



9 September, 2015

News:

Responding to the refugee crisis

Organisations have been highlighting different ways Christians can respond to the worsening refugee crisis

On Wednesday the Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, issued [a statement](#) praising the grassroots response that has seen [Baptists offer 250 spaces for Syrian refugees](#).

'We have been inspired by hearing of the generous response by Baptists to a campaign that encourages our churches to offer beds for Syrian refugees,' she said.

'As Christian believers, our first instinct, and indeed our Gospel calling, is to be a people of generosity and welcome. We therefore seek to support, encourage and enable the Baptists who have offered these spaces in whatever way we can.'

In calling for Baptists to offer generosity and welcome, she also highlighted our call to be a prophetic community, in particular by "calling upon political leaders across Europe and beyond to unite in common accord to address the sources of this crisis."

She encouraged local churches to respond in four ways:

- To explore afresh the Biblical perspectives within our Gospel tradition that inform our response to the refugee and stranger.
- To respond through prayer both to the individual plight of the many thousands of people who continue to seek refuge, and for the political situations which both cause and offer resolution to this crisis.
- To offer practical responses working as much as possible in partnership with other concerned citizens both from within our Christian community and beyond.
- To contact their MPs to share concerns and inform future debates in Parliament

There are many ways Baptists are already responding, in addition to offering beds for Syrian refugees.

BMS World Mission partners in Lebanon have long been working [with refugees from Syria](#). Lebanon currently has more than [1,100,000 registered Syrian refugees, according to the UNCHR, which acknowledged that figure is likely to be even higher](#). Its population

is only 4 million.

As far back as 2013 Nabil Costa, the Executive Director of the Lebanese Baptist Society (LSESD), and a BMS World Mission trustee, told *The Baptist Times* how [Lebanese Baptists are reaching 25,000 Syrian refugees with a mix of food, medicine and shelter.](#)

[BMS personnel are also involved in serving refugees arriving in Italy.](#) BMS ministers Ann and David MacFarlane have been among the compassionate faces refugees fleeing Syria, Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia, have seen after braving the treacherous and expensive journey. When their church is alerted to the coming of a ship, the congregation team waits with water, clothes and food as the tired and scared refugees finally reach land.

BMS is also in consultation with [EBAid](#): the European Baptist Federation has its annual council meeting later this month, where it will be gathering stories of migration and determining what its focus should be in offering help.

Elsewhere a Baptist church planter in Austria has detailed the [short and long term response of Austrians, including those from his church, to the crisis.](#) [Yorkshire Baptists have been encouraged to sign a petition](#) asking that the UK accepts more asylum seekers and increases support for refugee migrants in the UK. The petition is here: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/105991>

Baptist minister the Revd Phil Jump offered [some reflections in response to the refugee crisis](#), which was shared through the Joint Public Issues Team. Baptists are working ecumenically through JPIT to explore how we might use our collective voice to call for an ongoing response that represents the values of God's Kingdom.

Last week the Evangelical Alliance called on its member churches to respond with "prayer, practical care and compassion". It issued five actions:

1. Pray: the Evangelical Alliance's director of prayer has written [a prayer](#) which can be used at services this weekend to focus attention on the refugee crisis and our response.
2. Give: many relief and development organisations are working in Syria and surrounding countries and their special funds provide an opportunity to give towards practical assistance. These include [Tearfund](#), [World Vision UK](#) and [Open Doors](#).
3. Open: whether it's through linking a rental property with a local authority to house resettled refugees or providing a spare room, are there ways we can use what we have to help those in need? [Citizens UK](#) are campaigning for local authorities to agree to resettle more refugees, and [Home for Good](#) are collecting names of potential foster carers for unaccompanied minors.
4. Act: many charities work with refugees in the UK. One such charity is [Refugee Support Network](#) which provides mentors for young people specifically to help them in their education.
5. Campaign: while there are significant complexities to this current crisis, and the many surrounding issues, we cannot be silent. The Evangelical Alliance is calling for its members to contact MPs across the UK asking them to speak up in support of refugees.

