

The Parish Church of St Anne, Kew



SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM

Year 2: First meeting. Saturday 26 November, 2016, 10-12.

FOCUS on REFUGEES 5

Programme

1. Welcome, introductions, guide to session and update
2. Liturgy
3. Study
4. Silent prayer and reflection
5. Drawing up a statement of commitment for St Anne's, chaired by Marion Mollett.
6. Local developments and diary dates
7. Closing prayers

2. LITURGY

Leader: Lord have mercy

All: Christ have mercy

Leader: Lord have mercy

Leader: For those caught in conflict, whose life hangs in the balance, we cry out

All: Lord have mercy

Leader: For those who cannot escape, trapped by war raging around them, paralysed by fear or faced with an impassable ocean, we cry out

All: Christ have mercy

Leader: For those who flee leaving behind all that they have known, venturing into new and strange places, we cry out

All: Lord have mercy

Leader: For those who are here, at the end of a perilous journey, now faced with a new uncertain path, we cry out

All: Lord have mercy

Leader: Merciful God, help us to act with compassion, to welcome with love, to put the needs of our neighbours before our own. Inspire us to pray, to act, to be the people of hope that you call us to be.

All: Hear us as we cry out, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(from: Church of Scotland, worship resources in response to the refugee crisis)

3. STUDY:

i. Extract from House of Commons Home Affairs Committee Report, Migration Crisis, 03 August 2016

After a year-long inquiry, the Home Affairs Committee says EU action to address a crisis it should have foreseen has been "too little, too late", with the EU-Turkey agreement a partial solution at best which raises serious humanitarian, human rights, logistical and legal concerns.

The report publishes for the first time the number of Syrian refugees resettled in each local authority area. These figures show many Local Authorities (LAs) are not pulling their weight in resettling Syrian refugees, and there is scant evidence that the Government is on track to meet its commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrians by 2020.

The current numbers of people seeking to move into Europe are "unprecedented in modern times". The Archbishop of Canterbury has described the scale of the crisis as "colossal".

There were 1,255,640 first-time applications for asylum in EU member states in 2015, double the 562,680 in 2014, with over half of these from ongoing war-torn countries Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Contrary to popular perceptions, only 3.1% of these were in the UK, and in January 2016, 55% of the irregular migrants arriving in the EU were women and children.

It is estimated that in the first six months of 2016 a staggering 227,316 migrants had entered Europe by sea, arriving in Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Spain, with Libya as the main departure point, followed by Egypt. Nearly 3,000 of these are thought to have died in the attempt...

The approach taken by the then Foreign Secretary in respect of Libya, where a reported 500,000 people are waiting to cross the Mediterranean illegally, is complacent. Given the UK's involvement in the Libyan civil war and in the rebuilding and reconciliation efforts which have followed, the EU should be able to offer Libya a deal, with substantial funding provided to tackle people smuggling at the points of departure, and access to Libyan territorial waters for European country vessels agreed in return.

Thousands of those in the Calais Jungle are Syrians, Eritreans, Sudanese, Iranians and Iraqis, including many children, many of whom have family members in the UK or other ties to this country. It is clear that many people in these camps are entitled to humanitarian protection or refugee status, and that their claims should be processed in the UK. Much more could and should be done through family reunion and accepting unaccompanied children, including increased use of safe and legal migration routes.

The Committee says it has yet to see any evidence of a strategy designed to deliver a long-term solution to the presence of the camps, where experts testify to appalling conditions leading to sickness and suffering: a further unacceptable lack of preparation and planning that must be addressed immediately by the French and UK governments together.

Allowing unaccompanied children to join family members already in the UK might result in more vulnerable young people making dangerous journeys to try to reach the UK, but the Committee agrees with the Bishop of Durham that the 157 unaccompanied children now in Calais who have family members in the UK "should already have arrived" in the UK. The Government should as a one-off accept all of these children into the UK now.

