Refugee theology resource for churches and church groups

Introduction

This resource is for churches and groups of Christians to begin to think more deeply about the work of God in relation to refugees, asylum seekers and all kinds of displaced people. It looks especially at children and young people who are refugees and what their lives and their futures mean to us.

The resource is divided into four sections and you may like to mix and match items from different sections according to what you and/or your group like to do.

Yellow journey: these four sections, colour-coded yellow (beginning on page 3) are for individuals and groups who like to read stories, talk about things together and discuss issues.

Blue Journey: these four sections, colour-coded blue (beginning on page 23), suggest ways to engage with Scripture, prayers, and also contain sermon outlines on the biblical topics offered.
Green Journey: these four sections, **colour-coded green** (beginning on page 35), are for people who want to research information, get involved in action, use art or other creative media, or otherwise find different ways to investigate what is going on in the world.

Pink Journey: these four sections, **colour-coded pink** (beginning on page 48), suggest ways of using theology and spiritual discipline to become more aware of child refugees, more compassionate in our response, and to help with our own theological understanding, spiritual growth and discipleship.

Throughout the resource, it is possible to concentrate on the life of a particular young person who is a refugee, Fahad, from Syria. Fahad’s story is highlighted in red.

This resource has been written by Dr Anne Richards, with input from the Revd Juliet Kilpin, on behalf of the Mission Theology Advisory Group of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. More information about MTAG can be found here: https://ctbi.org.uk/mission-theology-advisory-group-resources/ or here: https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/MTAG%20Introduction.pdf

We hope you find this resource useful. Please let us have any comments or feedback at church@childrenssociety.org.uk
Refugee stories: Meet Isaak

Isaak’s story

Isaak (not his real name) is 16 years old. He lives in a makeshift city of tarpaulins, containers and houses. Old people sit outside dwellings on plastic chairs; children play in a series of alleys. The walls are covered in graffiti, painting, messages, memories of other times and other places. The alleys run around ‘neighbourhoods’ which come together in a kind of public square where older men sort out disputes and rivalries. Sometimes there is violence, but more often there are questions and concerns about food and medicine – who is sick, who needs help. It’s not immediately evident but everyone here is living in a state of emergency.
There are borders to this city, this landscape. There are entrances and exits, shops, streets, places of worship, but this place does not exist on a map. Everyone who lives here has a geographical origin on a map, but now Isaak lives both somewhere and nowhere, truly displaced. Some people around us insist they are on the way to somewhere; all the talk is about migration, moving on. Others, baking bread or making falafel, brewing coffee, behave more as if this is a permanent place. And yet Isaak and his friends are aware of transport links and the international borders not far away. Yet somehow just out of reach.

At the borders, guards sit, bored. How life goes can depend on their moods. They control the aid and the supplies, even the food and essentials the families send. Their power over Isaak and all the others is a way of life. When it rains, the tangle of dangerous wires which are the people’s links to the outside world often short out. Water is in short supply and young people like Isaak are always at risk of diseases suddenly breaking out. Those living here are not all the same, but have this in common: they cannot go home. Yet the human spirit is indomitable. There is laughter; people play games, enjoy meeting friends, making conversation and drinking tea together. Isaak and his friends live in hope. They also live sometimes in hopelessness.

Isaak lives in a refugee camp.

(Story compiled from reports received from Isaak’s camp by the Mission Theology Advisory Group)

Read more: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/08/refugee-libyan-camp-people-dying

Reflection: How do we know how God wants people to live?

In the heart of the book of Isaiah there is a beautiful passage which the missiologist Raymond Fung calls ‘the Isaiah agenda’ – a picture of the kind of life God wants for all human beings. It is a world in which tragedy and sorrow are left behind, to be replaced with joy and delight. People are healthy and happy, and live out their lives with proper food and shelter. They have enjoyable and productive work which benefits themselves, not exclusively others. Above all, the people live in peace away from violence and disruption. This is a prophetic word for, above all, – a displaced people.

Isaiah 65: 17-25

*For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered*
or come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice for ever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in it
an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;
for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
They shall not labour in vain,
or bear children for calamity;
for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—
and their descendants as well.
Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the Lord.
The reason why this is a missiological agenda is because it is our task to realise God’s vision on earth: on earth as it is in heaven. Yet when refugees arrive in our midst, they show us a mirror of how far we are from realising what God wants for every human being. Refugees come from places of war and violence; they have lost their homes, they have no security, they are often prey to illness and suffering from the trauma they have endured. What is God’s good news for them? This is the proclamation that Jesus makes in Luke 4 – that God’s good news for them is realised in his ministry.

One of the particular theological questions around the issue of refugees and our Christian response is not what is to be done to help them immediately, but what sort of future we can offer them. That is a more complicated question than just giving aid or an instant compassionate response. The Isaiah agenda requires us to be in for the long haul – making room in our society for people to have the shelter and peace they require to recover from their experiences and become happy and healthy members of our communities, to become neighbours and friends. What does that take?

Some people are afraid of migrants and refugees and see them as threats to our way of life. Some have even described them as ‘scum’, imagining that they want to undermine our society, hurt us, or scrounge from us. Yet in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus delves into the meaning of the Levitical instruction to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’. He tells the story of those people who could help someone in
deep distress, but who do not, and ‘pass by on the other side’. What are they afraid of? Why don’t they help? The person who does help, not only deals with the immediate situation, but makes provision for the injured person’s rehabilitation and future. That is what makes the Isaiah agenda a possibility.

The Children’s Society works to give refugee young people the help they need to receive the good news of the Isaiah agenda. Young people need friendship and advocacy to make their way through the asylum process and to understand the legal requirements and documentation. They need others to care about their experiences, their mental health issues and trauma and to give them appropriate support and healthcare. They need shelter, security and support to obtain education, employment and opportunities. They need to feel welcomed, appreciated and given space to offer their own gifts and interests to their new neighbours. They need to know that the Isaiah agenda is especially for them.

More: https://ctbi.org.uk/mission-theology-advisory-group-resources/ See the downloadable resource on mission and migration.

