

GENERAL SYNOD HUSTINGS FOR CLERGY QUESTION 3

How should the Church respond to the current refugee crisis?

<p>BAKKER, the Revd Jane</p>	<p>Our Christian heritage calls us to embody God's generosity through welcome and hospitality. Both the Old and New Testaments implore us to welcome the stranger and to harbour the displaced. We, as God's people, need to remember the experience of our ancestors as aliens and outcasts in a hostile land.</p> <p>Our faith causes us to live counter-culturally because it is based upon the premise that we too are exiles in this world. The Church of England should promote this view. We should petition and prod and, if necessary, shame our government to be faithful to their claim that Great Britain is a 'Christian nation'.</p> <p>We should also champion the language of generosity at every opportunity. A part of our biblical heritage is a call to remember our own status as stranger. If Christians are able to detach from those that are 'other' then what example are we for those who make political decisions?</p>
<p>FOSTER, the Revd Gavin</p>	<p>God's people were very often migrants and refugees: Abraham left his home for an unknown land, Moses and David fled for their lives, Jesus and his parents escaped to Egypt. Jesus is still sending his disciples to the ends of the earth today.</p> <p>It's hard to read the Good Samaritan story and not to draw some obvious conclusions about how to treat foreigners in need. The geo-political issues <i>are</i> complex and we need to think carefully about how to help refugees around the world, not just those strong enough to reach our borders. But whatever we say or do should inspire our leaders, our nation and all of us to be the very best neighbours we can be.</p>
<p>MICKLEFIELD, the Revd Andrew</p>	<p>In my own Parish we have done the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given prayers for people to use in their own devotions and people have written their own• Made sure these prayers are included in intercessions during services• We will be taking up a monetary collection for Medecins Sans Frontieres• Made available details of how to lobby our local MP using the ideas promoted jointly by the Methodist Church, URC, Baptists and Church of Scotland• At the Standing Committee we made a commitment to review these responses weekly, looking to see what needs became prevalent and asking for members of the congregation to suggest other ways in which we could respond.• We are looking to see how we might set up a collection point for items to be sent out to Calais and beyond.• Others are investigating how to offer spare rooms to refugees.

	<p>On a national level the Church needs to help local communities by advocating good ways in which to respond. Our Bishops and Archbishops are key to helping the government and large organisations/charities see a loving, gracious, compassionate Christian response with also a challenge to long term sustainable policy.</p>
<p>NOEL, the Revd Rachel</p>	<p>We need to recognise that it is a hugely complex international situation, with refugees in this country, across Europe and across the world.</p> <p>The Bible tells the stories of a people in exile, of living in other lands, and contains repeated calls to hospitality, especially for the stranger. We should be promoting radical hospitality and generous giving. As James 1:27 reminds us, we need "to care for orphans and widows in their distress."</p> <p>As a church, we need to engage at all levels, promoting practical engagement and support within our own communities, such as Project Paddington (which works with schools and children to send teddies and show support for refugee children); whilst also engaging at wider levels with those working internationally to seek longer-term ways forward.</p> <p>If / when refugees settle in our areas, we need to continue to promote the message of radical hospitality and welcome, reducing the fear, and leading the way in compassion and promoting engagement and relationship.</p>
<p>NUTT, the Revd Angela</p>	<p>St Teresa of Avila once said <i>"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world"</i> As the body of Christ we are called to show compassion to those who suffer, to work to support them and alleviate suffering and hardship. We are also called to welcome the stranger, to care for widows and orphans, to serve and include those on the margins and to love our enemies. With that ringing in our ears I think it is imperative that we act to welcome refugees, campaign Government for safer, fairer and more generous asylum policies and act as church, local and national to support and accommodate those who need help here, as well as working with those who are in transit, and in camps.</p> <p>In addition our response needs to be longer term. We need to be part of the discussions and the negotiations that will seek to bring political and financial stability back to the regions from where people are fleeing; seeking peace, justice and reconciliation.</p>
<p>PERRY, the Revd Canon William</p>	<p>The Church is seldom at its best when it seeks to promote a specific political agenda. Rather, it should enunciate matters of principle, and look for ways in which it can live those principles out - bearing in mind St Paul's words: "as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Both the "all" and the "especially" should guide our actions: excluding no-one from our practical concern and help, but always remembering the distinctive claim that our suffering fellow-Christians rightly have upon us.</p>