Note: *The French evacuated 6,400 migrants from the encampment in 170 buses, starting on 24 October 2016, with the intent of resettling the migrants in different regions of France. On 26 October 2016, French authorities announced that the camp had been cleared. (Source: Wikipedia, 15.11.16)*

ii. Population of Richmond, mid 2014: 193,585

iii. Extract from Pope Francis, extracts from his message for the 2017 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, January 15, 2017

Migration today is not a phenomenon limited to some areas of the planet. It affects all continents and is growing into a tragic situation of global proportions.We need to become aware that the phenomenon of migration is not unrelated to salvation history, but rather a part of that history. One of God's commandments is connected to it: "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (*Ex 22:21*); "Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (*Deut 10:19*). This phenomenon constitutes *a sign of the times*, a sign that speaks of the providential work of God in history and in the human community, with a view to universal communion. While appreciating the issues, and often the suffering and tragedy of migration, as too the difficulties connected with the demands of offering a dignified welcome to these persons, the Church nevertheless encourages us to recognize God's plan. She invites us to do this precisely amidst this phenomenon, with the certainty that no one is a stranger in the Christian community, which embraces "every nation, tribe, people and tongue" (*Rev 7:9*). Each person is precious; persons are more important than things, and the worth of an institution is measured by the way it treats the life and dignity of human beings, particularly when they are vulnerable, as in the case of child migrants. ... 8 September 2016

iv. Remembering Syria. Extracts from 2016 report from the UNHCR representative in Syria: Sajjad Malik

The crisis in Syria entered its sixth year in March and humanitarian needs are staggering, with **13.5 million people in need of life saving aid** and nearly **five million refugees** fleeing across the borders, often making perilous journeys, some even losing their loved ones along the way. There are also **6.5 million internally displaced, with 5.9 million people living in hard-to-reach areas** and besieged areas without regular access to humanitarian assistance.

The impact of the conflict in Syria is complex and wide ranging, and amongst the many heartbreaking things, it has caused forced displacement, sudden destitution, crumbling infrastructures, the breakup of families and whole communities, as well as the collapse of the normal social structures in some areas.

The protection needs of the Syrian population are massive and agencies face huge challenges in terms of access and reach to meet their needs. ... We have used, and will continue to use, every avenue available to provide protection to the most vulnerable people throughout Syria. ...

Despite the very difficult, challenging and at times, volatile operating conditions, UNHCR, continues to also provide other types of humanitarian assistance to those in need throughout Syria. ... We have also continued to deliver assistance in areas that are besieged and very hard to reach ...

The winter conditions in Syria are very harsh, with temperatures often falling as low as minus 13 degrees centigrade in many areas throughout the country, causing great suffering. ... While the conflict rages on, with millions displaced internally, and externally as refugees, and the destruction in many parts of the country continues, Syrians are hopeful that peace will return to their beautiful country and that they can rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

Despite everything that is happening, there are many heart warming stories that bring the hope, joy, strength and determination contained in this report: people returning to their homes, tradesmen who lost everything starting to work again after receiving our livelihood tool kits, individuals undertaking vocational training and opening small businesses with the UNHCR-supported small loans or start up grants, as well as everyday milestones and other daily life occurrences that show strength and a determination to go on no matter what.

Being in Syria now close to one year, I have witnessed firsthand the resilience, pride, dignity and adaptability of the Syrian people, especially the internally displaced. We, the UNHCR Syria family, resolve that, despite the lingering war and its bitter reality, we will continue to reach those in need with our dedicated staff and our partners, regardless of their location, and will strive to lessen the hardships of the people of Syria. I hope that peace will soon come to Syria and look forward to the day when I will see UNHCR assisting in the rebuilding of this beautiful country.

4. SILENT PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Prayers

Lord Jesus, as a child you were a refugee in Egypt. Have compassion on all who are refugees today and teach us your compassion. Guide our world leaders to act with integrity and justice, and your Church to proclaim your mercy.

