



IAFN

March 2021



‘I Will Welcome the Stranger’

Showing compassion, mercy, love and hospitality among asylum-seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons

International Anglican Family Network

celebrating the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation

'I Will Welcome the Stranger'



Editorial:

By Bishop Nigel Stock, Chair of the International Anglican Family Network management committee

'Lord when was it we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' *Matthew 25.46*

Welcome to the IAFN Newsletter. One could say that "welcome" is the theme for this edition. Or rather what is being done in the face of people being ejected from their own societies, being made unwelcome in their own home, and often unwelcome in places where they seek refuge.

The migration of large numbers of people as they seek to escape war, famine and natural disaster is one of the most tragic issues facing our world at this time. It is stating the obvious to say that the global pandemic has made all this worse. Too often we read of refugee and IDP camps where COVID-19 is rampant and humanitarian organisations struggle to provide the necessary medical aid. But the Pandemic also stifles awareness of the continuing crisis of displaced people and separated families.

I hope therefore, if nothing else, this newsletter will play a small part in keeping up awareness of refugees and separated families.

But even more important it contains accounts of what can be done. I particularly take the point of Anne Fitcher who talks of ministry "among and by refugees" being so different from ministry "to and for them" (p.9). The stranger has so much to give us.

It reminded me of a privileged time of being neighbours to a Syrian family displaced from Homs, who came to the UK under the Community Sponsorship programme via a refugee camp in Jordan. One of the children of the family had been injured in the fighting around Homs and had lost the sight of one eye. They were grateful beyond measure to have found safety and refuge, but of course the hard work was just beginning of adapting to a new country, culture and way of life. Yes they needed support in the form of expert assistance to negotiate the bureaucracy of the Western world and to access medical help. But what stays in my mind is what they gave. The mother of the family was happy to give lessons in Arabic when one of our community asked. It was a wonderful way for her to get to know someone better, but it was a real gift to the recipient. Also memorable was their hospitality. They wanted to thank those who offered any assistance so they would cook meals in the Syrian style. One of the interpreters who worked with them explained to me that Syrian cooking is highly regarded in the Middle East and I can see why. The value of the wider family was also apparent, as they were able to find relatives and support from the dispersed Syrian community.

The theme of hospitality to strangers is not hard to find in the scriptures. Perhaps the most challenging being in St Matthew's Gospel where Jesus speaks of separating the sheep from the goats. It is quite clear who the blessed are; "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." (Matthew 25.35,36). But the blessed are puzzled because they cannot think when they did this. The famous answer is of course; "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

This is a newsletter about serving the Christ in others, in strangers and refugees whatever their race, culture or creed. It would be wonderful if it encouraged all of us to do more.

International Anglican Family Network (IAFN)

IAFN networks across the Anglican Communion to celebrate the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation. Out of this celebration IAFN is an advocate for the family in the face of behaviours which diminish this potential, sharing stories of hope, promoting family care and sustaining the family as the cradle for human dignity.

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Hospitality, healing and reconciliation in Mozambique

The Anglican Missionary Diocese of Nampula, founded in 2019 is centred in the city of Nampula and covers two Northern Provinces of Mozambique: Nampula and Cabo Delgado.

Nampula Province hosts the National Refugee Camp for external refugees at Marratane. This has 17,000 residents mainly from Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia. It is stable and managed under the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Our church has a well-established ministry in the community there with over 386 congregants led by Revd Claudina Cabral.

Since 2017 Cabo Delgado has been the epicentre of an Internally Displaced People (IDP) crisis resulting from the Insurgency which worsened significantly during 2020. There are now over 565,000 IDPs, some in temporary camps in Metuge, Chiure and Namialo-Corrante but the majority are hosted in foster homes throughout southern Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa Provinces. Society was unprepared for the humanitarian crisis brought about by the flow of IDPs in search of security and the church's ministry is being shaped to focus on hospitality, healing and reconciliation.

The Ministry of Hospitality requires the church and its ecumenical and inter faith partners, internal and external, to join hands to welcome new families and assist in meeting their immediate physical and emotional needs.

The state relief agency and other better resourced non-governmental organisations are providing the essentials but the need on the ground is immense. People have been disconnected from their land and the burial places of their ancestors, and have lost all their livelihoods because of the armed insurgency, and now rely entirely on hand-outs. The church is involved in collecting and distributing goods and serving their new neighbours, but most importantly the church provides community where the displaced people are accepted, listened to and cared for.

Many displaced people, including unaccompanied children, come with signs of trauma and the emotional effects of conflict and it will take time for them to find healing. Hawa (name changed) comes from Matemo Island. After losing her husband, two children and many relatives when rebels attacked, she now lives on her own in the suburbs of Pemba, the main city of Cabo Delgado, a place where she never intended to live. There are so many like Hawa who, in this time of COVID-19 and a strong rainy season, need food, shelter, clean water and, in the long term, a place and a community in which to rebuild their futures and begin to heal.