Some things to think and talk about:

- What do you think a day in the life of Isaak might be like?
- How might Isaak’s life be transformed by the Isaiah agenda?
- When Jesus says ‘He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives’ what would that look like in today’s world?
- What good things might Isaak take from the camp to support his new life?
- You could also watch some of the Channel 4 TV series *Home*, about a couple from Dorking who arrive home from France to discover an illegal immigrant called Sami in the boot of their car. What would you do if you were Katy and Peter? What do you make of what happens to Sami?
- What part could Christian communities play in bringing the good news of the Isaiah agenda to young people like Isaak?
Refugee stories: Meet Fahad

Fahad’s story

At just 16 years old, Fahad and his twin brother were forced to leave his home in Afghanistan to flee from the Taliban, leaving his family behind and facing a long and dangerous journey by car, van, boat and train to Europe. With little certainty that they would make it to safety and fearing for their lives, Fahad and his brother found the journey frightening and traumatic.

They were taken by various different people through several countries, with little knowledge of where they were from one day to the next. Unable to speak with those transporting them and without any contact with home or the outside world, they were scared and alone.

After several months of uncertainty, they finally arrived in the ‘Jungle’, a large refugee camp just outside of Calais, alongside thousands of other refugees fleeing from terror or simply with no safe home to go back to.
With nowhere else to go, the brothers built a make-shift shelter with whatever they could find, living on the little food and clean water offered by local charities. Each day was a struggle for survival, living in inhumane conditions and with no clothes or belongings, but what they had arrived in.

Seeing no other way out, they had no choice but to join the hundreds of other refugees each night to make the long walk to the lorry terminal, hopeful that they would make it onto a lorry going to the UK, where they might have a chance of survival. Every night they would try and escape and every night the security guards would turn them back and tell them to try again another night.

Life in the camp was cruel and dangerous and with each day, the twins were beginning to lose hope that they would ever make it out. To keep him going, Fahad would write poems and read the poetry of Afghan poet, Rumi, whose book had been given to him by a volunteer, Alice.

After five long and difficult months in the camp, a desperate Fahad finally made it onto a lorry, where he hid behind a cargo cage. Unsure of whether his brother had also made it, he had no choice but to sit and wait. After hours in the freezing cage, Fahad looked up to see a British police officer.

Fahad was taken to the local police station and interviewed, where his age was wrongly assessed to be older by an official from the Home Office.

It was only after he was able to prove his age that he was placed safely in foster care, yet he was extremely worried for the safety of his brother, who he hadn’t seen since Calais and was still in danger. Without any way to contact him, Fahad could only wait for word that he was safe.

After a month of waiting, Fahad was relieved and thrilled to get a call from his brother, who had made it to the UK. The twins were finally reunited and now safe, yet they were suffering heavily from the effects of the trauma of their journey and the time spent in Calais. Both were trying to recover, yet they were struggling to adjust to life in an unfamiliar city, speaking very little English and with no family or friends in the UK for support. To make things worse, both had very little contact with their family at home, who had also had to flee Afghanistan.

 Luckily, shortly after arriving in the UK, Fahad was given the contact details for The Children’s Society by the Refugee Council and he began attending the weekly youth group, where he met his specialist refugee and migrant project worker Alison, who works closely with unaccompanied minors arriving in the UK.
Fahad and his brother not only attended the youth group, where they could make friends and take part in activities, but they both also received one-to-one support from Alison with everything from enrolling at college to accompanying them to meetings with their immigration solicitor.

Today, the brothers are still awaiting a decision on their case for asylum, yet with help and support from The Children’s Society, they have been able to begin to recover from the trauma they have faced and have the support they needed to start and rebuild their lives.

Fahad is currently attending college. He hopes to one day study politics at University and work with the United Nations, where he can use his experiences to help others. He is grateful to The Children’s Society for supporting and helping him when he needed it the most.

More:  https://www.gov.uk/claim-asylum
https://justice.org.uk/asylum-human-rights/

**Reflection**

**God chooses the outcast and the lost for God’s purposes – Genesis 21.14-21**

*So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.*

*When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, ‘Do not let me look on the death of the child.’ And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, ‘What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.’ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy, and he*
grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

When God hears the cry of Ishmael in the desert, desperate for water and on the point of death, God not only provides for his physical needs by directing his mother to find water, but promises him a significant future. To achieve that future is not an easy road, but God was with him.

If we imagine that every refugee like Fahad and his brother lives an Ishmael journey, we can see that every person on the move, every person displaced from their origins has a unique identity, gifts, and a destiny desired for them by God. If we think about migrants of all kinds as people who God is promoting to us, asking us to see them as especially chosen and lifted up for the future God wants for all, does that change the way we think about them?

Fahad is now in a place where he can think about studying politics at University and working for the United Nations, where his experiences will form the foundation for his advocacy.
Some things to think and talk about:

- How do you think it feels to leave your family and run from danger?
- Where might we see God at work in Fahad’s journey?
- What do you think Fahad’s future will (or could) be like with the right help and support?
- What do you know about the UK’s asylum process? How would you go about finding out what asylum seekers and refugees need to do?
- When Jesus says ‘the oppressed go free’ (Luke 4.18) what would that mean for Fahad and his brother?
- What **ONE** thing could your Christian community do to help young people like Fahad have a decent future in the UK?
Lydia’s story

Lydia was a West African asylum seeker who is now living in the UK. This is her story.

This happened when I was 14. I was walking to school with my younger sisters, a distance of about five miles. We set off early. When we were about half way to the school, a truck came down the road behind us. Before I knew what was happening, the truck stopped, I was grabbed and thrown into the back, leaving my sisters on the road. When I screamed, a man hit me and threatened me. The men drove to a town and took me into a house where I was raped by several men. When it was over, one of the men stabbed me with a knife and threw me into the street. I managed to get help and eventually made it back to my family.
But that was not the end because the men in the truck were still around and people in my village were all talking about how I was bad news and would get taken away again. They worried that I would make it more likely that their daughters would get grabbed as well. My family worried that I would either get abducted again or the other people in the village would try to hurt me. They thought I was carrying evil luck or witchcraft and had brought the rape upon myself by looking more grown up than my sisters. So they decided I should be sent away to another country. I couldn’t be allowed to stay at home with them anymore.

That made me very sad. But I agreed to leave my family and go away.