Lord of compassion and love, may our eyes see those who are suffering on our shores as Christ sees them, may our ears hear their stories, their grief, their desperation and their hope. May what we see and hear reach our hearts so that we respond to their human need before any other consideration. Free us from preconceived ideas about migrants and from the prejudices that build borders, walls and fences, around hearts and between countries. Give us the grace to love those who have fled from war and persecution and all who have lost homes and loved ones before making the

hazardous journey to our shores. May we obey Christ's commandment to love them as we love ourselves and so accept them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen (*Eileen Routh*)

O God, you keep us company in the heart of our suffering and helplessness. All our hope is in you. Give courage and confidence to those who seek safety in our country. Stay with them, protect them, surround them with your love. Inspire them always to carry something beautiful in their hearts and keep them from being crushed and embittered by their sorrows. We trust that through loving kindness, solidarity and practical help, given and received in your name, O God, that a bright bridge will be built across the dark chasm of injustice and conflict towards a new dawn. Amen.

(*Sister Teresa White FCJ – Faithful Companion of Jesus*)

Almighty Father, whose Son Jesus Christ has taught us that what we do for the least of our brethren, we do also for him; give us the will to be the servant of others as he was the servant of all, who gave up his life and died for us, but is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *Collect for 11th Sunday after Pentecost*

Reflections

I am only one but still I am one. I cannot do everything but still I can do something; and because I cannot do *everything*, I will not refuse to do something that I can do. *Helen Keller (1880-1968) was born a healthy baby in Alabama, USA, but aged two, was left deaf and blind by an illness. She became one of the 20th century's leading humanitarians.*

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality. *Desmond Tutu.*

Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which must look out Christ's compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless people now. *St Theresa of Avila.*

In a world where there is so much luxury amid so much poverty, those of us who have, need to share with those who don't. There is so much suffering, and the needs are so great, yet every one of us can do something to make a difference. ... As a mother who lives a comfortable life, I can't sit by and watch the suffering of millions without doing something. ... My approach is for us to give what we can, sharing the good clothes, shoes, money and other essentials that we have, with those who have nothing. We give our best, not

our cast offs, because we want the humanitarian aid we send to be a message of hope and encouragement. *From front page of Samara's aid appeal, www.samaraaidappeal.org*

5. DRAWING UP A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT FOR ST ANNE'S

6a. LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Breaking Barriers. Sally Cannon writes: "Our group of 12 volunteers (which includes two members of the Social Justice Forum: Sue Lloyd and Sally Cannon) is now giving weekly support to refugees at the Breaking Barriers drop in centre in Clapham. Each refugee has very different needs and we are all learning fast how best to help them. There is always great celebration when one of the clients gets an interview or a job! Additional volunteers would be very welcome to join us after Christmas".

2. Refugee Action Kingston. Marjorie Evans had a very enjoyable meeting with Jenny Arokiasamy, the manager of Refugee Action Kingston. A new centre will be available soon in Surbiton and Jenny would like help with a group she hopes will meet there for discussion on community matters. www.refugeeactionkingston.org.uk/

3. CARAS. Claudine visited on November 23rd www.caras.org.uk

3. The Queen's School collection in support of the Samara Aid appeal. Over 55 boxes were packed in October and sent to Syria to help displaced Syrians. www.samaraaidappeal.org

4. Refugees Welcome in Richmond (RWinR) This is the initiative in which Churches Together in Kew (CTinK) are involved, to try, with the support of Richmond Council, to find private rented housing in our borough for 50 Syrian refugee households, currently living in refugee camps as there is nowhere for them to go. The most recent meeting was held on November 11th. Two families are about to arrive in two properties in Whitton, owned by Caritas, the Roman Catholic Charity. RWinR will continue to focus their efforts on finding more rental properties for Syrian families within LBRuT. More effort will be made to distribute the housing flyer by setting up tables in various public spaces around the borough. Valerie Booth, Elizabeth Byrne-Hill and Rosy Harvey plan to have a table at the next Kew Farmers Market. RWinR will also compile details of support available for the refugees when they arrive. www.refugeeswelcomeinrichmond.org/properties/ .