Our Healing Ministry attends to the deeply rooted and long term spiritual and emotional scars left by the wounds of the conflict. Northern Mozambique had been known for its cultural and religious diversity: Christian and Muslim families have been living together peacefully since the 5th century AD but the Cabo Delgado conflict (characterised by Islamic extremist attacks on remote communities and ports which

were already disadvantaged by poverty, lack of opportunity, alienation from external mining developments in the region, failure of harvests, the devastation caused by Cyclone Kenneth in 2019, and the COVID-19 pandemic) has strained family and community relationships, compromised trust, and distorted the spiritual nature of faith as a divine and life-giving way of bringing people together.

We, and our ecumenical and inter faith partners, are mobilising our spiritual resources and re-reading Scripture in order to reverse these conflicting narratives, to assist families in nurturing good relationships, dialogue and mutual appreciation. Communities are bringing their understanding of God and the needs of the most vulnerable to the debate about migration and refugees.

The situation facing families in Cabo Delgado is complex and has no parallel in our collective memory in Northern Mozambique. But the Bible is full of stories of families in similar, hopeless situations which show that God can change any circumstance.



Photo credit: Lucilla de Fatima from Foundation for Community Development Mozambique

The story of Naomi and her family in Ruth 1.1-22 resonates with the story of Hawa and her fellow widows in Cabo Delgado. The church in Pemba and our diocesan mission team are using this story with the family meetings they organise to illuminate and start conversation when women gather in homes for mutual support and to share experiences. The hope is that these enable community dialogue and healing that will become part of local peace-building work.

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Finding community in a new home in Egypt

By Monica Mehaffey, Head of Education at Refuge Egypt, a ministry of the Episcopal/Anglican Province of Alexandria

Refugees come to Cairo, Egypt, fleeing war and persecution in their home countries. They leave behind their homes, possessions and, most significantly, their local communities. At home, their tribe or extended family served many functions, from providing a safety net in times of trouble, to choosing a spouse for the young people. When they arrive in Cairo, they are forced to adjust to very different circumstances. There are no refugee camps in Egypt, so refugees are integrated into existing neighbourhoods alongside Egyptians and refugees from other nations. They find work in the informal labour sector, often as domestic workers. Life is difficult and they struggle to find the strong social network they had in their home country.

Along with providing high quality education, one of the goals of our educational programming is to foster the social ties that refugees struggle to find in Egypt. Learning alongside fellow refugees from other tribes or nations provides a safe environment for getting to know someone and breaks down the barriers that often exists between people.



Our Adult Education programme is a place where refugee newcomers to Egypt find community. Fatima is a 25-year-old woman from Somalia. When Fatima began English classes as a new student, she was incredibly shy, nervous, and hesitant. She refused to speak to her teacher or classmates, and didn't participate in class even when called on.

A volunteer, Judy, made an effort to reach out to her and encourage her to participate, but struggled to know how to help her open up. She reminded Fatima that class was a safe place and encouraged her to get to know her classmates, and Fatima did. By the end of the four-month term, Judy commented that Fatima was one of the most social students in class. She was actively involved in class-work and an active participant in class discussions. She had bonded with several of her peers. She became incredibly warm and social, and helped her peers in class. Fatima had found belonging and the class had become community.



At the Happy Child Pre-school, the love of Jesus that the teachers show the students has a dramatic impact on their behaviour and social development. At the end of March, the pre-school was forced to close down for a few months due to the Coronavirus pandemic. As is true of young people around the world, the pre-school children suffered greatly during this time due to lack of the structure and routine that school normally provides. Most refugee parents still had to work outside the home, sometimes leaving their children under the supervision of a neighbour or older sibling.

One mother shared about the impact of the pre-school closure on her son, Ahmed. During the quarantine period, Ahmed became addicted to video games and would stay up until the middle of the night playing. Without the routine of getting up for pre-school each morning, he didn't have a bedtime and he wasn't getting enough rest. He also started watching violent movies online and would see the news reports on television about the pandemic. These movies and the news started to affect him emotionally and behaviourally. He started to talk less with his family members and didn't want to play with his relatives when they came for a visit. He also started to be physically aggressive with other kids and adults.

Once the pre-school reopened following the loosening of regulations, the teachers were intentional about helping the children process what they were experiencing as a result of the pandemic. The teachers equipped the kids with knowledge about how to defend themselves against the virus by washing their hands, wearing a mask, and maintaining distance from other kids while playing. They also reassured children that they didn't need to be scared about catching the virus, and if they did become sick, they would get better within a couple of weeks.