Lydia’s family negotiated with an aunt in the UK to have Lydia come to live with her, but there were considerable problems. The aunt was worried about the witchcraft accusations and about being cursed by the men and she kept changing her mind. Lydia’s family panicked and eventually paid a smuggler to get Lydia into Europe. Lydia was further abused by the smugglers and guides. The smugglers demanded that Lydia get more money and this was eventually paid by the aunt. Eventually Lydia got to a camp and permission to join her aunt and to apply for asylum. She is now an adult currently living with her aunt in the UK, but is unsure of her future and is still dealing with the accusations of witchcraft.

(Lydia’s name is a pseudonym to protect her identity. She and her aunt told her story to Anne Richards of the Mission Theology Advisory Group)

More: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-46802548

Reflection: Children are a blessing

In A Biblical and Theological Basis for Ending Violence against Children, John Baxter-Brown writes:

We believe that children are a blessing from God, a sign of God’s presence within God’s creation and of hope for the future. This hope is shown in the coming of the King of Kings, for children were important – indeed, central – to Jesus’ self-understanding. He was a child, the Son of David, the Son of Man, the Son of God who was and is his father. This relationship was a core value for his life and teaching (and is a central tenant of Trinitarian theology). It is an intimate relationship, based upon God’s love, and is mirrored in the reception the disciples give to a child: “Whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me welcomes not Me, but the one who sent Me.” “It is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs,” Jesus said. “Truly I tell you, whoever does not
receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” Jesus blessed the children, holding them up as models of the Kingdom: we should follow his example and learn from them.

Violence against children breaks Jesus’ heart. We believe that the suffering of children is close to Jesus’ beating heart and grieves him deeply. He gave dire warnings of the eternal damnation of those who caused one of these little ones to stumble, as all forms of violence are against the will of God. We, his followers, are called to protect children by standing between them and violent forces that seek to harm them. We are called to stand against the principalities and powers that inflict injustice and violence upon children, through prayer, advocacy, defending their rights and even direct action. We are to call others to treat them with the inherent dignity that they deserve, for they are created in the image of God and bear that image. We are not to allow that image to become even more tarnished, nor for it to be destroyed through abuse, or by other forms of violence against children. These are a violation of God’s purposes who longs for the kingdom to ‘come on earth as it is in heaven.’ We are to have no part in such evil, but to oppose it as Jesus did, for violence against children of any type damages their ability to flourish physically, emotionally, spiritually, psychologically and socio-politically. Jesus, however, went further taking violence upon himself, “so that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.”
Many refugees and asylum seekers arriving in the UK have suffered appalling violence and have terrible stories like Lydia's in their past. Those experiences may have to be re-lived and re-told in order to be granted asylum and it is no wonder that many young people with this kind of trauma suffer from PTSD, flashbacks and other mental health problems. These in turn may make them more vulnerable to suffering violence in this country as well.

Lydia carries burdens of guilt and of being called ‘evil’. She worries that she is, or has been, cursed and that curse will affect her future life and those around her. She misses her family and worries continually about her sisters and what might happen to them. She is a Christian, but always worries that she is not good enough or deserving enough to be loved.

John Baxter-Brown says that violence like that which Lydia suffered breaks Jesus’s heart.
More: Nadine Daniel highlights some of the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers in telling their stories: https://focusonrefugees.org/nadine-daniel-speaking-about-migration-refugees-and-sponsorship/

Find out more about the psychological help offered to young refugees through The Children’s Society. https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/young-peoples-mental-health


Some things to think and talk about:

- How do you feel about Lydia’s story?
- Imagine you were Lydia and had to make a claim for asylum which involved telling a room full of men what had happened to you. How would that make you feel? (Watch Nadine Daniel in the link above to help with this).
- If children and young people are a blessing from God and hope for the future how do refugee children and young people bless us with their presence and how should we respond to such a blessing coming to us?
- How do you think refugee children and young people are especially at risk of violence?
- How can we do more to help children and young people who have experienced violence?
Refugee Stories: Meet Jenny

Jenny’s story

In 2016, Jenny Baldwin, a member of Brentwood Baptist Church in Essex went to the (now closed) Calais refugee camp known as ‘The Jungle’. There she found that her skills could answer the most important needs. She told her story to The Baptist Times and it is reproduced below with permission.

https://baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/474653/Sewing_skinny_jeans.aspx

‘After reading an article in my daily paper back in February (2016) I felt God telling me to get out of my comfort zone and volunteer to work in the Calais refugee camp commonly known as ‘The Jungle’.

At the time I did nothing about it because I was frightened how my family would react. So it went on the back burner.'
However, at the Baptist Assembly in May there was a chance to find out more about going to visit Calais under the auspices of Peaceful Borders, a small group who want to bring dignity and justice to the people David Cameron referred to as ‘swarms of migrants’. So I made contact and volunteered. I thought I would be teaching in the school or sorting donations. But it didn’t work out that way.

I went with a group of 14 people, including my husband, from Baptist churches in the UK. We were to be there for a week and were allowed to make our base one of the restaurants which had been closed down by the French authorities in early July.

As a throwaway remark to one of the organisers I had said I could sew. The result was that I was able to set up a repair and alteration workshop at the back of the restaurant using a donated sewing machine.

With help from refugees of different nationalities I was able to produce a poster in several languages, which went up on the window.

Nothing happened initially, but soon word got around and ‘customers’ began to arrive. I was asked to shorten trousers, create shorts from long trousers with tatty hems, mend seams and patch holes.

But the greatest challenge came when I was required to create ‘skinny jeans’ out of baggy ones. Their owners wanted to look a little more on trend. With the aid of a biro, they drew a line on the inside to show how skinny they wanted them, and using the few pins I had in my travel sewing kit, I was able to machine a new seam. As the week progressed so the demand grew, lads came back bringing their friends to have jeans altered too.
Jenny with Abby Crawford, another member of the trip, showing the newly altered, skinny jeans

There is no electricity in the camp so in order to run my sewing machine we bought petrol to run a small generator already in the restaurant. As I sewed people would come in and plug their phone chargers into the extension sockets, making the most of the power being on, their phone is the only link they have with friends and family back in their countries of origin.

