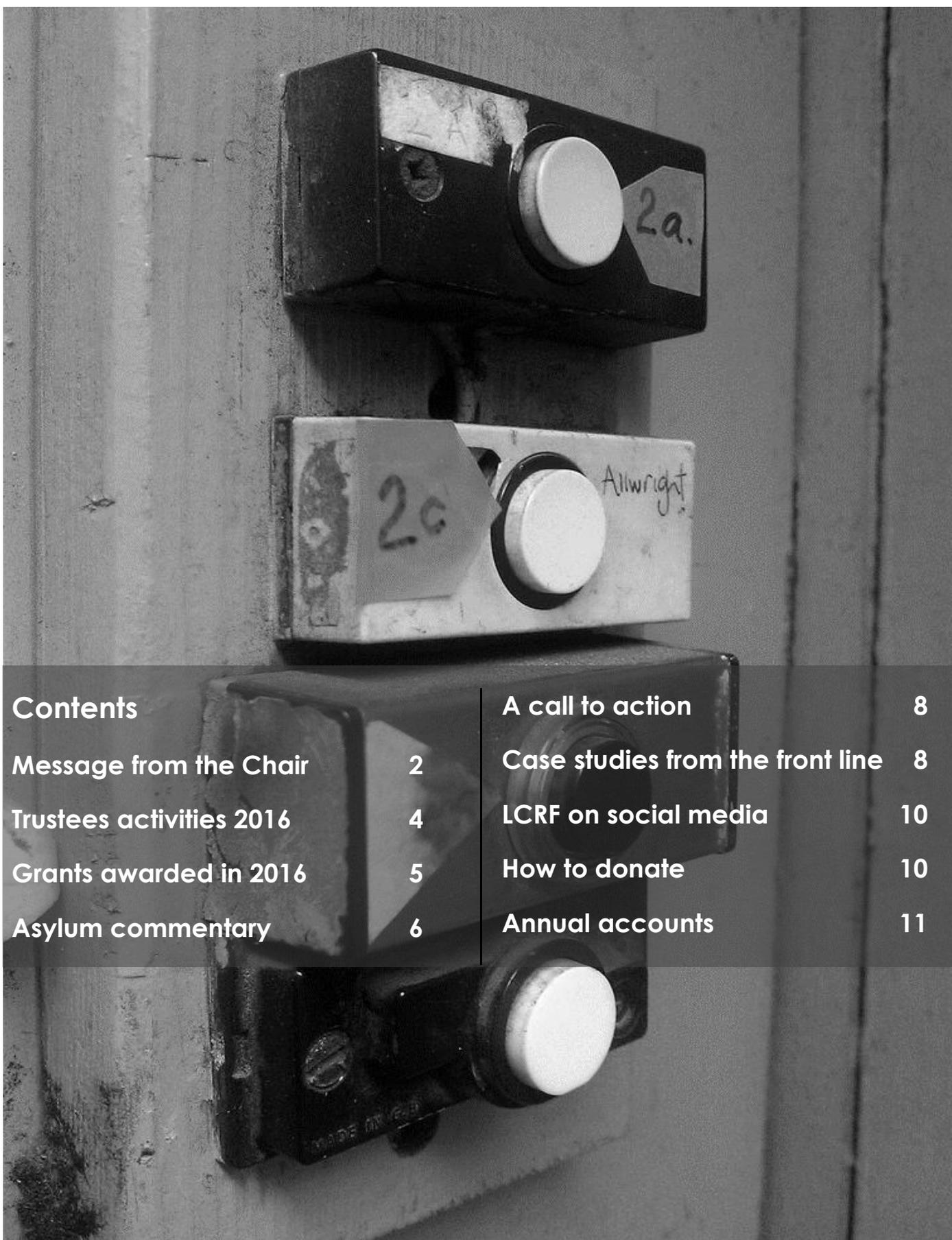


ANNUAL REPORT 2016

www.help4refugees.co.uk

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Message from the Chair

Wherever I walk in inner London these days I seem to encounter people who are begging for help.

Sitting on the pavement, with or without a dog, swaddled often in blanket or sleeping bag or huddled in a hood; of all ages, and different ethnicities; some with suppurating sores (bandaged or otherwise), many with days of ingrained dirt on unwashed hands or feet; plastic cup to hand; seemingly resigned to a lifetime of such purgatory, many not even looking up at the passer by. "I did not know that poverty had undone so many..." – to misquote Eliot.

