

A COMMUNITY OF COMPASSION:

5 WAYS TO RESPOND

Diocese of Canterbury
November 2023



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Bishop Rose has asked us to pray that Archbishop Justin’s campaign for justice for those who are in urgent need for international protection will become a reality.

Archbishop Justin has also stated that:

“When we fail to challenge the harmful rhetoric that refugees are the cause of this country’s ills, that they should be treated as problems not people, invaders to be tackled and deterred, we deny the essential value and dignity of our fellow human beings.

“The right to seek asylum, and the duty of the global community to protect refugees, has been politically degraded in this country when it should be a positive and a source of pride.”¹

Here are five ways we as Christians in the Diocese of Canterbury can respond to the continuing crisis, while undergirding all our work in prayer:

A prayer for all refugees and those seeking asylum

O God of love, whose compassion fails not:

we commit to you the many who in desperation

make dangerous journeys to countries unknown

to escape war, violence, poverty, and persecution of any kind.

Draw near to them in the face of danger on land or sea.

Deepen their courage and strengthen their resolve in the many obstacles they face.

Remove from their midst those who seek to profit from their agony.

We pray for those who work in different ways to bring hope,

to relieve suffering and distress, and to restore them to fullness of life.

We commend them all to your merciful care, for your love’s sake. Amen.

The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin

The Bishop of Dover

¹ [Statement from Archbishop Justin Dec. 2022](#)





Illegal Migration Act

Please see the Bishop of Dover's statement regarding the plans to punish and criminalise those seeking asylum in the UK:

“Seeking asylum is a human right, enshrined in law. We know that most people arriving on small boats and seeking asylum have their applications granted because there is sufficient evidence of their claim to stay. Deporting asylum-seekers without a hearing is a brutal response given that there is currently no fit asylum application process in place here. There has to be a better way. I ask of our government that we do not ‘other’ those who are most vulnerable in our world.”²

1 - Pray

We have developed [spiritual resources](#) to help churches in our diocese to reflect and remember refugees and migrants, as well as those communities and organisations trying to meet their needs.

2 - Act

Archbishop Justin has said that:

“The Church has always been a place of sanctuary for those in need, and Churches in the UK and across Europe have been meeting the need they are presented with. I reaffirm our commitment to the principle of sanctuary for those who require our help and love.”³

It is a call to churches to act and be prepared to respond to those in need from other nations in our midst.

So, what practical support can you give?

As a diocese, we are aware that there needs to be a continuous effort fostering a welcoming community that goes hand in hand with working alongside refugees. This is especially true when it comes to Kent where in 2022 more than 45,000 people crossed the Channel in small boats. It has three bridging hotels for Afghan families and provides contingency asylum accommodations to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, adults and families.

Tensions towards newcomers in the receiving community here are deeply felt and reinforced by stigmatising narratives fuelled by fear and amplified in the media.

We believe that, only by facilitating encounters, people will challenge preconceived conceptions on migration and become advocates of welcome.

There is so much potential in our churches to bring new life into building a positive narrative of welcome and we are well positioned to gently introduce, train and support volunteers to serve into this field.

Embracing a holistic approach, with our projects we want to overcome the dichotomy of services “for refugees” and “locals” and bring together established communities and newly arrived refugees integrating our activities into a “one community” vision.

² [Statement from Bishop Rose March 2023](#)

³ [Archbishop of Canterbury on the refugee crisis](#)





Give

As for many groups involved with migrants and refugees, we welcome financial support as this means we can buy goods directly as and when needed, as well as keep our diocesan projects going.

Please consider donating to the diocese's work with refugees here:

Together Kent

Sort Code: 40-52-40

Account Number: 000 29 014

Please do reference Refugees when making your kind donation.

3 - Serve

Our diocesan projects

Our diocesan projects serve the vision of a just and fair society. Our long-term goal is to bring the spirit of our shared humanity into people's everyday actions. This is the difference we want to make; central to this vision is making meetings happen - we want to help unlikely friendships to blossom through solidarity into meaningful relationships. Our projects intend to create genuine long-term social bonds and expand the social network of our community. For newly arrived communities, we hope to plant seeds of belonging and love for their new neighbours. We also hope to bring back a sense of normality to their lives after forced displacement.

Currently we have:

For Ukrainian families and UK sponsors

Welcome Hub

In April 2022 we set up the first Welcome Hub in Kent for newly arrived Ukrainian families and UK sponsors. The Hub operates as a weekly drop in and is run in partnership with a local organisation, Canterbury for Ukraine. We organise workshops on how the system works in the UK regarding housing, community safety, education, Universal Credit, budgeting as so on. With an open-door policy, information, advice and guidance is provided with distribution of free SIM cards.

As a diocese we helped over 34 people within the first six months to find sanctuary in Kent through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and are actively involved in the hosting process of more.

Interested in volunteering for this project? If you are familiar with the benefit system - Universal Credit, employment support, NHS, legal, and education - [please do get in touch here](#).

