



10 February, 2015

News:

Government challenged on refugee policies

Christians in West Yorkshire have challenged the Government to significantly improve conditions for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK

In [a hard-hitting statement](#), the [West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council \(WYEC\)](#) has expressed its concern “at policies which cause homelessness and poverty among people seeking sanctuary”. In light of the “largest refugee crisis since World War II,” it has called on the Government to change national policy in four ways:

- to establish SAFE AND LEGAL ROUTES for refugees to find protection in the UK and Europe;
- to regard and respect people seeking refugee protection as FUTURE CITIZENS, willing and able to make a positive contribution to the UK;
- to increase ASYLUM SUPPORT to at least 70 per cent of Income Support and to grant asylum seekers PERMISSION TO WORK;
- to prevent the homelessness of new refugees by INCREASING THE TRANSITION PERIOD from 28 to 40 days for those granted protection in the UK.

The statement concludes that our national attitude towards the most vulnerable is a guide to the spiritual health of our society. ‘In failing to support people seeking refugee protection, we are failing ourselves,’ the statement reads. ‘We uphold the words of Jesus on the judgment of nations: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me.”’

The statement has been affirmed by members of eight Christian traditions: Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Moravian, New Testament Church of God, Quaker, United Reformed Church, and the Wesleyan Holiness Church. Church Leaders in the region have a tradition of coming together on Ash Wednesday to speak out on issues of common social concern. It will be officially presented on Ash Wednesday at New North Road Baptist Church in Huddersfield (10 February).

The church is the base for [Reach](#), a project offering support and hospitality for asylum seekers and refugees, which has operated out of New North Road Church for 15 years. Reach started when a Sierra Leone asylum seeker came into the church to say thank you for his safe arrival (his friend had been shot on the way). Reach offers advice, lunch, food parcels, clothing, furniture, English language classes, conversation and friendship.

Former Baptist Union President the Revd Ernie Whalley is the Chair of Reach. He said, 'We see on TV boats loaded with asylum seekers drifting in the Mediterranean because of the terrible conflicts in the Middle East and parts of Africa.

'Some of these people come over our threshold at New North Road. This project is one of the 'welcoming arms' of our church as we reach out in the name of Jesus who always gave a special place to the most vulnerable.'

The Revd Kevin Watson is Moderator of the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church. He said, 'We cannot ignore the biggest human crisis in Europe for 70 years. Let's open our hearts and open our borders to people fleeing persecution. Let's treat asylum seekers with the dignity and respect they deserve; let's see them as future citizens; let's recognise them as children of God.'

Calais church and mosque destruction denounced

Christians for Calais strongly denounces the sudden destruction of a mosque and church in the Calais 'Jungle' refugee camp

Christians for Calais, which brings together faith responses to the refugee crisis in northern France and coordinates through Facebook has issued the following statement:

Prefecture representatives were recorded and witnessed, including by NGO and charity leaders, as stating that they would not bulldoze churches or mosques. This was double checked, as the protestant church and a mosque were within the 100 metre eviction zone announced and then enforced by the authorities. It was reconfirmed verbally that churches and mosques would not be removed, and this was initially upheld as those structures were indeed left untouched when the buffer zone was created on Monday 18th January.

However, on Monday morning 1 February without warning, bulldozers arrived and destroyed these houses of worship. No communication regarding this was received by any party, including the NGOs and charities in charge of the camp or those who owned the structures and materials.

The protestant church served a great many Christians in camp, held weekly services at set times and operated as a quiet place of prayer for refugees and volunteers alike.

Christians for Calais calls upon all Christians in particular to rebuke this action and join together in supporting the refugees stranded in Calais and Dunkirk. We urge the faith communities of Britain to denounce the destruction of holy places, in particular when it affects a group of people already so vulnerable.

We are asking for support in our efforts to assist the desperate state of affairs just 20 miles from the UK, where dispossessed people fleeing from appalling situations are subject to brutality and denied basic human rights including food and medical care.

