

Hosting Ukranian Refugees in Grampound

Clare Jenkins, Church warden at St Nuns, Grampound writes...

It is Ukrainian Independence Day and three months since our lovely Natasha and Olenka, her daughter, joined us.

Like most who watched in disbelief as Russia invaded Ukraine, we felt impotent as photos and news reel appeared showing carnage. Apart from pray the only thing we felt we could do was to shelter fleeing refugees. The process



was chaotic but a Facebook group set up in St Austell (St Austell homes for Ukraine, run by an amazing couple the Toogoods) enabled us to be matched with our lovely ladies from Kiev.

Olenka at 16 is totally fluent in English and we were astonished that her French was as good. Natasha relies on her translator but slowly and surely is getting more confident in speaking. They both got jobs helping in the Alverton hotel and Olenka is preparing to go to college. Like most refugees, Natasha's husband remains in Ukraine but they speak daily. Natasha announced when she arrived that she knows what it is like to have worked all your life and to lose everything. She says it has made her appreciate what is truly important and for her it is God and her family.

They are Christians and have accompanied us to church. Fellow members of St Nuns in Grampound also took on refugees in the hope we would have some form of community for them. WE have been lucky in that our family just feels bigger.... despite all the niggles it was so worth it. The pointless war drags on ruining lives. Small acts of kindness and a bit of laughter seem to be the one thing we can do.... if you've been thinking about looking after a Ukrainian refugee then I'd recommend it!