

The Parish Church of St Anne, Kew



SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM

Third meeting: Sunday 22 May, 2016, 18.30-20.30.

FOCUS on REFUGEES 3

Programme

1. Welcome, introductions, update and guide to session
2. Liturgy
3. Reading and study reflection
4. Silent prayer and reflection
5. Responding: sharing ideas, deciding on action
6. Looking forward
7. Closing prayers

UPDATE SINCE FEBRUARY AND DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Development	Date, time and venue
Prayer vigil during Refugee Week under the auspices of Churches Together in Kew.	Wednesday 22 June, 19.00 – 22.00 at St Anne’s
Refugees Welcome in Richmond Event * (RWinR also held a training session in April with Citizens UK)	Thursday 30 June, 19.00-21.00, Waldegrave Drawing Room, St Mary’s University, Strawberry Hill.
Harvest Festival Supper provided by the Chickpea Sisters**	Saturday 1 October, in the Hall, times to be confirmed.
Harvest Festival services will focus on Refugees. Special preacher: the Reverend Professor Dr Nicholas Sagovsky who has been closely involved with refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.	Sunday 2 October, 8am and 10am at St Anne’s.
Harvest Festival special collection for charities working with refugees	Sunday 2 October, 8am and 10am at St Anne’s.

* Further details on page 7

** The Chickpea Sisters, a social enterprise that arose through Caras, the Tooting based charity that we heard about in February from Dr Jess Thomas, chair of the trustees and of which Judith Evans is a patron.

LITURGY

The liturgy is based on ‘Let justice roll down like waters’, from the Corrymeela Community worship book.

Leader: First let us give thanks for God’s Holy Spirit working amongst us.

All: Loving God, we give thanks for the upcoming Prayer Vigil in Refugee Week, for the Refugees Welcome in Richmond event and for our plans for our Harvest Festival in October. We pray that all that we do, however small, may witness to your Kingdom.

Leader: Long ago, God spoke through the prophet Amos, saying, ‘Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. (Amos 5: 24) This evening we hear God calling for justice for those who suffer because they are refugees – through war and famine and fear.

All: Loving God, open our ears to hear your call and open our hearts to respond.

Leader: Loving God, you have called us to do justice.

All: Loving God, we confess our failure to do justice. Our resolve to build a just society and a just world weakens in the face of controversy and personal sacrifice. Our ears become closed to those who cry out because of injustice and confront us with the need to change.

Leader: Loving God, you have called us to show kindness

All: Loving God, we confess our failure to be kind. Fear, anger, hatred, pride and prejudice all lead us to judge others harshly. We confess that we do not wish to suffer with others, to share solidarity with those who are poor, who are starving, who are strangers.

Leader: Loving God, you have called us to walk humbly with you

All: Loving God, we confess our failure to walk humbly with you. We confess our pride in thinking that we know best, and that we do not need constantly to call upon you. We turn in on ourselves and away from others in need.

Leader: Lord, give us insight into ourselves and in your mercy and compassion forgive us.

All: Free us to live as you mean us to be, to do what we can to bring in your Kingdom of justice, mercy and compassion. We ask this in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Leader: we say together slowly:

All: Loving God, let your Kingdom come and your will be done in the hearts and lives of men and women everywhere: that all injustice may be set right, and that refugees may be helped to find a home, to work with dignity, to receive a fairer share of your world's resources and to be given a place within a welcoming community. Let your Kingdom come for all those who are suffering because of war, for all who live with hunger, for all who live in fear, for all divided families who seek reunion together. Let your Kingdom come, Lord, for all your children everywhere. We ask this in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

READING AND STUDY REFLECTION (Father Nigel)

Micah 6, verses 6-8 (RSV)

“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of
rivers of oil?

Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin
of my soul?”

8 He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require
of you

but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

SILENT PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Prayers

Loving God, we give you thanks for all the people we are coming across who
are witnessing to the justice, kindness and humble walking with you to which
you are calling us. We pray for them and for the coming of your Kingdom, in
the name of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen

Prayer for five friends. (leaflet given to us on Sunday May 7th).

