

**TOGETHER
NETWORK⁺**



Together in Prayer

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

May - July 2019



Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The world is in the grip of one of the worst forced displacement crises ever. Over 68.5 million people around the globe have had to flee their homes and become refugees due to war, persecution, hunger, human rights violations and environmental disasters – that's equivalent to the entire British population.

"Indifference and silence lead to complicity whenever we stand by as people are dying of suffocation, starvation, violence and shipwreck... Biblical revelation urges us to welcome the stranger; it tells us that in so doing, we open our doors to God, and that in the faces of others we see the face of Christ himself." - Pope Francis

The UK has a long history of providing refuge to those from other countries: as early as the 16th century, French Protestants fled persecution from Catholics, finding sanctuary and safety in England.

This prayer diary explores how our Development Workers across the Together Network are supporting those seeking asylum and those settling into their new lives, with suggestions of how you can remember them in prayer.

Thank you for supporting our work with your prayers.





Given that the world is facing the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War, comparatively few people make it to Britain in their search for safety.

In 2018, an estimated 612,600 people sought safety in Europe (down 11% from the previous year).

People who are seeking asylum make up a tiny proportion of new arrivals in Britain.

Statistics show that 20.5 million non European Economic Area (EEA) nationals arrived in Britain in the calendar year 2018 – but just 0.14% of them were seeking refuge here. Of course, not all people seeking asylum will be granted permission to stay in Britain.

The British asylum system is extremely tough.

Just 33% of initial decisions made in 2018 have been grants of protection (asylum or humanitarian protection). However, many refugees had to rely on the courts rather than the Government to provide them with the protection they need. The proportion of asylum appeals allowed over that time was 38%.

At the end of 2018, 50,143 people seeking asylum and their dependents were being supported by the Government.

This does not mean asylum seekers live in luxury; far from it, people have no say in where they live and are often left to survive on around £5 a day.



Find out more.

Facts on this page are from The Refugee Council.

Northern England

Diocese of Blackburn

Together Lancashire (TL) is bringing together local organisations to develop a more cohesive response to welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. In Preston they have built a network of volunteers, professionals, statutory, voluntary and faith organisations, together with asylum seekers and refugees living in the city. The network hold regular quarterly open meetings, and other events and celebrations. Preston is now a 'City of Sanctuary'; part of the national movement building a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. TL is also working on the 'Lancashire Sanctuary Homes' project which aims to find a home for every refugee and destitute asylum seeker.



Please pray for the ongoing development and impact of this project. Pray also for the volunteers who are hosting refugees, visiting homes and administering the hub.



Midlands

Diocese of Lichfield

Walsall Council has been selected by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as one of five pilot sites to test its new integration strategy. Transforming Communities Together (TCT) is part of the 'Walsall for All' board, which aims to create integrated, empowered and inclusive communities where people from all backgrounds can come together to celebrate what they have in common. TCT are working with 'The Walsall Welcome Box Team', a partnership of four churches which gives new asylum seekers and refugees a welcome box of gifts via a home visit, and shows new arrivals around the community.



Please pray for continued wisdom for those leading this work, strengthening of existing partnerships and a renewed confidence to work together across geographical and cultural barriers.

Diocese of Coventry

Together for Change (TfC) have pioneered Fresh Start, working with churches of various denominations and other organisations, to offer a warm and welcoming environment to refugees and asylum seekers. Although they receive excellent professional support in Coventry, they often lack companionship. TfC seek to meet this need through four main initiatives: Saturday morning football sessions, conversational English groups, a refugee choir and Nourish Food Events in churches that bring people together from many different cultures.



Please pray for solutions to barriers, such as childcare responsibilities, which can prevent young women from engaging in the refugee football sessions. Please also pray for TfC's refugee choir, launched this year.

Oliver's Fresh Start

Oliver* is a young man from Sudan, whose village was bombed. He escaped the violence and managed to get to Europe, eventually arriving in Coventry and seeking asylum. He arrived in England alone, with limited English, and no friends.

