



*How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her
young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. (Psalm 84:1-3)*

*A scribe then approached and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus
said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has
nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20)*

#RefugeesWelcome at St Albans

Providing sanctuary and safe passage is the founding principle of St Albans Cathedral and Diocese in the story of Britain's first martyr, Alban, protecting the life of a Christian priest from Rome, Amphibalus, seeking asylum in England. The Roman soldiers beheaded Alban when he refused to turn Amphibalus over to them. As a diocese we have an exceptional example of Christian sacrifice and hospitality in the person of Alban – one which in our current refugee crisis should provide inspiration and guidance.

The Rt Revd Richard Atkinson, Bishop of Bedford, has provided an initial guidance in responding to the crisis in his recent letter. The following is the draft of a proposed strategy with three areas of response: that of immediate urgency to save life, health and well-being; of interim necessity and long-term goals. This is followed by a list of further information: where to donate in the way of money or goods, how to volunteer and where to find training, further information on the crisis as it unfolds, spiritual and theological resources. This is not a comprehensive list by any means, and one which we will seek to update as occasion arises.

That a pan-European solution to the refugee crisis is essential is now an accepted assertion, but this is only part of a bigger picture. The following is an extract from material prepared for a European Region meeting of faith leaders by the United Nations for ending incitement to atrocities leading to genocide:

'The European region is one of the most linguistically, ethnically and religiously diverse regions of the world. The region is also diverse in terms of the socio-economic status, political systems and levels of political stability of its States...Moreover, throughout the region, a side effect of the financial crisis has been an increase in nationalist movements, which on the one hand can generate a sense of unity but on the other can encourage hostility towards exclusion of certain communities and, in response, feed radicalisation, both of which factors are early indicators of the risk of atrocity crimes.

European States have been criticised for being ill-prepared, and for failing to fulfil their responsibilities towards those fleeing violent conflict and their obligations under refugee law. Alex Bellamy, Director of the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, noted that "*all states* within the United Nations acknowledged their responsibility to use "diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means" to protect populations from atrocity crimes...the granting of safe passage and asylum is without doubt one of the most effective, if not the most effective, ways of directly protecting people from atrocity crimes." The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of migrants has criticised the European Union's response stating that "allowing people to die at Europe's borders just because of their administrative status, is in complete disregard for the value of human life."¹

The Dublin Agreement, which requires those seeking asylum to register in the first safe port of call in Europe, is no longer fit for purpose during such a large scale emergency situation. That border countries, many of whom are undergoing tremendous financial strain, should bear the brunt of the crisis is deeply unfair. A means must be found for cooperation across Europe in order to provide safe passage, preservation of human dignity and protection of the vulnerable as well as eventual re-settlement.

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St Albans Diocesan Inter Faith Adviser, the Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills, attended the recent United Nations European Region conference of faith leaders and has written the following statement upon which this strategy is developed:

¹ <http://theglobalobservatory.org/2015/09/syria-refugees-unhcr-aylan-kurdi/>



A statement from the UK & Ireland coalition formed following the 16-18 September 2015 United Nations European Meeting on the role of religious leaders in preventing incitement that could lead to atrocity crimes

'As a group of UK faith & organisational leaders invited to participate in the United Nations European meeting on preventing incitement leading to atrocity crimes, we confirm our determination to work together in responding to the current refugee crisis, alongside our European Colleagues, on three levels: immediate provision of care in the way of food, shelter and human warmth; enabling movement to places of safety, taking into account the needs of family to remain together, accepting close friendships and communities as falling within the definition of 'family'; and long term settlement into establishing home and employment. This is the least that human decency calls for and is incumbent upon all those claiming to be adherents of religious and spiritual tradition.

'We condemn all forms of violence against those seeking refuge. And we celebrate all gestures of hospitality and generosity on the part of governments, organisations and individuals.'

Dr Ahmed Shaheed
Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills
Carl Soderbergh
Hajar Al-Kaddo
Irfan Khan
Rabbi Lee Wax

For more information, please see:

http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50686#.Vf_Z4t9Viko



What can we do?

