

A space of refuge and safety

LCRF Lenten Resources 2022

The London Churches Refugee Fund offers these prayers and reflections for the five Sundays in Lent, inviting you to use them for your personal prayers and devotions or in church services, fellowship and Lent house groups.

Each of the five parts relates to the lectionary readings for the five Sundays in Lent and includes a real-life case study reflecting the experience of refugees & asylum seekers in London.

All of the organisations referred to in the case studies have received grants from LCRF. While there may be no direct link between those grants and the cases described, the funds that we make available to them typically support destitute people with small subsistence payments, food, toiletries, phone credits, travel passes or other necessities. So in many cases the help provided to refugees or asylum seekers will be the result of your generous support of LCRF.



You can read more about our work, and how you can support it, at www.lcrf.org.uk. If, as you use these Lenten Resources, you feel moved to make a donation, you can find details of how to do that on the final page as well as on our website.

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Week 1 (Sunday March 6th)

From this week's [lectionary readings](#):

When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26, 6-9)

Case study

C had been accommodated by the Housing Justice hosting project for three years when he was finally granted refugee status, fourteen years after arriving in the UK.



As he prepared to leave the project and move on to the next stage of his life, he expressed how he feels he has benefitted from the project:

“The hosting project has made a really big difference to my life, more than I can say in words. I’ll never forget it. Having somewhere to live is the most important thing in life, and having £25 a week is so important when before we had nothing.

Before this I was sleeping on the streets for six years. When I was finally able to stay in a house, I couldn’t believe it. It was like a dream. I used not to be able to think well, sleeping on the street; my thoughts were very slow and confused, and I was depressed. Since being given somewhere to stay, I have been so much happier and more optimistic. I didn’t go to church when I was

sleeping on the streets because I was self-conscious about my appearance and hygiene. I didn’t think the other people at church would want me there or want to be close to me. Now I go to church regularly, and I am proud that I am taking care of myself and I am much more confident. I feel like a different person. Now I’m looking forward to the future, hoping to find a job and move on to my own flat, so I can live my own life.”

Reflection – ‘Home’

What rights do any of us have to live where we live, the place we call home? Is birth, inheritance, membership of a particular ethnic or linguistic group an automatic ticket to the good life?

In Deuteronomy the Jews are reminded to be thankful that they have arrived at the land of milk and honey, rather like settlers in North America reaching the bountiful lands after trekking west across the continent. For them, the period of wandering, being mistreated as aliens was at an end. They could enjoy their new settled status.

By contrast, Luke tells us about Jesus in the wilderness, a place few would want to call home. He fasts, he suffers. He is tempted and in his rejection of the easy way shows us that material considerations matter less than serving God.

We can't all experience the physical desert in the way Jesus did, but many refugees and migrants spend months, even years, in a wilderness of homelessness, sofa-surfing, sleeping on the streets.

'A wilderness of homelessness, sofa-surfing, sleeping on the streets'

They may not be able to return to the place of their birth and so home is where others welcome them.

A song that's a prayer

As part of its 2022 Borough of Culture celebration, Lewisham Council commissioned a choral piece by Barbara Dudek. Its words have been buzzing around my head.

Room for all, room for all, open your heart and look around.

Room for all, room for everyone, room for all the differences.

Hey, we've come a long way, travelling to places, loving, changing, longing for home.

Room for all, room for everyone, we are stronger when together, softly walking each other home.

May it be so – Amen

Stella Jeffrey, LCRF Trustee

Week 2 (Sunday March 13th)

From this week's [lectionary readings](#):

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27,1

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. Luke 13,34

Case study

F and her 8-year-old daughter were destitute and being sheltered by a church when they were referred to Streatham Day Centre (SDS). She was given a small grant of £10 and the bus fare to visit a local foodbank. Over a period of six months, she visited the Centre on a regular basis for ongoing advice and was also assisted by the NHS Health Inclusion Team. Throughout the summer (before Covid), mother and daughter attended SDS's programme of educational, community and fun activities, including visits to local parks and a trip to the seaside. Transport costs were provided to various appointments as part of the process of making an application to a local authority.

The family secured accommodation and subsistence support and continued to benefit from foodbank referrals. Both mother and daughter joined SDS's Saturday homework and family learning project, where F became a volunteer. Through a partnership with a local TechAid project a laptop has been provided so that they can continue to participate in online learning and activities. They are awaiting a decision on an application to regularise their status.