This information greatly affected Ahmed, and his anxious demeanour quickly dissipated. The teachers paid him particular attention, showing their love and care for him and encouraging interaction with his peers. As Ahmed began to re-engage in classroom activities and group play, his aggressive and antisocial attitude melted away. At home, Ahmed returned to his regular routines and began to socialize with family. Ahmed had returned to his warm and social self, thanks to the practical love the teachers showed him at pre-school.

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Northern Ireland, a changing landscape

Denise Bradley is Programme Manager for Marginalisation at Corrymeela. Corrymeela is Ireland's oldest peace and reconciliation organisation and is responding with practical, emotional and spiritual support for refugee and asylum communities. Its mission is to transform division through human encounter.

Northern Ireland (NI) has experienced over 30 years of violent, ethno-political conflict and its landscape continues to be marked by struggles with high levels of cumulative trauma. This legacy has led to the highest prevalence of mental illness in the UK with an estimated 40 per cent of the 1.7 million population having experienced conflict trauma.

Two decades after the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement (<https://bit.ly/3aXmTid>), NI is welcoming increasing numbers of newcomers into post-conflict communities, often migrating, seeking asylum and refuge from displacement, violence, persecution and war. NI is no stranger to displacement. During 'the Troubles' families were 'burnt and bombed out' of their homes, sometimes figuratively, often literally. Fear, coercion, and paramilitary threat displaced many throughout Ireland and beyond.

Whilst those seeking refuge and asylum in NI have been politely accepted, with many church communities reaching out to welcome with practical support, there has been an increase in race-hate incidents with limited opportunities for communities to have meaningful contact and interaction.

Corrymeela has been working in partnership with the British Red Cross, Irish Red Cross and ArtsEkta (an organisation working to develop intercultural relationships), researching and promoting the integration of Protestant, Catholic, migrant, refugee and asylum seeking communities through programmes throughout the Province. The project was funded by European Union's Peace IV programme.

Many of those gathering have experienced multiple traumas, so under the theme of Relax and Re-connect, Corrymeela designed and delivered the contact programmes through a Trauma Informed Approach, crucial from the outset of delivery to provide spaces to nourish and sustain pain and suffering. We collaborated as a partnership to facilitate spaces where people could feel valued, begin to connect and trust those around them, and to feel freedom to express thoughts, feelings and story without fear of rejection or being misjudged.

Throughout the weeks women, men and children from local NI communities, displaced and exiled Middle Eastern, African and European communities opened their hearts and worlds through facilitated dialogue and therapeutic and creative arts, exploring difficult issues such as depression, isolation, loneliness and barriers to inclusion such as language and fear.

For some attending the programme, it was the first time they had ever spoken to someone from a different ethnic or

cultural background. Having spaces to ask questions and share culture and language embedded understanding and confidence to connect. Within rooms, stories of Belfast, Derry, and Newry were told alongside stories of cities across the world, cities that hold complicated and conflicting histories. The women shared their experiences of uncertain futures, heart-wrenching fear, and never-ending concern for loved ones left behind, the power of art allowing for tender exchange. Over communal meals, music, dance and art, curious hearts opened in the invitation towards cultural expression – honouring both the joyful and painful parts of their humanity. Together they often found a lived experience of safety and connection in the shelter of each other.

A local Catholic woman, Theresa, developed a friendship with a black, Muslim woman, Majida, and shared with us, "We now pray for each other's families even though we practise different religions. We are more united ... no longer strangers." Aisha, a black, Muslim woman from Sudan spent time with local women deeply impacted by conflict areas in Belfast, sharing, "They have a heart. They feel what we feel because they had war. I felt this was the best place I can stay. This is my home now."



There was opportunity for the families to retreat to Corrymeela's residential centre in Ballycastle. The centre sits on a stunning North Antrim coastal site and for over 50 years has hosted peoples from all over the world. The residential retreat gave opportunities to deepen experiences of safe community and time to breath and process painful traumatic memories into the beautiful, surrounding landscape. Muhammad, a Syrian man of Kurdish origin, shared during one such retreat, "This has been my best memory – seeing my wife and children happy and safe. Thank you."

For more information on the mission and programmes of Corrymeela and the residential centre, see www.corrymeela.org.

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Community sponsorship in the UK

Canon Catherine Hilton, a Mothers' Union Worldwide Trustee, describes her experience of refugee support in the community in the Manchester area, England

My story began in Summer 2018 when I was asked if I would be interested in joining a community core group to help support a family of refugees from Syria. At this point, all the ground work of applications, form-filling, identifying a house and contacting the UK Government Home Office and the local authority had been done by members of the core group. They were now looking for extra people to help when a family arrived. I said I was interested. I had already had a little experience of helping a Congolese family with day-to-day issues such as education, benefits and medical appointments.

A few weeks passed and I heard nothing so I made contact. The core group had all but given up the idea as they had failed to find a charity sponsor in the community. They had tried local churches, the Diocesan Office and others, and had not been successful in assuring the necessary funding.