And I baulk at the relentless demands each one poses on my conscience and my pocket. 'That's the last pound, or two or five, that I am handing out today...' – and then I look ahead and my heart sinks. Sometimes I will buy or top up an Oyster card, sometimes I give straight cash, sometimes it's an electricity key for someone lucky enough to have a roof over their heads but unlucky enough to have no money, sometimes I go into a shop to buy food or a meal. But always my patience, and the implicit

budget that I am intuitively prepared to spend each day, run out before the demand itself – there's always more need round the next corner.

I do try to stop, and talk, and ask the person's name and shake their hand, as well as give money or help, as Pope Francis adjures us to, and occasionally even pray with and for them. But just yesterday I reflected on how endless, and how insoluble by personal charity alone, this problem is – *what*, I muse, is the solution?

And these are just the people, mainly European, whom I see on the streets of London.

I haven't even BEGUN to address the issue, the seemingly intractable issue, of the many millions of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers across the globe fleeing war, famine, disease, want and persecution. Those who cross seas and continents in search of freedom and security in the West and who suffer and die in their thousands in the attempt: drowning in leaky boats in the Mediterranean, abandoned to a slow death from thirst and heat exhaustion in the deserts by people smugglers, forced

into slavery and abduction by war lords and gang masters.

Our country and our world has to get a grip. The people begging on the streets of London, and the refugees criss-crossing the globe, are living and suffering icons, manifestations incarnate, of our refusal as a nation and a world to "think big", to develop national and global structures – political, economic, legal and social – based on justice and compassion. If God whispers to us in our pleasures and shouts at us in our pain, then surely he is *bellowing* at us in the suffering of the poor, the migrant and the refugee. And these issues will only be susceptible to solution by deep structural changes to the way we organise our nation and our world, rooted in the vision and values of the Christian Gospel.

We are saved by Christ, born again into the Kingdom of Heaven, in order that we might work here and now *on earth* to bring into being that new heaven and new earth where Christ is King and where Kingdom values inform all structural outcomes. We are called to roll up our sleeves and get involved politically, prayerfully,

ideologically and in every incarnate way imaginable.

The visionary and practical post-war creation of the NHS and the Welfare State was based largely on a Christian vision of the New Jerusalem here in Britain. We now need new solutions, based on those same timeless Christian visionary values, to resolve the suffering of the poor and homeless in Britain and the refugees and asylum seekers in so many countries. We all share the responsibility to think big. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29.18)

The London Churches Refugee Hardship Fund continues, through the agencies we help support, to provide emergency relief to destitute asylum seekers in London. This work is still vital, even as we strive for that new earth where things will be altogether different. It's a case of *both ... and!*

As Christians we have to face up to both these tasks: building a better world for the future while doing all we can for those we encounter today, every day. That includes, of course, the destitute on the streets of London, desperate for a place of refuge.

To meet the rising demand from the front-line charities to whom we make grants, we also need *both* one-off gifts *and* regular planned monthly donations from individuals and churches.

So thank you for all you are doing to help – and may God bless and strengthen us all in these Kingdom tasks.

Revd Chris Brice

Trustees' activities 2016

The Trustees met regularly during the year, in addition to the AGM in June. That turned out to be a most remarkable evening, with Archbishop Rowan Williams providing a brilliant keynote speech. The full text can still be downloaded from our website, www.help4refugees.co.uk, where you will also find details of our Trustees and Patrons.

Two of our meetings were devoted as usual to scrutinising grant applications, with the results shown on Page 5 of this report.

We have no staff. All activities are carried out by the Trustees and other volunteers. At the end of the year we said goodbye to two long-

serving Trustees, Revd Maggie Hindley who has retired, and Marie Trubic who has moved to new ministry in Glasgow. We are hugely grateful for all they have done – and it means that, more than ever, we need some new helping hands. Do get in touch if you might be willing to serve in this way.

We are also grateful to St. Martin's, Gospel Oak, and the London Interfaith Centre for hosting our meetings, and to David Bond for his excellent work as Treasurer.

Our annual carol-singing was held once again at Oxford Circus tube station, on the rather early date of 25th November. We still raised over £1,800 – or almost £2,300 with Gift Aid. Thanks to all who sang or helped in any other way.

