

OUR LADY OF RANSOM

4th Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) - Year C

Psalter Week 4 – 26th /27th March 2022



Wise old Fr. Makarios lived alone at the top of a mountain. A young priest visiting asked, *do you still fight with the devil?* “No, I used to” he answered, “but now I’ve grown old and tired, and the devil has grown old and tired with me, I leave him alone, and he leaves me alone”. *So your life must be easy now?* “No, far more difficult, for now I fight with God”. *You fight with God and expect to win?* “No”, said the wise old priest, “I expect to lose, and God to win”.

So true for us all. The amazing story of the Prodigal Son illustrates so beautifully two great struggles in life. In our early years we fight the devil, fighting powerful, chaotic, urgent energies and impulses - all driving and tempting us on to do wild things like the younger son in today’s parable. Money, identity, status, prestige, all sorts of struggles happen. Later in life, a second struggle begins, now, with God.

In early years, many wounds can often be concealed within this passion for life. As the years roll by, these wounds break through. The betrayals, hurts, abuses, angers all surface. Now a new struggle begins - to let go, forgive – everything - including family, church, nation, yes, even forgiving God because life has been so unfair. We see how we are now fighting God. Not so easy. Those who let go, forgive, those who do their grief-work, they are the ones who grow old gracefully, mellow-out, become wise. To not let go is the stuff of the older son in the parable. His anger, bitterness and resentment all surface. His obedience and loyalty are duty, not love. Now he fights the father (God). Can he ‘really’ beat God? He holds on, showing no love. The father (God) begs him to let go, forgive, love – *come to the party (heaven).*, *your son was dead (in hell) and is alive....all I have is yours*”. Shouldn’t all that make him happy? Will this older son die a happy or bitter old man? The younger son sinks lower than the low (hell) in wanting his father dead (give me my share...), content to eat pigs’ husks, (what’s a good Jewish boy doing with pigs and their husks?.urgh!) – but gets sensible and is forgiven – no questions asked. Do we get this?

Us too. God’s forgiveness is **wildly unconditional**. Yes, wildly unconditional – no conditions attached. He begs, yes he begs us to experience that truth so we can forgive others in turn. Finally, peace and freedom. Do we hold on, remain unfree, and stay bitter, or do we get sensible, and let God win, by letting go, forgiving, and finding peace?

God Bless, Fr. Paul

Today’s Readings

1st Reading: Joshua 5:9-12

Psalms : 33

Second Reading: 2Cor 5:17-21

Gospel: Lk. 15: 1-3,11-32



MASS INTENTIONS	
Saturday 26th March	
5.30pm Mass	Margaret Peggy O'Sullivan RIP (Angela McNicolas)
Sunday 27th March 4th Sunday of Lent ('Laetare' Sunday)	
8am Mass	Parish Community
9.30am Mass	Filomena Arcamone Barrile (Susan & Damian Lucibello)
Monday 28th	
7.15pm Mass	People of Ukraine RIP and Ints.
Tuesday 29th	
	Jean Flight RIP (Jean Wood)
Wednesday 30th	
10am Mass	Göran Bergstrom RIP (John & Marie Carman Foster)
Thursday 31st	
	Chris Graham RIP
Friday 1st April	
10am Mass	Andy Rickard RIP (Mary & Pat Rickard)
Saturday 2nd April	
5.30pm Mass	Pat Holohan RIP (Patricia Holohan)
Sunday 3rd April 5th Sunday of Lent	
8am Mass	Parish Community
9.30am Mass	John Enever RIP (John & Marie Carman Foster)

All Masses and Church Services are now Live Streamed.

