

A SABBATICAL EXPLORATION OF ACCOMPANYING PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN THE DIOCESE IN EUROPE

(June -July 2022), Carolyn Cooke – Five “Cs” for accompanying people on the move

This summary is the result of two months of enquiry and reflection on how Anglican chaplaincies in the Diocese in Europe can build on the ways we accompany people on the move.

OBSERVATIONS – FIVE Cs for accompanying people on the move in the Diocese in Europe

1. **CELEBRATION Our starting point** as chaplaincies in the Diocese in Europe is that we are migrant communities in a host country in Europe. This experience affords us at least some insights into the challenges of navigating a foreign context. The very nature of church is to be a community – the body of Christ. We start by giving thanks for our assets – who we are and what we are already doing to welcome people into our community – providing “social capital”. I found all the conversations with chaplaincies humbling, challenging and hopeful. All expressed their sense of fragility and limitations, yet their commitment to keep looking for ways to enhance their support. Many individuals and chaplaincies live beyond themselves (our Diocesan Rule of life), as they welcome and reach out to people on the move arriving among them at church or in their region.
2. **CAPACITY BUILDING in our chaplaincies** – Two key questions for our chaplaincies:
 - a. **What is already happening?** First carry out a mapping exercise to find out what is currently on offer locally. Our churches have limited resources and capacity on our own – but we can partner with local church or faith groups or NGOs and Government bodies who are assisting people on the move and who will often have more expertise and local knowledge. This may not be a whole church focus, but we can encourage individuals who are looking to reach out, to partner and collaborate with other community groups and ensure they feed back to our churches.
 - b. **How do we best accompany /be-friend people who are on the move appropriately?** There are some helpful handbooks for training volunteers to be-friend / mentor a person who is seeking asylum. This sort of training could be offered online at a diocesan wide level. **Key resources** – Restore Handbook in Birmingham Churches Together Be-friending scheme; Point D’Appui Day Centre in Lausanne (Churches together); Joel Nafuma Refugee Centre – Managing Director, Guilia Bonoldi. (*Carolyn to attend Restore be-friending scheme training online, in autumn 2022*)
3. **CONNECTION** – Set up links between chaplaincies who are involved in supporting people on the move. Chaplaincies who are active in this ministry have much to teach one another – both from our mistakes as well as our good practice and successes. Developing a network of active churches will enhance the care and support we offer and guard against chaplaincies feeling isolated and overwhelmed.
4. **COMMUNICATION of stories** that bring the realities and experiences of refugees to life and assist in creating a positive narrative around those who are seeking refuge among us.
5. **CONVERSION – a change of heart and attitude in us towards people on the move.** How do we view people on the move? As those with problems to fix? Often accompanying people is disempowering and humbling because we are not there to “fix them” but to walk alongside them – to learn as well as to signpost and share some of the experiences of exile. Exploring the unconscious bias is important here. What is the thing beneath the thing? What language and labels do we use? Where is there mutuality in our relationships which will bring about deep change in us as we seek to accompany others.

SOME EXTRA LESSONS LEARNT THROUGH THE COURSE OF CONVERSATIONS:

- a. KEY QUALITIES in the way we approach those we hope to accompany: humility, curiosity but not nosiness, “bienveillance” (looking with good will /kindness?), aware of our common humanity, looking for mutuality. Barriers can be broken down and understanding built up as we “do things together” with shared goals – such as Park / Lake clean ups.. common ground and goals – rather than focus on what is different.
- b. THE WIDER EUROPEAN CONTEXT Our place in the bigger (Europe-wide) and smaller pictures – mapping exercises – realism - Learn from one member of the church or local area with expertise on migration issues and current migration flow. (See Annual Report JNRC – for further details)
- c. OUR LOCAL CONTEXT – who is among us? Always changing – policy level – local level – geopolitical view – stats? what is the prevailing culture / the challenges facing migrants arriving among us depending on the local culture?
- d. LOCAL SUPPORT –Map the local community organisations that are already supporting migrants and refugees? – unique stories and baggage and dislocation and isolation – and motivation and resourcefulness – key needs – language, language, language and security – desire to learn and engage.. Poem – by Tim – re The Good Foreigner..
- e. OUR THEOLOGY AND MISSION? Father Dennis – Tangier ([The Fisher of Men - Moorish Tides](#)) – Tony Dickinson – Nick Finlay – Vickie – Father Louis – no labels. Difficult “welcoming” questions – where do you come from? Good resource – Borders and belonging – exploring the book of Ruth.
- f. OVERLAP WITH RACIAL JUSTICE Look for the thing beneath the thing – power of language and overlap with racial justice – eg “invader” – the one who comes over the waters – indicating the outsider – 21 Danish words for foreigner! Beware of labels and difficult “welcoming” questions – where do you come from?
- g. GUIDE TO BE-FRIENDING PEOPLE ON THE MOVE – Restore – Diane Barraud – Point D’Appui – Coup de Main
- h. NETWORK OF SUPPORT – advocacy
- i. LISTEN to stories of exile – experiences of loneliness, being different, loss and grief, trauma
- j. NO STRINGS ATTACHED – managing expectations - Hospitality – with no strings / expectations attached. (Poem – the good foreigner) Complex hosting of Ukrainians – importance of good matching
- k. SIGNPOSTING – key to helping people arriving to settle in
- l. USE REFUGEE SUNDAY / Refugee Week as an opportunity to learn and grow in understanding and worship

MY APPROACH

I have had the privilege of accompanying people on the move since 2010, here in Switzerland, and when working as a curate in inner city Nottingham from 2002 – 2005.