We heard some heart wrenching stories about why people had made their journeys. Being able to spend time listening and drinking tea was a privilege. And being able to use my sewing skills to make clothes look and fit a little better was a bonus. I hope to go back occasionally to continue the service.’

More: https://youtu.be/sMKzgWcjdaY

Reflection: Simple skills further God’s purposes

Proverbs 31. 19-21

She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to the needy.  
*She is not afraid for her household when it snows, for all her household are clothed in crimson.*

If we dig deeply into the well-known poem about ‘a capable wife’ found in the Book of Proverbs, we find that the skills of the wife go far beyond the domestic life, but contribute to the wellbeing of the whole community. The wife not only sews cloth and makes clothes which protect her household, but become the foundation of a profitable business which allows her to take care of those in most need.

Many people who wonder about how they can help migrants, refugees and displaced people, imagine that help is all about donations, and different kinds of aid: things collected and given to needy people, but Jenny’s story of simple but effective service shows that the ability to give people back their dignity and sense of pride through mending their clothes and altering them is just as important. To create better clothes for others is to recognise the human being who is to wear them. When the young people drew their lines in biro, they were getting back control of their lives through decisions about how and what to wear and Jenny made that possible for them. To have altered and improved clothes adds to confidence and self-esteem for people whose possessions are few.

Jenny’s story also shows that in thinking theologically about our response to refugee people, we can see that helping people attain dignity goes hand in hand with justice. Advocacy also can wear the face of service. The third ‘mark of mission’ is ‘to respond to human need through loving service’ and through Jenny’s story we can see that in action.

The Children’s Society similarly tries to offer loving service to refugee young people. You can find out more here: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-lobbying/child-refugees-and-young-migrants?gclid=EAIaIQobChMImPDOlZq14gIVT7HtCh3bEAFxEAAYASAAEgKUdPD_BwE
Some things to think about:

- Where do you see God at work in Jenny’s story?
- Who do you suppose sewed the hems on Jesus’s clothes?
- How do you think the young refugee people felt when Jenny had altered their clothes?
- What simple skills might you have that could make a real difference to others?
- What ONE thing could your Christian community do to make life better for people in need?

For more thinking about refugees and clothes see the ‘art’ section in Green Journey.
Exploring Scripture 1: Love the Stranger

Photo by David Stock

Scripture reflection

Deuteronomy 10.17-19

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Throughout Scripture, and especially in the Hebrew Scriptures, ‘strangers’ (or foreigners) are linked together with orphaned children and widows, - people without protection, the most vulnerable members of society who can easily be overlooked or left without provision.

In this passage, it is God who is seen to be looking out for those vulnerable and displaced people: those who are displaced from their homes and countries, and
those who are displaced from their families, displaced within society. They are to be taken in and provided for, nourished and clothed. Their futures within the community matter. God’s provision is to be matched by human provision: the people of Israel are asked to do God's will for such people as a matter of justice, and, more importantly, because it is in their history and memory: they too were displaced. Justice flows from common experience and a common humanity.

Some things to think about:

- In this passage, care for all displaced people is God’s command. What does this mean for us if we want to live in obedience to God’s will?
- Displaced people are given the basics for survival in the community – food and clothing. What do you think are the necessities for living well in our community and how can these be provided to the most vulnerable, especially children?
- What do you think such provision helps such vulnerable people to do? What do their futures look like? How do the children grow and flourish? What can they then give back to the community?
- What do you think God wants for Fahad and all refugee children and young people?

Sermon notes for leaders: theme ‘Love the Stranger’

Starting out with God:

- This passage tells us something extraordinary about the ‘mighty and awesome’ God: God has a preferential desire to take care of those with the least. With God, the last, the people at the bottom of the pile, shall be first. When Jesus announces his ministry, he singles out liberation and care for the weak and vulnerable. This is not a dream, but the reality of the Kingdom.

Acting on God’s call:

- Remember situations when you were a complete stranger and what that felt like. Are we willing to follow God’s will for vulnerable people and all those in need? Are we, as Christians up for it or do we just leave it to others? If we want to follow Jesus, how do we listen to and understand his statement in Luke 4? Jesus says that we welcome him when we welcome and care for people in desperate need.
Our church and community:

- So what are the needs of vulnerable adults and children in our community? Give some examples. What are we already doing? Who is helping? Who can we partner with? Whenever we reach out to those in need we find Jesus.

Challenge: loving the stranger:

- Loving the stranger means putting aside prejudice, fear and concern in favour of God’s desire. It means giving people a future where they are part of our community and valued. It means making space for them, seeing them as neighbours. It can feel risky, scary but that’s nothing to what our neighbours may have gone through.

Leading on:

- Finding in our worship encouragement to love the stranger without reservation. We go out in the power of Spirit to make that happen in our own community.
Exploring Scripture 2:
Dangerous Crossings

Moses is saved from death

Exodus 2.2-10

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. ‘This must be one of the Hebrews’ children,’ she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, ‘Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?’ Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, ‘Yes.’ So the girl went and called the child’s mother. Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, ‘Take this child and nurse
it for me, and I will give you your wages.’ So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, ‘because’, she said, ‘I drew him out of the water.’

In this passage, Moses’ mother knows her baby is in danger of death and does all she can to give him a chance both to save him and make sure he has a better life. Moses is placed into the water in a basket, the word for which (tevah) is only used once more in Scripture -for Noah’s Ark. He is then watched over to see what will happen. Pharaoh’s daughter finds the baby in his ark of spiritual protection and brings him safely out of the water, arranges for his care by his own family, and takes him to be her son.

Moses goes down into the water in his basket and is raised out of it safely. This also prefigures the crossing of the Red Sea when Moses, with God’s help, leads the people of Israel through the danger into liberation. We keep this symbolism in baptism, when by water we are brought by God’s grace into a new life.

Yet so many refugees struggle in makeshift and unsafe boats to cross the sea to the new life of Europe and the UK. Many babies and young children are not as fortunate as Moses, despite the care and protection of their families. The sea claims them. What will it take to bring them to safety and protection, and to a new life?