***To take part please go to <https://stream.seccomgroup.com/channel/olor>
Masses can be watched "live" or later as a recording.***

<p>PARISH PRIEST Father Paul Fox 50 London Hill, Rayleigh Essex SS6 7HP 01268 382 499 www.olorchurch.org email: rayleigh@dioceseofbrentwood.org</p>	<p><u>Public Mass times:</u> Saturdays 5.30pm Sundays 8am & 9.30am Wednesdays 10.00am Fridays 10.00am <i>Please be aware - Times and days of Masses are subject to change.</i></p>
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Our Parish is part of The Brentwood Diocesan Trust, Registered Charity Number 234092

***Act of Consecration
to the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Basilica of Saint Peter
25 March 2022***

O Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, in this time of trial we turn to you. As our Mother, you love us and know us: no concern of our hearts is hidden from you. Mother of mercy, how often we have experienced your watchful care and your peaceful presence! You never cease to guide us to Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Yet we have strayed from that path of peace. We have forgotten the lesson learned from the tragedies of the last century, the sacrifice of the millions who fell in two world wars. We have disregarded the commitments we made as a community of nations. We have betrayed peoples' dreams of peace and the hopes of the young. We grew sick with greed, we thought only of our own nations and their interests, we grew indifferent and caught up in our selfish needs and concerns. We chose to ignore God, to be satisfied with our illusions, to grow arrogant and aggressive, to suppress innocent lives and to stockpile weapons. We stopped being our neighbour's keepers and stewards of our common home. We have ravaged the garden of the earth with war and by our sins we have broken the heart of our heavenly Father, who desires us to be brothers and sisters. We grew indifferent to everyone and everything except ourselves. Now with shame we cry out: Forgive us, Lord!

Holy Mother, amid the misery of our sinfulness, amid our struggles and weaknesses, amid the mystery of iniquity that is evil and war, you remind us that God never abandons us, but continues to look upon us with love, ever ready to forgive us and raise us up to new life. He has given you to us and made your Immaculate Heart a refuge for the Church and for all humanity. By God's gracious will, you are ever with us; even in the most troubled moments of our history, you are there to guide us with tender love.

We now turn to you and knock at the door of your heart. We are your beloved children. In every age you make yourself known to us, calling us to conversion. At this dark hour, help us and grant us your comfort. Say to us once more: "Am I not here, I who am your Mother?" You are able to untie the knots of our hearts and of our times. In you we place our trust. We are confident that, especially in moments of trial, you will not be deaf to our supplication and will come to our aid.

That is what you did at Cana in Galilee, when you interceded with Jesus and he worked the first of his signs. To preserve the joy of the wedding feast, you said to him: "They have no wine" (*Jn 2:3*). Now, O Mother, repeat those words and that prayer, for in our own day we have run out of the wine of hope, joy has fled, fraternity has faded. We have forgotten our humanity and squandered the gift of peace. We opened our hearts to violence and destructiveness. How greatly we need your maternal help!

Therefore, O Mother, hear our prayer.

Star of the Sea, do not let us be shipwrecked in the tempest of war.

Ark of the New Covenant, inspire projects and paths of reconciliation.

Queen of Heaven, restore God's peace to the world.

Eliminate hatred and the thirst for revenge, and teach us forgiveness.

Free us from war, protect our world from the menace of nuclear weapons.

Queen of the Rosary, make us realize our need to pray and to love.

Queen of the Human Family, show people the path of fraternity.

Queen of Peace, obtain peace for our world.

O Mother, may your sorrowful plea stir our hardened hearts. May the tears you shed for us make this valley parched by our hatred blossom anew. Amid the thunder of weapons, may your prayer turn our thoughts to peace. May your maternal touch soothe those who suffer and flee from the rain of bombs. May your motherly embrace comfort those forced to leave their homes and their native land. May your Sorrowful Heart move us to compassion and inspire us to open our doors and to care for our brothers and sisters who are injured and cast aside.