At the time, I was Diocesan President of Manchester Mothers' Union. We had been hoping to find a way to help refugees. It was in our Development Plan but as yet we had failed to find a way to get involved. I knew that our local Mothers' Union had sufficient funds available and, with great enthusiasm but some trepidation, I suggested that Mothers' Union Manchester may be able to help and to be the charity sponsor. God was on our side! Trustees were meeting the following week and the leaders of the core group attended to outline what was involved. The Trustees agreed to make the funds available and to help with furnishings and basic necessities for the house. We also committed to accessing grants and to fundraising.

That was just the beginning!

The family arrived in December 2018: grandmother, grandfather, son, daughter, daughter-in-law and three children. We collected them and all their worldly goods from Manchester Airport.

Then the work began. The individuals in the core group took on responsibilities according to their strengths – education (the local church schools provided places and the local authority provided language tuition for the adults); benefits; financial budgeting; health. I took on the health responsibilities which meant that I spent a great deal of time with the family.

There were regular meetings with representatives from the Home Office to make sure that we were on track and to offer support.

The family is now thriving! The Mothers' Union was a tremendous support both through funding and providing for the family. (The fundraising and accessing of grants meant that very little of the funding promised by the Mothers' Union was used). In 2019, the family met our Worldwide President when she visited Manchester. The children are flourishing at school and the family has now moved on from their first



Food shared by Syrian refugees with Mothers' Union members

property into a family home with a garden. They are getting on very well with their neighbours. The daughter married and moved to live with her husband in London where she is expecting a baby in March this year.

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Open, inclusive and welcoming in Glasgow

Glasgow is Scotland's largest city. For 20 years, it has welcomed asylum-seekers arriving in the UK. During this time, many different agencies – Government, charities, church and community groups – have been set up to support the thousands of asylum-seekers from all over the world arriving in the city. Despite this, many experience destitution and desperation in the hostile environment created by British Government policy. This is the story about how one woman, living comfortably in retirement, first became aware and involved.

Some years ago, I was shocked to read in the newspaper about a young man, an asylum-seeker, who had sewn his lips together to draw attention to his plight. He lived near me! How could I ignore what was happening on my doorstep? My husband and I got involved as volunteers in a church-run night-shelter for destitute asylum-seekers. I also volunteered as a holiday host for the charity Freedom from Torture, offering week-long holiday- and respite-breaks for asylum-seekers from elsewhere in the UK.

My husband and I were part of a large congregation at St Mary's Cathedral, with its 'Open, Inclusive & Welcoming' slogan. A discussion about asylum-seekers after a Sunday service raised interest and concern about what could be done

to help. Knowing how lonely and isolated the men from the night-shelter were, I suggested we might start by individuals meeting with one or two of them after church for a cup of tea and a walk to explore the sights of Glasgow. The first to volunteer was a 90-year old woman who invited two of the men to lunch with her family at home. The idea snowballed and more became involved, socialising and sharing a wide variety of activities and, in turn, learning first-hand of the difficulties and struggles people have in our country and about the cultures and circumstances from which they had fled. For some, it resulted in lasting friendships and support.

Other members of the congregation came up with more ideas. We already had a weekly 'open house' where volunteers showed any visitors around the church, with leaflets for them to take away. Sometimes, homeless people or asylum-seekers popped in and asked for help. As well as a cup of tea and a listening ear, we wanted to do more for them. A leaflet was prepared listing places in the city where people could get free meals, clothes, showers, support for their asylum claim and charities offering support and advice. This proved very useful and also educated the wider congregation on how to help such people whom they might meet on the bus or in the street.

As Christmas approached one year, we used our pew leaflet to ask for people to donate £5 to provide a voucher for a meal and overnight stay for an asylum-seeker in the night shelter. This proved an attractive Christmas gift and stocking-filler and led to many wanting to know more and to offer continuing financial support to the shelter.

The Cathedral Provost, who already had a range of badges for sale at the back of the church, decided to make one saying 'Refugees Welcome'. This proved a huge success, with many of the congregation wearing them and reporting interest from passers-by. As well as 'thumbs up' support from passing strangers and enquiries about where the badges could be obtained, it led to many discussions sharing information about supporting refugees in Glasgow and refuting negative myths.



An English priest referred an Iranian asylum-seeking family moving to Glasgow, asking if we could welcome and support them. We visited them on arrival and helped with clothes, bedding and children's toys. We also helped them liaise with various agencies and become familiar with the city. They were warmly welcomed at our Sunday services, and afterwards,

with their young daughter readily making friends in the Young Church group and quickly learning English through playing with other children. Initially, the parents' English was very limited so we guided them to join language classes. Strong friendships developed leading to letters of support to the British Government Home Office and giving evidence in support of the family at their immigration court hearings.