Some things to think about:

- What do you think Moses’ mother had to do to make sure her plan worked? How risky was what she did?
- Imagine what prayer Moses’ mother might have made when she put Moses in his basket.
- How might God have prompted Pharaoh’s daughter that day? What can we learn about our own response to refugee children in need?
- What would you do, if you opened the door to find a baby in an ark/basket on your doorstep?
- What plans do you think Fahad’s family had to make to get out of Afghanistan?

Sermon notes for leaders: theme ‘Dangerous Crossings’

Starting out with God:

- Sometimes we just have to trust God. But that can be hard when we can’t see or even anticipate the future. But all of us at some time or another have to risk something to make the future happen. We might risk taking out a mortgage or a new job [other examples] where we are not quite sure how that might work
out long term. We take a risk when we start a new relationship or employ someone – how will those relationships develop? With God’s help we can navigate life and flourish.

**Acting on God’s call:**

- But some people have to risk much, much more than that. People caught up in famine, desperate poverty or war zones may have to risk everything to protect their families and to give them any hope of a future. We see on the news the risks they are prepared to take – dangerous sea crossings in flimsy, overcrowded boats, using up all their possessions and savings to get away from danger, starting out again with nothing. Does God call people away from danger and suffering, urging them to act? Does God call us to be Pharaoh’s daughter and be more alert to the needs of people crying for our help, like the baby in the basket?

**Our church and community:**

- So what does the story of Moses mean for our church and community? Where are the dangerous crossings in our own community (people escaping from abuse or addictions; health problems like cancer treatment, debt or bereavement etc) and how can we be more alert to those who have to make them?

**Challenge: watching for the unexpected**

- Jesus tells us to be alert and watchful. It’s easy to be horrified when we see news coverage of dead children who have perished in a dangerous crossing. But it is even easier to forget about them when the news moves on to something else. We have a responsibility to be witnesses to suffering and to injustice and to do all we can to change what is wrong in our world and help those who grieve because of it.

**Leading on:**

- Finding in our worship a new watchfulness and anticipation. The Kingdom requires that we are ready for those making dangerous crossings and to provide sanctuary and to be sanctuary for others. We go out in the power of Spirit to make that happen in our own community.
Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I have called my son.’

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old.
or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

‘A voice was heard in Ramah,
   wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
   she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.’

According to Matthew’s gospel, Jesus is in danger of death after he is born. Joseph cannot risk staying where he is any longer and takes his family down to Egypt. The danger does not go away for other children. The grim reality is that they are killed by forces of power, greed and fear. The grief and horror rises up from the passage, as violence takes over.

Some things to think about:

• Imagine you had to take your family and run away from danger. What would you do? What plans would you have to make? What would you need? Where would you go?
• Do you think that if this country was as dangerous as in the passage that you would hope to go back some day, or would you stay where it is safe? How would you go about remembering your home and your culture in a strange place?
• Where do you think God might be warning refugees today to ‘go down into Egypt’? Do you think God leads refugees and asylum seekers to come to Britain? Might it change the way we feel about refugee children if we look at them as God-placed among us?
• Many refugee children have mental health issues as a result of their experiences, including guilt at having survived. How would you help Fahad and his brother live with their memories and experiences?

Sermon notes for leaders: theme ‘Knowing when to run away’

Starting out with God:

• The Gospel says that God told Joseph to run away. The family of Jesus was vulnerable and powerless against the murderous fear of Herod. They could not fight that power; they had to get away from it and put distance between them
and the danger. But the stark fact is that those who would not, or could not run away, died.

- We see this in our own society, in domestic violence, in knife crime, in trafficking and addictions. People need to be able to run away, but they are trapped unless they have somewhere to run to, - refuges, places of sanctuary, places of recovery. For Joseph’s family that place was Egypt, out of Herod’s clutches, until it was safe to return.

Acting on God’s call:

- But Jesus only survived because Joseph acted on God’s call. He was open and receptive to God and made God-guided decisions which protected the child Jesus. Would we think differently about refugees and their children in this country if we thought of them as God-brought to us? As God’s gifts to us?

Our church and community:

- So how do we help people to understand that it is ok to run away from violent or threatening situations, rather than engage and fight? Who in our community needs breathing space, a place to recover, a place to step away from stress and fear? How can we help? That might mean helping those around us and in our families with any problems that could get out of control – debt, work stress, relationship difficulties, caring for sick or elderly people. How can we help those around us get a break, be places of sanctuary, even for a little while? Who else, living among us, needs that caring space if they are to live well, as God wants for them?

Challenge: knowing when to run away

- Knowing when to run away requires discernment and good judgement. It doesn’t mean giving up or abandoning people, or walking away from responsibilities. It means knowing that the best thing to do is to retreat and start working on the future. Joseph was especially attentive to God’s direction; people who are in retreat from violence and fear are not passive agents; even if they have lost everything they have a future to which God is calling them.

Leading on:

- Finding in our worship encouragement to be places of rest and recuperation for people who need it and to accompany them on their journey to healing and flourishing. We go out in the power of Spirit to make that happen in our own community.
Leader: Loving God,
we bring to you this cry:
From all war and violence

People: *Let my people go*
Leader: From all greed and power
People: *Let my people go*

Leader: From all oppression and injustice
People: *Let my people go*

Leader: Redeeming Jesus
You bid us come to you across the water

Leader: In times of fear
People: *Let us come to you in safety*

Leader: In times of danger
People: *Let us come to you in safety*

Leader: In times of doubt
People: *Let us come to you in safety*

Leader: Inspiring Spirit,
you light the path to new life.
In times of confusion
People: *Help us see the way*

Leader: In times of frustration and difficulty
People: *Help us see the way*
Leader: In times of struggle

People: *Help us see the way*

Leader: Loving God,

by these prayers,

let us enter the world of the stranger,

the refugee, the asylum seeker.

Help us to remember all those who need our help

and know we are Christians by our love for them.

Eternal God,

we ask these prayers through your Son,

our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

People: *Lord, hear our cry...*

All: *Amen.*


*.......................*

*A Prayer for Fahad*

*Loving God,*

*we pray for Fahad and his twin brother*

*and for Isaak, Lydia and for all refugee children.*

*May they be loved and cared for among us*

*for the rest of their lives*

*and may we be blessed by their presence among us*

*Amen.*
Find out about:
refugee news reporting

Have a look at these news headlines and check out some of the stories behind them. (All web links correct as of June 2019). Also have a look online for new and different stories about the situation around the world of child refugees.