Krish Kandiah, member of the leadership team at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Thame and founder of Home for Good, produced [a widely circulated short film](#) which highlighted how many biblical characters were refugees, and outlined five practical responses. [More than 9,000 people have volunteered to foster refugee and migrant children](#) fleeing the

crisis in the Middle East. His church [was also featured in the Guardian discussing ways to respond to the crisis.](#)

Also writing in Christian Today, Embrace CEO Jeremy Moodey highlighted [five things you should NOT do to help.](#)

Picture: András D Hajdú/IRIN

How is your church responding to the refugee crisis?

Contact media@baptist.org.uk

Baptists offer space for Syrian refugees

In one week British Baptists have offered 250 bed spaces for Syrian refugees

In a message to the [Baptist Collaboration Facebook Group](#) last week, minister and co-founder of church planting agency Urban Expression Juliet Kilpin asked if Baptist churches could each offer five spaces for refugees fleeing Syria.

The call was inspired in part by the news that [10,000 Icelanders had offered to house Syrian refugees](#) following a Facebook call from a prominent Icelandic author: the Icelandic government had just announced it would only accept 50.

Writing in the Baptist Collaboration Group, Juliet said, 'If Iceland (with a population of 300,000) can find space for 10,000 Syrian refugees, can our 2,200 (ish) churches offer 5 spaces each and tell our government we can accommodate and care for 11,000 refugees if they will let them in...?'

She added, 'Best case scenario, we care for people in their time of need. Worst case scenario, we show Baptists are radically welcoming and shame the government for not offering safe havens for those fleeing war.'

The response was immediate and has been growing ever since. After one day there

were pledges of 65 spaces. By Friday (4 September) this had become 150. That number has now grown to 250. 'Really encouraging!' said Juliet. The campaign was [commended by General Secretary the Revd Lynn Green, who said it had "inspired"](#) the Baptist Steering Group which met this week.

Juliet is researching agencies with which to partner to enable Baptists to action these offers. She is in discussions with Citizens UK, which has been [campaigning for a year to get local authorities to pledge to resettle 50 refugees each](#). She is also in contact with other experienced agencies to determine the practicalities involved.

She has now created [a new Facebook page – Take Refuge](#) – to provide updates for all those who have offered spaces, and information for those interested in finding out more about how to help people in the greatest movement of people across Europe since WW2.

In it she has encouraged people to spread the word to enable others to respond to the crisis in this way if they want to, as well as highlighting the potential strength of Baptists acting together.

'By keeping a list of Baptists who have offered space, we have a voice with which to speak to government and express our desire for greater generosity, so that hopefully these offers of spaces can actually be taken up by those who need safe spaces to stay.

'We want to vocalise our concern for refugees and encourage the British government to enable the generous public to do their fair share in caring for vulnerable, peaceful people fleeing war-torn places.'

Since that initial post the response of the British government has changed. [As recently as last Wednesday David Cameron insisted Britain would not accept "more and more" migrants](#), stating that the best solution to the crisis was to bring peace and stability to the Middle East.

But situation intensified in the ensuing days. The shocking picture of drowned Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi, washed up on a beach in Turkey, went viral, and Germany, France and Italy asked that asylum seekers are shared more evenly between EU countries.

On Monday the Government [subsequently announced it would take up to 20,000 Syrian refugees](#) over the next five years.

The issue was further debated on in the House of Commons on Tuesday after Labour secured an emergency debate because it thought the 20,000 figure was inadequate.

On Wednesday European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker announced proposals to distribute 120,000 additional asylum seekers among EU nations, with binding quotas. The UK can choose whether to take part in the quota scheme.

Can your church host a family from Syria?

Contact Juliet on julietkilpin@aol.com

For more visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/takerefugeGB>

Welcoming refugees in Austria

Austrians, including many Christians, are engaged in tireless short and long term support to the thousands of traumatised people arriving in their country, writes Vienna-based Baptist church planter David Bunce

Over the weekend, more than 13,000 people arrived in Vienna as refugees.

Many of them were clearly traumatised and in need of emergency medicine. All of them were exhausted. [Some of them had started the journey by walking out of Budapest along a live motorway](#) in the hope of getting somewhere safe. Lining the sides of the platforms as trains drew in were hundreds of ordinary Austrians – distributing water, fruit, medicine and clothing.

The issue of refugees traveling through Austria came to a head two weeks ago with the horrific deaths of [71 refugees in the back of a refrigerated lorry](#).