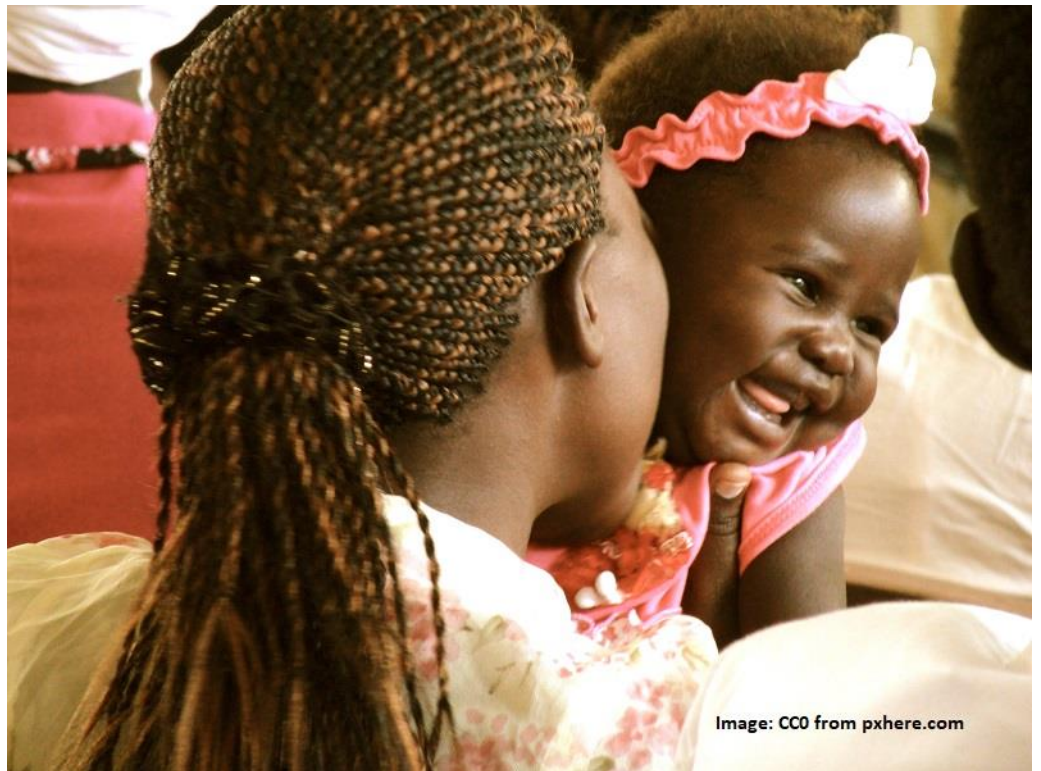
Reflection

Love is an undefinable, ephemeral quality which has lasting effects in our life. The centrality of Jesus' love for the world transformed individuals, communities and events and still continues to transform lives today. As a mother hen holds her wings open to envelop her chick, a lasting covenant and promise is shared and a space of refuge and safety is created. There is comfort and assurance of a love which protects and is everlasting.

'A space of refuge and safety is created... Love is sometimes action'

Love is sometimes action; standing up for situations which are unjust and wrong; walking alongside and sharing in the joy and trials of life and interceding when needed.

Julian of Norwich, an English medieval mystic, spoke of the loving Motherhood of God in some of her writings; 'It is our Lord's meaning, how we are redeemed again by the motherhood of mercy and grace into our natural home where we are made by the motherhood of natural love, a love which never leaves us.'



Prayer

In the moments of doubt and fear,
Hide me under the shadow of your wing as your love.

As an old way of living changes to a new,
Hide me under the shadow of your wing.

As I wait and find courage in your presence, O God,
Hide me under the shadow of your wing.

In the midst of your love,
Keep me as the apple of your eye.

Amen

Revd Roxane Liddell, LCRF Trustee

Week 3 (Sunday March 20th)

From this week's [lectionary readings](#):

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you... (Isaiah 55, 1 & 5)

Case study

For all organisations in the sector, lockdown meant changes in working practices had to be made very quickly to meet very different needs. In Croydon, the Home Office released more than 200 people from detention, and Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) were approached to support a number of ex-detainees.

B was picked up by the Homeless Outreach Team and put in a temporary hostel with Croydon's No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Team having agreed to support him, as no food was provided. Unfortunately, this support was very slow to come so CRDC gave him an emergency food parcel and a small cash grant on a Friday to tie him over until Monday. However, on Saturday he rang to say he was not allowed to share cooking pots, crockery, cutlery etc with others, so CRDC gave him the necessary equipment, even a cheap rice cooker as he came originally from a country where rice was eaten with every meal.

Unfortunately, the NRPF Team was overwhelmed and were unable to provide support for the next week, so CRDC gave him more food. They also put him in touch with the Samphire Project (ex-detainees support) who were prepared to give him a small grant. Because B didn't have a bank account, CRDC agreed to receive the Samphire grant and gave him the cash.