Christians for Calais notes in addition the human right of freedom of religion and the unacceptable nature of taking away the right to practise faith from people who have little else to cling to.

Where the sacred inhabits the ordinary

Manchester's residents and visitors are being encouraged to seek silence and stillness in their busy city through a stunning art trail this Lent

The [PassionArt "Be Still" festival](#) features key Lent themes such as stillness, temptation, prayer, mindfulness, compassion, solitude and grief in six of the city's most iconic sacred and secular venues. The exhibits are a mix of contemporary installations, paintings, sculpture and live performances by internationally-renowned and local artists.

'Seeking silence and stillness in a busy city is a spiritual exercise that all can explore,' said curator Lesley Sutton, who has served in ministry in the city of Manchester for the past 28 years and is a member of [LifeChurch in Sale](#).

'The season of Lent has much to offer contemporary society as a space to pause, reflect mindfully and learn to live more simply and compassionately within the stresses and activities of everyday city life.

'The selected and commissioned art works highlight themes common to the human condition, loss and bereavement, compassion, solitude, and our longing for peace and stillness.'

One of the world's most acclaimed ceramicists Julian Stair exhibits his major exhibition 'Quietus Revisited: The vessel, death and the human body' in the historic setting of Manchester Cathedral, exploring rituals around death and burial through his monumental life-size body urns and contemporary sarcophagi.

St Ann's Church hosts Manchester's first digital altar piece entitled Veneration Bell

by Welsh artist Adam Buick; a 16 minute video projection of hand thrown ceramic church bells suspended in sea caves around the coast of Pembrokeshire chiming at different states of the tide as the sea crashes against the cave walls.

Bells are a universal symbol of the sacred and Buick's placing of them acts as a homage to nature, drawing attention to the beauty of the surrounding landscape. St Anns will ring their Angelus Bell at midday throughout the season of Lent, a call to stillness for the city.

Other works include:

- Paintings by Ghislaine Howard, Woman of the Year 2008 at The John Rylands Library examining being present and compassionate to the moment,
- Norman Adams' much admired Stations of the Cross at the Hidden Gem,
- Works by Antony Gormley, Edmund de Waal, Gwen John and GF Watts at Manchester Art Gallery exploring stillness and solitude
- And a series of newly commissioned conceptual word art by local artist Micah Purnell critiquing contemporary culture in relation to the temptations of Jesus in the stillness of the wilderness will be on display at Ziferblat in the Northern Quarter.

The art trail can be walked as a full day's pilgrimage or each venue discovered as a single reflection in a lunch hour. Each art work in the trail is accompanied by a reflection and a praxis to help visitors engage spiritually and practically with stillness, prayer and mindfulness.

Lesley curated a similar trail in 2014 that saw more than 7000 visitors engage with the Easter story. Her husband Roger Sutton led Altrincham Baptist Church for 22 years and now has an itinerant ministry leading the Gather network for the Evangelical Alliance. He is also a nominee for the President of the Baptist Union.

Visit <http://www.passionart.guide/>

'Switch homes, churches to electricity from renewable sources'

A new initiative responding to the Christian community's concern around climate change will see thousands of people across the UK encouraged to switch their homes and churches to electricity from renewable sources

Launched on Ash Wednesday, the [Big Church Switch](#), facilitated by Christian Aid and Tearfund, will start inviting hundreds of thousands of Christians to switch energy suppliers, to urge their churches to follow suit, and to celebrate those churches and individuals who have already made the switch.

The project will pool the buying power of thousands of individuals and use that combined consumer force to leverage green deals with energy providers. Power stations generate around one-quarter of all the UK's emissions of the gases that cause climate change: shifting to electricity generated from renewable sources such as wind and solar will send a strong signal to governments and businesses that churches are prepared to lead the way and that renewables rather than fossil fuels are the future.

A new website www.bigchurchswitch.org.uk will provide information for people considering making the switch, to make the process as easy as possible.