Holy Mother of God, as you stood beneath the cross, Jesus, seeing the disciple at your side, said: "Behold your son" (*Jn* 19:26). In this way he entrusted each of us to you. To the disciple, and to each of us, he said: "Behold, your Mother" (v. 27). Mother Mary, we now desire to welcome you into our lives and our history. At this hour, a weary and distraught humanity stands with you beneath the cross, needing to entrust itself to you and, through you, to consecrate itself to Christ. The people of Ukraine and Russia, who venerate you with great love, now turn to you, even as your heart beats with compassion for them and for all those peoples decimated by war, hunger, injustice and poverty.

Therefore, Mother of God and our Mother, to your Immaculate Heart we solemnly entrust and consecrate ourselves, the Church and all humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine. Accept this act that we carry out with confidence and love. Grant that war may end and peace spread throughout the world. The "Fiat" that arose from your heart opened the doors of history to the Prince of Peace. We trust that, through your heart, peace will dawn once more. To you we consecrate the future of the whole human family, the needs and expectations of every people, the anxieties and hopes of the world.

Through your intercession, may God's mercy be poured out on the earth and the gentle rhythm of peace return to mark our days. Our Lady of the "Fiat", on whom the Holy Spirit descended, restore among us the harmony that comes from God. May you, our "living fountain of hope", water the dryness of our hearts. In your womb Jesus took flesh; help us to foster the growth of communion. You once trod the streets of our world; lead us now on the paths of peace. Amen.

Pope Francis.

Helping those in the Ukraine, and Ukrainian Refugees.

Please see the end of this week's newsletter for guidance and information regarding hosting refugees.

Camino de Santiago fundraising

"The week before Holy Week, Freya, a teacher from OLOR School and her father are planning to walk over 100km over 5 days, on the famous Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, starting from Ferrol in northern Spain.

She is using the pilgrimage as an opportunity to raise money for CAFOD's Ukrainian Appeal. This is in order to set up shelters in Ukraine that provide beds, food, washing facilities, transport, psychosocial support and safe spaces for children to play.

A target of £500 has been set. Undoubtedly, a cause close to many hearts. Can you donate, however small or big? If so, please consider donating here on Freya's justgiving page below. Thank you,

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/our-lady-of-ransom-catholic-primary-school>



'Baked with Love' Cake Sale after 9.30 Mass on Sunday 27 March

James and Daniel Cevizli have gathered a team of children from the parish to do their bit for the Ukrainian refugees by baking.

All proceeds to CAFOD Ukraine appeal.

If you don't have cash on you, please do come and get some cakes. Donations can be made via this website

or by scanning the QR code www.justgiving.com/Antonia-Cevizli



PLEASE PRAY

For all the sick members in our Parish and all our relatives and friends.

† ANNIVERSARIES †

Kindly pray for Johanna McMahon, Annette Dorothy, Margaret Dommett, Dennis Green, Gladys Amato, Laszlo (Les) Balogh, David Lyons, Pamela Woods, Kenneth Buckingham, John (Pat) Holohan whose anniversary occurs about this time. May they rest in peace.

Happy Mother's Day to all our Mums.

Mums, please take a daffodil at the end of Mass.



Good Friday United Town Service here at Our Lady's.

This will be here in our church at 10am on Good Friday much like several years ago when we previously hosted it. It was considered a great success. Please come and support this wonderful Ecumenical event. Refreshments, including hot cross buns, will be available after the service.

First Holy Communion – Current Year 3 Children

Please keep an eye out in the newsletter in the summertime for details of First Holy Communion for our current Year 3 children. We *hope* to begin in the autumn.



Children's Liturgy team-

We are currently working behind the scenes to organise and update DBS paperwork so that we will soon be able to offer some children's liturgy sessions at Sunday mass. We are so looking forward to sharing sessions with our parish children again as soon as we can and will update you shortly.

"Kids" Bulletin

A children's version of the gospel is available weekly. This can be accessed on the following website: www.thekidsbulletin.com and is aimed at primary school children. It can be downloaded and printed out.