Other Iranian asylum-seeking families started attending St Mary's and were warmly welcomed. Some asked to be baptised, confirmed and married. The Bishop also became involved with the Cathedral leadership and congregation in representations to the Home Office and immigration courts. Pew sheets were used to inform, update and inspire members to request positive action on behalf of asylum-seekers and refugees by writing to their Members of Parliament and the Home Office Minister.

The wider congregation continued to donate bedding, clothing, household goods and baby equipment for free distribution to refugees setting up their own homes, having obtained official 'Leave to Remain'. Some members learnt to teach English for Speakers of Other Languages in order to offer classes in the church.

As the congregation had members from a wide variety of professional backgrounds, we recognised that we were well-placed to offer one-to-one mentoring to asylum-seekers and refugees who already had some fluency in English and were seeking to gain UK-recognised professional qualifications. Many already had such qualifications and experience in their country of origin. When COVID-19 happened we had to develop new ways of continuing support during lockdowns and church closures.

Now in my 70s, life is so much richer and heart-warming than I ever envisaged. I continue to learn so much about courage, resilience, compassion and forgiveness because of my asylum-seeking friends and my growing 'family'. My husband and I now have an Iranian 'son and daughter-in-law' and I am 'grandma' to children from Sierra Leone, Gambia and Iran.

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Families reunited in London

The London Churches Refugee Network brings together Christians working with refugees and asylum seekers in London regardless of background, creed or ethnicity, responding with love and compassion to their needs and trying to help them make a new life in the UK. The London Churches Refugee Fund specifically provides funding for those who are totally destitute and have no recourse to any form of public support, which makes this work vital.

The Notre Dame Refugee Centre, a member of the London Churches Refugee Network, has provided the following stories of families separated by conflict being reunited.

One of our clients is a refugee from Eritrea. She approached us for assistance in bringing her husband, child and nephew to the UK last year. At the time, the husband and children were living in a refugee camp in Sudan in terrible conditions.

Our client and her nephew's parents had left the camp and had taken the treacherous journey to Europe. They took a boat from Libya to Italy that had been arranged by traffickers. The boat sank out at sea. Our client and four others were saved by a fisherman but 35 drowned, including our client's brother and his wife (the nephew's parents). Our client made it to the UK and was granted refugee status.

Whilst she was in the UK, her husband, child and nephew left the camp for Ethiopia where they thought the conditions would be better.

We started the family reunion process last year but because of the COVID-19 pandemic there was a long delay. Family reunion only applies to spouses and biological children but there was no question of leaving the nephew behind. We applied for a DNA test to prove he was our client's nephew and included him in the reunion application, citing 'exceptional circumstances of child'.

The visa applications were successful but the Ethiopian government had begun to enforce travel restrictions on Eritrean refugees who could now only leave by applying for an exit visa. To apply for an exit visa, a passport was needed. As the family were Eritrean refugees, they could not obtain a passport. So we were at an impasse and the expiry of the UK visas was getting closer.

We contacted the UN High Commissioner for Refugees who documented the family and travel documents were then issued. The Ethiopian government then granted the exit visas.



We also contacted the British Red Cross in the UK to provide flight assistance. Our client's family finally arrived in the UK and were reunited.

Another of our clients, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), came to the UK in 2016 seeking protection. He waited four years for a decision from the Government's Home Office. When he was finally granted refugee status, he asked if we could assist in bringing his young son to the UK. His son had been living in Kenya with his mother, who abandoned him. Our client paid a family in Kenya to care for him whilst we tried to get custody awarded to him through the Kenyan family courts.

Once custody was awarded we began the process of family reunion. The Home Office initially refused a visa for the boy as he did not meet the requirements for family reunion - he had not lived with our client in DRC. We requested a reconsideration based on the best interests of the child and human rights legislation under 'family life'. The Home Office overturned the decision to refuse, and a visa was granted. The child arrived in the UK and was reunited with his father.



The father wrote to the Notre Dame Refugee Centre to thank them for the impact they are having on family lives. He said, "You can't imagine the inner peace and the happiness I'm feeling being reunited with [my son] after all those years, and seeing all my children laughing together in the same room ... God bless you all".

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Building lives and peace among IDPs in DRC

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) there are around 5.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), mostly in the four eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika. The people have been displaced as a result of conflict which is often sudden and brutal. Whole communities have abandoned villages, homes and livelihoods. People have fled with only the barest of possessions. Villages have been burned to the ground. Schools and health centres have been ransacked and destroyed.

The factors behind the conflict are numerous and complex. According to UNICEF, disputes over land and resources combined with deep-rooted ethnic animosities, a militarized informal economy, the ready availability of arms, and weak governance have led to a surge in violence during the last three years.

The Revd Bisoke Bernard Balikenga is the Youth Coordinator for the Anglican Church of Congo. Here, he describes some of his work among IDPs in the province of Ituri.