Christian Aid's Head of Advocacy Laura Taylor is a member of Epsom Baptist Church in Surrey. She said: 'The public want clean energy and are willing to take action themselves by switching suppliers.

'But to make the big shift to a low carbon future happen, individuals and communities can only do so much before it's up to the Government to change the whole system and drive the energy market to 100 per cent clean energy. So today we're saying to the Government: we're switching to low carbon energy, now you must switch the country's energy from fossil fuels to renewables.

She added, 'The congregation at my own local church, Epsom Baptist Church, wanted warm actions not just warm words, so we are going to put our faith into action by switching as part of this movement. I encourage every church to join the campaign.'

Bishop of Salisbury, Nicholas Holtam, who leads on environmental issues for the Church of England, said, "The Big Church Switch is a simple, practical, good idea. It supports the move to renewable energy.

'If Lent is about renewing our lives in response to the love of God here is a way to follow. You can do it, and so will I.'

Ben Niblett, Tearfund Senior Campaigner said: 'Tearfund are excited about the Big Church Switch. The UK church has a vital role in overcoming poverty and inequality in a way which doesn't cost the earth and lasts for generations to come. Switching is a great way for Christians to love our neighbours and show the government we want more action on climate change, like investment in clean, renewable energy.

'Christians care about our neighbours in the UK and around the world being hit by climate change - we're seeing more floods, more droughts, and more people going hungry - so we think this will strike a chord.'

For more information about the Big Church Switch, visit www.bigchurchswitch.org.uk.

An ordinary day at the foodbank?

A Baptist minister gives an insight into a day at a foodbank in Bonymaen, Swansea

It was an ordinary Friday at the East Side Food Bank in Bonymaen. It was fairly busy, and counting up the referral vouchers after closing we found slightly more than the average number we've seen over recent weeks. But was it ordinary? Week by week, we are able feed people in crisis.

One of the volunteers coming about half an hour before opening to set up found somebody waiting, not with a voucher but with gifts: a teenager had diverted the funds that would otherwise have gone to Christmas cards for his friends and teachers to buy some of the shortage items he's read about in the Evening Post.

He wasn't alone; other people had done the same over Christmas and donated funds. During the course of the morning, other people came in with donations of food, people passing on their way back from a shopping trip, quietly leaving a bag. A couple came with donations from a local church.

The team worked away steadily, sorting and dating the stock, making sure that it is rotated so that everything goes out by its 'best before' date. Others meet the clients completing the forms and offering a sympathetic ear if its needed, perhaps being able to suggest some help with their problem.

The storekeepers (people with amazing powers of organisation) make up the parcels while another of the regulars mans the small kitchen, making the drinks and keeping everything spotless. Unseen for most of the time somebody else collected donations from Morrison's and shopped for shortage items with donated savings stamps.

Locking the door, I reflected on the way that the team who give their time and skill to make this routine happen are channeling immense good will and committed help for unknown fellows.

The Revd Chris Lewis is the chair of the East Side Food Bank, and minister of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Bonymaen

From Action Teamer to app creator

A former BMS Action Teamer is set to release a new Bible-based App for children and their grown-ups this Lent

Joanne Gilchrist and her family will be wrapping up old message in a new way this Pancake Day, having created their own app.

Called [God for Kids](#), the app is designed for parents who want to use the lent period

to teach their children more about God. Instead of telling a story, it looks at one Bible verse at a time to uncover a particular personality trait of God, answering such questions as 'Where does God Live?' and 'How old is God?' along the way.

'I've always loved studying the Word of God and teaching it to others,' explains 33-year-old Joanne, who spent six months in Belgium with the BMS Action Team programme in 2000-1 and has been an evangelist/missionary ever since.

'The character of God is so fascinating and I've loved coming up with creative ways to pass what I've discovered onto my children.

'They love being quizzed, doing puzzles and they love the iPad. So what started as a book evolved into a kids' app and on Pancake day the idea will become reality!'