EXTRA MASS DURING LENT – Monday Evenings at 7.15pm

During Lent there will be a Monday evening Mass at 7.15pm- if this proves popular then we can make it a more permanent fixture. This is immediately followed by -

Rosary for Peace. You are invited to join us in saying the Rosary after the 7.15 pm Monday evening Mass this Lent to pray for peace in these troubled times. Let us all call on Our Lady for peace in Ukraine, in our families, and in our hearts. Any questions, call Katherine on 07906 844284 or Gisele on 07860 816263.



SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

If you are 16 years old or above and would like to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, please let Fr. Paul know **in writing, with your name and contact number explaining the reasons you wish to receive the Sacrament.** The next preparation course for Confirmation will start on Tuesday 29th March at 7pm in the Bethany Room. Thank you.

THINKING ABOUT THE CATHOLIC FAITH? ...

Perhaps you are, or maybe you know someone who has stopped coming to Church, and is wondering about returning. Or, you yourself might wish to informally ask questions, deepen your understanding and faith. Whatever your circumstances, you are welcome to come along to our Parish RCIA programme and learn more about what it means to be a Catholic Christian.



Our next programme will be starting on Monday 25th April at 8pm in the Bethany Room (covid restrictions permitting).

If you are not part of the Catholic Tradition, and you decide during the programme you would like to commit yourself to the Catholic Faith, you may be received into the Church at Easter next year.

If you are interested in joining the programme, please contact Fr. Paul for more details.

(01268 382499 / rayleigh@dioceseofbretnwood.org)

MASS AND SYMPATHY CARDS...

can be obtained at the repository shop and the presbytery.

Please contact Fr. Paul to arrange a convenient time to come, choose, collect and pay for the cards if the shop is closed.

Be part of the Walsingham House Team 2022/23:

If you will be 18+ in September, and are looking for an exciting gap year opportunity, deepening team working and practical skills in a context of youth leadership, and developing your faith, then a year on the Walsingham House Team could be perfect for you. For more information please contact Joseph Beattie, by emailing

josephbeattie@dioceseofbrentwood.org or calling 01277 373959. There is an open afternoon from 2-4pm on Sunday 10th April; for more information and to register, go to www.bcys.net/events/whopenday/

Easter Flowers

Donations for flowers at Easter would be most welcome. Envelopes are on the Repository Counter and can be left at the Presbytery or money put in the box on the wall at the back of church. Many thanks from The Flower Team

Knights Easter Raffle

Tickets for this year's Easter Raffle will be available for collection as you leave the church after weekend Masses. Please take the envelope containing the tickets and return those sold, along with the money, to the Presbytery by Sunday 10th April (Palm Sunday). The draw will take place after the 9.30 am Mass on Easter Sunday.

BCYS EVENTS

*(YOUTH MASSES take place on the **First Thursday** of **EVERY MONTH** and groups are always welcome! Please let us know in advance if you wish to bring a group, if you are able, so that we can have an idea how much pizza to order! Any groups are always welcome!)*



BCYS Youth Mass,

Thursday 7th April, Brentwood cathedral

Come along from 6pm for pizza, followed by praying the Stations of the Cross in the Cathedral for Lent, before we begin Youth Mass at 7:30pm. Open to all those in years 9 and above, no booking necessary.

(YOUTH MASS takes place on the **First Thursday** of **EVERY MONTH** and groups are always welcome! Please let us know in advance if you wish to bring a group, if you are able, so that we can have an idea how much pizza to order! Any groups are always welcome!)

BCYS Lenten Revision Retreat,

2nd - 3rd April, Walsingham House

In years 11 -13 and preparing for exams this year? Get a change of scenery and a fresh perspective at Walsingham House at Abbotswick this lent for times of prayer, socialising and activities, but mostly to revise, alongside friends and the Walsingham House team members. As always the chapel is here for times of quiet reflection throughout the day. Book online NOW at www.bcys.net/events.

Sponsored Sleep out

8th - 9th April, 8pm - 8am

Wherever you are in the Diocese, take part in your gardens, schools or parishes, on your own or as part of a group and spend 12 hours sleeping rough outdoors to raise money for a local charity supporting the homeless. Email sleepout@dioceseofbrentwood.org for more information and to take part.

