

The Parish Church of St Anne, Kew



SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM

First meeting: Advent 2015, 5 December.

FOCUS on REFUGEES 1

Programme

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Content of booklet
3. Liturgy
4. Informing ourselves
5. Biblical passages
6. Silent prayer and reflection
7. Tea and coffee (v briefly!)
8. Responding: sharing ideas, deciding on action
9. Closing prayer
10. Dates and topics for 2016 meetings

LITURGY

We will use The Kingdom of Justice (Corrymeela Community worship book), using this prayer after the third *help us to give ourselves in love*.

Leader: Gracious and merciful God.

All: We look to you for guidance as we pray and act.

Leader: Suffering Christ .

All: We pray that you would comfort those who are in distress.

Leader: For those caught in the midst of war.

All: We pray for peace.

Leader: For those held captive.

All: we pray for freedom.

Leader: For those facing hatred and intolerance.

All: We pray for love.

Leader: For those fleeing for their life.

All: We pray for protection.

Leader: For those who are desperate.

All: We pray for hope.

Leader: For strangers in a strange land.

All: We pray for friends.

Leader: For those involved in administering aid.

All: We pray for their protection and that their work is effective in bringing relief.

Leader: For all of those caught up in circumstances out of their control.

All: We pray that the Holy Spirit is present in their time of need.

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

Leader: You are the God who makes all things new , you are the God of hope who calls us to have courage and faith and hope.

All: *Help us to give ourselves in love. Amen*

INFORMING OURSELVES

DEFINITIONS *(taken from US, Lent 2016 study course on Migration and movement)*

Asylum seeker.

In the UK an asylum seeker is someone who has asked the government for refugee status and is waiting to hear the outcome of their application. (UNHCR) .

Immigrant

A person who comes permanently to live in a foreign country (Oxford Dictionary).

Internally Displaced Person

Two elements are decisive ... 1. The coercive or otherwise involuntary character of movement – that is, movement caused by armed conflict, violence, disasters and the like; and 2) the fact that such movement takes place within national borders' (UNHCR).

Migrant

'might be defined by foreign birth, ,by foreign citizenship, or by their other movement into a new country to stay temporarily (sometimes for as little as a year) or to settle for the long-term' (Migration Observatory, University of Oxford).

Refugee

A person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of he protection of that country' (1951 Refugee Convention).

What is a bogus asylum seeker? There is **no such thing** as a bogus asylum seeker or an illegal asylum seeker. As an asylum seeker, a person has entered into a legal process of refugee status determination. Everybody has a right to seek asylum in another country. People who don't qualify for protection as refugees will not receive refugee status and may be deported, but just because someone doesn't receive refugee status doesn't mean they are a bogus asylum seeker.

(source; Office of National Statistics, Migration Statistics report, 26 November 2015, downloaded 27 November.

BACKGROUND: UNHCR.

UNHCR (Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees) was set up in 1951 to help the estimated 1 million people still uprooted after World War II to return home. The latest figures available show that the number of refugees of concern to UNHCR in mid-2014 stood at 13 million refugees, up from a year earlier. A further 5.1 million registered refugees are looked after in some 60 camps in the Middle East by United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was set up in 1949 to care for displaced Palestinians.

The refugees of concern to UNHCR are spread around the world, with half in Asia and some 28 per cent in Africa. They live in widely varying conditions, from well-established camps and collective centres to makeshift shelters or living in the open. More than half of all refugees of concern to UNHCR live in urban areas. They all face three possible solutions: repatriation; local integration or resettlement.

Source: UNCHR, downloaded 19.11.15

Number of refugees and asylum seekers originating from six countries: December 2014

Originating from:	Number of refugees, (see note 1)	Number of asylum seekers, (see note 2)
Syria	3.9 million	79,670
Afghanistan	2.5 million	85,418
Sudan	666,000	36,000
Iraq	370,000	103,733
Eritrea	363,000	54,000
UK	141	85

Source, UNHCR: downloaded 19.11.15

1. Persons recognized as refugees under the 1951 UN Convention/1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU Convention, in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, persons granted a complementary form of protection and those granted temporary protection. It also includes persons in a refugee-like situation for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained. In the absence of Government figures, UNHCR has estimated the refugee population in many industrialized countries based on 10 years of individual asylum-seeker recognition.
2. Persons whose applications for asylum or refugee status are pending at the end of 2014 at any stage in the asylum procedure.

