



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

July 2022

**Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton**

Dear Friends,

"Why do we pray for the Ukraine? Nothing is going to change so it's a waste of time" was said in a recent TV news programme. Maybe some of you reading this will feel the same way. For me it was certainly something to ponder.

You may be old enough to remember the 2nd World War. Did people stop praying then? Church attendances were high, husbands, and sons were mostly involved in the fighting and no doubt their families continually prayed for the safe return of their loved ones. Women were called up to work on the land, in factories or driving ambulances etc. Our Queen, then a teenage princess, was one of them. They too, no doubt, prayed for an end to the fighting. That war did end after almost 6 years.

We may ask ourselves why God does not answer our prayers immediately but we need to consider perhaps something of what God can do as much as what he does seem to do. I believe we have been given a life with freedom to more or less do as we like. This is perhaps explained by the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. Eve having been tempted offered the apple from the tree of knowledge to Adam. They both knew God had forbidden it – the only thing he forbade them to do – and there was the first and fatal sin. Humans knew both good and evil and could, in effect, do as they liked. So while many chose to try and live a loving and honest life, others took the opposite view through greed, hate, self-serving. Where we come across wrong-doing, injustice and murder etc. there we see evil, and there is the devil – inside humankind. But because God is just and has accepted we all have this freedom, I believe that by his own rules, to some extent, he has to let us get on with it. We can only pray that there are more good and wise rulers, than violent and unjust rulers and that somehow, through the just and righteous thinking of peoples and nations, good will always triumph over evil. History shows us that over time the good in the human race is the victor.

Prayer is not useless, God does not ignore us. He gives us strength to carry on and to overcome our fears in all sorts of ways. Pray for that inner strength, pray that the aggressors will have a change of heart, for all involved. Pray for the families and refugees that they will be able to return to their homelands, for the peacemakers and for all who suffer in any way or are bereaved. Continue to pray for your own family and friends. God's thoughts and ways are not the same as ours, but he will be with all who call on Him and in time there will be a healing.

With my best wishes