Some things for you to think about:

- What roles have political decisions to play in helping child refugees and giving them a better future?
- How could we help politicians understand the problems and dangers for child refugees?
- Who is it funds borders, fences, political systems, fake news? Who are the winners and losers?
- What would it take to get the political will to speed up decisions and make the provisions necessary?
- What might it feel like to have to wait to re-join family or to be deported back to a war zone?
- Can we do better at predicting when child refugees will need our help?
- Imagine you are Fahad in one of these situations. What questions would you want to ask? How would you feel? What would you need from Christians? From charities? From governments? What would you like to say to them?

Hundreds of child refugees deported from UK back to war zones

‘Hundreds of people have been sent back to unsafe places such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan – which the Foreign Office advises against travelling to. Data released under the Freedom of Information act showed 734 people granted asylum as children who had since turned 18 were removed from the UK between January 2015 and September last year.’

13 April 2019

https://metro.co.uk/2019/04/13/hundreds-child-refugees-deported-uk-back-war-zones-9195583/
Calais child refugees waiting 10 times longer to join family in UK

‘The average wait for a positive response to a request by unaccompanied children in Calais to join families in the UK increased from 10.98 days in 2016 to 111.31 days, nearly four months, according to a Home Office document.’

1 April 2019


Calais child refugees went on hunger strike after UK transfer delays

‘In particular, it was raised that the mental and psychological state of the children had deteriorated in recent weeks, including one case of a child who has attempted suicide and 15 who are currently partaking in a hunger strike.’

31 March 2019


Children’s services not fit for refugees, says Chief Minister

‘Jersey is currently not fit to take in child refugees because of the ‘very poor state’ of the relevant social services, which need to be improved for local youths first, the Chief Minister has said.’

27 March 2019

UNICEF warns of risks for wave of child refugees from Venezuela

‘Across Colombia’s capital, Venezuelan children, including infants, spend hours at busy intersections while their migrant parents sell candy or ask motorists for a few coins to get through another day after fleeing their homeland in search of a better life.’

6 April 2019


Rape is a very real threat for unaccompanied children in Ethiopia's refugee camps

"You may find strangers in the forest, or wild animals, who run up to you. Some of us will come home wounded. Yes, some of us are raped.’

2 April 2019


Austrian far-right promises ‘very, very tough asylum policies’

‘When pictures of Asel Tamga, her father and hijab-wearing mother appeared online, a Facebook page marking the birth as well as internet news comment sections were flooded with Islamophobic comments. One wrote: “I’m hoping for a cot death.” Another: “Deport the scum immediately.”

A third, referring to the new interior minister, added Mr Kickl was “going to send you out of the country. He’s the man to do it.”

https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/austrian-far-right-promises-very-very-tough-asylum-policies-1.3351223
Find out about: Refugee Journeys

Have a look at a map of the world or a globe. Find these countries:

- Afghanistan
- Syria
- Iraq
- Iran
- Eritrea
- Somalia
- Bangladesh

Find out:

- How far it is from these countries to the UK?
- How many countries and borders do you have to cross?
• What kind of journeys do you have to undertake – mountains, seas, etc
• How many different cultures and languages will you encounter?

Some things to think about:

• How would you make such a journey?
• How much money would you need?
• What essential items would you have to take with you and how would you carry them?
• How would you communicate with relatives or friends in the country you are trying to reach?
• Who could you trust?
• What authorities might you have to deal with?
• What problems or dangers might you run into?
• What effects might such a journey have on you?

Use what you have found out to imagine Fahad’s journey and experiences.

• Find out more about how the Children’s Society helps young people who have come through trauma, danger and fear. Think about what needs to change in our society: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs/our-blog/the-end-of-the-journey-young-asylum-seekers-and-the-struggle-for-stability
• Find out more about how The Children’s Society helps young people with practical problems and needs. Have a look at the report ‘Not just a Temporary Fix’ here https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/not-just-a-temporary-fix-durable-solutions-for-separated
One of the people who has been working tirelessly to help refugees is Lord Alf Dubs. Lord Dubs feels deeply for refugees because he came to the UK as a refugee himself, one of 10,000 Jewish children rescued by the Kindertransport in the two years before the outbreak of WWII.

Read about his story: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alf_Dubs,_Baron_Dubs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alf_Dubs,_Baron_Dubs)
The Dubs Amendment

A European Union Law, the Dublin III Regulation, says that families have a right to stay together. So refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in one EU country can apply to join family members who live legally in another EU country. Although law, this was not being implemented successfully until an organisation, Safe Passage, challenged it, and in early 2016 the first unaccompanied minors stuck in France were reunited with family in the UK. By May 2019, 1800 people had been reunited through this route that was successfully opened.

Find out about this here: http://safepassage.org.uk/achievements/

But there are also many unaccompanied refugee children trying to get to the UK who do not have families in the UK or who do not know how to contact their relatives.

In 2016 Lord Dubs proposed an amendment to the Immigration Bill to make Britain take its share of responsibility for some of the many children stranded across Europe. Now named after Lord Dubs, the amendment refers to section 67 of the UK Immigration Act 2016.

Lord Dubs first suggested the amendment to provide for 3000 unaccompanied refugee children from Europe to be brought to the UK and given protection. The exact number was rejected, but the amendment was later accepted with an unspecified number. Approximately 480 children should eventually come through this scheme.

Find out more: http://safepassage.org.uk/frequently-asked-questions-2-2/

However the authorities were very slow in implementing this scheme. Some of the problems cited included:

- Local councils cannot find enough homes for unaccompanied refugee children.
- The scheme encourages more young people to make the dangerous trip across Europe to get here.
- The scheme encourages people traffickers to exploit children and young people with the promise of a better life in the UK.

However, some blame the delays on the Home Office’s ‘hostile environment’ and suggest that even though local councils have pledged spaces, and children have been processed in other EU countries and are ready for transfer, Britain has dragged its feet for no obvious reason. Some child refugees who are clients of Safe Passage waited in France for transfer up to nine months after approval.

