORD, I called;
to the Lord I cried for mercy:
“What is gained if I am silenced,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it proclaim your faithfulness?
Hear, LORD, and be merciful to me;
LORD, be my help.”*

**All
You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.
LORD my God, I will praise you forever.**

**Prayers of repentance**

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***. R:*** ***Forgive us and help us change.***

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. ***R:*** ***Forgive us and help us change.***

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. ***R:*** ***Forgive us and help us change.***

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.
***R:*** ***Forgive us and help us change.***

**We remember**

The names or 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 the mourn the injustice of their deaths. Many are unknown, as in this list, but as Pope Francis said, ***‘Everyone has a name, a face and a story’***.
(Meanwhile Ooberfuse will play accompanying music quietly).

*Today we mark those who died in June 2022.*

**On 30/06/22**
6 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN from Tunisia drowned, boat sank off shore of Djerba (TN) on way to Europe; 3 missing, 3 bodies found, 11 rescued
**On 27/06/22**
- 2 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN (men) unknown presumed drowned on way from Turkey, bodies found by tourists on beach of Island of Lesbos (GR)
Ahmed Hasan Abdiaziz (man, 25) Somalia suicide, jumped in front of truck near refugee tent camp at Loon-Plage (FR), died in hospital in Lille (FR)
- 54 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN (including children, woman) Senegal, Guinea, Nigeria, Gambia drowned, boat on way to Spain capsized off coast of Senegal due to fire on board; 14 body found, 40 missing, 91 resqued
- 30 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN (including 8 children; 5 women) Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Mali drowned, rubber dinghy got damaged & filled with water in Central Mediterranean Sea; 1 body found, 29 missing, 71 rescued
- 2 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN (pregnant women) unknown drowned, rubber dinghy got damaged & filled with water in Central Mediterranean Sea; 71 rescued

**On 24/06/22**
49 PEOPLE – whose NAME is NOT KNOWN FROM Sub-Saharan Africa, from Sudan, Chad and other countries were killed in an incident with the Moroccan & Spanish security forces while trying to get through a border fence of Spanish enclave of Melilla - and 76 people are missing.
Also others, we do know the name whom have died at the same place and time trying to cross the border fence:

Essoh Guilaine Parfait (man, 24) Cameroon
and following mostly young men were all from Sudan:
Kussay Ismail Abdelkader, Mohannad Maamoun Aissa, Abderrahim Abdellatif Ali (Hanine), Abdelaaziz Yaakoub Anwar, Abdenacer Mohamed Ahmed, Jalal Abderrahmane Mahmoud, Marwan Mohi Al-Din, Muhammad A. Abdul Rahman , Jalal Abdel Shakour, Mustafa Abkar Yahya, Muhammad Y. Abdul Rasoul , Abdullah Omar,Mustafa Abrar , Al-Zubair Mirsal, Ibrahim Othma, Adel Youssef , Muhammed Ali, Ahmed Al-Mahdis, Bakri Saleh, Khaled Abker ,Ahmed Al-Haj, Mohammed Harun ,Nabil Abkar ,Ahmed Adam ,Ibrahim Siddiqui ,Yasser Al-Yasudani ,Ahmed Al-Tom ,Ibrahim Al-Tijani ,Saleh Kamal ,Core William (Gedo) ,Adel Abdul Rahman ,Tariq Ibrahim ,Abdul Razzaq Ibrahim ,Youssef Abdullah ,Othman Abdul Rahim, Saddam Ahmad ,Hassan Youssef, Abdullah Omar ,Ibrahim Mohamed ,Omar Ahmed ,Farouk Saleh ,Abdul Aziz Muhammad ,Muhammad Salah ,Ahmed Mohamedeen Ahmed, Mu’tasim Adam Abdul-Bashir , Jalal Abdul Shakur Yahya, Mohamed Wad Anjali, Isaac Issa, Ibrahim Ali Muhammad, Mahdi Muhammad, Abdullah Omar, Baghdad Hussein, Wali al-Din Muhammad Ali, Abdul Basit Muhammad Isha, Nasreddin Abkar Khamis, Bashara Ibrahim Idris, Mazen Dafa Allah, Adam Khamis Ahmed, , Hamed Youssef, Abu Bakr Hussein, Ibrahim Al-Halous, Suleiman Abkar Harun, Adam Mostafa Haren.

