

Church leaders unite in a statement and prayer for the current Refugee Crisis

A Message from the Church Leaders in the North East

In recent weeks we have been deeply challenged by reports and images of refugees desperately seeking safety at the risk of their lives.

We note, and welcome, the recent decision of the government to admit up to 20,000 refugees from Syria over the next five years. We also acknowledge the high level of commitment that has been made in the past few years in sustaining the overseas aid budget and the support given to work in the refugee camps in the Middle East. However, alongside such limited medium and long-term action there is urgent need for immediate aid for those seeking refuge in Europe. We urge a more generous response.

It is a delight to see the generous-heartedness with which the overwhelming majority of the people of the North East are ready to welcome those fleeing the humanitarian tragedy of Syria. This generosity is fully in tune with the spirit of hospitality that marks the life of our region and lies at the heart of the Christian gospel.

We call on Christians in the North East to work alongside local authorities and other agencies to offer support and care as we welcome families into our communities. We are glad to offer, on behalf of the churches of our region, our readiness to contribute local and practical support. We will be taking immediate steps to mobilise the churches' contribution to our regional welcome.

We are thankful for the work of many already providing resources to refugees in Calais and we encourage churches to continue to work with them.

We invite you to join us in our commitment to pray for all those who are fleeing to safety from troubled areas of the world, for those who work with them and for all those in positions of power that they may do their work with compassion and wisdom.

God of the nations
you have compassion on all your creatures.

Have compassion on the people of Syria
and all those nations of the world
oppressed by violence and conflict.
Stay the hand of the violent,
strengthen the arm of those who seek peace with justice
and give courage and wisdom to the leaders of the nations
as they seek both to resolve and mitigate the effects of national conflict.

Generous God,
we thank you for the generous hearts of your people
and all those of goodwill across our continent, nation and region.

We pray for ourselves –
that you would so form in us the character of Christ
that we will stand ready to offer His generous welcome to our communities, homes and lives.

So may your will be done
and your kingdom come
on earth as it is in heaven.

Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen

Signed:

Dr. Mark Bonnington (New and Independent Churches in the North East) Chair of North East Churches Acting Together

Rt Revd Paul Butler (Bishop of Durham)

Revd John Claydon (Regional Minister, Northern Baptist Association)

Rt Revd Seamus Cunningham (Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle)

Bishop Terry Draine (Bishop of Middlesbrough)

Rt Revd Paul Ferguson (Bishop of Whitby)

Revd Ruth Gee (Chair of the Darlington District of the Methodist Church)

Revd Stephen Lindridge (Chair of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne District of the Methodist Church)

Majors Denis and Olive Lomax (Divisional Commanders, Northern Salvation Army)

Revd Lis Mullen (Moderator of the Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church)

Revd Paul Revill (Regional Minister, Northern Baptist Association)

Rt Revd Frank White (Assistant Bishop of Newcastle)

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