2017 Dates for your diary

Refugee Week: 19th – 25th June. How about organising a local service or fundraiser for us? See our website for resources.

AGM: will take place in the autumn, date to be announced later.

Carol Singing: Friday 8th Dec: to be added to our contact list please email info@help4refugees.co.uk.

Our grants to front-line agencies in 2016

In 2016 the Fund received £32,332 in donations – up by 26% year on year. With Gift Aid and interest, our total income was £35,586 and we were able to give grants of £28,350 while carrying a balance forward. We helped 28 different organisations in 2016 with 40 grants, each of up to £750. Two of the organisations were new to us this year. Food parcels, toiletries, hygiene packs, travel cards and help with ESOL classes are the most usual requests, but we are willing to consider all applications that relate directly to the relief of destitution among refugees and asylum seekers in London.

Thanks to our donors we were able to support the following agencies:

- Action for Refugees in Lewisham
- Afghanistan and Central Asia Assoc
- Article 1 Charitable Trust
- Baisekel
- Baobab Centre for young survivors in exile
- Barnet Refugee Service
- Black Women's Rape Action Project
- Children's Society
- Croydon Refugee Day Centre
- Dost Centre for Refugees & Migrants
- Freedom from Torture
- Haringey Migrant Support Centre
- Housing Justice
- Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants
- Jesuit Refugee Service UK
- Lewisham Refugee & Migrant Network
- London Catholic Worker
- London Jesus Centre
- Migrants Organise
- Migrant Voice
- New North London Synagogue
- Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-In
- Notre Dame Refugee Centre
- Praxis Community Projects
- Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London
- Refugee & Migrant Network Sutton
- Southwark Day Centre
- Spare Room
- Streatham Drop-In Centre for Asylum Seekers & Refugees

Congratulations to Croydon Refugee Centre and to Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants, who both celebrate 20th birthdays this year. And Greenwich Migrant Hub has just had its first birthday! Croydon's poster revealed that it had helped 10,707 people, welcomed people from 82 different countries and has volunteers from 23 churches in that borough.

We consider applications twice a year, with application deadlines around 30th April and 31st Oct. Other charities interested in applying for grants should see the information on our website, under the "Grant Forms" tab.

Asylum commentary: No slow-down in rates of destitution

John Murphy, LCRF Trustee

Did anyone think when the Fund was launched in June 2007 that within 10 years it might not be needed? Probably not, because 2007 was only 5 years after the highest number of claims for asylum – 84,130 in 2002. Although the claims in 2007 were far lower, at 23,431, the massive problem of destitution among asylum seekers was already evident.

By the time of the launch, Refugee Action had published its report, *The Destitution Trap*. The Executive Summary begins, ‘No one knows how many destitute asylum seekers there are in the UK’. The process of making a claim for asylum, the initial decision and then a possible appeal, can take months and years. At the end of it, then as now, an uncertain number of people simply drop out of sight and out of the statistics. In 2004, 47% of those who had received final refusals had either not been removed from the UK or it wasn’t known if they had departed¹. What we do know is that they were left with neither the right to work nor any recourse to public funds.

That remains true today. The Migration Observatory, using Home Office statistics, details that in the period 2007 – 2015, ‘On average, 28% of decisions on appeals (against initial refusals) during this period were granted and 72% dismissed’ and then adds a table of asylum seekers ‘Refused but not removed or known to depart’. In 2007, it was 34% of refusals; 5 years later it was 30% and in 2014 it was 21%. Of course, percentages need to be linked to the number of decisions made each year, but clearly there is an accumulation of people who sought protection, were refused and who have not left the UK. Without accommodation or secure means of support, they struggle to survive in a continuing state of destitution or at risk of exploitation and abuse.

To these numbers must be added those refugees and asylum seekers who become destitute for other reasons, such as bureaucratic failures and delays or failure to comply with the conditions of Asylum Aid. Overall, even if the numbers are uncertain, the scale of the problem is obvious to all who have

¹ www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings

eyes to see. The many organisations, drop-ins and centres which welcome and support destitute refugees and asylum seekers spotlight the ongoing humanitarian need. They report to the Fund that the level is rising.

The continuing effort of church and community support for those living in destitution is undermined by the language used to describe different categories of refugees and asylum seekers. The present Prime Minister, in a speech to her party in 2015 when she was still Home Secretary, said:

‘The system is geared towards helping those most able to access it, and sometimes manipulate it, for their own ends – those who are young enough, fit enough and have the resources to get to Britain. But that means support is too often denied to the most vulnerable, and those most in need of our help’.