The outline below is a useful outline of the different ways in which you can lend help. Everything makes a difference, whether it is prayer, writing a letter to your MP, collecting clothing and tents, helping people to settle into a new home. Everything makes a difference, nothing is so small it doesn't matter.

PEWS – where the best work of the church is done!

Pray & Reflect – prayer & informed discernment

Encourage – speak out in the way of social justice, support the weak

Welcome – in the way of food, clothing, medical care, friendship

Shelter – provide temporary accommodation, safe passage, settlement into home

A Prayer for the Refugee Crisis

from the Church of England website:

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

In 2006, Archbishop Sentamu set up a peace vigil in York Minster. Camping in a tent and living on a liquid diet for seven days, it was a dramatic plea for peace in the Middle East during a time over a thousand people were killed. Events have continued to harden and now millions of people are on the move. While not encouraging our congregations camp out in cold churches, it would be possible to set up a mock camp, along with an example of the supplies people might be trying to carry or live on for a day or a week. Prayer corners can be imaginative places, which remind us not only of the need to pray for others, but to take that prayer into action.



<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/archbishop.gives.public.witness.for.peace.in.york.minster.tent/7256.htm>

How can we better understand?

The following issues are divided into three strands of immediate, interim and long-term needs. These are further divided into what must be considered for the refugees themselves, and, secondly, with regard to those seeking to provide help in any capacity.

For refugees:

Immediate need:

- Food, clothing, shelter – the current means of travelling on foot, possessing only what can be carried over long distances means there is little these people are able to hold onto in the way of all three of the above. With the coming winter months, even tents, if available, will not prevent death and severe illness in the event of severe cold. A fair means of distribution must be sought and encouraged. This is happening somewhat through those volunteers working on the ground, but further networking could provide smoother access. It must be emphasised that the efforts on the part of security forces, police and army, to remove essential provisions, supplies and possessions from individual persons must immediately desist. If it is felt groups of people must be moved on, they must at the very least be allowed to collect their possessions and treated with dignity.
- Travel – a means of safe travel should be coordinated across Europe through provision of coaches, trains, if need be individual cars, and eventually air transport. This should not be provided only for those who are able to afford it, but to all those in need.

- Border control – The Dublin Accord was negotiated during what could be considered a period of normalcy with regard to European migration, and as part of nations’ rights to control their borders. It does not take into account the extraordinary circumstances we are currently in, and a large burden of providing a place of safety for those fleeing from war and violence is born by nations bordering Europe. In the spirit of a Europe endeavouring to cooperate in order to find mutual flourishing, it is proposed the whole of Europe must work together in providing safe refuge during extraordinary circumstances and the rule of applying for sanctuary in the first country of arrival in Europe must be waived.
- Medical care – There are those who are suffering from malnourishment, wounds from the hardship of travel and psychological trauma. Those with nursing and other medical training are volunteering in Calais and across Europe in providing care.

Interim need:

- Housing until settlement – Individuals, voluntary organisations and even local authorities are already looking at ways in which they can offer temporary accommodation for an interim period as people find employment and find their feet. Agreement will need to be made clear between parties, with appropriate translation and cultural understanding, as to the parameters of the arrangements so as to prevent misunderstanding.
- Daily needs: food, clothing, friendship
- Education in the way of language, cultural norms – considerable support can be gained from similar communities already in the UK who will be best able at guiding through this transition.
- Spiritual, psychological support – spiritual support from experienced religious leaders/believers as well as help from trained counsellors will be essential
- Health care – work with local health care authorities as to provision of health care, keeping in mind many will have suffered serious trauma.
- Relationship building – sometimes just taking someone out for a cup of tea or to a movie can make all the difference, and enable an amount of normalcy. Small gestures mean a great deal.
- Connection with family – there will be concern about family left behind in the country of origin, as well as those with whom they have lost contact along the way. Help must be provided to enable those connections to be re-established. (The Red Cross is already at work on this issue, it will be a matter of connecting with what they are already doing.)