Find out more about Alf Dubs by looking at his Twitter feed @AlfDubs

Some things to think about:

- Lord Dubs cares about unaccompanied child refugees because he was a child refugee himself. How important is it to learn from people who know what it feels like to be refugees?
- What would you say to the government about its political concerns?
- What kind of help do unaccompanied children need once they arrive in the UK?
- How would you try to persuade a young person to trust a slow system and not risk their life in search of a quick arrival?
- What kind of scheme do you think should exist after Brexit?
- Look back at the stories in the Yellow Journey and find out more about what The Children’s Society is doing to help young people with their ongoing needs once they are in the UK: see childrenssociety.org.uk/support-refugees

Learn more about the theology of migration here:

Learn more about the theology of trafficking here:

Go to: more resources on trafficking:
https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/MTAG%20Trafficking%20Resources_0.pdf
Find out about: Making refugees visible – and invisible

‘Suspended’

‘Suspended’ by Arabella Dorman at St James’s church, Piccadilly at https://www.sjp.org.uk/
This installation by the artist Arabella Dorman is made from the discarded clothing of refugees gathered from the beaches of the Greek island of Lesvos by members of The Starfish Foundation [http://www.asterias-starfish.org/en/](http://www.asterias-starfish.org/en/). The purpose of the installation is to remind us of the people who once wore these clothes. As the installation is lit, the clothes come into focus; as the installation darkens, we are reminded that it is easy to forget about refugees or to become indifferent to their stories and their future.

The Revd Lucy Winkett, Rector of St James’s Piccadilly, writes:

‘One of the church’s roles in situations of injustice is to “create witness”. To encourage one another to become people who are willing to see, not to look away, and then speak about hidden suffering, by making visible what is not visible to most. At Christmas, we tell stories of Jesus becoming a refugee. At the festival of the incarnation, we sing about Jesus being clothed humanity, “veiled in flesh”. This is a way of seeing Christ in all people who are rootless and far from home. And being willing ourselves to become “clothed in compassion”.

[https://www.sjp.org.uk/suspended.html](https://www.sjp.org.uk/suspended.html)
‘Our Boat’

In May 2019 the Venice Biennale art exhibition opened. One of the pieces of ‘art’ called ‘Barca Nostra’ (Our Boat) is the wreck of a ship which sank in the Mediterranean on 18 April 2015. Between 700 and 1,100 people died. Only 28 survived.


The artistic director said: ‘It’s one thing to see an image in a newspaper or on television but when you confront the physical thing, you have a whole other group of sensations. You feel it in a different way; you’re processing the information in a different way, hopefully that leads you to think in a different way.’

But Juliet Kilpin of Peaceful Borders (www.peacefulborders.org) met one of the few survivors from the ship in the Calais ‘jungle’ in 2015. She describes him as a gentle yet traumatised soul. Juliet tweeted:

‘I appreciate art, but seeing this ship as art really discomforts me. Does it humanise or dehumanise those who journeyed in it?..Italy paid 10 million Euros to raise the
ship. Imagine how many passengers that could have helped settle safely. We spend more on the dead than the living… Powers would rather memorialise the dead than help the living.’

Stations of the Cross

This Stations of the Cross exhibition went on display in Easter 2016. Photos of refugees depicted an alternative Easter story. It provoked some to action. One Baptist church that hosted the exhibition went on to host a Syrian family that came through the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, in one of its properties. But Juliet Kilpin of Peaceful Borders says at least one of the people photographed is still stuck in displacement three years on.

‘Art speaks to our hearts, but our minds need to organise for change,’ Juliet says.

See some of the photos and read more: https://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Stations-of-the-Cross-refugee-photography-goes-on-display
Refugees making art

Ali Dorani, an Iranian refugee, was able to get to Norway after he became noticed for his cartoon drawings, done under the name EatenFish, - he was a fish because he was 'fished' from the sea after escaping by boat. However he was then ‘eaten’ by the authorities, as he was not allowed to enter Australia and held in a detention camp. Read about his story here: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-47693505

Art therapy has also been helping refugee children and young people start to recover from their traumatic experiences. You can see some of their drawings here: https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/03/17/470809097/syrian-refugee-kids-were-told-to-draw-whatever-they-wanted

Some things to think about:

- What kind of thoughts and feelings do you get from looking at these installations?
- What do you think about Revd Lucy Winkett’s description of making visible what is hidden or forgotten?
- What do you think about arguments that refugees need action and not art?
- Do you think these installations make refugees more visible or dehumanises them further by showing them through their lost clothing?
- Do you think it is important to make art like this within places of worship?
- Reading Fahad’s story, how would you feel if his clothes were part of the display? How do you think Fahad might feel?
- How can compassion and creativity best work together to make refugees more visible and lead to action and help?
- Juliet Kilpin said ‘Art speaks to our hearts, but our minds need to organise for change’. Where have you seen art motivate people to action?
Reflection and Prayer: Safety

In this section, you might like to look back at some of the other resources in the Yellow, Blue and Green Journeys and use an image, idea, new knowledge, bible passage or prayer to focus on the idea of SAFETY for refugee children.

A refugee child is still a child, first and foremost. What does it mean to be a child? What does God want for all children?
A Spiritual Exercise

...Sit in silence and leave distractions behind.

...Concentrate on quiet breathing.

...Think about Fahad leaving Afghanistan, or Lydia leaving her sisters behind, or think about unaccompanied children hoping to be reunited with family in the UK. Forget for a moment that they are refugees, but remember that they are children who need to feel safe among us.

...Imagine them arriving in this country. What do they need to feel safe, to feel loved and cared for?

....What is God asking us to do for these children? How can we make places of safety for them?

...how could we support agencies and charities, authorities and schools, to create that safety?

...how can we show them the Good News of Jesus who calls children to be with him and blessed by him?

...Find one picture or one word or one simple phrase from the resource so far.

...Holding that picture, word or phrase in your mind.

...Reach out to Jesus bidding the children come to him.

...Close your eyes for one minute, then reopen them and sit in silence for one more minute

...Take time to note anything that may come to you.

...Give thanks as appropriate.
Prayer

Jesus, Creator and Sustainer of all things,
you are King of Kings and Lord of Lords – nothing escapes your gaze.
Every child is fearfully and wonderfully made in your image.
You long for each precious child to flourish in safety and wellbeing,
coming to a full and life giving knowledge of you.
Your heart must break whenever violence is perpetrated against your children.

