

The Parish Church of St Anne, Kew



SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM

Second meeting: Lent 2016, 20 February. 10.15 -12.15

FOCUS on REFUGEES 2.

As we have rather a lot to get through, we are leaving tea and coffee on the side, please get up at any point, except during the silent prayer time, and help yourself!

Programme

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Review and handout
3. Reading and theology
4. Liturgy
5. Silent prayer and reflection
6. Talk by Dr Jess Thomas, Trustee of the Tooting based charity Caras – *Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, followed by questions.
7. Congregational engagement: deciding on priorities for action
8. Closing prayer
9. Suggested dates of next meetings: 22 May; 15 October; 3 December.

LOCAL UPDATE since meeting on 5 December 2015

1. The Christmas Crib service collection of just over £2000 was given to **Christian Aid's Refugee Appeal** and will be matched by the Government.
2. St Anne's had two collections during Advent to support an initiative by a parent at the Queen's School for the **Samara's Aid Appeal**, www.samarasaidappeal.org/ Holy Trinity Church was the collection point for 96 boxes and 29 bags of winter clothes for the Samara Aid Appeal.
3. The Queen's School had a food collection on February 5th of foodstuffs to go directly to Syria through a newly formed charity UK Action for Refugees.
4. **Churches Together in Kew** (St Anne's representatives, Annabel Clark & Gabrielle O'Neill): Valerie Booth, chair, has participated in a number of meetings as part of Refugees Welcome in Richmond (RWinR). Caroline Sherrard is chairing the group and the next meeting will be on **Monday 29th February at 9.30am at the Eel Pie in Church Street, Twickenham.**
5. Churches Together in Kew Lent course, **All is Gift**, is a helpful prayer and reflective resource and has been used in our signposting information.
6. Judith Evans introduced Claudine to Dr Jess Thomas, who is speaking to us today, at the Tooting based charity **Caras** (Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers).
7. Sally Cannon has been investigating the whole question of helping refugees establish career paths in this country. (see paper further on).

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

1. The war in Syria began five years ago in March 2011
2. The UK, Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the United Nations co-hosted a conference in London on 4 February and committed \$5.8 billion for 2016 and a further \$5.4 billion for 2017-20. (NHS budget in 2015/16: £116.4 billion)
3. **Until 29 February 2016**, the Government will match, pound for pound, all money donated to UNICEF.
4. **Syrian refugees, key facts:** *Department for International Development, 25/1/16:*

Number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria	13.5 million
Of whom, internally displaced	6.5 million
Number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries	4.59 million
Number of children in need	8.1 million
Of whom, refugees	2.1 million
Deaths as a result of the conflict	250,000

5. Number of refugees and asylum seekers originating from six countries: mid 2015
(for notes, please refer to first handout) Source, UNHCR: downloaded 31.1.16

Originating from:	Number of refugees,	Number of asylum seekers,
Syria	4.2 million	90,751
Afghanistan	2.6 million	106,972
Sudan	641,000	40,109
Eritrea	384,000	60,157
Iraq	378,000	141,913

6. Number of refugees and Internally Displaced People residing in different countries, mid 2015 *Source: UNHCR, downloaded 31.1.16*

Residing in:	Number of refugees	Number of Internally Displaced People.	Total population of concern to UNHCR
Syria	149,000	7.6 million	7.9 million
Iraq	288,000	3.96 million	4.3 million
Sudan	356,000	2.3 million	2.8 million
Pakistan	1.5 million	1.6 million	2.2 million
Turkey	1.8 million	-	1.98 million
Lebanon	1.2 million	-	1.2 million
UK	117,000 + 38,000 asylum seekers		155,000

7. Overall, the number of persons seeking asylum in the EU-28 (i.e. European Union) in the first quarter of 2015 reached 184,800. This was 85,400 more than in the same quarter of 2014. The main nationalities of asylum seekers in this quarter were Kosovans, Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis. ‘The highest number of first time asylum applicants in the first quarter of 2015 was registered in Germany (73,100 applicants, or 40% of total applicants in the EU), Hungary (32,800, or 18%), Italy (15,300, or 8%), France (14,800, or 8%) and Sweden (11,400, or 6%). These five member states account for 80% of all applicants in the EU-28’. *Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe(CCME) report, page 18*

8. Of the approximately 42.9 million persons of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2013, only 4.21 million were to be found in Europe, one of the richest regions in the world. *CCME report page 19*