Booking for all these events, and all information, can be done online at www.bcys.net/events or you can email me with any questions.

Brentwood Catholic Children's Society has several charity Gold Bond places for the **TCS London Marathon** taking place on the iconic London course on Sunday 2nd October 2022. If you would like to be considered for one of our places and think you could raise a fundraising total of £1800 before Gift Aid, please email Julie jabbott@bccs.org.uk All information is available on our website where our application form can be downloaded: <https://www.bccs.org.uk/fundraising-and-events/all-events/tcs-london-marathon> **Please note that the closing date for applications is Friday 8th April.** Thank you.

Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham – 28th May 2022:

Join Bishop Alan and other parishes around the Diocese of Brentwood in Walsingham as we celebrate the Year of the Family 'Hearing and Doing the Word of God'.

We will celebrate Mass at the Basilica before walking the Holy Mile to the grounds of Walsingham Abbey to celebrate Vespers and Benediction on the site of the Holy House.

If you are interested in going please speak to Fr Paul.

THE DIOCESAN LOURDES PILGRIMAGE IN 2022, led by Bishop Alan, will take place from Sunday 24 – Friday 29 July in Lourdes. Costs have not yet been confirmed.

This will be the first time in three years that the diocese has returned to Lourdes. Brochures for the pilgrimage, which will include costs, will be available soon. If you would like further information now, please contact Cathy O'Connor, the Administrative Director: cathy@dioceseofbrentwood.org or 07813 710070.

Fully escorted PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK SHRINE, IRELAND, 23rd May 2022.

£699.00 per person sharing. Price includes flight with 10kg hand luggage, all transfers, 4 nights' in Knock House Hotel with full board. All entertainment and excursions included. Lunches on days out. Wheelchair accessible rooms. Single room supplement £100. Contact Patricia on 01268 762 278 or 07740 175557 or email knockpilgrimages@gmail.com. Knock Pilgrimages is a member of the Travel Trust Association and is fully protected by ATOL T7613.

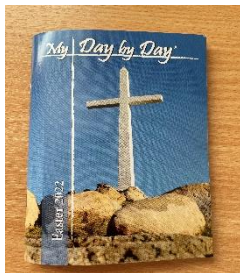
PRAYING THE HOURS

Three short videos are now available on www.whatgoodnews.org introducing The Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office. Fr Adrian Graffy is in conversation with Sr Anne Spielberg and Fr Gerard Bradley. The different hours are explored and at the end of part 3 links are provided for text and livestream of the Office in various languages. Simply go to the website, scroll down on the home page and click on 'Praying the Hours'.

Brentwood Catholic Children's Society

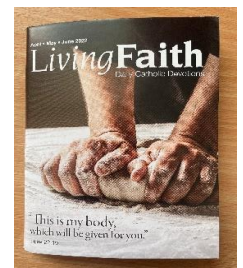
Please find link for the electronic version of the BCCS Easter Newsletter:

https://www.bccs.org.uk/application/files/2616/4734/6129/bccs_Easter_2022_Newsletter_single_page.pdf



My Day by Day and Living Faith Books

New Day by Day Easter books and Living Faith for April, May and June are available at the back of the church from this weekend. £1 each. Please put the funds in the pot beside the books. Many thanks.



Headteacher - St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Upminster

Required from 1st September 2022. Group 3: L18-24a (Outer London). NOR: 420 (2 form entry).

The governors of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Upminster, are seeking to appoint an inspirational and dedicated Head Teacher due to the retirement of the current Head Teacher. St Joseph's is a nurturing and welcoming community with Christ at the centre. Our new Head Teacher will work with supportive governors to shape the strategic direction of the school, and will be responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of St Joseph's.

