

## Family Service – Refugee Crisis – 20<sup>th</sup> Sept

### Children's talk:

What is an alien? - Belonging to a foreign country:

So what is a refugee? A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to [escape](#) war, [persecution](#), or natural [disaster](#):

Have you seen any TV or pictures about this?

What did you think?

Did you notice how many children were there? More than 50% refugees are in fact children

What do you think it must be like losing your home?

What about losing your friends?

What must it be like not to go to school?

When you saw the children – did they look happy?

What do you think we should do?

Maybe we could remember them in our prayers; when they come here maybe we could make friends with them.

Now most of these children have lost so much – maybe we could send the cards and pictures to cheer them up.

Would you like to do that?

### Adult Talk:

9.5million people have been internally displaced in Syria – 4 million have left the country and there are 16 million people in need of assistance.

It is the worst humanitarian disaster of our time – worst than the exodus during the genocide in Rwanda 20 years ago.

As we have already heard more than half our children and have been out of school for months – even years.

They are going to Turkey, Egypt, Africa and Iraq but most are trying to get to Europe: Germany and Switzerland

They are travelling by foot, boat and train

Archbishop Justin Welby says: 'This is a hugely complex and wicked crisis that underlines our human frailty and the fragility of our political systems. My heart is broken by the images and stories of men, women and children who have risked their lives to escape conflict, violence and persecution.'

We cannot turn our backs on this crisis. We must respond with compassion. But we must also not be naive in claiming to have the answers to end it.'

Not all the refugees live in camps though as you see they themselves are just awful – crowded and struggling to cope. Some of the camps for example in Jordan have over 81,000 people – the size of a small city!

But many find shelter where they can – abandoned buildings; chicken coops, sheds and more often than not under trees etc. There is often no clean water; sanitation – diseases such as cholera and polio can easily spread – let alone lack of food and medicines.

In our Leviticus reading we heard that: we are called to break down barriers, to welcome the stranger/alien and love themselves. To seek the peace and justice of our God in our world today.

The Corinthian reading also tells us that we are one body – and one when part hurts, we all hurt.

Of course there are no easy answers and of course there are so many concerns. We see that when receiving countries get so overwhelmed they close their borders and despair overflows into violence. There are many who are concerned about resources and funding and others still that are worried about security. All of which are valid. But I believe we have to think beyond those issues and offer practical help right now.

The church has always been a place of sanctuary for those in need and historically has met needs throughout the world when called upon. Here in the UK we have a wonderful history of offering shelter and refuge to Jewish refugees, Ugandan Asians, Vietnamese boat people and many many more. During these times the issues were controversial too and yet as a country we rose to the challenge and were blessed by the result.

The Oxford Diocese recommends that churches work through the established agencies - one of which is based in Oxford – City of Sanctuary Oxford

We cannot stand idle now – we must act with compassion and work with other countries to help where we can. Obviously the best solution would be to have peace in our world – where people could stay in their homes in safety but right now that's not happening. Practical help is needed now.

Ps 41

Blessed are those who consider the poor and needy; •  
the Lord will deliver them in the time of trouble.

2The Lord preserves them and restores their life,  
that they may be happy in the land; •  
he will not hand them over to the will of their enemies.

Prayer:

**The Church of England has issued a prayer for the refugee crisis:**

**Heavenly Father, you are the source of all goodness, generosity and love.**

**We thank you for opening the hearts of many to those who are fleeing for their lives.**

**Help us now to open our arms in welcome,**

**and reach out our hands in support.**

**That the desperate may find new hope, and lives torn apart be restored.**

**We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ Your Son, Our Lord, who fled persecution at His birth and at His last triumphed over death.**

**Amen**