[The following Monday, 20,000 people marched through the centre of Vienna under the banner 'refugees welcome'](#), partly as a show of solidarity, partly out of frustration at the perceived inaction of the government.

Since then, members of the public have been organising themselves, collecting donated items, organising an army of voluntary interpreters and seeing to the basic needs of those caught up in the central European refugee crisis. Using Facebook and Twitter, practical donation needs could be altered on an hour-by-hour basis, which meant that energy was being used in an efficient way.

Amongst the many volunteers were many from the Baptist church I serve in, who have been giving tirelessly of their time and energy. Many people spent long days at train stations over the weekend, helping give aid and just spending time with people and listening to their stories. They are everyday heroes of the faith, working unseen in response to the promise of the Kingdom of God.

Our small church ([Project:Church in Vienna](#)) has a long history of working with refugees, having more than 10 years experience in Refugee and Integration work (as part of [Austrian Baptist Aid](#)).

We're active not just in crisis relief work (though many of us are), but in offering long term practical support, accompaniment to legal hearings and government offices, integration German courses and counselling. Many of the refugees who arrived in Austria over the

last week headed on towards Germany. For those who stayed, the existence of long term projects such as our [Refugee and Integration work](#) will be key.

We also have an awareness of some of the realities behind media myths of left and right. When I think of UK headlines about refugees having passed through many 'safe-countries' for example (the implication being: 'why should they continue to Germany, other than greed?'), I have to shake my head and think of the many horrific eye witness account I've heard about [human rights abuses in these so-called safe European countries](#).

Stories of police brutality, sexual violence, organised crime, appalling hygiene and inadequate medical care experienced by refugees in Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey and Hungary are all [too-well documented by organisations like Amnesty International](#) – and all too ignored by many political (and Christian) commentators in the United Kingdom.

I've been asked to write a couple of ideas about how churches in the United Kingdom can help.

Firstly, please pray. The work is hard, often discouraging and frequently comes up against the 'powers and principalities' of the world. Outpourings of short-term sympathy such as those seen this month are encouraging, but all too rare. But the hope is that Christ has unmasked the powers as being ultimately powerless, and that He is building His Kingdom through His church.

Secondly, I would urge churches to study the realities of the issue. Organisations such as [Amnesty International](#) and [Pro Asyl](#) have been researching the current crisis for years, and there are a lot of good resources easily accessible.

I would urge churches to question the easy myth of 'economic migrants', to look hard at the definition of 'safe country', to understand the realities of physical, sexual and psychological trauma which many refugees are living with.

And finally, I would like to encourage churches who would like to help out practically to seriously consider donating to organisations with a focus on long term integration and support, rather than immediate disaster relief.

Donations of food and clothing for crisis situations can be easily organised by local cities according to need; material donations from abroad is often the wrong type or at the wrong time or in the wrong place.

However, church and organisations such as [Austrian Baptist Aid](#) who work sustainably over the long haul with people, who continue after the media attention has died down, are what will make the real difference in people's lives flourishing.

David Bunce works as a missionary and church planter in Vienna and is on the pastoral team of Project:Church. He is married to Mairi

Objecting to assisted dying bill

Christian leaders in the West Midlands have written a powerful open letter expressing their objection to the assisted dying bill put forward by a local MP

The letter to Wolverhampton MP Rob Marris, whose bill will be debated in the House of Commons on Friday (11 September) highlighted concerns that while the bill has a “noble aim, it has the potential to introduce “far worse consequences for our society in the years to come.”

[It was published in the Express & Star](#), the UK's biggest-selling regional evening newspaper, and signed by 36 faith leaders, including the Revd Adrian Argile, Regional Minister Team Leader of the Heart of England Baptist Association.

Currently the law values “every life as intrinsically worthy of our protection”, the faith leaders stated. If passed, the Assisted Dying Bill will protect the practitioners of assisted dying and removes legal protection from “those who most need it; the sick, the weak, the disabled.” That is why it has been opposed by “every disability group in the country.”

There has been a steady increase in euthanasia in all the countries where comparable laws have been introduced, the faith leaders continued, citing statistics the Netherlands, Belgium and the US state of Oregon.

The bill will also create “very unhealthy tensions between patients and their carers,”, as well as introduce dangers in seeking to measure “how ‘terminal’ ‘terminal’ really is.”