Perhaps include a refugee, named or unnamed, as one of your friends and
use this prayer, adapted from the Church of England – Prayer for the
Refugees:

Heavenly Father, you are the source of all goodness, generosity and love. I
thank you for opening my heart to this friend who has fled for their life. Help
me now to open my arms in welcome, and reach out my hands in support.
Help me to do this so that this unknown desperate person may find new
hope, and so that a life torn apart may be restored. I ask this in the name of
Jesus Christ Your Son, Our Lord, who fled persecution at His birth, and at His
last triumphed over death. Amen

God, our Father, no one is a stranger to you. You watch over each of us with
your loving gaze. May those people fleeing from their homes in search of
refuge be reminded that your own Son, and Mary our Mother, also
experienced life as refugees and be renewed in their faith and hope. Guide
political leaders to act generously and work towards lasting and meaningful
peace in those areas affected by violence and conflict. May we, through
Christ's example, open our arms and hearts in welcome to those most in
need of safety, shelter and compassion. Grant this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

Lord, you call us to this task of investigating the times and circumstances of the manifestation of your mystery, amid today's confusion. We thank you for the gift of being called to inevitable love of neighbour, which we cannot escape, because it invades our heart and thoughts. Grant us, then, the grace to let ourselves be guided and led by your Spirit, that we may fulfil our prophetic mission in our day. We pray in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Adapted from C-M. Martini (1993), Letting God Free Us p.60 and p. 128.

Reflections

We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realising that. This enables us to do something and to do it very well.

Archbishop Oscar Romero (1917-1980)

Looking through this mission theological lens, we can develop what the Bishop of Leeds has recently called a 'compassionate imagination'. Imagination is needed to respond to a situation for which European politics has no long term plan. It is no solution to receive refugees into communities that fear and hate them and want to see them 'go home'. We have to understand why we should care and why we should actively choose to be vehicles of hospitality and welcome as well as then looking into the practical matters of how Christians and churches can help long term. Pope Francis has also called for a transition from a 'culture of rejection' to a 'culture of encounter and acceptance'. What would such a culture look like and how would we recognise it? Why should we want peace and reconciliation in countries we know little about and may never visit, and why should we work for global stability and co-operation between nations and people-groups? Canon J John, writing on his blog, argues that compassion needs ongoing involvement, intelligence, analysis, and integrity. Compassion should not spring exclusively from tear-jerking pictures but be fed into wise and effective decision-making; the head as well as the heart. Such issues are both theological and strategic because they are related to our view of what God's kingdom might look like. They challenge us to think deeply about whether as Christians we only pay lip service to the idea of mission or are prepared to make the fruits of mission happen. Is God's kingdom bound by human definitions of nationhood? What does being neighbours imply in a globalised world?

What kind of world are we, as Christians, being called to work towards?
Church of England, Mission Theology Advisory Group
www.churchofengland.org/ourfaith/mission/mission-theology.aspx

RESPONDING: SHARING IDEAS, DECIDING ACTION

Heavenly Father, you are the source of all goodness, generosity and love. We thank you for opening the hearts of many to those who are fleeing for their lives. Help us now to open our arms in welcome, and reach out our hands in support. Help us to do this so that the desperate may find new hope, and so that lives torn apart may be restored. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ Your Son, Our Lord, who fled persecution at His birth, and at His last triumphed over death. Amen

Church of England – Prayer for the Refugees

SALLY CANNON'S PAPER: Supporting the Resettlement of Refugees through the provision of encouragement, professional information and friendship, May 2016.

Some quotes to think about:

“The achievement of a level of employment consistent with prior occupational status is of crucial importance to the degree of assimilation and satisfaction a refugee achieves in his resettlement:

Refugees in America: A Reference Handbook

Wahid Ahmed trained as a civil engineer in Afghanistan where he worked in a senior role for the UN on infrastructure projects, overseeing road and bridge building. Ahmed fled to the UK in 2008 with his wife and family. Whilst waiting for the outcome of his asylum application, he studied to pass high level English language exams, so he could take a one year post-graduate certificate in construction management. When he started applying for jobs, he received constant rejections: most of the time an automated e mail that told him to assume he had been unsuccessful if he heard nothing back within 4 days. When he called to ask why he had not been invited for interview, he was told he had no UK experience. At this point he often proposed that he volunteer to work for the company, but the offer was always rejected. In 2014 he was working in a food shop: “To be honest, it makes me cry, but I have no option but to continue. The people I work with are very kind. They know I am an educated person. They tell me, “Please don't be sad. You will find a job in your field eventually” .