The impression is given that those who reach the UK by themselves, rather than via UNHCR schemes including the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme under which the government has committed to take 20,000 from Syria, are somehow less “genuine” or “needy” – whether they are granted asylum or not². The EU-Turkey deal creates the same perception by attempting to send back those who seek to make their own way to safety.

The ‘Hostile Environment’, proclaimed in 2012, halfway between the launch of our Fund and today, distorts the public’s view of both migrants fleeing persecution and those who seek a better life. Even as we sustain our humanitarian response through providing food, clothing, hygiene packs, travel and mobile cards, the typical items for which the Fund’s small grants are used, the rise of public anti-migrant attitudes and behaviour which we have witnessed since the Brexit vote calls for a full and coordinated advocacy response on behalf of churches and local communities.

We have a shared responsibility to people assessed and rejected, or simply failed, by the system. They are still here.

² Similarly, the All Party Parliamentary Group of MPs in their report published in April 2017, highlighted that we now have a “two tier” system for refugees. While it has only moral authority, the report is well worth reading and makes a range of recommendations. It can be found at <http://bit.ly/2phFXkL>

A call to action: unaccompanied children seeking asylum in Europe

Lord Dubs, Rabbi Janet Darley and their colleagues at Safe Passage (Refugees Welcome – Citizens UK) reported the good news on April 26 that 130 more children would be brought to the UK under the Dubs Amendment. They also

appealed for help to do more before the General Election, as the agreement for the resettlement programme expires with the end of this Parliament. We are urged to write to our MPs to maintain the programme.

Case studies from some of the agencies we support

M's father worked as a driver and interpreter for the British and US armies in Afghanistan. When M was 14, the Taliban murdered his father as he slept beside his family, then returned twice to demand M work for them. His mother hid him while making plans for him to leave, but M was not ready developmentally to leave home and family. He travelled for months, abused and neglected, to reach the UK at the age of 15. His asylum claim was refused but he was given leave to remain to the age of 17½ and put in the care of social services. At 17½ his further application to remain was refused, and M became destitute. The Baobab Centre used funds from LCRF to enable M to buy food and travel to his solicitors and medical appointments, while awaiting the final outcome of his asylum claim.

B is a Kurdish Iranian young man who was a guest of London Catholic Worker (at Giuseppe Conlon House) for a year. He had worked as an electrician's mate in Iran where he had a bike which he serviced and maintained himself. He is now attending college in North London to gain qualifications as an electrician, and lives independently about 8 miles from the college. He started helping in the Baisekel workshop while a guest of LCW, and as well as refurbishing bikes for others, he built a bike for himself, using a donated frame, wheels and other parts, which he uses to commute to college and to volunteer at the workshop. Recently he referred two Kurdish Iranian compatriots to Baisekel, who provided them with bikes so that they too can attend college to learn English.

A, an Armenian journalist, was persecuted by his government after founding an organisation promoting human rights and campaigning against the government's dictatorial policies. Escaping to the UK in 2013, he claimed asylum but poor legal representation meant that both his claim and his later appeal were refused. A suffers from severe mental health issues because of the trauma he has experienced, and his GP requested that he should be moved to London for treatment. Not only was the request ignored but the Home Office withdrew all support, so since 2014 he has been homeless and destitute.

A came to Haringey Migrant Support Centre (HMSC) in 2015, and was found a top-quality solicitor who is helping him to submit a fresh claim. However, he could not access any Home Office support for several months so was still homeless and destitute. HMSC referred him to a hosting project and thanks to a £20 Hardship Grant he was able to cover his travel to Epsom, where his host family welcomed A and provided him with a roof over his head.

S is a single mother with a four-year-old child. She suffers from depression and stress brought on by her sufferings in Syria, her isolation, without friends or relatives, and her worries for the two children whom she had to leave behind in Syria. Migrant Voice was able to provide her with financial support for food, and clothing for her child, and is helping her to appeal against refusal of asylum.