Long-term need:

- Settlement into permanent home
- Employment
- Education – provision for schooling for children, university students, re-training for professional qualifications in the UK already obtained elsewhere
- Relationship building
- Spiritual & community life – finding a community of faith or hobbies, volunteering, etc.

- Care of psychological trauma – not only are traumas likely to affect people the rest of their lives in some manner, the second generation of children also tend to feel the effects
- Long-term health effects from physical abuse or other violent injury

For those wanting to help:

Immediate:

- Collection points for donations – places such as Emmaus and others do regular runs to Calais, but also provide for the needs of those settling, such as a 'survival pack' of furniture for moving into a first home. They also have a system of sorting donations for those in camps, and request that donations arrive sorted into similar items, and that they are clean and in good condition. The rule is, if you wouldn't use it for yourself in the condition it is in, don't bring it.
- Charities for monetary donations – a list is provided in this paper
- Volunteers transporting donations – for those wanting to help out or take donations to camps, it is better to coordinate this with those already out there in order for items to go to those most in need in the best and most dignified manner possible. Organisations listed in this paper will be able to help with this.
- Counselling and supervision, what to expect – don't get too involved in each individual story. Every person in the camps or arriving in the UK will have a tragic story, and secondary post-traumatic stress disorder is a recognised risk. It is possible to be caring and to listen, without getting drawn in to the trauma yourself. And by all means find other to talk it through with afterward.
- Stories from those who have already gone before – listen to others and gain from their experience

Interim:

- Housing – working with local authorities, and anyone taking in refugees; essential to counsel and provide on-going support for those providing housing in a personal capacity, particularly when sharing your own home. People who have undergone trauma may have all kinds of difficulties it may be hard to understand. It is often found that when people have undergone starvation, they will hoard food in strange places. There may be hoarding of certain items that have been difficult to get a hold of, or trouble sleeping, keeping warm, etc. Ensure you talk these through with the individual, and get counselling yourself around how to handle living with those who have undergone trauma.
- Furnishing – something to sleep on, sit on, eat from, cook with and preserve food (the 'survival pack' mentioned previously)
- Building friendships, providing support – settling in the UK is not just about housing and employment, it is also about building relationships with people and feeling they have something valuable to contribute to the country that has taken them in
- On-going counselling (for volunteers) and supervision
- Multi-agency cooperation & networking
- Helping make connection with lost family (Red Cross)
- Political pressure on governments, media, agencies, business

Longterm:

- Continued support through friendship and networking – a refugee friend isn't just for Christmas!

Additional points:

Airport and other chaplaincies – It may be that as freedom of movement and more organised travel is developed that refugees will arrive at Luton Airport in need of short term accommodation for a night or two, plus food, and most of all friendly faces, warm smiles and hospitality.

It may also be that hospitals, universities, schools and other types of chaplaincy will have specialist calls on their time.

Social media - It is suggested that a Facebook group is set up where parishes/individuals/faith groups within the diocese are able to share their pictures and stories. This will develop into a helpful body of information not only in the way of witness to what is already happening, but also of help to others wanting to do more. Notification of how to share information across the diocese will follow.

The hashtag #RefugeesWelcome is being tracked worldwide by Citizens UK, so be sure to include this while using social media. Help spread the word!

There is a form letter at the end of this paper which can be used to send to your local authority or MP.

Resources:

Below is a list of resources which have been recommended by those working on the ground in our communities.