The Revd Jonathan Somerville, minister of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Wolverhampton, helped to co-ordinate the letter and was another signatory alongside his colleague the Revd Hannah Colk.

There were also representations from many denominations in the region, including the Revd Steve Faber, Moderator-Elect of the West Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church; the Revd John Howard, chair of Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury Methodist District; Bishop David McGough, Roman Catholic bishop for Wolverhampton; and Pastor Emmanuel Kapofu of the International Life Centre.

Mr Marris [introduced the bill in June](#) after a similar bill put forward by Lord Falconer ran out of time before the general election.

The proposed new law would enable patients with less than six months to live to be prescribed a lethal dose of drugs on the authority of two doctors.

The full text of the letter can be read

here:<http://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-news/2015/09/01/assisted-dying-bill-an-open-letter-to-rob-marris/>

Get spiritual about Rugby during the World Cup

Churches in Rugby help to arrange a series of events to coincide with the tournament, which begins on 18 September

For some people, the game of rugby is almost like a religion – and there are plenty of opportunities to get spiritual in the birthplace of the game during the Rugby World Cup.

With the support of Revive Churches, the [Enjoy Rugby Festival](#) (12 September – 6 November) will feature a variety of events with a spiritual theme that range from a sports quiz to rousing gospel performances.

Rugby's official Fanzone will be located on Old Market Place in the heart of Rugby town centre, and just a stone's throw from Rugby station and Rugby School - the birthplace of the game.

The Fanzone will have a capacity of 2000 people, with free entry throughout Rugby World Cup 2015 for fans and families. It will feature a big screen with live coverage of matches, entertainment, food and drink and rugby-based activities.

The Convenor of Revive is the Revd Dr Michael I Bochenski, minister of Rugby Baptist Church. He said: 'It has been good to work with Chris Stanley and a highly motivated council team in helping to shape a varied and attractive [Rugby Fanzone programme](#).

'As churches in Rugby we try not to hide behind our church walls. We believe very much in getting out into our communities and serving God and people there.

'The Fanzone programme is, we believe, a good example of this in practice.'

All the events take place at the Rugby Village, Old Market Place, on days when tournament matches aren't being shown in the official World Cup Fanzone.

On Sunday 13 September, Revive Churches are inviting local Rugbeians and international guests to an all-faith, interactive act of worship preceded by a Family Fun Time with face-painting, games, crafts and free BBQ.

The family activities start at 4pm, followed by the Songs of Praise event at 6pm.

For those who think they know their sports trivia, Baptist Minister and Sports Chaplain the Revd David Chawner will be Master of Ceremonies for a six-round multi-media sports quiz on Wednesday 16 September.

David is the Pastoral Director for Rugby Union, Chaplain to Northamptonshire County Cricket Club and Chair of Sports Chaplaincy UK. Organised by Rugby Revive, the quiz is free to enter. To register your team, visit www.enjoyrugby.co.uk or call Rugby Visitor Centre on (01788) 570410.

Both sport and religion have a strong connection to music, and the ACM Gospel Choir will be in town on Thursday 8 October to perform tunes you know and love as well as rousing rugby anthems including World in Union, Swing Low and Jerusalem.

A musical collective of some of the most talented singers, songwriters and performers in the UK today, with a great blend of voices from different genres, the Choir will be taking to the stage at Rugby Village at 7.30pm.

Tickets are £8 adults and £6 for under 18s, from Rugby Visitor Centre or www.enjoyrugby.co.uk

On the 29 October Children's and Families workers from several local churches will be organising a Light Party.

Children aged 5-11 are invited to join in the party with games, activities, sweets. Early booking is advised. Come dressed in glow, neon, and bright clothes. The event runs from 3.30pm-5.30pm.

The day after the Rugby World Cup final, there will be a special Swing Low Sweet Chariot celebration on Sunday 1 November.

Music and songs from the world of rugby, personal world cup accounts and faith stories will combine for a memorable finale organised by Rugby Revive. The event is free to attend and kicks off at the Rugby Village at 4pm.

And finally... rounding off the Festival on Thursday 5 November, Elevate Music, a high impact youth event also organised by Rugby Revive, will see the Rugby Village filled with loads of live music, dance, competitions and madcap fun.

Aimed at young people aged 11-16, the event runs from 7pm-9.30pm and is completely free to attend.