In Ituri province we have many challenges but trust in God who gives us strength for the work. There are 64 camps for IDPs in the province and here in Bunia town we have five of the camps. I am able to work in three of the camps but I would like to be active in more than ten camps. We do not have enough resources to extend our work. In the camps here in Bunia we are offering the following activities.

We have set up a peace centre and run seminars to teach people about peace building. We also undertake counselling work in two of the big camps where people have many difficulties. They are traumatised by the violence and loss they have experienced. Many of the internally displaced people want to have their revenge and create war because they have lost members of their family who have been killed during conflict in their villages.

Many children are in the street because of not having food. They are begging in town. Many of them have been abused and raped. Also some of them are doing business of doing sex so that they can get money for their life. We are developing a programme for the children but we do not have possibilities for helping many of them.

We have a school for orphans which is interdenominational but our classrooms are small. We took some children but more are still coming to us. We do not have another room for receiving all of them.



We also teach practical skills to those who have not had a chance to attend school. Some women have been abused and our activities with them are giving them hope.

We set up screens and project a film about Jesus to help in building the IDPs up spiritually, which is most important. We also run some discipleship seminars to support them in becoming followers of Jesus.

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Meet four young asylum-seekers in Cyprus

Revd Anne Fitcher is a priest in the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. As social concern officer for the Anglican Church in Cyprus, she works closely with asylum-seekers and refugees. She writes:

Ministry 'among' or 'by' refugees is so different from ministry 'to' or 'for' them; and that is our experience here.

Cyprus has the highest number of asylum-seekers per capita in the European Union. Many are single and young. Many arrive traumatised by religious persecution or civil war. They have escaped barely imaginable horrors and survived dangerous journeys and unscrupulous traffickers.

Life on arrival isn't easy. Reception camps are overflowing. Asylum services are overstretched. Decisions about their status are often delayed, as are benefit payments. Employment opportunities are limited.

Let me introduce you to four extraordinary young people (names have been changed).

Grace, now 23, left her parents and siblings in English-speaking Cameroon in September 2019, two years after war began. She remembers "houses and supermarkets were set alight. We had to hide in bushes to get to school. Guns were everywhere."

In Cyprus, Grace was reunited with her cousin and a friend. They share accommodation. One day, Grace offered to help a lady carrying heavy shopping. Shortly afterwards, Grace went with her to church and was immediately welcomed. Members of the congregation offer Grace, her cousin and friend, casual work but perhaps more importantly value them hugely as church members. "They give us such happiness", I was told. "They are, simply, our treasure."

During lockdowns, a team from our church telephones several people each week to keep in touch. John, a young Nigerian man seeking asylum is among those I call. Last week, John telephoned me. I asked "What can I do for you?" He replied, "I'm phoning to see how *you* are, Ma'am". It was a humbling moment. Clearly, I still have much to learn about the mutuality of this ministry.

I have felt privileged to get to know a young woman from French-speaking Cameroon. Emma, like Grace, was forced to leave home for her own safety. Her journey was hard. Reneging on his promise of safe passage to the Republic of Cyprus, a trafficker left her north of the border. Emma walked for many kilometres, alone and barefoot. Finally reaching the



Emma at the door of her home

south, her torn, bleeding legs and feet needed immediate medical attention.

Emma was introduced to the Anglican church by a young woman she met locally. She recalls her first Sunday there. "It was nice and kind ... they welcomed me. They made me feel at home".

Emma has been in Cyprus for three years and has not yet had her first interview with Immigration. It's as if life is put on hold. And the pain of separation from home and family remains raw. "I am the last child. I have so much love there. I would never think of leaving my people unless I had to."

Emma relishes every opportunity for life, growth and hope. Learning English quickly and well, she works as a volunteer teaching English to fellow asylum-seekers at a local non-governmental organisation. During lockdown, unable to teach or help with their food and clothing distribution, she arranges individual appointments by phone for fellow asylum-seekers.

Emma is much loved for the energy and life she brings us in church – and for her glorious singing voice. There was widespread joy, too, when last Christmas during an online service, she read the lesson - beautifully. "My faith has grown since being in Cyprus", Emma told me. "I've seen the hand of God more and more in my life."

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Lastly, meet Chris from Biafra, where he was a youth leader; "work that as a Christian I'm meant to do", he says. But his role as a Christian leader made him a target. He fled for his life. Last January, Chris was housed in a seaside town in Cyprus. At the Anglican church he found practical help and, above all, a loving welcome. He explains, "I came and knew nobody. God has sent me here ... they are mother, brother, sister to me. I feel I have another family." Chris's contributions to worship and Bible study are greatly valued.

As the young people share their stories, news headlines come alive – of insurgencies, civil war, and the persecution of Christian communities. And as Chris's parish priest has reflected, "We pray for the persecuted church but through them we experience what it's like to be a persecuted Christian."