The Guardian 2014

We ought to be able to do better than this!

What members of the Social Justice Forum have found so far:

Members of the Social Justice Forum researched how easy or difficult it is for a newly arrived refugee with a similar professional background to their own, to resume their career here.

It seems that almost every one of us found this task complex, time consuming and often frustrating. Given that we know the language, the culture, the work and the way things are organised here, imagine how difficult it must be for someone who has few or none of our advantages!

Many of the group stressed the initial challenges that all refugees face such as:

- Gaining asylum and the right to stay and work here
- Acquiring a good level of English
- Accessing the specialist help that is available but hard to track down
- Having original professional qualifications or accreditation recognised here
- Accessing and funding additional training needed to qualify to work here

Some of our group felt that it would be impossible for most refugees in their own professional field to resume their chosen occupation here: there were just too many constraints, barriers and pitfalls! Others rightly pointed out that there are already many sources of career advice available to refugees and a small group such as ours could do little to help.

Other individuals felt that we could encourage and support refugees in their search for work by helping them to:

1. Assess their skills.
2. Research the job market.
3. Prepare CVs/Cover letters.
4. Make applications.
5. Prepare for interviews.

Feedback from others beyond our group.

Any help that we decide to offer would need to be channelled through an appropriate refugee organisation. I have spoken with Sanja Djeric Kane, Director of Refugee Action Kingston (RAK) who is very positive indeed about working with us:

“We ABSOLUTELY love your idea and there is definitely a need for it”. Sanja’s view is that people with a background in a specific occupation could be very valuable to refugees with similar work backgrounds. She explained that although there is good generic support available from employment agencies such as Job Centre Plus, their focus is generally on getting refugees into work of any kind rather than helping them to resume their

careers. This is perfectly understandable given refugees' urgent need to support their families without recourse to state benefits.

Sanja told me of one refugee they are trying to help at the moment who would be an obvious candidate for the sort of support we are thinking of. This woman is an ex teacher who is hoping that she may, eventually, be able to resume her career as a teacher. Until then she would like to work as a classroom assistant. Unfortunately RAK does not have a local source of volunteers with experience as classroom assistants or teachers who could offer this refugee some time to help her understand the role of a classroom assistant and how she might apply for such a job.

I am now also in contact with Jenny Arokiasamy, Community Resilience and Engagement Manager at RAK. She felt that our interest had come at exactly the right moment for them. She recently had to cancel a planned 10 week course for a group of refugees on preparation for work when it became apparent that each individual refugee had very specific needs and could only really be helped through one to one contact with someone who understood the work they had done in their home country and wanted to resume here. Jenny felt that volunteer help was needed on a range of issues: preparation for interview; understanding a person specification, preparing a CV and generally learning more about how occupations are organised and managed here. She has offered to come to meet with us and to invite someone who already volunteers in this area of work to come and explain what he does. I have also contacted Breaking Barriers, a national charity that supports the resettlement of refugees and our idea received a similarly warm welcome there. Their representative has asked me to meet or speak with him week during the beginning 16th May.

Our Potential Offer

At this stage my suggestion is that we consider and test out the capacity and commitment within the St Anne's Community to offer voluntary support to RAK or similar organisation.

If we take this forward a named individual* would need to take responsibility for liaison between Refugee Action Kingston and volunteers. Volunteers could commit as much or as little time as they are able to give and what they decide to offer would reflect their interests and strengths as well as the needs of the refugees receiving the support. * Sally is prepared to take on this role initially.

RAK tell me that some volunteers offer one to one support over a period of time to one refugee. Others might make a one off contribution to some training or perhaps support at a group session on applying for jobs or carrying

out mock interviews. Communication may happen at one to one meetings, through e mail or telephone.

Questions

1. Are there any questions or comments about this discussion paper?
- 2a. Do you want to be involved with Sally in a small planning group to take this forward?
- 2b. Do you want to be one of the people meeting with Refugee Action Kingston?
3. How do we want to communicate with and involve others at St Anne's? There are different groups e.g. 8am attenders; 10am attenders; Junior Church; Choir; Friends.
4. At what stage should we invite other churches in Kew to work with us?
5. What should we call this project?