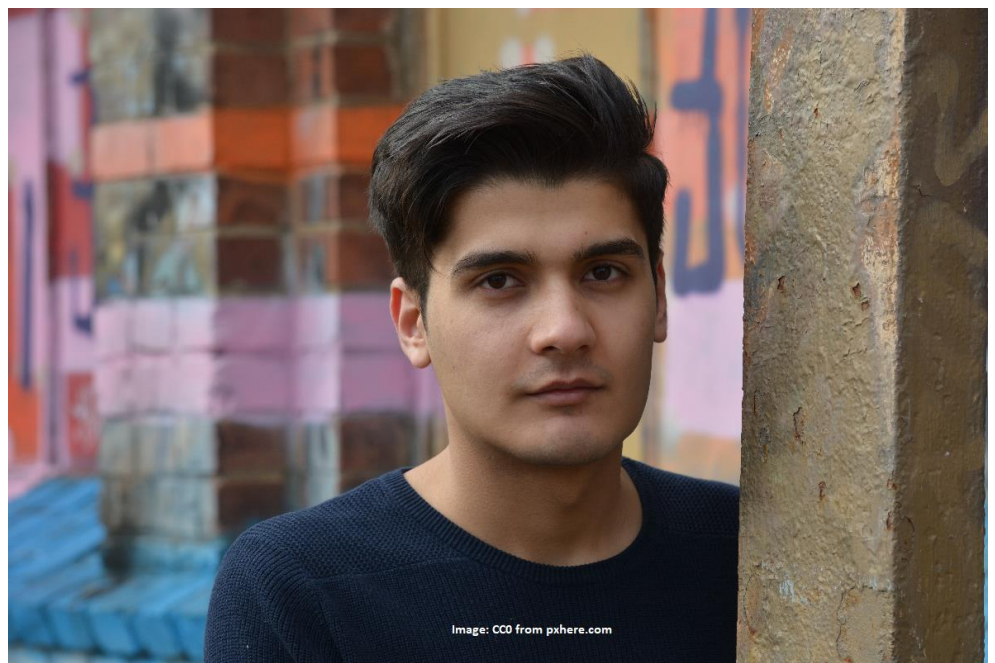


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Reflection

Today's readings focus on the New Covenant which will be established by the coming of Jesus. God's original Covenant with David was addressed to the people of Israel.

The new Covenant will encompass all peoples everywhere, 'nations that you do not know, and do not know you'; no-one will be excluded. God will care for all, will look after everyone, whoever they are.

The hungry, the thirsty, yearning for God, will be satisfied. They can always rely on God to provide for all their needs.

They are given a vision of a rich banquet, to which all are invited, the wedding feast of the Lamb about which Jesus taught us, the consummation of God's kingship.

We who try to follow Jesus are called to follow his actions, to care for all those in need, whoever they are. Those who belong to the groups we try to help, like all those who work and volunteer at Croydon Refugee Day Centre, are always willing to go the extra

'...always willing to go the extra mile'

mile, to do that little bit extra, like hunting for a rice cooker, or giving cash to someone without a bank account to receive a much-needed grant. They are an example to us all.



Prayer

Lord, help us all to see you in everyone you have created.

Give us the strength and courage to fight for those who have been forced to flee their homes, their families, their native land. Sustain and support those who struggle to help them to find security and new relationships in a strange country.

And inspire us all to be faithful stewards of creation, working to protect your world of justice and peace.

Amen

Robina Rafferty, LCRF Trustee

Week 4 (Sunday March 27th)

From this week's [lectionary readings](#):

The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal to this day. Joshua 5, 9.

We had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found. Luke 15, 32.

Case study

M came to the London Jesus Centre (LJC)'s ESOL classes as a beginner, having never attended school in her own country, so had many barriers to overcome, including an eye condition resulting in extremely poor eyesight.

LJC produced large print worksheets for M and gave her the extra support needed. They supported her with travel money to attend lessons for several months, and through immense determination she progressed from barely being able to write her own name to studying at L1 (Upper Intermediate Level). She now has refugee status, and can support herself.



Reflection

“I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.” I wonder why exile is so closely linked to shame, both in the Bible and in the world today? It wasn't the Israelites' fault that they were enslaved in Egypt. Jesus himself freely chose to share the experience of exile, and its shame, when he lived among us; Paul speaks of it as God having made him to be sin who had no sin. Refugees among us in London today are by and large treated with hostility, whatever the circumstances of their coming here, and they wouldn't be human if they didn't internalise some of that consistent mistrust.

Shame is toxic. We know from the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 that God just doesn't do shame. What God does is welcome, healing, restoration, forgiveness (where it's needed), delight, empowerment, honour and celebration of his imperfect, weary, damaged children.