Indeed, the whole family, members of the Anglican/Baptist church [St Thomas Crookes, Sheffield](#), have been involved in the app's creation. Gabriella, seven, was the main 'tester' of her mum's first efforts and is now officially involved as the voice of the main character, Rü. You find out what the name means in the fourth and final adventure of the app.

Younger daughter Briony, five, tested the new content of the second adventure in the app, 'God is Big'. She regularly asks her mum when she can do another 'God for Kids' before bedtime.

Dad Johnny, Programme Manager at The Oakes Holiday Centre in Norton, Sheffield, said 'It's become part of our bedtime routine. Brush teeth, do a God for Kids activity, then stories and bed. We have always used this time to read a Bible story but they've read them all at least twice now. This is something new.'

The family moved to South Yorkshire from New Zealand in 2014, where they worked as missionaries with Youth With A Mission and the local church.

'As a family we have helped kids and parents all over the world learn more about God, through preschool music groups, Sunday schools and festivals,' added Joanne. 'My husband even published a children's' book in the Philippines once!'

Joanne is now writing a book, [a blog](#) and the content for the third and fourth adventures of God for Kids app.

The app will be released in the App Store on Pancake Day (9 February). The Android version will be released on 15 May. For more information, and for Joanne's blog, see www.GodforKidsapp.com or facebook.com/GodforKidsapp.

Baptisms:

Desborough Baptist Church, Northamptonshire: John & Heather Temple
Nansen Road Baptist Church, Ipswich: Emmanuel Lynch and Mrs Emmanuel Lynch
Morton New Day Baptist Church, Lincolnshire: Win Swift, Judy Clay, Arthur Bates
Queen's Road Baptist Church, Coventry: Louise Kennedy, Alan Reid, Sandra Robinson
Victoria Park Baptist Church, Bristol: Martin Hannaby, Darren Knowland

Know anyone preparing for baptism? [Check out our range of cards](#)

Send your baptism notifications and stories to phobson@baptist.org.uk

Deaths

LORKIN, Margaret (Peggy) died peacefully at Carisbrooke Nursing Home, Torquay on 31 January 2016, Mother to Janet and Christine, Grandmother and Great Grandmother, wife of the late Rev Peter Lorkin sharing five very happy and rewarding ministries. Thanksgiving Service at Paignton Baptist Church on 17 February 2016 at 3 pm. Donations in memoria to Baptist Missionary Society.

TUCKER, Ronald, in missionary service with BMS in India in the 1950s and longtime member of Hagley Free Church, has died, aged 95. A memorial service takes places at Hagley Free Church, 95 Worcester Road, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY9 0NG on 17 February, 2.30pm.

Jobs

Finance Manager, the Baptist Union of Great Britain
Director, The Guild of Health and St. Raphael
Ministerial Support Worker, Potter Street Baptist Church,

Harlow, Essex
Internship Co-ordinator, Bromham Baptist Church
Regional Minister, South West Baptist Association
Regional Team Leader, East Midlands Baptist Association

For more information on all these positions, visit
<http://www.baptist.org.uk/jobs>

Events/resources:

Intern opportunity, Joint Public Issues Team

Are you a young person who wants to work as part of a team making meaningful change in the world? Are you interested in making links between faith, life and politics? The JPIT internship is a fantastic opportunity to experience all this and more

<http://www.urc.org.uk/other-vacancies/1904-joint-public-issues-team-internship.html>

Incarnate Encounter

A unique opportunity to spend time with pioneers from around the country 4-6 March in Bradford/Leeds.

For more visit: buytickets.at/incarnatenetwork

A new RE lesson has been created around the film **Captive**, which has been released on dvd. The film (and lesson) explores the nature of forgiveness.

Visit <http://ow.ly/XWccw>

Rawfaith Rugby is an initiative to link together Christian supporters of rugby, both Union and League. It is backed by Christian Vision for Men.

<http://cvm.org.uk/rawfaith/>