At each step of his journey from Sudan to England Christians have helped him: providing him with new clothes in Italy, food at the Calais refugee camp, and in Coventry, support from Together for Change. TfC's Fresh Start coordinator met Oliver through one of the various ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) classes which TfC supports. He invited Oliver to the Fresh Start Refugee Football sessions,

and from there to after-football refreshments and English Conversation Classes. Oliver has received over 60 hours of free English Support through Fresh Start, which has boosted his overall confidence. After living in fear in his home country, he now feels safe and able to develop a new life in England. Oliver now has been granted refugee status.

*name changed.



Fresh Start has helped Oliver develop English language skills, make new friends through football, and feel integrated into life in Coventry.



21,863

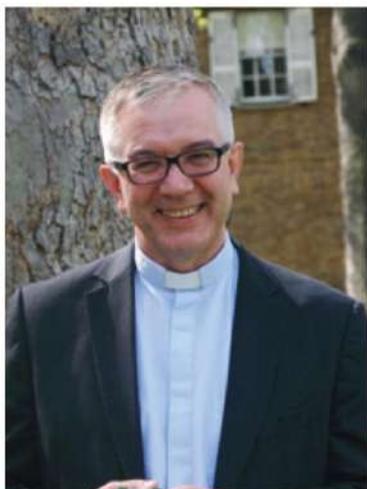
people took part in **Together Network** events, training, and workshops in 2018

1,015

social action and community projects supported by the **Together Network** in 2018

1,142

churches supported directly by the **Together Network** with social action activities in 2018



We are speaking out for social action!

Our speakers would love the opportunity to speak about our work in **your church**. We are taking bookings now for our Church Speaker 2019 diary.

Revd Paul Hackwood, our Chief Executive, gives a very powerful & inspiring talk on

Social Action and the wider work of the Church Urban Fund and the Together Network.

Would you like to book him for 2019? If you would, please email: rhea.varma@cuf.org.uk or call: **020 7898 1452**

Help us change lives and communities together

togethernetnetwork.org.uk

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Diocese of Nottingham

At the end of 2018, Transforming Notts Together initiated a network to bring together churches and Christian organisations in greater Nottingham who support refugees and asylum seekers. Previously, there had been very little connection between them and after a couple of meetings, members were already sharing ideas and building relationships.

On May 21st, they are co-hosting an event with Welcome Churches to ask the question: 'What would it look like for every refugee in Nottingham to receive a welcome from the local Church?' The evening will include: steps to building a refugee-welcoming church, an update on the refugee situation in Nottingham and resources and tools to help people welcome refugees. Although many churches have stepped up to welcome and care for refugees and asylum seekers, the need in Nottingham city is massive, with large unknown numbers of destitute asylum seekers.



Please pray that people come to the event in May and really engage with what it could mean both for their congregation and as individuals.

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." - Matthew 25:40

Southern England

Diocese of Exeter



Please pray that Transforming Plymouth Together (TPT) are able to offer valuable support to churches where it is most needed, and pray also for their work with the City of Sanctuary movement in Plymouth; that it gains momentum and impact.



Transforming Plymouth Together are supporting churches as they work with refugees coming to Plymouth, a dispersal city.



Who is an Asylum Seeker?

An asylum seeker is someone who has made an application for protection in line with the UN 1951 Refugee Convention, and the 1967 European Convention on Human Rights. A person applies for asylum on the grounds of having a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, political belief or membership of a particular social group.

What is Refugee Status?

A person given refugee status is normally granted leave to remain in the UK for 5 years. At the end of that period they can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

Who is a Migrant?

A migrant is a term that has no legal meaning but is used to describe someone travelling to another country and is usually used to mean an economic migrant.