Donations:

- <http://www.weareus.org.uk/news/europe/>
- Tearfund Refugee Fund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 8QE, www.tearfund.org/en/refugeecrisis/ / 02089779144
- If you wish to give clothes or other goods: Red Cross offer a 'Shop-drop' service specifically for refugees: www.redcross.org.uk/Donate-Now/Donation-enquiries/Shop-Drop-for-Refugee-Crisis; The nearest shop to Welwyn is Luton: 12-14 Park Street - LU1 3EP 01582 455441
- The Emmaus Centre in St Albans are doing runs to Calais: http://www.emmaus.org.uk/st_albans/latest/news/1677_calais_appeal_updated
- US (formerly USPG) leading a rapid response in Europe with the Diocese of Europe <http://www.weareus.org.uk/news/europe/>
- Christian Aid is working with churches and other agencies in Europe and the Middle East. <https://donate.christianaid.org.uk/refugees> .
- Doctors of the World is part of the global Médecins du Monde network have set up an appeal for donations to help support their work <https://doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/pages/calais-appeal>

Training opportunities:

- http://www.citizensuk.org/six_day_training
- <http://www.uk-imr.ac.uk/study/> (see short courses)

Volunteering and befriending:

- Watford and Three Rivers Refugee <http://www.wtrrp.org.uk/>
- If you are professional seeking to offer help and support to refugees please contact the Refugee Council: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/ 020 7346 6700

Housing:

- If you might be able a room in a house for a refugees: Red Cross has a dedicated helpline: 0800 107 8727
- Citizen UK, apart from an extended programme of help for refugees, has set up a means by which landlords can offer properties for refugees: http://www.citizensuk.org/help_find_homes_for_syrian_refugees
- If you might be able to offer longer term accommodation the best course seems to be to talk to the housing teams in your local authorities. These are a few- Welwyn: wgc.housing@welhat-cht.org.uk 01707 357796; Hatfield: hatfield.housing@welhat-cht.org.uk 01707 357088
- The Emmaus Centre will donate a set up pack for housing: something to sleep on, something to sit on, something to eat from and something to cook with http://www.emmaus.org.uk/st_albans or http://www.emmaus.org.uk/st_albans/shops_and_services/our_shops/439_harpenden_shop_-_emmaus_st_albans
- At the present time fostering of unaccompanied children is not supported through these schemes, but anyone interested in doing so is directed to the usual Hertfordshire Fostering service: www.hertsdirect.org/services/healthsoc/childfam/fostadoptsharedcare/newfostering/ 0800 917 0925

Some useful background and practical information:

- Archbishop Justin's statement www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5606/archbishop-of-canterbury-on-the-refugee-crisis
- Canterbury Diocese has produced a Refugee Crisis Tool Kit www.canterburydiocese.org/refugee-crisis-five-ways-to-respond/
- Various blogs and comment pieces <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/home-and-community-affairs/asylum-and-immigration.aspx>
- from the Diocese of Europe: <http://eurobishop.blogspot.co.uk/2015/09/anglican-agency-us-launches-rapid.html?m=1>
- <http://www.citizensuk.org/>
- <http://www.migranthelpuk.org/get-involved/>
- whatever you think of their policies, one of the simplest source of clear information is the government website: www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2
- Save the Children updates <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/emergencies/child-refugee-crisis-latest-updates>

- Facebook page for local Hertfordshire amnesty groups working with local councils in welcoming refugees as a part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HertsWelcomesSyrianFamilies/>
- Local petitions which already have over 1500 signatures
<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/refugees-welcome-in-hertfordshire-4>
- United Nations Refugee Agency <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/>
- A six-minute film explaining the current crisis – very helpful!
<http://9gag.com/tv/p/az2bNN/the-european-refugee-crisis-and-syria-explained?ref=jfs>

Theological resources:

- Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church, by Susanna Snyder
<http://www.ashgate.com/isbn/9781409423003>
- Praying in Exile, by Gordon Mursell
- Walking in Another's Shoes, by Ruth Worsley & Karen Rooms (Grove Books series)

What our faith friends are saying:

Below is a collection of statement from our ecumenical and interfaith friends. This is only a few, there is so much more – but maybe you can discover this for yourselves as you work together in our communities to welcome those in need.

CCJ Statement on refugee crisis:

The stories and pictures reaching us over the last weeks speak to us powerfully of the suffering of people who are searching for hope, freedom and security. As Christians and Jews, we share a profound commitment to respect for the dignity of every man and woman made in the image of God, and we recognise the biblical imperative to welcome the stranger. We urge our own government and the governments of the European Union to work together to find ways of generously welcoming refugees, effectively curbing people trafficking, and constructively seeking peace and justice in the Middle East.

