

## Refugee Week 2014 – service materials from the London Churches Refugee Fund



### A prayer for refugees and for ourselves:

God our Protector and Saviour,  
who lived on this earth as a stranger,  
open our eyes and our hearts  
to those who live as strangers among us,  
make us hospitable and generous to them,  
and grateful for the gifts they bring to us.

Amen.

### Are we bothered?

“In biblical terms, hospitality is a positive obligation. That is, a potential host has an obligation to invite the stranger in. This is contrary to the norm in our culture, where a visitor / stranger must not expect an invitation. In our culture, if someone fails to provide hospitality where it could be offered, it is not regarded as immoral. However, **God’s people are called to go out of their way to invite the stranger in and provide hospitality.** Failing to do so is not simply immoral, it is a redemptive *non sequitur*.”

(Source: <http://www.isaiahone.org/>, our emphasis)

### Some Bible passages applicable to the theme of refugees and strangers:

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. *Hebrews 13:2*

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. *Deut 10: 17-19*

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. *Matt 25:35.*

**Churches using the Revised Common Lectionary will also find relevant themes in most of this week’s readings, such as the account in Genesis 21 of the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael, or the cry of despair in Psalm 69. Or see the quote from a refugee overpage and compare this to Luke 15:16.**

## Case Studies from LCRF Clients

B is Kurdish, which was enough for her to be stopped, arrested and tortured by the Turkish police. She escaped to the UK, and claimed asylum. She told staff at the Islington Centre, where she is learning English, that she rotates between friends' houses where she sleeps on the floor or sofa and has no money for food, travel or toiletries. The Islington Centre helped her apply to the National Asylum Support Service and get to the interview location. She was awarded NASS support in the form of £35 a week by Azure card, so she can now at least buy necessities, but she still struggles to find money for transport.

T had local authority support withdrawn after an age assessment, and fled NASS accommodation after being badly bullied by another resident. Returning to London as the only place in the UK that he was familiar with, he found that none of his acquaintances could put him up on a regular basis. The Children's Society Destitution Project, New Londoners, offered to refer him to a cold weather shelter or to advocate with NASS for alternative accommodation but T was too afraid to try either. As he often had no place to sleep overnight, the Society provided him with bus passes through the winter months so that he could ride the buses all night, a warm and relatively safe option compared to being on the streets.

**“There is one animal that I envy so much in this country, and it's the pet dog. When I see people with pet dogs and see how they are taken care of in homes, fed and everything, I compare myself with them and cannot measure up. I lose hope in living. I envy the dog.”** (Genuine quote from a refugee)

A is a 26 year old from Gambia who has been refused asylum. She was trafficked to the UK on pretence that she would be able to study here, but instead was forced to work as a housemaid. When she came to Hackney Migrant Centre's drop-in she was homeless and destitute, very distressed and scared. Because of A's unclear immigration status, HMC made a Subject Access Request to the Home Office. She is still waiting for an answer but through the help of HMC and others has gained confidence and strength. She recently started to study at Hackney Community College and is living in temporary accommodation from Praxis, where she can stay until her situation is more secure.

R is a Zimbabwean in her mid 50s. When she first attended the Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers she had received a negative decision from the Home Office. R was destitute and had experienced abuse after accepting an offer of accommodation. Along with providing her with food parcels and hardship money, SDCAS referred R to a CAB immigration specialist, to Praxis with regard to her accommodation and to their counselling psychologist. Praxis were able to find her temporary accommodation through their spare rooms scheme. SDCAS gave R support through their hardship fund to cover essential living costs and for transport to appointments with agencies. Praxis also made a section 4 application for R which led to her dispersal. Staff at the Day Centre researched local services that she would be able to access to ensure that she would not be isolated in her new location.