<p>Myth</p> <p>Most asylum seekers end up as criminals.</p>	<p>Truth</p> <p>Asylum seekers and refugees are law abiding citizens. Official figures show that the vast majority of people seeking asylum are law abiding people.</p>
<p>Myth</p> <p>Most asylum seekers are bogus asylum seekers.</p>	<p>Truth</p> <p>There is no such thing as an 'illegal' or 'bogus' asylum seeker. Under international law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in any country that has signed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and to remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim.</p>
<p>Myth</p> <p>Asylum seekers drain the welfare budget and NHS.</p>	<p>Truth</p> <p>Refugees make a huge contribution to the UK. Migrants to England, including refugees, pay more into the public purse compared to their UK born counterparts.</p>
<p>Myth</p> <p>Asylum seekers and refugees get large handouts from the state.</p>	<p>Truth</p> <p>Asylum seekers do not receive large handouts. They actually receive around £5 per day. Additionally, asylum seekers are not allowed to work, do not qualify for council housing and they cannot choose where they live.</p>



Facts on this page are from 'A Guide: Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Migrants', produced by Churches Together in the Merseyside Region.

Diocese of Truro

Transformation Cornwall (TC) is supporting refugee families with friendship and community support through work with The Cornwall Faith Forum, in partnership with the Cornwall Refugee Resettlement Network and the Cornwall Islamic Community Centre. TC is assisting the Cornwall Faith Forum's volunteers by developing a volunteer handbook and policies to support the important contribution that volunteers make to this work.



Please pray for sensitivity and energy for the volunteers, and for the refugee families; that they may feel incredibly welcomed into Cornish life.

A Prayer for Refugees

Written by Jane Yeomans, Worker at Transformation Cornwall

We thank you for the blessing of having the refugees in England and the opportunity of sharing and learning cultures together. We pray that they feel welcomed into life here as their presence strengthens and enhances our communities. We pray for wisdom to respect diversity and to have an awareness of cultural sensitivities.

We thank you for the tireless work of the volunteers and workers supporting the individuals and families, in schools, the coffee mornings and in their homes.

We remember that your Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own. Inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts so that we are fit and able to welcome our new friends into their new homes here among us.

We ask this through your Name, Amen.

Miriam's Story

Miriam* was 27 when she arrived in London to study. Over the coming years her situation changed and it was no longer safe to return home.



Miriam was left isolated in a new country until she encountered the hospitality and friendship from her local church. The church felt overwhelmed as to how to respond and navigate the system. Together Network's London partner, Capital Mass, delivered training and 1:1 sessions to

help the parishioners support people through the immigration and asylum processes. This gave them the guidance, knowledge and confidence to support Miriam through her complex and lengthy case. They were also able to help Miriam access legal advice and raised funds for her living

costs. Miriam and 20 church friends attended the final court hearing where she was given leave to remain in the UK. The Immigration Judge said he was 'very impressed by both the numbers and commitment of the church congregation in their support for Miriam'.
*name changed

Diocese of London



Please pray for increased opportunity to link up with churches and individuals in London. Pray also for continued clarity for Capital Mass as they seek to effectively support minority ethnic worshipping communities.

Capital Mass employs a dedicated worker to respond to refugee and migrant issues. This worker supports churches as they seek to respond to the needs of migrants and refugees in their communities. They run training sessions for Church Night Shelter volunteers on how to support homeless migrants including concerns for EU nationals around Brexit and Modern Slavery. Capital Mass are also connecting with minority ethnic worshipping communities about how they can help them practically as they support each other as migrants in the UK.

Additionally they are encouraging churches to become Refugee Community Sponsors. With the success of a church being used as a reception centre following a Modern Slavery raid, they are seeking to develop this important work.

What is the Together Network?

The Together Network is a key and distinctive aspect of CUF's work. It is currently comprised of 20 partnerships with Church of England dioceses working to support social action in specific areas of the country, and continues to grow.

Together Network member organisations employ dedicated Development Workers who support churches and other groups that are seeking to bring about positive change in their communities. This includes offering encouragement and guidance, delivering training, helping to identify resources, and building connections between groups.

Being part of an established national network enables members to share best practice and promote strategic working. At the same time, members can respond innovatively and creatively to specific opportunities and challenges in their areas.



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**National movement,
Local action**

The Together Network is a subsidiary charity of the Church Urban Fund

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