I have looked at this question from various angles:

1. In conversations with chaplaincies in the Diocese in Europe (10 x interviews)

Key Questions:

- What is your direct involvement as a church with people on the move?
- How do you partner with other church or faith groups?
- How do you collaborate with local NGOs and / or Govt bodies?
- What could help to resource the support you offer?
- What are the key lessons you have gleaned from accompanying people on the move?

The chaplaincies with whom I spoke are:

All Saints, Milan, Italy (including Varese and one other community)	Revd Canon Vickie Simms
St Andrews, Zurich, Switzerland	Revd Jackie Sellin
St Nic's Church, Basel, Switzerland	Revd Anne Lowen
Church of the Holy Ghost, Genoa, Italy	Revd Tony Dickinson
Holy Trinity Church and Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Geneva, Switzerland	Revd Canon Michael Gusk and Revd Canon Daphne Green
St Alban's, Copenhagen	Revd Canon Smitha Prasadam
Gibraltar – Cathedral St Georges, Malaga, Spain	The Very Reverend Ian Tarrant (Dean of the Cathedral) and Revd Louis Darrant
St Ursula's, Bern, Switzerland	Revd Helen Marshall
St Mark's Grenoble, France	Revd Nick Finlay
Christ Church, Amsterdam, Netherlands	Warden Becky Moss
Lyon, France	Revd Ben Harding

2. In conversations with individuals directly supporting people on the move or training up others to accompany displaced people. (5x interviews)

USPG – United Society for Partners in the Gospel	Rebecca Boardman - Regional Manager for Oceania and East Asia, and who also supports the Diocese in Europe with issues of migration support
Point D'Appui, Churches Together Day Centre in Lausanne, Switzerland, for people	Ms Diane Barraud

dealing with migration challenges http://www.eglisemigrationvd.com/wpweb/	
Restore – Churches Together Befriending Scheme in Birmingham Diocese, UK	Nicole Gilmore, head of women’s befriending scheme – training and supporting volunteers
Joel Nafuma Refugee Centre in Rome, based at St Paul’s within the Walls	Managing director, Guilia Bonoldi
St Helen, Lowfell, Gateshead, UK	Revd Yvonne Greener

3. **In direct involvement with those seeking asylum or with refugee status** (Three long term friends now seeking asylum in UK, contact with local people who either have refugee status or are in limbo – meeting them either individually or in groups) Hosting two Ukrainians for two months – and connecting with organisations supporting Ukrainians in Switzerland).

4. **By building collaboration between local community organisations involved in supporting people on the move**

These organisations are:

- TLFP – The Lost Food Project** – (Local Food Bank) has brought direct contact with 15 households locally – who have refugee status or have been refused refugee status.
- Coup de Main** – Association focussing on social integration for local people in exile / seeking asylum or with refugee status.
- le Lieu-dit** – a local Association that aims to inform and integrate people in exile in the Nyon area
- Stronger Together** – An association supporting families hosting Ukrainian refugees and refugees themselves.
- EVAM** - Établissement vaudois d’accueil des migrants – cantonal government body in charge of supporting migrants.

5. **Background reading**

Borders and belonging, Pdraig O’Tuama and Glenn Jordan, A Study of the Book of Ruth (excellent study guide for small church groups).

A Nazareth Manifesto – Sam Wells

Hostile Environment, Maya Goodfellow

The Wealth of Refugees, Alexander Betts

References –

Refugee Sunday - <https://www.faithward.org/world-refugee-sunday-worship-toolkit/#including-refugees>

<https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Prayers-and-Worship-Resources-for-Refugee-Sunday.pdf>

<https://www.faithward.org/migrationstories/tim/> - Tim’s poem – a good foreigner.. when..

Reformed Church of America – Refugee Sunday resources / theology of migration

Migration Story-telling project / RCA - <https://www.faithward.org/migrationstories/>

<https://interfaithrise.org/> - Inter-Faith Rise – in US

Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) – see reports – Miracle Project – training for integration

Joel Nafuma Centre for Refugees - Annual Report 2020

TERMS OF REFERENCE: MIGRANT / REFUGEES / ASYLUM SEEKERS – Amnesty International

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/#definitions>

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution there. The risks to their safety and life were so great that they felt they had no choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country because their own government cannot or will not protect them from those dangers. Refugees have a right to international protection.

Who is an asylum-seeker?

An asylum-seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.

Who is a migrant?

There is no internationally accepted legal definition of a migrant. Like most agencies and organizations, we at Amnesty International understand migrants to be people staying outside their country of origin, who are not asylum-seekers or refugees.

Some migrants leave their country because they want to work, study or join family, for example. Others feel they must leave because of poverty, political unrest, gang violence, natural disasters or other serious circumstances that exist there.

Lots of people don't fit the legal definition of a refugee but could nevertheless be in danger if they went home.

It is important to understand that, just because migrants do not flee persecution, they are still entitled to have all their human rights protected and respected, regardless of the status they have in the country they moved to. Governments must protect all migrants from racist and xenophobic violence, exploitation and [forced labour](#). Migrants should never be detained or forced to return to their countries without a legitimate reason.