LOOKING FORWARDS

1. Signposting. This information has been updated and is available on our church notice board. It has been shared through Churches Together in Kew. Is there anything else we can do with this information – for example, sharing with other churches in the Richmond Deanery? Is it being used? Is there a way in which we could show the information more effectively to draw attention to it?
2. Refugee Week, Monday 20 June (World Refugee Day) to Sunday 26 June. Refugee Week celebrates the contribution of refugees and aims to be a diverse, colourful and exciting festival of events and activities. This year's theme will be 'WELCOME'. The following may be of interest:

Call me by name: stories from Calais and beyond: exhibition by the Migration Museum Project	2 – 22 June, London Newcastle Project Space, Shoreditch. 28 Redchurch St, E2 7DP
25 Years of Welcome. Refugee Action Kingston hosts an evening of performance, music and creativity.	Monday 20 June, 7pm – 9pm, All Saints Church, Kingston Upon Thames. £5 on door.

3. Refugees Welcome in Richmond (RWinR)
<http://www.refugeeswelcomeinrichmond.org/properties/>. This is the initiative in which Churches Together in Kew (CTinK) are involved, to try, with the support of Richmond Council, to find housing for 50 Syrian refugee households in our borough. The organisers who include Valerie Booth, the Chair of CTinK, are holding an IMPORTANT EVENT on Thursday June 30th (see p1 of this handout) at St Mary's University, Strawberry Hill. WE ARE ALL INVITED TO TRY TO ATTEND THIS AND IF AT ALL POSSIBLE TO BRING FIVE FRIENDS WITH US.
4. Prayer card. Update from Helen and Susan.
5. Links with Refugee Action Kingston and collections of things. Update from Daphne and Lorraine.
6. Social Justice Forum meetings. We suggest our last meeting in this Church Year will be on Saturday 15 October. We need a date for our first meeting of the new Church Year in Advent and to agree the on-going focus of the Forum for that meeting and during 2017.
7. Paper from CHURCH OF ENGLAND: The Christian responsibility
 Scripture has much to say about the treatment of the vulnerable and the need to welcome strangers and foreigners without suspicion. It is an essential part of the Church's mission and ministry to reach out to the marginalised and persecuted, and to stand in solidarity with them in their struggles, suffering and hopes. Christians are also called to prophetic witness, to speak out against injustice and oppression; this might include asking questions concerning policies and attitudes that dehumanise and breed intolerance.

What can churches do?

- Pray for peace; work for peace and justice; and seek to understand the causes of conflict and persecution in our world.
- Urge your parish and other local churches to become aware of the world situation and the gospel imperative to respond to those in need.
- Find out about what arrangements are in place in your area for the reception of asylum seekers and how churches are already involved with others in offering welcome and support.
- Discuss in your church council how to respond to asylum seekers who seek help from the Church.

- Invite a speaker to address your PCC, Deanery Synod or Diocesan Synod.
- Consider setting up a local group among churches or faith communities to support asylum seekers in the community or nearby detention centres.
- Join a group teaching English to speakers of other languages.
- Find out about asylum seeker children in schools and the voluntary help that might be needed.
- Find out more about campaigns for destitute asylum seekers, the right to work, and the end to detention.
- Set-up a collection point for food, clothes or furniture for asylum seekers.
- Write to your MP about the situation faced by asylum seekers and the hardships that you are aware of.
- Write to newspapers or other media that persist in promoting a negative stereotype of asylum seekers and refugees.
- Encourage your Church to observe Refugee Week (usually in June), One World Week and Racial Justice Sunday.
- Listen to the experience of asylum seekers and refugees, and encourage their full participation in planning, implementation and evaluation of projects and services.
- Encourage the government to pursue an 'ethical foreign policy' - with a particular concern for the places people are forced to leave because of persecution or extreme poverty.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/home-and-community-affairs/asylum-and-immigration/asylum-what-can-churches-do.aspx> Downloaded 10 May 2016.

CLOSING PRAYER: the Lord's Prayer together.