READING AND THEOLOGY

“Love the sojourner...for you were sojourners...” Deuteronomy 10:19

What have we learned from the current refugee crisis, and indeed the other refugee crises that are to be found in the pages of history? What have we learned from the sojourner? We need to learn what to call them: are they migrants, or refugees? A sojourner in the Bible can be a guest, or a pilgrim. The sojourner can stay for a short or a long time. A sojourner in the Bible might flee from famine, or persecution, or be a victim of war, or economic injustice. A sojourner might be escaping grief, or have been carried off into captivity. What we learn from the sojourner is one size will not fit all. Deuteronomy challenges us to love the sojourners, for we too were once in their place. In our transient time we have all been on the move, and will continue to be in transit. We too need shelter, comfort, nourishment and love. Today’s headline sojourners are, in fact, brothers and sisters in the human family. God calls us to love sojourners because in each one God’s image is found. To love the sojourner is to love God and to love ourselves. *Church of Scotland worship resources in response to the refugee crisis.*

LITURGY

(taken from: Church of Scotland, worship resources in response to the refugee crisis and from the Corrymeela Community worship book)

Leader: Long ago God spoke through the prophet Amos saying, Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.

Next: Today we also hear God calling for justice in the cries of those who are suffering because of war and conflict and poverty in our world.

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

Next: For those caught in conflict

Next: whose lives hang in the balance
All: We cry out, Lord have mercy
Next: For those who cannot escape
Next: trapped by war raging around them
Next: paralysed by fear
Next: or faced with an impassable ocean
All: We cry out, Lord have mercy
Next: For those who flee
Next: leaving behind all that they have known
Next: venturing into new and strange places
All: We cry out Lord have mercy
Next: For those who are here
Next: at the end of a perilous journey
Next: now faced with a new uncertain path
All: We cry out Lord have mercy
Next: Merciful God, help us to act with compassion,
Next: to welcome the stranger with love,
Next: to put the needs of our neighbours before our own.
Next: Inspire us to pray,
Next: to act
Next: and to be the people of hope that you call us to be.
All: Hear us as we cry out.
Next: You are the God who makes all things new,
Next: you are the God of hope
Next: who calls us to have courage and faith and hope.
**All: Lord, open our ears to hear your call and open our hearts to respond.
For the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

SILENT PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Prayers

Loving God, our Creator, we pray for our fellow human beings. Help us to be grateful for all that is good in our lives, and to see reason for the bad. Make us more aware of those who are disadvantaged, those who are neglected, those who are rejected. Help us, not just to condemn the injustices of our society and our world, but to work to redeem them, in whatever way You will for us. We make this prayer in the name of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Cardinal Hume Centre, Westminster.*

Loving and generous God, You have made us in your image and given us everything we are, and everything we need to fulfil your purpose in giving us life. Open our eyes to the gifts you have poured upon us so that we may have grateful hearts.

Help us to thank you by using your gifts in service to others and spreading your kingdom of love. Amen. *From: All is Gift, Churches Together in Kew Lent book, 2016.*

‘O Lord, open my eyes that I may see the need of others, open my ears that I may hear their cries, open my heart so that they need not be without succour. Let me not be afraid to defend the weak because of the anger of the strong, nor afraid to defend the poor because of the anger of the rich. Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use me to bring them to these places. Open my eyes and ears that I may this coming day do some work of peace for thee’. Amen. *Alan Paton*

Reflections:

The economic plight of many countries remains dire following the global financial crisis, and the increasing ecological crisis, driven by climate change, is being felt by agrarian and rural communities that have always existed at the margins of self-sustainability and viability. For as long as these factors persist, European countries should continue to expect the movement of people seeking the relative security of European destination countries. For such people, the attendant risks of migration and seeking refuge are far outweighed by the risks of remaining. These can include unemployment, violent death, starvation, sexual violence, slavery, or one of many other undeserved consequences of conflict, drought, disease, famine, or disaster. *Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe(CCME) report, page 18*

The individual man, woman and child has eternal and everlasting value. Every single human being matters. He or she matters because God created that person, loves that person and wants that person to be with him eternally in the closest living fellowship. *Through the year with Michael Ramsey, January 21st*

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

But how is this impotence transformed? As one gropes for an answer, it seems to me that part of the answer lies in prayer. That sounds very conventional and trite. Nevertheless, I do believe that God gives sight to those who would see; that he cures the extraordinary blindness from which we all suffer in different aspects of our lives and personalities; that he grants the great gift of imagination if we will dare but ask him for it. And imagination is power. The helplessness and impotence, which we so often feel, arises because we do not know what to do, we cannot think of appropriate action. Yet if we can at least begin by praying regularly that God will show us, puny as we are, what we can do for the healing of our land, I am convinced that little by little over the years, he will show us. *Francis Wilson, Professor of Economics, Cape Town University, writing in February 1975 during a 24 hour prayer vigil for a large number of black student leaders who had been arrested by South African security police at the end of 1974 and detained without trial. Some were held for long periods in solitary confinement. All were finally released without being*

charged for any crime. In: John de Gruchy (1985) Cry Justice: prayers, meditations and readings from South Africa

Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. *1 Corinthians 12 4-7*

CONGREGATIONAL ENGAGEMENT: DECIDING ON PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Here are some ideas for congregational engagement with God's call to us about the plight of refugees. Please discuss them together and then vote on the flip chart, as a threesome, for your top three actions, using **three** red spots for your first choice, **two** red spots for your second choice and **one** red spot for your third choice. If you have another idea that is not here, please write it on one of the post-its and place it under the heading NEW IDEAS.

I. Suggestions for deepening our faith

1. We use one Sunday this year for a special service to connect our faith to the plight of refugees and to reflect on God's call to us at this time.
2. We hold a prayer vigil during Refugee Week (20 -26 June with World Refugee Day on Monday 20 June) in conjunction with Churches Together in Kew.
3. We develop a prayer card which is put in our pews and which we can take for use at home.

II. Suggestions for raising our awareness

4. We hold a café evening with one or more speakers on the topic of refugees
5. We invite the Chickpea Sisters from Tooting to provide lunch with us (approx. cost £10 a head) and tell us about their experience as refugees
6. We organise a celebration event during Refugee Week. St James' Piccadilly, for example, held an evening of music, readings, and testimony on the themes of exile and homecoming on February 2nd.
7. We have a congregational briefing after our main services on the local initiative, Refugees Welcome in Richmond and the Churches Together in Kew contribution to this.

III. Suggestions for giving

8. We have a special collection after the main services on Sunday June 26th (Sunday in Refugee Week)
9. We hold a fund-raising event during 2016 to raise funds for the Tooting based charity Caras (Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers).
10. We have a one-off book collection to support the book sales at the Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers.
11. We have a one-off garden tool collection for Refugee Action Kingston
12. We have a one-off fabric collection for Refugee Action Kingston

IV. Other suggestions

13. We develop a statement of commitment on the lines of the one by St Martin in the Fields - see below
14. We form a letter -writing group who are prepared to stand up for refugees in letters to our local councillors, to our MP, Zac Goldsmith, to one or more of our eight London MEPs and to the local and national press.
15. We pursue Sally's idea – see below.

PAPER FROM SALLY CANNON

Most members of our congregation enjoy secure employment. Many will have professional or high level trade qualifications and for them a broadly predictable and secure future lies ahead. The same was true of many of the refugees who are currently fleeing war in the hope of finding a safer future in another country.

Most refugees want desperately to use their skills, knowledge and experience to rebuild their lives and contribute to our community as soon as possible. What do they need to do in order to achieve that aim? Britain needs teachers – not least in science and maths. However, for many good reasons, there are huge barriers facing a qualified and experienced teacher from overseas. The task of understanding what an overseas trained teacher needs to do proved to be extremely complicated and time consuming – even for someone who has worked in the British education system for years. Briefly, every individual must:

- Demonstrate that he/she has a good knowledge of English
- Understand the basic education system here
- Check if their professional qualification is recognised (many will not have been able to bring original documentation)

- Find out what further training they might need to gain Qualified Teacher Status
- Apply for and complete relevant additional training.

There are organisations that help (at least in London: it was hard to find any country-wide support). However you have to know what you are looking for in order to discover this help – hard for someone just arrived and struggling to settle a family into a new environment!

Just having a fellow professional who knows their way around the system and could point you in the right direction of more sustained help could make all the difference.

Questions we could consider:

1. Would entering your profession or trade be similarly complex and daunting?
2. Does our congregation have people who could/would give a little of their time to help?
3. Is this aspect of supporting newly arrived refugees of interest to the Social Justice Forum?

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.

ORGANISATIONS UPDATE, these sites are all helpful in informing us.

CARAS (Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) <http://caras.org.uk/>
This is the charity about which Dr Jess Thomas is talking today.

CHRISTIAN AID www.christianaid.org.uk

CHURCHES COMMISSION FOR MIGRANTS IN EUROPE www.ccme.be

An ecumenical organisation that serves the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees and minority groups at European and national level. There is a valuable report (January 2016) on contemporary patterns of migration in Europe and the Churches' response

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN <https://ctbi.org.uk/how-the-churches-are-responding-to-the-refugee-crisis/>

DIOCESE of LONDON <http://www.capitalmass.org.uk/refugee-response>

GOVERNMENT <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2> updated 16 November 2015.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/495141/DFID Syria Crisis Response Summary 2016.01.25 .pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/495141/DFID_Syria_Crisis_Response_Summary_2016.01.25_.pdf) 25 January 2016. This gives details of the response by the Department for International Development <https://www.supportingsyria2016.com> All about the Syria conference on 4 February.