6b. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2017

11 January	Refugees Welcome in Richmond meeting, 7.30pm, venue to be confirmed. Local contact: Valerie Booth. val.booth123@btinternet.com
13 – 15 January	Migration in Europe. Christians Aware conference, Swanwick, Derbyshire. www.christiansaware.co.uk
15 January	World Day of Refugees and Migrants is celebrated by the Roman Catholic Church world wide
11 February	Next Social Justice Forum meeting with a talk by Judge John Manuell (8am attender)
20 May	Social Justice Forum meeting –led prayer in the Church, by Sister Sue, Community of St Francis.
24-26 May	Understanding Islam, three day course by Chris Hewer, in Kew (eight places available)
19-25 June	Refugee Week 2017

7. CLOSING PRAYER: the Lord’s Prayer together (slowly!).

REFERENCES

1. Churches Together in Britain, The European refugee crisis: CTBI delegation report, September 2015. This report has many photographs and quotations, giving us a helpful picture of the ‘situation on the ground’ in Greece this time last year.

2. Church of England Mission Theology Advisory Group (MTAG): Mission, Migrants and Refugees. This (undated but recent) report is helpful on theology and goes well with the bible studies on Asylum, see below.

3. The Reverend Canon Anthony Harvey, Asylum in Britain, six Bible Studies www.churchofengland.org/ourfaith/mission/mission-theology.aspx

4. House of Commons Home Affairs Committee report, Migration Crisis, August 2016:

[Read the key facts](#)

[Read the report conclusions and recommendations](#)

[Read the full report: Migration Crisis](#)

5. November 3: Government response to the House of Lords European Union Committee report – Children in Crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU, published on 26 July 2016. (See www.parliament.uk for the report and the Government’s response)

Below is a copy of a report written by Claudine and Christopher on the first year of the Social Justice Forum. Thank you to everyone who filled in the questionnaire.

SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM, report on first year for the Ministry & Mission Committee and the PCC.

1. The Social Justice Forum.

The idea of the Forum came from Celebration300, a sense of thanksgiving for all that we share at St Anne’s, and an increase in the outward-looking mission of the church as shown by a series of café evenings. The Forum is complementary to the Ministry and Mission committee, acting as a locus of active concern for social justice in our church. The idea was that a small group of committed people would meet together four times a year to pray, study and act on different issues of social justice. Prayer is seen as fundamental, since we are trying to discern what God is asking of us, the people of St Anne’s Kew, now, in relation to the great suffering and injustice of our world. By social justice, we understand how all that we have been given is from God and is shared between us (the social bit), and how fair or unfair these shares are (the justice bit). Inequality, wealth and poverty are the underlying topics but at the launch meeting on 2 November 2015 those present decided that the Forum should focus on refugees in our first year.

2. Attendance at Year 1 meetings

Four meetings were held over the Church’s year, in December 2015, February, May and October 2016. They have been jointly convened by Christopher Stephens and Claudine McCreadie. Thirty people are on an email list. Attendance has been as follows:

	December 2015	February 2016	May 2016	October 2016
Number of participants	21	16	13	13
Apologies	3	6	9	9

3. Format of meetings

Meetings last two hours. The first hour focuses on study and prayer, the second on action. Claudine produces a hand-out, professionalised in the Parish Office, which is afterwards available on the St Anne's web site.

4. Outcomes

a. Contact has been established with four organisations:

i. **Breaking Barriers**, a new charity whose aim is to establish refugees in employment for which they prior experience and skills. Four members of St Anne's are involved as volunteers. Link person: Sally Cannon (8am attender)

ii. **CARAS** (Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers), a Tooting based charity that provides help and support to refugees and asylum seekers in South London. We had talks from two of the trustees at our February meeting and at the Harvest Supper and a collection for them at the Harvest Services (over £1000 with gift aid). The **Chickpea Sisters** is a social enterprise in catering, set up under the auspices of CARAS. They provided our harvest supper. Proceeds from the Advent Fair are to be given to CARAS. Link person: Judith Evans, a patron of CARAS (8am attender).

