

Prayer Vigil at the Home Office for Victims of Global Borders February 2025

Leader invites a few moments of silence and contemplation before the 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 – “I Come Like a Beggar”

I come like a beggar
with a gift in my hand,

I come like a beggar
with a gift in my hand.

**(R) By the hungry I will feed you,
By the poor I make you rich,
By the broken I will mend you,
Tell me, which one is which?**

I come like a prisoner
to bring you a key,
I come like a prisoner
to bring you a key. **R**

The need of another
is the gift that I bring,

The need of another
is the gift that I bring. **R**

Take the wine that I bring you
and the bread that I break,
Take the wine that I bring you
and the bread that I break. **R**

By Sydney Carter

Psalm 49

A The God of gods, the Lord,
has spoken and summoned the earth,
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices;
your offerings are always before me.

B ‘How can you recite my commandments,
and take my covenant on your lips,
you who despise correction,
and cast my words behind you.’

A ‘You who sit and malign your own brother,
and slander your own mother’s son?
You do this, and should I keep silence?
Do you think that I am like you?
I accuse you, lay the charge before you.’

Prayers of Repentance

Leader: Loving Jesus, as a child 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 to welcome strangers in our land, but we have hated, humiliated imprisoned, and killed those who have asked for our hospitality.

All: Forgive us, and help us to change.

Leader: We are called today to welcome those fleeing from war, famine and poverty. Open our hearts, and those of our neighbourhood, of our city, of our country and of our continent, to those who need shelter.

All: Forgive us, and help us to change.

The List of the Dead

These are the known names and details of those who died trying to obtain sanctuary in Europe or the UK in February 2024. We share them here so as to honour their lives and mourn the injustice of their deaths; we remember also the many whose deaths remain unrecorded.

| Date | Details |
|------|---|
| ? | A human skull was found in Białowieża Forest on the Stara Białowieża-Narewka road (Poland) near the Belarus border. |
| 2/2 | A man of 20 from Syria died when he slipped & hit his head trying to repair a broken boat engine on way to Lampedusa (Italy); 12 survived. 2 people drowned when a boat from El Amra (Tunisia) sank off Lampedusa (Italy); 49 were rescued by the coast guard. |
| 4/2 | Rojdar, a man of 34 from Iraq, died in unclear circumstances from a gunshot wound to the chest near a refugee camp in Loon-Plage (France). Ousmane Sylla, a man of 22 from Guinea, hanged himself in the repatriation centre Ponte Galeria in Rome (Italy); he had to wait 18 months for repatriation. |
| 5/2 | 17 people, including a child of 5, were presumed drowned in a boat missing since it left the port of Bizerte (Tunisia) on the way to Italy. |
| 7/2 | 40 people from Sudan drowned when a badly welded makeshift metal boat sank off Sfax (Tunisia) on the way to Italy; 2 survived. |
| 8/2 | A man was electrocuted and burned at Gare du Nord in Paris (France) after climbing on a Eurostar train to London. |
| 15/2 | 9 men died from inhaling fuel fumes on the way from Libya, their bodies found on the bottom of a sinking boat off Zarzis (Tunisia); 45 survived. |
| 17/2 | 3 people drowned, having stayed on a Europe-bound boat that sprung a leak off Tunisia; 19 survivors swam to an oil rig. A man's body was recovered from a boat after a rescue operation off Libya; another man from the same boat died shortly after rescue. |
| 19/2 | 3 people from Africa and Asia died in a traffic accident. A smuggler was speeding, and their vehicle came off the road and overturned near Alidërce (Serbia); 11 survived. |
| 20/2 | 2 women died of unknown causes on a sea-rescue NGO boat headed to Bari (Italy); 121 were rescued. |
| 21/2 | A man of 40 from Iraq died of unknown causes in a reception centre in Boostedt (Germany). |

