

CHURCHES TOGETHER FOR CHIPPING BARNET



Justice and Peace Newsletter 31

January 2016

MORE ON REFUGEES

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1. Syrian refugees in Barnet

There has been no publicity about the refugees from Syria who have been granted asylum in Britain and who have come to the borough of Barnet. The official line is “the families the council is supporting have been through a tremendous ordeal and our focus is on ensuring that they are settled without huge fanfare. Rest assured, the necessary arrangements and professional support is in place”

Faithful Conteh, the co-ordinator of Volunteering Barnet, is waiting for further information, to see how the Syrians and other asylum seekers can be supported and welcomed.

Faithful@volunteeringbarnet.org.uk.

The Refugee Support Network is trying in particular to support young people, eg teaching English, but is short of co-ordinators and leaders. www.refugeesupportnetwork.org.

2. Migrant camp in Calais

In November a group of 17 parishioners from St Gregory’s in Union St joined with two other parishes to support Caritas Westminster on their journey to Calais to help the migrants in the ‘Jungle’ camp in Calais. They travelled in three minibuses, taking with them as much donated clothing and food as could be fitted in, but their main objective was to offer practical help.

The chaos, misery and mud in the camp made a deep impression on them. This is the account of the journey on the Caritas website:

“We went to Calais because we had been moved by the news and images that we have seen about the crisis all over Europe. We spent a month fund-raising and making the preparations necessary.....We slept in our mini-vans overnight and arrived at the warehouse of the local charity, L’Auberge des Migrants, early in the morning. From there we split into groups. Some who had skills or experience as builders helped to build shelters which could withstand the winter weather, whilst others helped sorting the huge amounts of donated goods that continued to arrive throughout the day. In the afternoon, we went to the camp to help set up tents for new arrivals and replace those which had blown down in a storm the night before.

“When inside the camp we worked alongside groups of the migrants, figuring out how to put together tents which were often missing poles or parts. Amid all the apprehension and fear about being in the camp, we were received with great friendship by the migrants – some of them made us tea in their tents while we worked, and others offered us raincoats to keep us dry, even though they had very little themselves. Among the desolation and chaos of the muddy and dirty camp, there were lots of smiles and laughter as we muddled through, trying to communicate through the language barrier and help as many people as we could.

“In the evening, we returned to a church hall, exhausted. Together we celebrated a beautiful mass, full of communion with one another after working together all day, and then slept on the floor of the hall. In the morning, the Christian migrants in the camp invited us to attend their

service in the camp, so we joined them in the church they had built there. We were struck by the reverence and respect to be found in the middle of so much suffering.

“We returned home later that afternoon, full of joy! The conditions in the camp had been incredibly difficult to see and be a part of, and any help we could give only formed a small drop in the ocean of the problems, but we had certainly received so much more than we had given. Hopefully we will return again soon!”

For the full report and photos see:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/caritas/news/guardian-angels-parish-trip-to-calais-winter-2015>.

3. Camps in the Middle East

Re’vd Joanna James reports:

Since September 2015 Christ Church Barnet has been acting as a ‘pop-up’ warehouse, storing banana boxes packed with warm winter clothing and bedding for refugees struggling through the cold winter months in the Middle East. So far, over 700 boxes have been sent from the Open Door Building in St Albans Road to a ‘Samara’s Aid Appeal’ warehouse on the south coast, where they were put into containers and loaded onto an articulated lorry and sent on a five-week journey to Syria and Iraq.

[Samara’s Aid was started by Samara Levy in Brighton in 2014, when the need became desperate for winter clothes and shoes to send to the people who were displaced in Iraq and who lost everything when IS took their towns and villages. She collected the clothing and managed to find a way of sending a lorry all the way to the people in need and distributing it through local people, familiar with the area. Now lorries leave about twice a month, filled with clothes, medical supplies, school equipment and other items. Some of the lorries go to makeshift camps which, because they are not official, do not receive supplies from the big aid agencies. Distribution is now organised through local NGOs that are registered with their government.

Over 150 churches across the UK are making collections to send to Samara’s Aid. See <http://www.samarasaidappeal.org>.]

Last year, Christ Church and Christ Church School were able to fill about 70 boxes and also offer storage space for collections from other churches, schools and companies, some from as far away as Leeds and Norfolk. More collections are due to arrive on 29th January, and volunteers are needed to receive them. Offers please to revjoannajames@btinternet.com.

4. Homeless Action in Barnet



LENT APPEAL 2016

This year the Lent Appeal will be for Homeless Action in Barnet (HAB). It is HAB that selects the people suitable to be given food and shelter in the Night Shelters provided by our local churches and synagogues. Perhaps more importantly, they provide facilities for any homeless people in our borough who walk through their doors: food, showers, washing machines, dentist, legal advice and company. The refugees coming to Britain who have been given asylum status receive a lot of state aid. Homeless people without that status, whether British or migrant, really do need our help. Envelopes for our donations will be distributed in Lent.

There will be more about Night Shelters and also a report about the transfer from the Valley Centre to the Hope Corner Community Centre in the next issue.

The Editor welcomes comments and suggestions.

jennyremfry@btinternet.com