If we have experienced that extravagant welcome ourselves, then how are we going to treat the exile in our own city? - with some of the same welcome; with empathy; with practical help; offering everything we can to help the newcomer to shine, as the London Jesus Centre helped M.

'God just doesn't do shame. What God does is welcome, healing, restoration...'

Prayer

Super-generous God,
Who chooses to be an exile among us,
teach us to welcome others as we would welcome you;
to honour our sisters and brothers
who are exiles from their home country,
and to let their light shine.
Amen

Revd Maggie Hindley, LCRF Trustee

Week 5 (Sunday April 3rd)

From this week's [lectionary readings](#):

Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters,

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43, 16 & 19.

Case Study

A left Sudan in 2017 after government persecution for being accused of supporting rebels. He was trafficked while in Libya, kept in rooms with as many as 200 people, ransomed, sold several times, working without pay and with minimal food. He finally crossed the Mediterranean in February 2019, eventually reaching Calais before making the journey across the Channel in September 2020. He was rushed to hospital on arrival, due to immediate medical problems, but was discharged to a hotel without any understanding of how to seek further medical support despite having diabetes, impaired eyesight, stomach ulcers, and the lingering effects of torture to his feet. The inappropriate food in the hotel, and its irregular arrival, put him at huge risk of further complications. Waging Peace spoke to A on the phone through a volunteer interpreter and were able to offer him a small grant of £40 to buy food items to manage his blood sugar levels throughout the day. They also made him a local GP appointment to get proper medicine and insulin. They connected him to Sudanese community groups and sourced some winter clothing, and worked with his lawyer to offer assistance in substantiating his claim.

**'Trafficked...
ransomed ... sold
several times'**



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Entering into the story

Set aside 15 minutes each day this week to enter with the Holy Spirit into A's story.

Ask God to show you what he wants you to see and to learn from it. Then read A's story again slowly several times as you enter into it imaginatively in the light of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection and Prayer

Imagine what it must have been like to have to flee the brutal persecution and the horrors of Sudan in 2017; to endure torture, kidnap and slavery; to be trafficked, lost and alone and far from home. Imagine the terror of the escape, crossing the Mediterranean in winter, then the journey across Europe and the challenge of the channel. All the while suffering debilitating injuries from torture; living on the edge of a diabetic coma; with no idea where healing, support, and help would come from. Only to find on reaching the UK that no one really seemed to care.

BUT THEN: the relief of that phone call from Waging Peace, the security of £40 a week made possible by the London Churches Refugee Fund, and the loving and skilled support at Waging Peace leading to healing and safety.

Now listen to the Lord God who made a way in the sea for 'A', a path in the mighty waters for this persecuted, tortured, trafficked, lost, man. Listen as God says to you in the midst of the fears and seemingly insurmountable obstacles you face:

“Behold....I am about to do a new thing.... Now it springs forth; I am making a way in the sea for you, a path in the mighty waters for you, I will make a way in your wilderness, and rivers to spring up in your desert, to give drink to my chosen...”



And as the dawn of Easter grows brighter each day this week, take heart from A's epic journey, that God will never fail you nor forsake you, that He will make a way in the sea and rivers in the desert for you, just as He did for 'A'.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, Amen

Revd Chris Brice – LCRF Chair and Trustee

Donating to LCRF

We'd really love you to make a small donation each month, which needn't be a major commitment. Just £10 per month will mean we recognise you as a Foundation Donor. If you are able to give more than that, even better!

You can make either regular donations online through Paypal, or by standing order. It really helps us to know that we have money coming in regularly. See the various options below for either regular or one-off giving.

Don't forget to Gift Aid your donation if you are eligible. Your £10 a month will become £150 a year to us with Gift Aid. If you donate online you will be offered a Gift Aid option. If you donate by other means, see below.

Donation options

One-off or regular donations online

Use the 'Donate' button at the top of our website, www.lcrf.org.uk. Or go direct to our Paypal Giving Fund page: <https://tinyurl.com/LCRFund>. Or to donate from a CAF account go to <https://tinyurl.com/LCRFcaf>. All of these routes should also give you a Gift Aid option.

Set up a standing order manually

Go to the Donate section of www.lcrf.org.uk where you can download a combined standing order / Gift Aid form. Or contact the Treasurer (details below) for a form. Return the completed form to the address shown on it.

One-off donations by BACS or cheque

Our bank account details are: **London Churches Refugee Fund, Account no 65231704; Sort Code 08-92-99**. Cheques should be made payable to the London Churches Refugee Fund and sent to The Treasurer, London Churches Refugee Fund, 144 Ladywell Road, London SE13 7HU.

To Gift Aid a BACS donation you still need to download the form from our website and send it separately.

If you experience any problems with any of these options, please contact our Treasurer, davebond144@hotmail.co.uk, for assistance.