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|------|--|
| 23/2 | A woman and 4 men drowned off Malta when a boat from Tripoli (Libya) capsized when passengers moved to one side of it during rescue; 29 survived. |
| 27/2 | 8 people drowned when a Spain-bound inflatable boat sank off Nador (Morocco) due to bad weather; 9 survived. |
| 28/2 | 26 people from Africa drowned on the way to the Canary Islands (Spain) when a boat capsized off Saint-Louis (Senegal); 274 survived. A boy of 6 from Syria died from exhaustion in a boat which, having left from Syria, was adrift for 9 days. His body was thrown overboard by his father. 3 men tried to seek help on a makeshift floating device, and drowned. 31 were eventually rescued. 3 people drowned in the Channel on the way to Britain; the body of one of them was recovered off Cap Griz-Nez (France). |

Taken from UNITED List of Refugee Deaths, produced by UNITED for Intercultural Action (UNITEDAgainstRefugeeDeaths.eu). Collated from the following sources: AA, AgrigentoNot, AfricaNews, Aljazeera, ANSA, AntiWarSongs, AriseNews, Barrons, BBC, BNNbreaking, Dabanga, DailySabah, ECRE, Euronews, Fanpage, France3, InfoMigrants, Internazionale, IIPost, LR, MaltaToday, N1Serbia, NRC, OpenMigration, Parisien, Philenews, RAI, RefinLibya, Reuters, RomaToday, SeaWatch, SHZ, Spiegel, Stampa, Stuut, Tgcom, TikieTokie, TikiToki, TorontoCityN, TP24, WiadomosciGazeta.

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)**

Habib’s Story

as told to the Refugee Council – read by Barbara Kentish

Reading

(Luke 6:17, 20-26) At that time: Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.’

Reflection by Martin Newell

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 Atlantic, the

Aegean, or the English Channel, and for those who mourn them. 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, those forced into the desert, and for those who commit these crimes. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for the protection of all people in refugee camps in Calais and elsewhere 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. We pray for Ibrahima Bah and all imprisoned people. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for the Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, those working in this building, and all others who work to maintain border regimes, that they will be guided by their conscience to change policy. We pray for the end of the hostile environment, and the creation of safe, legal routes for people anywhere to claim asylum in this country. We pray also for all of those in the USA placed into a state of insecurity and fear by the actions and policies of the new government, and for those resisting racist assaults on their communities. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for a resolution to the conflicts and oppression which displace people, for the end of the arms trade, and the realisation of the right of people to remain in their homes. We pray for the people of Congo, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Eritrea, Sudan, Ukraine, Russia, and Palestine. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray for those who are fleeing the effects of climate change, rising sea levels, drought, flood or crop failure; 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 *Safira*, the *Nihayet*, the *Solidaire*, the *Sarah*, the *Maldusa*, the *Life Support*, the *Mission Lifeline*, the *ResQ*, the *Imara*, the *Nadir*, the *Humanity I*, the *Ocean Viking*, the *Louise Michel*, and others; of the volunteers of the Alarm Phone; and of all activists working against borders. O Lord hear our prayer, **and let our cry come unto you.**

We pray that you create in all of us the strength and resilience 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.

Concluding Prayer

by the Baptist Union of Great Britain

All: God of all humanity,
When your people were enslaved and displaced
You led them to a land that they could call home.
When your people were in exile
Your promise was that one day
They would live in streets of play and laughter.
When your disciples were afraid and uncertain,
You spoke of your Father's House
With mansions and places prepared.

We pray today for all those who have no place to call home,
Hearing the heart-cry of your word
For those who are without refuge.
Where shelter is ours to offer
Grant us the will and resolve to reflect the generosity of our Creator.
Where others stand in the way of those who need safe haven
May our cry for justice never falter.
May the idols of self-interest and economic gain
Never deflect us from the ways of your Kingdom.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn – "Christ, Be Our Light"

1 Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

2 We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

3 I will hold the Christlight for you
in the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

4 I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.

5 When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

6 Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

by Richard Gillard

All introduce themselves briefly. Any announcements are given.

*[List produced by UNITED for Intercultural Action – campaign 'Fortress Europe No More Deaths'
unitedagainstrefugeedeaths.eu – listofdeaths@unitedagainstracism.org]*