For resettled families coming through government schemes comprising of Community Sponsorship Scheme

Welcome Café in partnership with Canterbury City Council and Canterbury Welcomes Refugees

The Welcome Café Project supports refugees and people seeking sanctuary living in the Canterbury area.





The project provides accessible English classes and employment support to people with personal experience of forced displacement. The Welcome Café responds to an urgent need for English and employment provisions especially for those needing ESOL Entry L 1 and 2 classes. The project aims at complementing statutory services by adding bespoke conversation opportunities for those who do not practise English beyond the traditional teaching settings and supply a community-led, caring environment to grow in confidence to those needing extra care to feel “job ready”.

Language barriers and unfamiliarity with the new environment trap new arrivals in a spiral of unemployment and quizzes their ability to feel part of the fabric of the new society. Becoming fluent in English and finding work are interlinked indicators of social integration. However, we provide extra value by developing a sense of belonging to the local community. For example, a key feature of our format is sharing a main meal with local volunteers as part of the activities. This is combined with convivial coffee breaks together with participants. These rituals have become significant for people who feel more relaxed and helped levelling up power dynamics so often overlooked in service delivery.

We want to help people regain their dignity whilst at the same time help our local community to grow in solidarity with those less fortunate.

[Interested in this project? If you would like to volunteer as a Conversation Buddy, please do get in touch.](#) Training and support are provided.

For Afghan families

One Stop Shop Welcome in partnership with Canterbury Welcomes Refugees

The One Stop Shop Welcome is a weekly drop-in service offering informal English classes for Afghan ladies and distributes essential items in friendship with local charities and Canterbury Mosque.

There is an emergent needs for such provisions to complement services and to heighten the chances of greater integration of Afghan women who moved out of bridging hotels into the fabric of the community beyond statutory services for refugees. Most of these women had been living in hotels since August 2021 and had no access to provisions gathered to improve their happiness and wellbeing. We are very well positioned to offer those service and extend the welcome.

Interested in this project? [If you would like to volunteer as a Conversation Buddy, please do get in touch.](#) Training and support are provided.





For schools

Voices of Welcome as a part of our School of Sanctuary work

Our diocese created a participatory project called Voices of Welcome aiming at fostering a welcoming school community through participatory workshops with children coming from different life trajectories. The project is currently run in a Church of England Secondary School and will help children become agents of a refreshing positive narrative on migration and change.

Do you want this project running in your school? Please get in touch: dpecoraro@diocant.org

Community Sponsorship

We would love to see more churches in our diocese welcome refugees through the Community Sponsorship Scheme. [Community Sponsorship](#) is a refugee resettlement programme enabled by local people. It is a transformative journey where people work together to bring a refugee family to safety and support them to independence. Any group of people can engage with the scheme. However, how wonderful it would be for a group of people, coming together from the same Church, to lead the welcome through Community Sponsorship? Archbishop Justin welcomed the first family in 2016!

Questions? Domenica, our Diocesan Refugee Officer, is also serving as Community Sponsorship National Representative for the Church of England and would love to talk to you about Community Sponsorship.

She has been supporting other groups in our diocese to engage with Community Sponsorship and would love to hear from you too!

dpecoraro@diocant.org or call her on: 07801898215

Foster families are always needed for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. [For more information, please follow the link to Kent County Council's website.](#)

4 - Campaign and advocate

Campaigning, signing petitions, writing to your MP, and working with activist groups are all powerful ways to give a voice to migrants and refugees and to stand alongside them. There are numerous petitions aimed at improving the quality of life of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK. Please find below campaigns and petitions to advocate for a just and humane society:

Illegal Migration Act:

- » [Safe and legal routes Cap consultation](#)
- » [Refugee Action CAMPAIGN TO LIFT THE BAN](#) preventing Asylum Seekers from working.
- » [Together with Refugees Campaign](#) for a just and humane asylum system





5 - Get informed

Archbishop Justin has said that:

“As Christians we believe we are called to break down barriers, to welcome the stranger and love them as ourselves (Leviticus 19:34), and to seek the peace and justice of our God, in our world, today.”⁴

It is important therefore to educate oneself in the facts and arguments in order to be able to help break down those barriers, and respond to the concerns others may have in the community regarding migrants and refugees.

- » [The Diocese of Canterbury’s myth-busting resource](#)
- » [Illegal Migration Act](#)
- » [On the realities of working with asylum seekers and refugees](#)
- » [Official statistics: asylum and resettlement data](#)
- » [Refugee Council](#)
- » [UNHCR resettlement fact sheet](#)
- » Forced migration is *not* a choice. Millions of people are internally displaced in their countries due to natural disasters and conflicts. Read: [The Global Displacement Report on Internal Displacement](#).
- » [Channel Crossing data](#)

4 [The Archbishop of Canterbury on the refugee crisis](#)