F and her two children were referred to Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network by the Children's Society as their leave was about to expire and they were facing eviction. LRMN assisted them with a Leave to Remain application and a fee waiver request, and also worked on a human trafficking referral in conjunction with Kalayaan as F had been forced into domestic servitude, exploited, not paid and sexually abused. Collaboration with the Children's Society and solicitors resulted in a successful challenge to the London Borough of Lewisham's refusal to accept that they owed a duty of care under the Children Act. Lewisham has now housed the family and are paying a minimal amount to F to enable her to support them. But the Home Office have refused F's application and LRMN have lodged an appeal. A decision on the trafficking referral remains outstanding.

LCRF online and on social media

There really is no excuse for not knowing what we are up to! As well as our website, www.help4refugees.co.uk, you can now follow us on **Facebook** (London Churches Refugee Fund, @RefugeeFundLondon) and on **Twitter** (Help4Refugees, @LCR_Fund). Please “like” us, retweet us, and generally help spread the word.

LCRF also maintains close links with the London Churches Refugee *Network*, which brings together Christians working with refugees and asylum seekers in London. For information on their activities see www.londonchurchesrefugeenetwork.co.uk, or email lcrefugeenetwork@gmail.com

How to donate to the work of LCRF

By post

Please send a cheque, made out to London Churches Refugee Fund, to:-
Dave Bond, Treasurer, LCRF, 144 Ladywell Road, London SE13 7HU

Online

Visit www.help4refugees.co.uk/donate and look for the red ‘Donate Online’ button. From elsewhere on the site, hover your cursor over ‘Support Us’ then click on ‘Donate’.

Standing orders

To make a regular donation, please use the form on the back page, download it from the ‘Donate’ page online (see above) or request one from the Treasurer. **If you are able to make a donation of £10 a month or more, you will be listed as one of our Foundation Donors.** We really value our regular supporters: could you be one of them?

Gift Aid

If you are a taxpayer, please request a Gift Aid form from the Treasurer at the above address, download it from the ‘Donate’ page online or use the one on the back page.

Annual accounts

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND		Comparative figures 2015
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT for the year ended 31st December 2016		2015
	£	£
RECEIPTS		
Donations		
Individuals		
Standing Orders	8,060	7,402
Postal	5,733	2,654
Collection at AGM	608	
On-line	3,711	651
Carol singing collections	1,840	2,101
	19,952	12,808
Churches and other organisations	12,380	12,885
	32,332	25,693
Gift Aid reimbursements from HMRC	3,243	2,715
Bank interest	11	17
TOTAL RECEIPTS	35,586	28,425
PAYMENTS		
Grants	28,350	21,650
Administration	209	406
TOTAL PAYMENTS	28,559	22,056
RECEIPTS less PAYMENTS for the year ended 31st December 2016	7,027	6,369

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st December 2016		
ASSETS		
Bank Balance		
Co-operative Bank Community Directplus Account	29,214	22,187
TOTAL ASSETS	29,214	22,187
TOTAL LIABILITIES	0	0
ASSETS less LIABILITIES	29,214	22,187
GENERAL FUND		
Balance brought forward 1st January 2016	22,187	15,818
Receipts less Payments in 2016	7,027	6,369
Balance carried forward 31st December 2016	29,214	22,187

GIFT AID DECLARATION for past, present & future donations

Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

Name of charity: **London Churches Refugee Fund**, Number 1121108

I want to Gift Aid any donations made by me:

today in the past 4 years in the future

Please tick all boxes you wish to apply.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please notify the charity if at any time you:

- *Want to cancel this declaration*
- *Change your name or home address*
- *No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains*

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Donor's details (all fields must be completed)

Title..... First name or initial(s).....
 Surname.....
 Full home address.....
 Postcode.....
 Date.....
 Signature.....

Please return the whole of this form, once completed, to :

The Treasurer, London Churches Refugee Fund, 144 Ladywell Road, London SE13 7HU

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

Complete this side only if you wish to make a monthly donation.

Those donating £10 per month or more will be added to the list of "Foundation Donors"

To the Manager [Name and address of your Bank:]

Please pay the sum of £..... on (or as near to) theday of each month with immediate effect and until further notice to the credit of: **London Churches Refugee Fund, Account no: 65231704; Sort Code 08-92-99; Co-operative Bank, PO Box 250, Southway, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT** and debit the following account accordingly:

Account held in name(s) of.....
 Account no. Sort Code
 Signed Date
 Name(s)
 Address

This Standing Order Instruction supersedes all previous standing orders to London Churches Refugee Fund.