Deadline for applications: 5:00 pm on Friday 29th April 2022. We warmly welcome and encourage applicants to visit our school. Please contact the school office on office@st-josephs.havering.sch.uk to arrange. Further information and an application pack are available from the school website: www.st-josephs-upminster.net

St Benedict's Catholic College - Lay Chaplain

The pay band for the role is Scale 7 (scp 19 to 24), which is £24,927 to £29,174.15 hours per week, Monday to Friday

Applications will only be accepted on the college application form (which can be downloaded from our Website) and should be emailed to Mrs Angela Jones HR Administrator at a.jones@stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk. CVs will not be accepted.

For further details about the role, please contact Mrs Jo Santinelli, Principal on 01206 549222 and for further details about the college, please go to our website www.stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk.

The closing date for applications is midday on Friday 29th April and interviews will be held w/b 16th May 2022.



St Benedict's Catholic College - Chaplaincy Apprentice/"Gap Year" Lay Chaplain Fixed term for 2 years (linked to duration of study)

37 hours per week, Monday to Friday and this will be required term time, plus five staff training days, plus 37 hours to be used flexibly during the year to support extra-curricular events and other key duties.

The pay band for the role is Scale 3 (scp 4 to 5), The actual salary for the role is £16,847.69 to £17,185.27 (under 5 years' service) or £17,069.37 to £17,411.39 (over 5 years' service).

The Governing Body is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all young people and expects all staff to share that commitment. The successful applicant will be required to complete an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.

Applications will only be accepted on the college application form (which can be downloaded from our Website) and should be emailed to Mrs Angela Jones HR Administrator at a.jones@stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk. CVs will not be accepted.

For further details about the role, please contact Mrs Jo Santinelli, Principal on 01206 549222 and for further details about the college, please go to our website www.stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk.

The closing date for applications is midday on Friday 29th April and interviews will be held w/c 16th May 2022.

FACE COVERINGS:

Although the legal requirement to wear a face covering no longer applies, the government suggests you continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces. ***We strongly encourage parishioners to continue wearing a face covering/mask while moving around the Church. While you are in your place in Church, please feel free to remove your face covering if you so wish.***

Beginning Experience Weekend:

If you are single again following divorce, separation or the death of your partner, a residential weekend to help you to heal will be held from 8th to 10th April 2022 at the Sion Community, Brentwood, Essex. If you would like more details, please ring Freda 01322-838415 or Maura 07795-498445 or email besouthofengland@gmail.com

PUBLIC MASSES

Please do not come if you have symptoms, sniffles, sneezes, coughs, immunity issues etc.

Use common sense and think of others.

Social Distance should be maintained as much as possible – again – out of mutual respect.

Please continue to follow only the directions of the Welcomers.

Holy Communion only to be received on the hand for added protection.

The church will continue to be both cleansed and sanitised regularly

Wash your hands, cover your face, make space.



NEWSLETTER ITEMS:

Please ensure all items for the parish newsletter are submitted to the office by midday on Thursdays.

PLEASE SAVE YOUR USED STAMPS....

Please continue to save your used stamps and leave them in the container in the Porch.

Ruth Fitzgerald would like to thank everyone who has donated used stamps – these have been passed on to the MS charity.

OFFERTORY CONTRIBUTIONS

Thanks to all who continue to support our parish financially.

DONATIONS USING QR CODES

To avoid having too much cash lying around, it is now possible to make donations in Church using your mobile phone and QR codes.

There are notices in the porch for contributions to the parish



ONLINE DONATIONS

To make a donation online go to <https://stream.seccomgroup.com/donations/olor>

GIFT AID / ENVELOPES. If you are a taxpayer and donate to the parish online, it's worth a reminder that we could get **an extra 25%** on your donations if you sign up to the Gift Aid scheme.

Please contact Sandra our Gift Aid Co-ordinator

(olorgiftaid@hotmail.com / 01268 772998) if you have any questions. Thank you.



Hosting a Refugee.