<p>PITKIN, the Revd James</p>	<p>The Bible has plenty to say about how to treat the vulnerable and the need to welcome strangers and foreigners. It is an essential part of the Church's mission and ministry to reach out to the marginalised and persecuted, and to stand in solidarity with them. Christians are also called to prophetic witness, to speak out against injustice and oppression and seek to change policies for the better. In practical terms, this means that we need to:</p> <p>Pray: There are plenty of resources available from the Church of England and agencies (such as Christian Aid).</p> <p>Give: Many relief and development organisations are working in Syria and surrounding countries - their special funds provide an opportunity to give towards practical assistance. Many churches have strong links with such agencies – these can be reinforced.</p> <p>Campaign: Join with agencies, and contact our MPs, to speak out in support of refugees.</p> <p>In the rural parishes where I am there are Local Authority 'Emergency Plans' which document available resources. There are still people who remember what the Church and Community did together to house refugees from London during the Second World War – when the school populations doubled with the influx.</p>
<p>ROUCH, the Ven Dr Peter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, we should respond. We cannot ignore such a significant presentation of need. • Secondly, we should respond together. Concerted action across a diocese and the Church is both more effective in meeting need and a more visible evidence of Christian compassion in action. • Thirdly, we should respond in collaboration with those best able to provide tangible support. Those charities and agencies active on the ground are best able to advise on what support is most helpful and to ensure that it is properly channelled. • Fourthly, as refugees arrive in the communities of Hampshire, as indeed they will, we should use our excellent contacts with statutory authorities to help us connect with new arrivals and ensure that in the Church they have a place of welcome.
<p>RUTHERFORD, the Revd Rosalind</p>	<p>General Synod was addressed last February by Archbishop Bashar, from Iraq He asked us to pray for the Christian communities in Iraq every day, to continue to raise awareness of their plight to use any relationships we have to help, and, practically, for finance for those families who remain, and those now in refugee camps. This is all that he asked of us, so it is a request I think we must take very seriously, and which applies to all refugee groups Prayer is the specific contribution that Christians can make. Financial help, particularly for those refugees still living in camps will continue to be vital. For a more personal response, donating goods when there is a clear means of getting them to those who need them, offering houses for refugees (the church of England does own property, including vacant vicarages) are all responses that Christians can make as individuals or as the church Nationally the Anglican church can make a significant contribution understanding the immediate situation and the deeper questions because of the links with churches and leaders still living in the communities from which many refugees come.</p>

<p>SARGENT, the Revd Dr Benjamin</p>	<p>The Bible is clear that refugees are to be welcomed and helped with sacrificial generosity. I think we have already failed to do this in the current crisis. At the very least, we should have launched a national campaign to deliver aid by mobilising local Churches to take a lead in their own local contexts and possibly calling for a larger and more immediate welcome of refugees to the UK than the proposed 20,000 over five years. Perhaps like many parish priests, I feel that I've missed a great opportunity to help refugees and show the love of Jesus Christ by not acting the moment this crisis emerged. People have asked me what the Church in Bransgore is doing that they could support and I've felt disappointed by my answer, simply directing them to Christian Aid. I can't blame the national Church for this, but with the right discernment and allocation of resources and publicity, the national Church could make an enormous impact for good in situations like these.</p>
<p>STEED, the Revd Dr Christopher</p>	<p>Practical compassion and generosity of spirit to admit suffering multitudes. For too long, Europe has closed its eyes and its heart towards the conflicts that are driving the exodus of the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to be free. It has been good to see the awakening of a greater moral consciousness towards refugees and asylum seekers. Unfortunately, resentment against economic migrants erodes support for refugees. We must do all we can to combat xenophobia; worries that societies will be swamped by aliens, economies will be burdened, benefits will have to be curbed and that terrorists will creep in under the radar. The politics of dignity rather than the politics of fear is something the church should proclaim. We stand for human value and worth. A change in attitudes is the starting point. Yet fears and concerns that our way of life (sometimes language as 'Christian civilisation') will be unalterably changed should be understood. Pope Francis' call for each parish to take in one refugee family is worthy of emulation. Handing out vouchers for food and clothing would be a practical expression of hospitality of spirit.</p>