Lord, give us your heart for children
and unite us in our effort to be ambassadors for you on behalf of children around the world.

We know it will take a world to end violence against children – here we are, send us, use us.

Pour your light into the darkest areas of violence, rescue and protect for your Name’s sake.

Amen.

John Baxter-Brown

A commitment:

Lord God, open our hearts to all children and young people in need. Help us to create places of safety for children.

We commit ourselves to making a future for them in which all may flourish.

More ideas from The Children’s Society’s resource From Fear to Safety, can be found here: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/in-your-church/from-fear-to-safety
Reflection and Prayer: Welcome

Anne Richards
Reflection

Putting up a sign is one thing, but putting the message into practice is another, especially when in some countries there has been a backlash against migration and refugees, blaming them for unrest, exploitation of European systems and benefits and blaming them for crime.

What does it feel like to feel welcome? Is it a one-off thing, or is it something that continues or something that needs to be constantly renewed?

Many migrants, refugees and asylum seekers face hostility and unkindness and are hurt deeply by people who judge them or treat them badly. What can we do to lessen the pain caused by our divided communities and to be their advocates?

How do we witness to Christ through welcome and hospitality in our own lives?

A Spiritual Exercise

...Sit in silence and leave distractions behind.
...Concentrate on quiet breathing.

...Think about Fahad or about any migrants and refugee people coming to this country.
...Imagine their hopes, dreams and fears.
...Imagine Joseph, Mary and Jesus going down into Egypt. Who welcomed them there and took them in?
...Think about what it takes to make someone feel really welcome.

...Find one picture or one word or one simple phrase from the resource so far.
...Holding that picture, word or phrase in your mind.
...Reach out to Jesus welcoming sick people, despised people, outcast people, frightened people.
...Close your eyes for one minute, then reopen them and sit in silence for one more minute.
...Take time to note anything that may come to you.

...Give thanks as appropriate

Prayer

Lord God, loving Father,

Teach us to start every day with welcome in our hearts.

Help us to create space for those who are different from us, who speak different languages, have different customs, whose histories are so diverse.

Show us the richness which flows from welcoming others and help us to be blessed by their presence in our communities and wider society.

Amen.

A commitment

Lord God, make us truly a people of welcome. Make us generous of spirit, and vessels of Christian love and kindness.

Teach us wisdom and patience with people who are just starting out on their future in this country.

We commit to this in Jesus’ name.

Amen.
Reflection and Prayer: Inclusion

Reflection

Children and young people need a future in which they can flourish. And in order to flourish they need to be fully part of the opportunities available.

Yet it can be hard for migrants and refugees to feel included. There might be language or cultural barriers or they might come up against misunderstanding and hostility.

As Christians we are called by God to look out for people lying by the wayside, people who are passed by. We are called to raise them up, help their healing and offer them hospitality.

A Spiritual Exercise

...Sit in silence and leave distractions behind.
...Concentrate on quiet breathing.

...Think about Fahad's ambitions to go to university and his desire to work for the United Nations
...Imagine his first day at university, making friends...
...Imagine his first day at work, the stories he might share with his twin.

...Find one picture or one word or one simple phrase from the resource so far.
...Holding that picture, word or phrase in your mind.
...Reach out to Jesus calling the disciples, gathering people he loved around him, telling them to make disciples of all the nations.
...Close your eyes for one minute, then reopen them and sit in silence for one more minute
...Take time to note anything that may come to you.

...Give thanks as appropriate.

**Prayer**

Loving God,

we thank you for including us in your covenant of grace and love.

Help us always to show that generous love to others

and especially to those who have crossed oceans to live among us.

Forgive us the times when we have been blind to injustice,

and forgotten those who believe themselves welcome but who have been turned away.

Make room in our hearts for all who seek inclusion in our communities.

**Amen.**

**A Commitment**

Lord Jesus, you sat at supper with your friends and washed their feet.

Teach us to serve others and to live in fellowship with everyone, whoever they may be.

We commit to open hearts and minds and to making space for others to call us famil
Reflection and Prayer: Growth

Reflection

As climate change continues and the stress on land and food sustainability worsens, and as nations continue to be torn apart by conflict and violence, it is clear that the movement of people is not going to change. More people will make dangerous crossings and heart-breaking journeys in search of safety and better lives.

We know that God wants good things for those people as God wants good things for us. And it may turn out that those good things for us depend on the justice, mercy and love we give and receive from displaced people among us. Through their presence among us, the gifts they offer to us, we are able to grow.
Spiritual Exercise

...Sit in silence and leave distractions behind.
...Concentrate on quiet breathing.

...Think about Fahad becoming an old man. Think about the stories he might tell his children and grandchildren.
Think about what he might say about his time in this country, his experience of Christians.
Will he think it was all worth it?

...Find one picture or one word or one simple phrase from the resource so far.
...Holding that picture, word or phrase in your mind.
...Reach out to Jesus preaching the Beatitudes
And realise that we are blessed and enriched by those we serve.
...Close your eyes for one minute, then reopen them and sit in silence for one more minute

...Take time to note anything that may come to you.
...Give thanks as appropriate.

Prayer

Jesus, Son of God, Son of David,
Son of Mary, Son of Man,
Jesus, King of Kings,
Lord of Lords and Prince of Peace,
who was there in the beginning with the Father and the Spirit,
is here now and ever shall be,
Jesus, friend of sinners,
friend and brother, Lord and Saviour,
send us out to live lives worthy of your love,
to live in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit,
to be your witnesses to the Kingdom and the ways of your Kingdom,
that together and in person we may be signs that point towards you,
towards peace, towards justice and away from violence to the least, the last and the lost.

Amen.

John Baxter-Brown

A Commitment

Loving and eternal God. We thank you for your Son, Jesus, who shows us the way. We commit ourselves now to be open to change and transformation, to learning and the growth of wisdom, courage and patience.

We commit ourselves to the growth in your Spirit which embraces the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. We commit ourselves to offering fellowship and friendship. We commit ourselves to advocacy and justice.

Amen.
Photo by Chris O’Donovan