It is a privilege to walk alongside Grace, Emma, John and Chris as fellow Christians. And we give thanks for the faith, energy, hope and joy they bring to us and share with us. Please pray for them, and for all who are forced to seek asylum and refuge. And pray for those of us who are blessed to minister with, and among them.

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Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. *Hebrews 13.1-2, NRSV*

Entertaining angels in Canada

Over 40 years ago, in response to the Vietnamese 'boat people' crisis, the Government of Canada established the Private Refugee Sponsorship programme, opening the way for faith-based and secular civil society organisations to sponsor refugees. Among the first to take up the opportunity were numerous Anglican dioceses across Canada. Since then, thousands of refugees – families and individuals – have been sponsored to settle in Canada. Today, 15 Anglican dioceses are Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the government ministry responsible for refugee resettlement.

Suzanne Rumsey, Public Engagement Coordinator for the Anglican Church of Canada's Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), explains more about Anglican involvement.

The network of diocesan SAHs is staffed by a mix of volunteers, paid staff and clergy who act as Refugee Coordinators. PWRDF, the official development and relief agency of the Anglican Church of Canada, provides some modest networking and advocacy support to those coordinators.

One such Refugee Coordinator is Jane Townshend, who volunteers in the Anglican Diocese of Huron. Jane writes about her experience with a Karen family from Burma:

For more than ten years the family waited for any sign of hope that their future would change ... and then, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, that hope was fulfilled and they

received their tickets to come to Canada. It had been a long ten years with at least three other flights arranged but then at the last minute cancelled because of health concerns.

The last denial came in August 2018 because the eldest daughter, who was 12 at the time, had a heart condition. The next thing we heard was that the only hope was for her to have heart surgery in Thailand and that would allow her to come to Canada after she healed. The cost was 10,000 Canadian dollars. The family sent a heart-wrenching video of the daughter dancing in their shelter in Thailand, trying to convince anyone out there that her life was worth saving.

After a conversation with our Bishop and her staff, the Diocese of Huron put out a special appeal which lasted less than four hours. I think it was the shortest appeal ever and one that actually had to be cut off. We had surpassed our \$10,000 target! The surgery in Thailand was a success.

Fast forward two years and the three-generation family stepped off the plane in Windsor, Ontario in October 2020. Wilma Lamb-Stuart, chair of the Leamington Area Ecumenical Refugee Committee was amazed by the community response in Leamington. She said, 'People who have heard of the family have offered many things. The family has rented a large house so that they can all stay together, and don't have to be separated. The Leamington Karen Community has welcomed the new family via phone calls, providing all the food during the quarantine time, and they are looking forward to introducing them to local places to enjoy when we have this pandemic and restrictions behind us.'

Paul Clarke is another Refugee Coordinator. He is Executive Director of Action Réfugiés, a joint refugee sponsorship initiative between the Anglican Diocese of Montreal and the Presbyterian Church in Canada. He reflects on the arrival of Syrian refugees in Canada:

Nearly six years ago a photo was published around the world. The image of Alan Kurdi, a small Syrian boy on a beach, drowned while his family tried to seek safety, spurred a reaction rarely seen. Journalists contacted us at Action Réfugiés Montréal, trying to understand the scope of the Syrian refugee crisis and, importantly, how people here could lend a hand. Our phones were overwhelmed with offers to help with furniture, apartments, meals at home, going for coffee, and clothes. Churches and individuals called us wanting to sponsor Syrian families. Individuals, foundations, and corporations sent us financial donations, often unsolicited. That one photo quite unexpectedly created a cavalcade of generosity and caring.

Since then, more than 40,000 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada. They have learned French and/or English. The children are in school. People have found or created jobs. Much has been done and we are thankful that many people are now living in safety. But when we talk to some of these folks about the anniversary of their arrival, it brings tears as they remember the difficult journey to arrive in Canada, the uncertainty they lived, and the numerous relatives lost due to war or trying to flee. Many here in Canada still have family members living in difficult situations, and hope that they might be reunited somehow.

