

# PEACE - Responding to the Refugee Crisis

## P - Pray, E - Educate, A - Act, C - Campaign, E - Engage

Note of meeting at Guildford Cathedral, 20 October 2015: about 150 present, including Revd Folli Olokose, Leonard Beighton and Hugh Bryant, representing the United Benefice.

**Bishop Andrew** outlined the Biblical and theological background.

*Leviticus 19:34 But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto to you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt,..*

Sacrificial generosity – "love to the loveless shown".

*2 Corinthians 8:2-3 - The grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How ... the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, .... and beyond their power they were willing of themselves ...*

*Matthew 25:31f, the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ...*

Global vision – our citizenship is not dependent on individual countries but in heaven. See Philippians 3.

Prophetic vision - the prophet Amos condemned Israel for treading on the poor [Amos 5:11]

Realism - Romans 3 - all have sinned, but *a man is justified by faith*. It is morally all right to verify that refugees are genuine.

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**Revd. Martin Kettle** (Home Affairs Policy Adviser, C of E)

Ways to help refugees:

Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme - will allow up to 20,000 from Syria over four years.

Private sponsorship of individual refugees – the government is devising and will promote a scheme.

Spare rooms and vacant houses to rent.

Unaccompanied minors. Coram Trust and Home for Good (charities).

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**Maurice Wren**, The Refugee Council

Britain must do more for refugees, because it can do more. Action points:-

1. A challenge - to give practical expression to 'refugees welcome here'.
  2. Talking to those who are concerned and anxious. Making space for conversations with refugees.
  3. How do we widen awareness to include all those asylum seekers who have already arrived and are now destitute as a result of government cuts, poor quality of decision-making and legal representation? We need to cover those already granted refugee status but let down by the system. After 28 days they have no housing or benefits. The system isn't working.
  4. How do we ensure that local and national asylum services are adequate, after five years of government cuts?
  5. We need to move on from sympathy to recognition that refugees are an economic asset. Germany and Sweden have blended compassion with a recognition that it is in their self-interest to have immigrants.
  6. Things which the government could do in future: – issue humanitarian visas, as France and Brazil do; relax the criteria for family reunions; start to work with the EU – Calais could be solved with cooperation between UK and France.
  7. Make sure that the voice of our local communities is heard, especially when the government is deaf.
  8. Refugee rights are our rights. Homelessness and poverty as a result of 'austerity' are problems both for refugees and for the domestic population.
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**Christine Elliott** Director of World Church Programmes, Churches Together

She had visited the Greek/Macedonian border, and had met a Syrian family including four children under six years old, who had made their way from a camp in Turkey via a dangerous and expensive Mediterranean crossing to Greece, and who were aiming to reach Germany. The whole family still looked neat and tidy: the girls had their hair in very neat pigtailed. Refugees like this are desperate people, not 'economic migrants'.

Need for governments to introduce safe passages to avoid trafficking.

Christians may be especially vulnerable as they avoid camps, as they suffer intimidation in them.

Help needed – money

- hygiene products, especially for women
  - clothing, especially underwear, shoes, sleeping bags
  - time – most refugees arrive traumatised and need a great deal of help in settling in; with informal help as well as with the practicalities;
  - an opportunity for the refugees themselves to be helpful.
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**Jane Huttly** Diocesan Safeguarding Training and Development Coordinator.

The diocese is working with other agencies in the area.

Canterbury Diocese has a toolkit focusing on help which can be given to Calais.

Safeguarding is not just for the few, but support is required generally, also to provide empowerment. Refugees arrive traumatised and must be given help to rebuild their lives.

Opening houses must be done properly through agencies to protect both hosts and refugees.

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**Mary Burguieres** Lead Manager Policy and Strategic Partnerships Surrey County Council

Surrey CC is touch with central Government and has brought together all local partners and services.

Recognises that the refugees are vulnerable and that the help to be given is for the long term.

Working on building up provision of housing with private landlords, fostering services, and help with settling into the community.

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**Canon Chris Rich** Director, Communities Engagement Team (CET)

Response being coordinated by Diane Peters of CET, email [dianerpeters@netscape.net](mailto:dianerpeters@netscape.net) .

Complex issues. Phase 1 until Christmas, not immediately involving us - need now to widen networks.

How to respond to Muslims – respect the other person.

This is for a long haul and will need partnerships.

Meanwhile write to your MP. [Esher and Walton - [dominic.raab.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:dominic.raab.mp@parliament.uk)]

Diocesan website on how to respond generally [www.cofeguildford.org.uk/refugees](http://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/refugees) gives an e-mail link for questions.

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Note by Leonard Beighton and Hugh Bryant  
21st October 2015