Food, admin, their own TV — how to make a refugee feel welcome



Displaced women and children like Olga and her son David are in need of help

In the midst of a dreadful news cycle, it was heartening to hear last week that within days of the launch of the government's [Homes for Ukraine](#) scheme, more than

130,000 people applied to host refugees. In order to be accepted, a host is expected to provide a room rent-free for a minimum of six months (they will be offered £350 a month to

help with expenses). Most volunteers will have no experience of taking in a displaced person, so if your application goes through, how can you make your newly extended household a happy one for everyone in it?

Mike Levy, a researcher for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, says we can learn from history. His book *Get the Children Out!* focuses on the Kindertransport — a rescue effort in the months before the Second World War that brought children to the UK from Nazi-controlled countries.

“Many of those young refugees arrived traumatised,” he explains. “Bed-wetting, nightmares and morose behaviour, often cruelly interpreted by foster parents as ungrateful attitudes, were not uncommon. And often foster parents were not aware of dietary restrictions. They might serve a ‘good English breakfast’ of pork sausage and bacon to an Orthodox Jewish child.”

Hosting can present unexpected challenges and there is a lot to be considered before your new housemates arrive.

Preparing to host

At the moment it is possible to sponsor only a named Ukrainian — that is, someone you know personally — but charities are stepping in to make introductions. Though the government has yet to clarify many of the logistics, it has confirmed that hosts and guests alike will be subject to security checks.

Daisy Garnett, a journalist, and her family hosted a Syrian man, Ali, for three weeks earlier this year. The stay was organised by the charity Refugees at Home. Ali had been in the UK for some years but needed short-term accommodation in London in order to sit dentistry exams.

The checks, Garnett says, were straightforward: she showed the charity the house and supplied two references, then cleared space for Ali in her stepdaughter’s room (she was away at university). “The charity gave us a full description of him, his age, what he does, his hobbies and his temperament,” Garnett says. They were also provided with information about his dietary requirements: “We bought halal meat.”



Ukrainians take refuge in an underground station in Kharkiv, which has been heavily damaged by Russian forces

Providing a thoughtful welcome to your guests can get you off on the right foot. “I think what’s really important is the little touches that make the place feel nice,” says Gabriella Brent, head of programmes at the charity Refugee Trauma Initiative. “Often an effort makes somebody feel cared for — whether leaving flowers in their room or inviting them to a welcome meal.”

While they’re with you

The government says hosts will not be responsible for helping refugees access benefits, register with a GP or get children into school — other organisations will offer this support. That said, extra help may be needed. In 2016, Emily and her husband hosted a 22-year-old Syrian refugee, Malva (not their real names), for six months. “I was quite naive about what it would involve in terms of her dependence on us,” says Emily. “The bureaucratic machine a refugee gets thrown into is unbelievably complicated.”

Essa El Hajy discovered this when he arrived in the UK from Syria as a refugee in 2016, aged 21. He says the practical support his hosts offered was invaluable. “I didn’t know anybody in the UK and I only knew a few English words,” he says. “As soon as I arrived, they said to me, ‘Don’t worry, we’re here to help you’. They taught me a lot about the systems and routines

in this country, and how to treat people here. They did a language lesson with me every day and helped me study. I needed them — on my own I couldn't have done it. I would have been lost." El Hajy now works in construction but still sees his host family frequently. Steve Louis helped establish schemes for two refugee families in his town in Buckinghamshire — the families, who come from Syria and Afghanistan, are housed independently but get structured support from the community.

"The key thing I've learnt is the importance of social capital," he says. "Money and housing are important, but what is easy to overlook is that we all know how to go about trying to get a job here, or how the school system works. If you're arriving from overseas, you don't know any of that stuff, and that's how communities can really help."



Thousands of Jewish children were evacuated from Germany and Austria before the outbreak of WW2

He recommends hosts set up their own informal community: "It would be very useful to have a group of mates who could share the load. Maybe one friend is helping with education, or another with getting a driving licence, and someone else will take them to the doctor if there are medical issues."

