

SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM, report on first year, December 2015 – October 2016

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 McCreddie and Christopher Stephens, 1 November 2016