More information on all the Enjoy Rugby Festival events (including free festival guide) and tickets for the ACM Gospel Choir are available from Rugby Visitor Centre on (01788) 570410 or online at www.enjoyrugby.co.uk

You can also follow the Enjoy Rugby Festival on Facebook (www.facebook.com/rugbyvisitorcentre) or Twitter ([@enjoyrugby](https://twitter.com/enjoyrugby)).

For more on how churches can engage with the tournament, visit <http://engage2015.co.uk>

Baptisms:

Amesbury Baptist Church, Wiltshire: Lesley Penelope Blake-Harris, Richlove Andoh, Yvonne Mortley
Didsbury Baptist Church, Manchester: Charmaine Nicholls, Sabrina Marshall, Joel Sheldrake
Earlsfield Baptist Church, London: Ken Thomas
Ross Baptist Church, Herefordshire: Bethan Gibson, Irene Rothwell, John Rothwell, Lou Winters, Angela
St Andrews Baptist Church, Bletchley: Andrea Adio
The Beacon, The Baptist Church Kilmington, Devon: Lesley Buss and Estelle Legg
Waltham Abbey Baptist Church, London: Charlene Boutswain

In memoriam

TYDEMAN - Marjorie - In loving memory of our dearest Mum and Gran who died on the 7th September, 1989. Always in our thoughts, love from all her family. 'Great was her faithfulness'

Death:

TAYLOR, the Revd Dr Leonard Charles

Passed away peacefully on 27 August at The Willows Residential Home aged 92 years. Loving husband of the late Dorothy now reunited. Devoted father, grandfather and great grandfather much loved by all his family. Cremation at Nuneaton Crematorium @ 1.30pm on the 18th September followed by a Thanksgiving Service in Hinckley Baptist Church at 2.15pm. Family flowers only and any gifts in memory to The Mission Aviation Fellowship via McCartneys Funeral Directors, Hinckley Tel: 01455 637138

Jobs:

Finance Director/Team Leader Support Services, The Baptist Union of Great Britain

Legal and Property Officer, The Baptist Union of Great Britain
Children's and Youth Worker, Beckenham Baptist Church
Full Time Associate Pastor, Southall Baptist Church
Regional Minister Team Leader, South West Baptist Association

For more information on these positions, visit <http://www.baptist.org.uk/jobs>

Events/resources:

Light Party

Free Light Party Packs are available from Scripture Union to help your church host a Light Party this Halloween - get a copy while stocks last - visit <http://ow.ly/RTbS3> or call 01908 856006.

Dealing with Conflict – Christian advances is this year's topic for the **Faith and Thought Symposium** (10 October, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church)

A forum for those who wish to hold together Christian faith and advances in scientific knowledge

For more information (and details of previous symposiums) visit:

<http://www.faithandthought.org.uk/Symp.htm>

Multiethnic Church – a new, six-week course for small groups, written by Baptist minister Malcolm Patten, to help develop healthy, integrated churches which reflect the richness and diversity of the Kingdom of God.

http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/447072/Multiethnic_Church.aspx

Anniversary

On Sunday 1 November 2015 **Berkhamsted Baptist Church**, Hertfordshire will be celebrating its 375 church anniversary. The Revd David Coffey will be preaching at the 10.30am service and all are welcome to the service and the lunch which will follow the service.

Navigating the Congo

Free exhibition and Talks

21st September – 26th September 2015

Regent's Park College, Oxford

Featuring artefacts, navigational equipment, maps, photographs, personal letters and diaries, Navigating the Congo is an exhibition which explores the history of non-conformist involvement in the Congo River regions during the 19th and 20th century. By looking at the collections held in The Angus Library and Archive, the exhibition seeks to bring to light some of the challenges faced in navigating this history and the relationships that developed between Baptist missionaries and the Kongo people during the period of European colonialism.

Two free talks will be held during the exhibition:

Tues 22nd Sept, 6pm – Bandi Mbubi (Congo Calling) will be speaking conflict in

the DRC and Fairtrade technology

Thurs 24th Sept, 6pm – Dr Rob Burroughs (Leeds Beckett University) will be speaking on Protestant missionary travellers in the Congo Free State

For opening times and booking information please visit: <http://bit.ly/1KSTG40>

For more visit www.baptisttimes.co.uk