**On the…
23/06/22**
14 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN North Africa drowned off Garabuli (Libya) on way from Al Alous to Europe; 7 bodies found, 7 missing, 60 resqued
**20/06/22**
4 PEOPLE – Name unknown drowned, boat sank off coast of Sfax (TN) on way to Italy; bodies recovered by Tunisian coast guard
**19/06/22**
8 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN(3 children, 3,8,15; 5 adults) Afghanistan, Syria, Egypt, unknown drowned, boat on way from Turkey to Italy broke in 2 during resquedcue near Mykonos (GR); 8 miss, 108 rescued
**19/06/22**
12 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN Sub-Saharan Africa drowned on way from Libya to Italy, bodies in state of decay found floating near beach of Skhira (TN)
**18/06/22**
Abderraman Bas (man, 25) Guinea drowned, body found floating in the Bidasoa river in Irun (ES) at the Spain-France border
**15/06/22**
Omar Elkhouli (man, 35) Egypt stowaway, shot by police when smugglers van evaded police checkpoints, died in hospital in Nice (FR)
**13/06/22**
Person - NAME NOT KNOWN (man, 19) Morocco stowaway, run over by truck he had been hiding under near Schwechat (AT) near Slovakia border; 3 survived
**11/06/22**
Person - NAME NOT KNOWN Syria traffic accident, traffickers' pickup crashed into fence evading police check in north Greece; 16 injured
**09/06/22**
Person - NAME NOT KNOWN (man) unknown died of unknown cause, body found on small boat in rough sea off Island of Formentera (ES); 5 rescued El
**08/06/22**
Melike Akbaş (girl, 15) Turkey electrocuted while getting off a freight train at Trudering station near Munich; died in hospital
**08/06/22**
4 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN (including 1 child; 2 adults) unknown drowned in shipwreck off Cabo Cope in Murcia (Spain); 3 bodies found, 1 missing, 12 rescued
***On the same day:***
18 PEOPLE - NAME NOT KNOWN (including 2 children; 2 woman) Syria, Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia drowned, rubber boat caught fire 14 hrs off coast of Djerba (TN) on way to Italy; 6 bodies found, 12 missing, 14 rescued
**04/06/22**
1 Person - NAME NOT KNOWN from Pakistan traffic accident, car overturned evading police check between Turkish border & Thessaloniki; 12 injured

**Also in June 2022** A young woman - NAME NOT KNOWN from Somali missing at Sea, arrived by boat in Chios (GR) and was pushed back to Turkey by Greek.

… followed by a short silence.
Leader: Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.
All: **May they rest in peace, Amen.**

(We lay FLOWERS while we sing the hymn)

**Hymn: Christ, be our light**
Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
Light for the world to see.
Refrain:
***Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.***

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.
***R: Christ, be our light!***

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.
***Christ, be our light!***

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.
***R: Christ, be our light!***
Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.
***R:*** ***Christ, be our light!***

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**Reading from Scripture**

Our reading is taken from the holy Gospel according to Matthew chapter 5 vv 38-42:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

**Followed by a reflection Bishop Paul McAleenan**

**Prayers of Intercession**(We start with prayer for the people on the boat that sank in front of the Greek coast of Kalamata last week.)

People present will read in turn:
1. 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, or whose lives were cut short when they met with hostility or violence.
O Lord hear our prayer, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

2. We pray for all those seeking sanctuary in the UK who depend on the UK 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, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

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

4. We pray for the refugees arriving in the UK and ending up in the former military barracks and camps, or those placed in detention at arrival. We pray for their mental and physical wellbeing and for their right to decent housing.
O Lord hear our prayer, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

5. For the comfort of all who have lost loved ones in the course of fleeing from their home country, or who have had to experience the trauma of watching others die.
O Lord hear our prayer, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

6. For a resolution to the conflicts which are forcing so many to flee in desperation and we pray in particular for the people of Yemen, Syria, Palestine, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, Congo and Sudan.
O Lord hear our prayer, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

7. 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, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

8. We pray for the staff and volunteers from the Rescue Ships, and the Alarm Phone. We think of the people serving on board of the Sea Watch 3, the reception teams on the Greek and Italian islands.
O Lord hear our prayer, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

9. For an end to the arms trade and militarism that aggravate and sponsor these conflicts.
O Lord hear our prayer, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

10. For the strength and resilience of all citizens to resist unjust immigration laws and to support one another in this struggle.
O Lord hear our prayer, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

11. In thanksgiving for the efforts of all who are working to rescue and welcome refugees arriving in Europe and for all who struggle for justice.
O Lord hear our prayer, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

Leader invites those present to add other prayers if they wish, ending O Lord hear our prayer, ***Response: And let our cry come unto you.***

**Act of Faith and Commitment**

Leader: Let us affirm our faith
All: **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**

Iona Abbey Worship Book 2001

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

I was cold, I was naked,
Were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?
Refrain: ***And the creed and the colour And the name won't matter, Were you there?***

When I needed a shelter,
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter, were you there?
Refrain: ***And the creed and the colour And the name won't matter, Were you there?***

When I needed a healer,
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer, were you there?
Refrain: ***And the creed and the colour And the name won't matter, Were you there?***
Wherever you travel,
I'll be there, I'll be there.
Wherever you travel, I'll be there.
Refrain: ***And the creed and the colour And the name won't matter, Were you there?***

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**Thank you to everyone** for coming and participating especially…

Bishop Paul, the students from Newman Catholic College, Ooberfuse, Fr. Robinson, Alaistar, Barbara …
and we then have time to introduce ourselves briefly and give any announcements or information.