

Response to the Refugee Crisis

Parish Meeting –29th November 2015

Introduction

This meeting was held as a result of overwhelming support expressed in the Proclaim '15 Questionnaires earlier this year and some 60-70 parishioners stayed on after the 10am Mass to discuss "How should this parish respond to the current and on-going refugee crisis?" It was stated that there are five pillars of support available to us namely 1) Prayer, 2) Financial Help, 3) Skills & Professional Help, 4) Shelter & Accommodation and 5) Provision of Food via the Foodbank.

Prayer

Following a healthy discussion it was agreed that we should ..

- a) have a dedicated Monthly Prayer Hour for Refugees and Peace – **Elizabeth Dillon**, aided by **Sandy Gale** will arrange the first during December and announce the date and time via the Newsletter, Noticeboards, the Website and from the pulpit
- b) include specific prayers for refugees and for peace during Greyfriars Prayer Group (Monday morning following Mass). Neil Quinn invited **parishioners** to compose their own prayers and send them to him via the Parish Office for inclusion in Greyfriars Prayers
N.B. These prayers will be published on the website under 'Faith-Prayer of the Week'
- c) encourage individuals to add their daily and/or private prayers to those being added to the prayer groups
- d) remind Parishioners that they might also choose to join either of the other two prayer groups i.e. Meditation Group (contact Patrick Dillon – tel 01275 794094) or St Anthony's Devotion Group Tuesdays at 7.30pm

Financial Help

It was suggested that two elements of financial help were available, namely 1) Immediate Help and 2) Creation of an Emergency Fund for when/if Refugees arrived in Clevedon. It was acknowledged that there was a risk that when providing funds it could go to the wrong people – rather than those truly in need. To reduce this risk it was agreed that any funds collected would be sent to a recognised and trusted Aid Agency – after significant debate it was agreed that ...

- a) CAFOD would be the selected Agency with monies directed to their Syrian Refugee Appeal see the on-line <http://www.cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-Emergencies/Syria-Crisis-Appeal> Note – Gift Aid applies
N.B. It transpires that "Silent Night – all is not right" is not a CAFOD Appeal
- b) **Vincent McLoughlin** will arrange for the provision of CAFOD – Gift Aid Envelopes to be available at Clevedon and Yatton.
Peter & Mary Kehoe volunteered to do any necessary counting, recording and banking.
- c) **Paul Gale** will arrange for collecting tins to be available at the back at both Clevedon and Yatton
- d) we welcomed Greyfriars Prayer Group starting the collection going with a donation of £150 – thank you!!
- e) buying "value goods" instead of "Branded Items" would help raise a few pounds per person per week.

f) It was also agreed that it was inappropriate to start an Emergency Fund as people would respond rapidly should the need exist.

Skills & Professional Help

After an exchange of views it was agreed that linking with other agencies such as Borderlands, St Nicholas Tolentino, North Somerset Council was the best way to provide the appropriate help while we as Christians were perfectly capable of providing a warm, welcoming and stable environment for any refugees who arrive in Clevedon

Shelter & Accommodation

As with Skills etc it was felt that action at this stage would be premature. Parishioners will stand ready to offer assistance when/if the request is made. Meanwhile we shall explore with other agencies what the needs may be and what associated skill/knowledge is required to increase the benefit of help provided and reduce any risks involved.

Food via the Foodbank

The Foodbank reported that it wouldn't be appropriate to donate food at present as Clevedon has enough to cater for local needs - surpluses are sent to Borderlands. If a sudden need arises the Foodbank will send out an appeal.

Summary

As a parish it was agreed that our efforts should be focussed on Prayer – both collectively and privately and on the provision of financial help through CAFOD. Thereafter we should be ready to respond if the call for further help is heard.

A final call was made for parishioners to email David Cameron asking him to expand and speed up the UK's response. The link for this is

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/More-issues/Refugee-action>

N.B. You get a reply from CAFOD and No 10!!

Ending

Before ending the meeting with 'The Lord's Prayer' Fr Reg reminded us that the opening words were "Our Father" and that the "Our" was all inclusive – friends, neighbours, strangers enemies even!!