iii. **Refugee Action Kingston** provide a variety of services to refugees and asylum seekers in the Kingston area. Link people: Marjorie Evans and Daphne Jowit (10am attenders)

iv. **Refugees Welcome in Richmond** is a group, working with Richmond Borough, that is dedicated to finding housing for fifty households under the government's scheme to bring in 20,000 Syrian refugees from refugee camps. We are in touch with them through Churches Together in Kew. Link people: Claudine McCreadie (8am attender) and Annabel Clark (CTiK representative for St Anne's)

b. Written materials

i. the **handout** for each meeting gives facts, bible references, prayers, reflections, web site references and updates on what is happening at St Anne's, in Kew and Richmond, nationally and internationally. The handouts are available on the St Anne's web site and at the back of the church (paper copy);

ii. **signposting** material was displayed for six months, giving a wide range of material about the different ways in which we can all help refugees;

iii. a **shorter guide to helping** was compiled from this, was distributed at the harvest services and is available on the St Anne's web site and on the church notice board.

c. Worship

i. our **Harvest services** focused on refugees. Our guest preacher was the Reverend Canon Professor Nicholas Sagovsky who has worked over many years with refugees and asylum seekers. His sermon is on the St Anne's web site.

ii. **Prayer vigil** under the auspices of Churches Together in Kew, was held at St Anne's during Refugee Week, June 2016.

5. Views of those involved in Social Justice Forum

We gave out a questionnaire at the October meeting and also asked for email responses. Eleven (excluding Claudine and Christopher) responded at the meeting and two by email.

Meetings attended	One	Two	Three	Four	No reply	Total
People attending	1	3	6	1	2	13

We asked whether people found various aspects of the meeting very helpful, or not so helpful. The numbers finding these aspects very helpful were as follows:

Handout	13	Web sites	7	Silent prayer	7
Bible reflection	10	CARAS talk	7		

We also asked about people's involvement in activities:

Harvest supper	6	Breaking Barriers	2
Harvest service	6	Refugees Welcome in Richmond	-

In a separate questionnaire, we asked eight members of the SJF for their views about the Harvest weekend. There were very positive comments, and here is a sample:

'What really worked well was sharing a meal with a refugee... this helped to recognise difference... but also find common ground'.

'Understanding serious matters can be combined with enjoyable occasions.'

'I was impressed how lively the evening was. There was a buzz right from the start. Everyone cheerfully ate the delicious food even though for some it was unfamiliar'.

‘Now that we have hosted one event of this kind, we will be willing/able/enthusiastic to host others in future’

‘We should reflect upon the experience and build upon the positive outcome... perhaps trying to ensure that future Harvest Suppers always try to engage with an outside group/charity

‘Think about some other events like this that we could host, or co-host ... in the kitchen we were just working together on a joint task – that was so rewarding’.

‘The ... sermon ... on Christian response to refugees was thought provoking and was quite a rallying call to individual and collective action’

‘Inspiring and informative, focusing our minds on our Christian responsibilities’.

In the questionnaire, we also asked for comments on what respondents would like the Social Justice Forum (SJF) and St Anne’s Church to be doing about refugees in the coming year. There was a general view that both should continue to support refugees, particularly in respect of housing.

6. Plans for Year 2.

i. Continue focus on refugees

ii. Meeting on 26 November 2016. Draw up statement of commitment by St Anne’s to the support of refugees, leading to adoption and publication.

iii. Meeting on 11 February 2017. Talk by John Manuell (8am attender) about his work as a Senior Immigration judge.

iv. Meeting on 21 May 2017. Led prayer in the Church around social justice and refugees. Leader: Sister Sue, Community of Saint Francis (Anglican Franciscans)

v. Meeting in October. Date and focus to be decided.

vi. Regular hand-outs on lines of Year 1

vii. Ongoing contact with Breaking Barriers, through volunteering; with CARAS, through occasional mutual get togethers; with Refugee Action Kingston, through volunteering; with Refugees Welcome in Richmond, through on-going contact.

viii. Advocacy and planning for a comparable Harvest weekend.

ix. Event marking Refugee Week June 2017.

x. Regular feedback to M & M and on church notice board and on the St Anne’s web site.

xi. Review of Year 2 to PCC and M & M and plans for Year 3

Claudine McCreadie and Christopher Stephens, 1 November 2016