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave OBE, Bishop of Woolwich and CCJ Chair.

Dr Jane Clements, Director

Elizabeth Harris Sawczenko, Deputy Director

<http://www.ccj.org.uk/ccj-statement-on-refugee-crisis/>

Statement on the refugee crisis in Europe

By His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom

excerpt:

The Church of Egypt is no stranger to the issue of asylum as it was Egypt that accepted and embraced the infant Christ and His family as refugees when they fled targeted and intentional persecution. It is indeed telling that while the world has apparently progressed over millennia since then, the problems and challenges remain the same.

As a Church with its roots in the Middle East we are very aware of the struggles faced by people in the region, Christians and others. It is essential that the plight of these refugees is not belittled or ignored, as they face very real challenges in their homelands, living with a daily threat to their livelihood and even existence.

At a time of increasing economic pressure in Europe and a greater fear of importing radical elements seeking to destabilise our communities, it is understandable that caution must be exercised... What is concerning is abrasive rhetoric in the media and public sphere, leading to the constant dehumanisation of people who are undoubtedly victims of this conflict, to the extent that many now see them simply as an impending risk to their communities, putting aside their basic rights and needs. What we must realise is that many of these people, indigenous to their homelands, are not fleeing out of choice or preference but out of sheer necessity.

The Scriptures are timeless in their direction, and when the Lord God instructs His people to care for the widow, orphan, traveller and stranger (Deuteronomy 10:18) that was not meant exclusively for His immediate audience alone, but to the whole of humanity over time.

These challenging events remind us of the brokenness of our humanity, but as Christians we also recognise the ability of God to heal that brokenness. For that reason, we pray confidently for solutions in the homelands of those fleeing, the countries that may extend whatever hospitality they can, and above all, safety for many who make these dangerous journeys out of sheer desperation.

For the full text: <http://www.bishopangaelos.org/content/statement-refugee-crisis-europe-hg-bishop-angaelos>

Dr Shuja Shafi, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain

Britain has long prided itself in being a humanitarian country on the world stage and offering refuge to those who need it most. We remember this most famously during the Second World War and the Kindertransport rescue efforts. We need to rekindle these values once more and ensure the UK takes its fair share of refugees. We are not calling for open borders, but open hearts. I call upon Muslim charities and families to do what they can to help refugees arriving here. And I call upon fellow Britons, interfaith, civil and political leaders to come together to see what we can do to address what is clearly a pressing humanitarian need.

<http://www.mcb.org.uk/british-muslims-join-calls-for-compassionate-response-to-refugee-crisis/>

Write to your MP & local authority:

Below is a form letter which can be used for sending to your local authority or MP. This is only a suggestion, please adjust as appropriate.

Dear

Our local Christian churches and our inter-faith partners, share with you, and many in our communities, deep concern about the current and tragic refugee crisis. We are very aware of the preparations you are facing to receive refugees and you are in our prayers and wish to encourage humanitarian efforts to provide a warm welcome to those in need.

The command to 'Love our Neighbour', with its particular emphasis on welcoming the stranger and caring for the most vulnerable, is at the heart of our Christian tradition. As such it means that we cannot but respond to the humanitarian crisis as it unfolds before us.

Many in the churches are already responding through financial and practical support for refugees in the Middle East and nearer to home.

More than that, as a church community, we are ready to offer what we can to support the refugees who arrive here and are ready to work with you. In particular we will:

- Work with others in the community to offer support for all refugees, including offering welcome, orientation, integration, sign-posting and practical assistance.
- Encourage where possible congregations and individuals to make housing available for use by refugees.
- Be ready to join any local working groups through making available senior and experienced members of our churches.
- Pray for, act with and stand with you as we rise to the challenge that this crisis presents to our shared humanity.

Please do keep us informed of developments locally, and whether there is anything either as an individual or alongside our faith community, for which we can offer assistance.

Sincerely,