LEARN ENGLISH AT HOME (LEAH) www.leah.org.uk 'Learn English at Home is a local and independent registered charity, supporting residents of Kingston and Richmond from ethnic minority backgrounds, who have English as a second language. We help and support our clients to attain the level of English needed to

communicate their everyday needs and empower them to become more confident and independent. Our services are delivered across Kingston and Richmond and we offer the following: Home Tuition; Community Classes; English for Health; Trips & Social Activities; Signposting. 'We work collaboratively with a wide range of other local agencies to take referrals, signpost to other services, and identify opportunities for progression. **The majority of our work is delivered by our dedicated volunteers who are the lifeline of the organisation, and without whom we could not exist.**

'LEAH works with ethnic minority adults, **including refugees and migrants**, who are currently socially isolated due to their lack of English language. We work with people who are unable to attend English classes at adult education college due to their child-care responsibilities, ill health or illiteracy in their own language. We currently work with over 300 people, providing the following services, all at no cost to our clients:

'One to one English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) tuition in the client's home; group conversation skills classes in community settings, with crèche facilities; trips and social activities in the surrounding areas e.g. heritage tours of Kingston; information about local statutory and voluntary activities and provision is embedded into all our services. Our services offer clients a means to overcome isolation and improve their chances in life through improved English language skills, increased confidence and self-belief, and greater knowledge of local services. Our work changes people's lives. It empowers clients to become active members of their local communities and in doing this; we contribute to building stronger communities.'

LONDON CHURCHES

<http://www.londonchurches.org.uk/resources/Migration+Common+Reflections+Dec+2015.pdf>

REFUGEE ACTION www.refugee-action.org.uk 'Refugee Action is an independent, national charity working with refugees. We help people who've survived some of the world's worst regimes to live again. We help people find the basic support everyone deserves if they're to live with dignity. The chance to build the safest, happiest and most productive life they can, so they can live. And where we encounter policies, practices or attitudes that won't allow this chance, we challenge them. We believe everyone who's fled their home to survive deserves a chance to live again' (*From Annual Report, 2013-2014*). *The section on **Refugee Voices** is particularly worth looking at.*

REFUGEE ACTION KINGSTON www.refugeeactionkingston.org.uk

'Refugee Action Kingston (RAK), founded 24 years ago, exists to offer holistic support to refugees and asylum seekers in the borough. We currently support almost 1,800 families. Having fled persecution, refugees and their families face

multiple and complex problems. Issues we help with include isolation, health problems, financial difficulties and reduced life opportunities, often due to complicated systems they don't know how to access. RAK's knowledge and experience of the specific barriers refugees and asylum seekers face on an everyday basis allows us to provide the support people need and prevent many problems developing. Please help us to enable refugees to become independent, active members of our community. **'Volunteers are involved in many different activities at RAK and are vital to the work that we do.** We usually ask volunteers to commit to a minimum of 6 months. Volunteers will need to fill in an application form, provide 2 referees and then attend an informal interview to see whether we have a suitable placement. We provide our own training, access to some external training, on-going support, volunteer meetings and socials'

REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORK www.refugeesupportnetwork.org This charity supports young refugees and survivors of trafficking to build more hopeful futures through education. The Useful Video (see below) includes an excellent talk on their work. At the moment, the number of people who have volunteered to help with educational mentoring exceeds their resources for organising the volunteers, but the charity would greatly welcome donations to help expand.

REFUGEE WEEK, Monday 20 June (World Refugee Day) to Sunday 26 June.

<http://refugeeweek.org.uk/> 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'. Resources can be downloaded or ordered: <http://refugeeweek.org.uk/info-centre/refugee-week-resources/>

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home This website keeps you updated on the international front

UNICEF <http://www.unicef.org.uk/landing-pages/donate-syria/> Until 29 February the government is matching all donations to UNICEF.

USEFUL VIDEO There is a helpful 56 minute video of a meeting on 20 January at St Mary le Bow Church in the City. Although the sound is occasionally problematic (particularly for the Bishop of Manchester), it makes for interesting viewing and listening:

<http://www.stpaulsinstitute.org.uk/videos/2016/jan/20/2016/jan/20/justshare-present-state-of-the-refugee-crisis>