



Common Reflections on Migration ***from the London Churches Theological Enquiry***

This document

- Page 1 gives a summary of the enquiry process and gives some ideas for 'What Next?'
- Page 2 gives some key messages from the process
- Page 3 gives some Biblical texts identified through the process
- Page 4 gives some other key resources

The process

- London Churches Social Action established a core group to guide a theological enquiry.
- We listened to migrants and those working with migrants across London.
- We held an extended seminar day in Barking attended by 50 people (including senior church leaders, Ecumenical Borough Deans, practitioners, social action advisors, The Refugee and Migrants Forum, The Jesuit Refugee Service, Hope not Hate, The Centre for Theology and Community, London Citizens, local ministers, academics; and people from Baptist, Independent, Pentecostal, Catholic, Anglican, Salvation Army, Methodist and URC churches).
- The core group reflected further and drafted some key messages.
- The messages were discussed, expanded and endorsed by the London Church Leaders as a toolkit of reflections for churches on migration.

The seminar explored two themes which the core research team discerned through attending to those engaged in being, and being among, migrants in London. These were:

“How is the church and UK society being blessed/challenged by migration?”

& “Who is weeping about, with and for migrants today?”

We also attended to God through prayer and silence, seeking to discern,
“What is the Spirit saying to the churches on migration?” We then asked:

“What from the treasures of our faith we can draw on towards responding to issues related to migration?”

What next?

- Use this in your churches and church leaders' networks to ask 'What now?'
- Use the key messages/texts and resources for Christmas sermons
- Do something together: Prayer Vigil? Open-letter to your MP/party leaders?
- Sign up to the London Churches Refugee Network <lcrefugeenetwork@gmail.com>
- Support the work of Citizens UK and others on resettlement - www.refugees-welcome.org.uk

Key Messages

- + **God's people are migrant people** – the Bible has a clear narrative about God's people being a people on the move; Jesus was a refugee; the Gospel spread through migration.
- + **London churches are migrant churches** – migration has hugely enriched the churches in London; very few congregations have no migrants; many are majority migrant & migrant led.
- + **Migration leads us to identify who we are** – migration challenges our understandings of identity and helps us to recognise our fear of the other; it leads us to identify God in the stranger.
- + **Migration challenges us to connect with gospel truths** – migrant stories help to engage Christians with issues of suffering, poverty, faith, hope, etc.
- + **Migrants are humans** – stigmatisation of migrants is an affront to a Christian understanding of the dignity of every human being; we all made in the image of God.
- + **Christians are at the heart of supporting vulnerable migrants** – there are many projects across London run by churches and including Christians, often accompanying the most destitute.
- + **God's generosity challenges narratives of scarcity** – political narratives of scarcity therefore challenge a key Christian understanding about God's world and the use of its resources.
- + **Evils should to be addressed** – migration is often the result of suffering caused by war, famine, disaster, injustice, global inequality; the negative causes of migration need addressing.
- + **Christians should be speaking Christian language on migration into wider society** - a positive language accompanied by celebratory actions, actions which make abundance a habit.
- + **What does it mean to be prophetic?** – What should the churches be calling for in relation to migration policy?



Image by Elizabeth Gray King (2015), created at the London Churches migration seminar.

Biblical texts for use in relation to migration

Genesis 11: 1-9 – ‘That is why it was called Babel - because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.’

Genesis 12 - ‘The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.”’

Leviticus 19: 33 – “The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

Deuteronomy 10: 17-18 – ‘For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.’

Ruth 1: 16 – ‘But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.’

Psalms 19 – ‘Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.’

Psalms 90: 1 – ‘Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.’

Ezekiel 47: 21-23 – “In whatever tribe the alien settles, there you are to give him his inheritance," declares the Sovereign LORD.’

Matthew 2: 13-23 – ‘When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”’

Matthew 28: 19-20 – “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

John 1:1-5, 14, 16 – ‘From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.’

John 1: 10-11 – ‘He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.’

Ephesians 2: 19 – ‘Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.’

1 Peter – ‘Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.’

Revelation 7: 9-10 – ‘After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.’

Revelation 21 – Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.’

Quotations designated (NIV) are from THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica. All rights reserved worldwide.

Resources

Organisations **Migrants Rights Network**

Excellent briefings on migration, for example on the Immigration Bill 2015
<http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/>

Migrant Voice

Resources on celebrating the contribution of migrants to the UK
<http://www.migrantvoice.org/>

British Future

Reports on attitudes to migration in UK politics
<http://www.britishfuture.org>

Citizens UK

Leading civil society organisation in the UK, engaged on migration and refugee issues
<http://www.citizensuk.org/>

Churches Refugee Network

A Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
<https://ctbi.org.uk/churches-refugee-network/>

London Churches Refugee Network

London network under the umbrella of London Churches Social Action
<https://ctbi.org.uk/churches-refugee-network/>

Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe

European network of churches working on migration
<http://www.ccme.be/>

Jesuit Refugee Service UK

Works alongside vulnerable, including destitute, migrants
<http://www.jrsuk.net/>

Issues

Detention

Report of the All Party Parliamentary Enquiry on Detention
<http://detentioninquiry.com/report/>

Family Re-unification

Britcits and others are working to amend family migration rules
<http://britcits.blogspot.co.uk/>

Settlement of Refugees

Citizens UK and others are working with local groups on resettlement
www.refugees-welcome.org.uk

Refugee Crisis

A list of how churches are and might respond is available on the CTBI website
<https://ctbi.org.uk/how-the-churches-are-responding-to-the-refugee-crisis/>

Message

Pope Francis – World Migrants Day 2015

https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20150912_world-migrants-day-2016.html

All web sources above as accessed on **20th December 2015**

For more information contact
**Canon Steven Saxby, London Churches Social Action,
Central Hall Westminster, Storey's Gate, SW1H 9NH.
Tel: 020 7654 3857; londonchurches@btinternet.com
or visit www.londonchurches.org.uk**