Number of refugees and Internally Displaced People residing in different countries, Dec 2014

Residing in:	Number of refugees	Number of Internally Displaced People.	Total population of concern to UNHCR
Syria	150,000	7.6 million	7.9 million
Iraq	271,000	3.6 million	4 million
Pakistan	1.6 million	1.4 million	3 million
Sudan	278,000	2.2 million	2.5 million
Turkey	1.6 million	-	1.7 million
Lebanon	1.1 million	-	1.12 million
Iran	982,000	-	982,000
Jordan	654,000	-	673,000
Ethiopia	660,000	-	665,000
UK	117,000 + 36,000 asylum seekers	-	154,000

Source: UNHCR , downloaded 19.11.11

Syrian refugees: some facts

- 12 million Syrians have fled their homes because of conflict; half are children.
- 4 million Syrians are refugees; most are in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.

- Children affected by the Syrian conflict are at risk of becoming ill, malnourished, abused, or exploited. Millions have been forced to quit school.
- More than 700,000 Syrian refugees and other migrants risked their lives this year to travel to Europe.
- Since the Syrian civil war began, more than 240,000 people have been killed, including 12,000 children. One million more have been wounded or permanently disabled. The war has become more deadly since foreign powers joined the conflict.
- Within Syria, healthcare, education systems, and other infrastructure have been destroyed; the economy is shattered. An estimated 4.8 million people are in areas of Syria that are difficult to access because of the conflict. It is hard for aid groups to reach them.-

Source: World Vision, downloaded 23.11.15.

- The Syria conflict has triggered the world's largest humanitarian crisis since World War II.
- The European Union and its Member States collectively are leading the international response. More than €4.4 billion have been mobilised for relief and recovery assistance to Syrians in their country and to refugees and their host communities in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt.

Source: European Commission ECHO Factsheet – Syria crisis – November 2015. Downloaded 23.11.15.

Refugees and asylum seekers in the UK: some facts

Does the UK have more asylum seekers than most countries?

No it does not. With an estimated 173,100 asylum applications, Germany was the largest recipient of new asylum claims in 2014. The United States of America was second with 121,200 asylum applications, followed by Turkey (87,800), Sweden (75,100), and Italy (63,700). By comparison, the UK received 31,300 new applications for asylum by the end of 2014.

Source: UNHCR 2014 Asylum Trends Report

How many refugees are there in the UK?

At the end of 2014, the population of refugees, pending asylum cases and stateless persons made up just **0.24% of the population**. That's 117,161 refugees, 36,383 pending asylum cases and 16 stateless persons.

The vast majority of refugees stay in their region of displacement, so that **86% of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries**. Turkey now hosts the highest number of refugees at 1.6million, followed by Pakistan at 1.5 million.

Source: UNHCR 2014 Global Trends Report

Where do asylum seekers in the UK come from?

The **top three** countries of origin are: Eritrea (3,568), Pakistan (2,302), and Syria (2,204) .

UK: RECENT MIGRATION STATISTICS:

Office for National Statistics Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, November 2015, downloaded 29.11.15.

	Year ending June 2015	Year ending June 2014
Immigration to UK	636,000*	574,000
Emigration from UK	300,000	320,000
Net migration	336,000*	254,000
Immigration of EU Citizens**	265,000*	223,000
Net migration of EU citizens	180,000	138,000
Immigration of non EU citizens	286,000	269,000
Net migration of non EU citizens	201,000*	165,000

Note: EU citizens exclude British citizens

* statistically significant compared with previous year

**The recent increase in EU immigration has partly been driven by EU2 (Bulgaria and Romania) citizens.

Why are people immigrating to the UK?

The most common reason for migrating to the UK is work. This has been the case historically, with the exception of 2009 to 2012, when formal study was the most common main reason for migration.

Of those immigrating for work-related reasons in the year ending June 2015, 64% (187,000) came with a definite job to go to and 36% (107,000) came to look for work.

The second most common reason for immigrating to the UK was formal study. In the year ending June 2015, a total of 192,000 people immigrated to the UK for formal study, of whom 131,000 (71%) were non-EU citizens

In the year ending June 2015, a total of 80,000 (of whom 45,000 (58%) were non-EU citizens) people arrived in the UK to accompany or join others, this remains relatively unchanged from 82,000 the previous year.