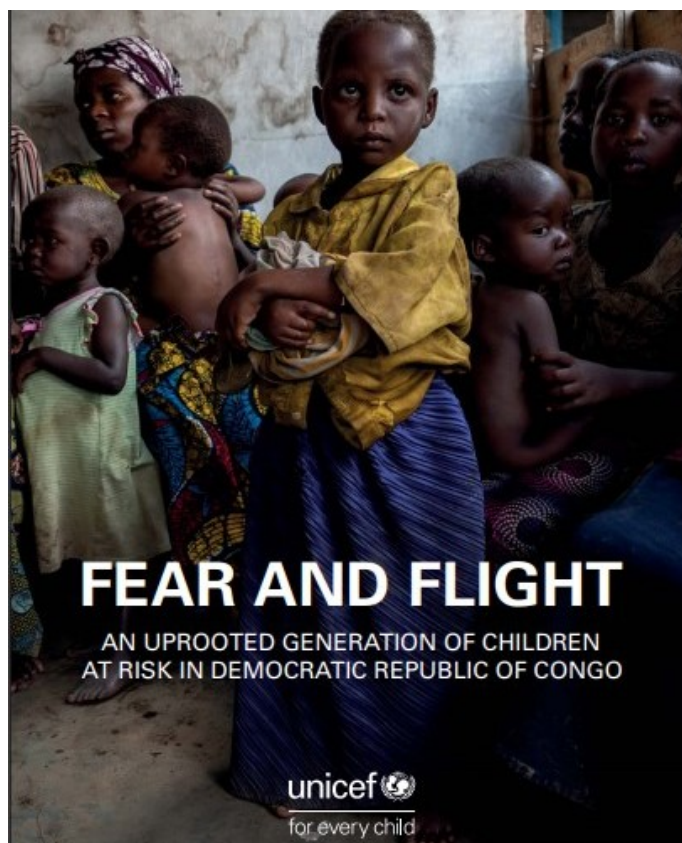


Paul Clarke (centre) with Syrian refugees Fadia and Fedaa who provided the catering for a church holiday party

Nearly six years after Alan Kurdi's photo was published, our attitude is quite well defined: *gratitude*, for the effort put forward by all segments of Canadian society to reach out a hand to refugees; *resolve*, to continue to advocate for refugee rights - for refugee claimants and for shorter wait times for sponsorship files; *confidence*, in the willingness of our neighbours, including individuals, faith communities, and corporate entities, to continue to support the work of organisations that accompany refugees upon their arrival in Canada.

We know that compassion and justice for refugees will continue to provide hope to people here and far away.

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Read this UNICEF publication (February 2020) at <https://uni.cf/3ugUkoB>. Read our article from DRC on page 8.

Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders

The call to welcome the stranger through protection and hospitality, and to honour the stranger with respect and equality, is deeply rooted in all major religions. In 2013 representatives of the world's major religions, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Justin Welby, endorsed the following 'Affirmations for Faith Leaders' (for other language versions, see <https://bit.ly/3dqLlO7>):

A core value of my faith is to welcome the stranger, the refugee, the internally displaced, the other. I shall treat him or her as I would like to be treated. I will challenge others, even leaders in my faith community, to do the same.

Together with faith leaders, faith-based organizations and communities of conscience around the world, I affirm:

- I will welcome the stranger.
- My faith teaches that compassion, mercy, love and hospitality are for everyone: the native born and the foreign born, the member of my community and the newcomer.
- I will remember and remind members of my community that we are all considered “strangers” somewhere, that we should treat the stranger to our community as we would like to be treated, and challenge intolerance.
- I will remember and remind others in my community that no one leaves his or her homeland without a reason: some flee because of persecution, violence or exploitation; others due to natural disaster; yet others out of love to provide better lives for their families.
- I recognize that all persons are entitled to dignity and respect as human beings. All those in my country, including the stranger, are subject to its laws, and none should be subject to hostility or discrimination.
- I acknowledge that welcoming the stranger sometimes takes courage, but the joys and the hopes of doing so outweigh the risks and the challenges. I will support others who exercise courage in welcoming the stranger.
- I will offer the stranger hospitality, for this brings blessings upon the community, upon my family, upon the stranger and upon me.
- I will respect and honour the reality that the stranger may be of a different faith or hold beliefs different from mine or other members of my community.
- I will respect the right of the stranger to practise his or her own faith freely. I will seek to create space where he or she can freely worship.
- I will speak of my own faith without demeaning or ridiculing the faith of others.
- I will build bridges between the stranger and myself. Through my example, I will encourage others to do the same.
- I will make an effort not only to welcome the stranger, but also to listen to him or her deeply, and to promote

understanding and welcome in my community.

- I will speak out for social justice for the stranger, just as I do for other members of my community.
- Where I see hostility towards the stranger in my community, whether through words or deeds, I will not ignore it, but will instead endeavour to establish a dialogue and facilitate peace.
- I will not keep silent when I see others, even leaders in my faith community, speaking ill of strangers, judging them without coming to know them, or when I see them being excluded, wronged or oppressed.
- I will encourage my faith community to work with other faith communities and faith-based organizations to find better ways to assist the stranger.
- I will welcome the stranger.



Photo credit: Lucilla de Fatima from Foundation for Community Development Mozambique. See story on page 3.

Barrier-breaking God,

You embrace all cultures and lands,
but keep a special place in your heart
for the stranger, the widow and the orphan.
Grant us the gift of your Spirit
that we may become as you are,
welcoming all as brothers and sisters,
your cherished children,
citizens together in Christ's kingdom of justice and peace.
Amen.

From Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018



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