Try to let go of any expectations about how a refugee should behave. "There is an awful stereotype that they should be constantly grateful, and immediately be really industrious and find a job," says Emily. "As a host you're just there to provide a space. Don't expect too much, and don't project any ideas about how a refugee should be operating."

Bear in mind that your guest may feel overwhelmed. "Don't expect constant signs of gratitude for your kindness — remember what the families have been through," counsels Levy.

Psychological support

Trauma can present itself in different ways. "Some people can go into shock and be disassociated from feelings," says Brent. "Others can be in a practical, go-go-go mode, or in a very agitated, anxious state. What is important is that hosts learn about trauma-informed care." She recommends the charity's free online course, Introduction to Setting up Safe Spaces (refugeetrauma.org/intro-training). Citizens UK and Reset also provide training in supporting refugee families.

In terms of discussing traumatic events, be led by your guest. "It's not always helpful to ask direct questions," says Brent. "Good questions might be: 'How did you sleep?', 'How are you doing today?'. Usually somebody will open up if they need to.'



The German president Frank-Walter Steinmeier meets refugees from Ukraine

Sharing a space

El Hajy appreciated his hosts explaining some basic rules early on. "They told me I wasn't allowed to smoke inside the house, so I didn't. They said, 'Please don't come home late and

make noise'. It's best just to be clear — because a refugee may not know what you expect, as they come from a different culture. It's better to know upfront rather than make mistakes and upset each other."

If there are things your guest needs to know about your home and the housework, it's a good idea to let them settle in first. "What isn't very nice as soon as you arrive in a different country is to have a bunch of rules given to you," says Brent. "That can feel very ungenerous and insensitive."

It is also helpful to make sure there's enough personal space, not only in their bedroom but in shared parts of your home, Brent says. Extend invitations but don't assume your guests will always say yes — and be patient, she advises.

The Garnetts decided as a family that they would like Ali to eat dinner with them. They discussed it with him and he agreed. They usually prepared vegetarian food. El Hajy joined his hosts for dinner as well, and enjoyed preparing Syrian meals for them.

When it came to chores, the Garnetts didn't ask Ali to muck in, but they showed him where the products were in case he wanted to clean his bedroom. "I didn't go into his room — I tried to keep that private," says Garnett. "I told him, 'I'm very happy for you to put your laundry in the basket and we'll do it, but if you'd rather do your own, I can show you how to use the machine'."

There may be a language barrier but that doesn't mean you can't connect. "If you're confident that your guest wants that connection, you can go for walks together, play sports, listen to music or be creative," says Brent.

The likelihood is that you won't cohabit forever. "Make it clear what your hard stop is in terms of the time that you can offer, but also work out practical things that you can do towards the end of that period, to help them prepare for leaving," advises Emily. "Most people do want to get their own space as quickly as possible." That said, your relationship won't necessarily end. "In our case it absolutely didn't — Malva is still in our lives, and I still help her out."

Beyond Ukraine

While Garnett's family is in the process of arranging to host a Ukrainian mother and child, she makes the point that there are many refugees here from other countries who still need a home, even if they're not new arrivals. It's not simply that hosting is a kind thing to do, she adds: "It's interesting and broadens your horizons. We like having people in our house — it makes us all behave better."

Links are below.

https://cuk.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJluc-CtgzojGNygZpMb_LytJZk3nYA3MGfe?link_id=0&can_id=216314e46591144378a3f50cdbb09403&source=email-welcoming-ukrainians-join-our-webinar-on-monday&email_referrer=email_1477979&email_subject=welcoming-ukrainians-join-our-webinar-on-monday

<https://www.caritasbrentwood.org/ukraine/>

[Homes for Ukraine – a British welcome for refugees from Ukraine](#)

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/blogs/1/2024/homes-for-ukraine-a-british-welcome-for-refugees-from-ukraine>