BIBLICAL PASSAGES

Exodus 23, 1-9; Leviticus 19, 33-37; Matthew 5, 1-12;
Matthew 22, 35-41; Matthew 25, 31-46; Hebrews 13, 1-2

SILENT PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Prayers

Almighty and merciful God, whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own; look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger, who are homeless and hungry. Bless those who work to bring them relief; inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts; and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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. That the desperate may find new hope, and lives torn apart 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

Living God, grant us the grace to see your image not just in those we know and like, but in those across the barriers of our making. Forgive the prejudices that divide and exclude, and help us to reflect your outrageous love that reaches out to embrace enemies. So may we truly follow Christ.
Amen.

Iona Community.

Wilderness God, your Son was a displaced person in Bethlehem, a refugee in Egypt and had nowhere to lay his head in Galilee. Bless all who have nowhere to lay their head today, who find themselves strangers on earth, pilgrims to they know not where, facing rejection, closed doors, suspicion and fear. Give them companions in their distress, hope in their wandering and safe lodging at their journey's end. And make us a people of grace, wisdom and hospitality, who know that our true identity is to be lost, until we find our eternal home in you. Through Jesus Christ, our rejected yet risen Lord.
Amen.

From St Martin in the Fields statement on the migrant crisis, 7 September 2015.

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.

As gift I receive You O Christ, and as gift I offer You to the whole world.

St Ambrose

Reflections

When it comes to the refugee crisis, the Christian Church has no option. The example we are given time again is one set by a generous God who deals graciously with our flawed humanity in such a way that we who belong to the community of the Church are invited to share that same spirit of compassionate reaching out, recognising the stranger in need, offering hope and hospitality as we are able, recognising the humanity we share with them as the same humanity Jesus shared and conscious that in these desperate people we see nothing less than the face of Christ, crucified and risen, the Christ who invites us to join him round the table where death and all that is life-denying and degrading is transformed by new life in the offer of hope, friendship and a home, a community where all are welcome and no-one is denied.

Church of Scotland worship resources in response to the refugee crisis

Who will help the refugees
To cease their endless walking,
While the ones who claim to care
Continue endless talking?

Words John L. Bell, © WGRG, c/o Iona Community, Glasgow

The point of a prophetic action is not to change the world but to display the manner in which the world is changed by God.

Sam Wells (2006) God's companions, p.203

RESPONDING: SHARING IDEAS, DECIDING ACTION

This is a hugely complex and wicked crisis that underlines our human frailty and the fragility of our political systems... there are no easy answers ... we

cannot turn our backs on this crisis. We must respond with compassion. But we must also not be naïve in claiming to have the answers to end it.

Archbishop Justin Welby, statement on the refugee crisis

SOME SUGGESTIONS

In thinking about what actions we might take, we suggest we talk primarily in terms of our actions as a Parish Church although clearly we cannot separate this from our individual actions.

1. Prayer, vigil, Epiphany service, day of reflection, bible study.
2. Giving eg Christian Aid; Harvest for Hope; Jesuit Refugee Service; Refugee Support Network UK; World Vision.
3. Statement of commitment on the lines of the one by St Martin in the Fields (see page)
4. Writing to our MP, Zac Goldsmith, and/or one or more of our eight London MEPs to support refugees coming.
5. Involvement in Churches Together in Kew initiatives.
6. Awareness raising eg speaker, café evening.
7. Supporting initiatives, information sessions elsewhere e.g. Vigil on 8 December.
8. Organise something for Refugee Week, 20-26 June 2016.
9. Investigate involvement in Kingston Refugee Action.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN KEW (CTinK): our representatives, Annabel Clark & Gabrielle O'Neill.

Valerie Booth, the current chair of CTinK, has been looking into how our Kew churches might respond and finding out about local developments in response to the Syrian refugee problem. Here are some of her points (30 November) :

Our responses

1. the importance of prayer;
2. support any local political initiative to help 'official' Syrian refugees/immigrants who have already been accepted by the Government through UNHCR;
3. provide practical help through relevant agencies.
4. write to our MP setting out our position.

Local developments

1. approaches have been made to Lord True, Leader of the Council, by Richmond Inter-faith Forum (chair, the Reverend Peter Hart of The Barn and St Luke's). Lord True replied explaining the Council's difficult problem about housing (4000 people on the waiting list);
2. Councillor David Linette (Kew) has written explaining the (sympathetic) position of Kew councillors over the issue;
3. a group has been set up, linked to the Vineyard Community Church and Cinnamon Network (see list of web sites). Councillor Peter Buckwell, a parishioner (South Richmond) is their spokesman on refugees.
4. A working group has also been set up, with the Council's blessing. Names of those involved include Christina Beckwith, Claire Charlton, Andree Frieze (Green Party), Caroline Sherrard.

ADDITIONAL PAPERS FOR 5 December

1. An open letter to world leaders from a Bishop in Jerusalem and a refugee, 1 September 2015 *Christians Aware, Autumn 2015*)
Archbishop of Canterbury on the Refugee Crisis.
(Lambeth Palace, 3 September 2015)
2. Christian Aid, Refugee Crisis Appeal.
3. Church of England, Immigration and Asylum, The Christian responsibility and what can churches do?
4. Churches Together in Kew, how the local Christian Community can help
Eastern Churches & Christian Refugees in the Middle East.
(Christians Aware, Summer 2015)
5. Government Response. Syrian refugees: what you can do to help.
(HM Government)
6. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, *Southwark Diocesan*.
newspaper (the Bridge), October 2015
7. Syria Crisis Response Summary.
(Department for International Development)

Statement from St Martin in the Fields, 7.9.15.

We recognise and affirm the actions many congregations and communities are taking to befriend and support migrants. Our own ministry with asylum-seekers has been a source of growth and discovery and a blessing to our whole community. We celebrate the warmth and welcome that migrants have received in several parts of Europe.

We wish to challenge some of the widely-stated assumptions surrounding the migrant crisis.

- We challenge the notion that efforts must be entirely focused on addressing conflict in the countries of origin. Intervention in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya didn't work; non-intervention in Syria didn't work either. There is no simple off-shore solution.
- We challenge the conviction that Britain is 'full' and there is neither space nor employment for newcomers. Our own community of staff and volunteers is immeasurably enriched by people from all over the world who have made our city their home – some junior, others who have risen to senior roles; their skills and enthusiasm are a blessing to us all.
- We challenge the way immigration is discussed as a question of duty – of whether Britain is obliged to take in people who are fleeing persecution elsewhere, how one can verify that the claim is genuine, whether one has to limit the number even of the persecuted, and whether anyone migrating largely for economic benefit has any right to be here. We maintain that migrants have always, and will always, be a source of initiative and energy, inspiration and renewal. The British population is almost entirely made up of people whose ancestors were migrants for a host of reasons: the nation's dynamism lies in the confluence of diverse cultures.
- We appreciate the drawbacks of making migration easier and the risks of thereby exacerbating the circumstances that bring it about. But we are a nation that loves to back the underdog; we are a people whose finest hour has been in standing up in the face of oppression; and we long for our country to show its true colours today.

20,000 welcomes: Advent Vigil for refugees: Tuesday 8 December, 10.00 to 4.30 pm, St Margaret's Church Westminster. **All welcome, for the whole or part of the day.**

Useful web sites

www.capitalmass.org.uk/refugee-response Diocese of London.

www.christianaid.org.uk

<http://refugeeweek.org.uk/> June 20 -26, 2016

<http://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/the-archbishops-speech/> Cinnamon Network is an organisation helping local churches to address local need.

www.refugees-welcome.org.uk **Refugees Welcome** has been set up to help Civil Society groups and members of the public to coordinate their activities and act together to show that the country is #ReadyAndWilling and that this is a place which says clearly Refugees Welcome.

www.refugeeactionkingston.org.uk/ **Refugee Action Kingston** is a local charity, providing advice and support for refugees and asylum seekers in the Kingston area.

<https://ctbi.org.uk/churches-refugee-network> **Churches Refugee Network** was born after Church members, in response to their Christian calling, began to minister to asylum seekers they met in their daily life. ..They soon met with the disturbing complexity – human, pastoral, legal, theological and political – which always characterises the refugee issue, and found that, for many, there were insufficient local resources to seek a purely local solution

www.citizensuk.org is concerned with practical help

<http://www.unhcr.org.uk/> United Nations

www.worldvision.org has a useful Syrian update on its web site

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4 11