

LCRF LENT RESOURCES 2023

INTRODUCTION

The London Churches Refugee Fund offers these prayers and reflections for the five Sundays in Lent, inviting you to use them for your 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.

If you would like to donate, please be assured all funds that we make are made available to organisations typically supporting 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.

Find us at:

www.lcrf.org.uk

Help4Refugees
@LCR_Fund

WEEK 1

SUNDAY 26TH FEBRUARY

You are a place for me to hide in; you
preserve me from trouble; you surround
me with songs of deliverance
(Psalm 32.8)

READINGS

Genesis 2.15-15, 3.1-7

Psalm 32

Romans 5.12-19

Matthew 4.1-11

CONSIDER

The temptation of Christ in the wilderness (Matthew 4, 1-7) is our inspiration for the 40 days of Lent. 40 days may seem extreme but present-day hunger strikers, like Richard Radcliffe who made headlines to free his wife Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and the example of Muslim friends fasting during Ramadan should encourage us. Many people will use Lent to give up little luxuries, like biscuits or chocolate, or sugar in their tea. Others may resolve to use their time more productively, to make an effort to deal with a difficult relationship or to study a book or a section of scripture.

At first, we find it hard to resist falling back into our usual habits and in this pale imitation of the temptations of Eve and of Jesus in the wilderness, the serpent beguiles us – just one sweet won't make a difference or perhaps we can start again tomorrow. It's not as if breaking our resolve will lead to a shattering transformation as happened to Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The passage from Romans complements the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience. I cannot read this passage without hearing in my mind Handel's setting of 'Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead' with its contrasting dynamics, speeds and keys all elaborating the message. If you don't already know it, this section of The Messiah, is well worth listening to.

REFLECT

Psalm 32 tells us a success story – what happens when transgressions are acknowledged and forgiven? Facing up to some things may be painful but, in the end, we will be able to rejoice. As a chorister, I am often too busy singing the chant right to appreciate the meaning of the psalms, so this week I am going to re-read Psalm 32 very carefully.

At the beginning of Lent when we may be concentrating on reducing our consumption, let us also consider those around us who are struggling with everyday living. As I try to cut down, I remember what so many have had to give up when seeking asylum or becoming a refugee; their homes, their way of life, and sometimes their families. What I have to give up is nothing in comparison.

PRAY

(Psalm 32)

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

2 Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

3 While I kept silent, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up[a] as by the heat of summer. Selah

5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

6 Therefore let all who are faithful
offer prayer to you;

at a time of distress,[b] the rush of mighty waters
shall not reach them.

7 You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;

you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. Selah

PRAY (CONT)

- 8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- 9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,
else it will not stay near you.
- 10 Many are the torments of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.
- 11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Stella Jeffrey
Trustee



WEEK 2

SUNDAY 5TH MARCH

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and our kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. (Genesis 12.1)

READINGS

Genesis 23.1-4

Psalm 121

Romans 4.1-5, 13-17

John 3.1-17

CONSIDER

Today's readings are about faith, and about journeying. Abraham, the father of the Judaeo-Christian religion, is called by God to leave his country, his family and his father's house for an unknown country hundreds of miles away. He is 75, not a young man, probably looking forward to a restful old age, supported by his family. Yet his faith leads him to accept God's call without question. He trusts, as the psalm tells us: "My help shall come from the Lord, who made heaven and earth".

REFLECT

Pope Francis's message to the World Day of Migrants and Refugees last autumn was to urge us to "build the future with migrants and refugees", that is to travel with migrants and refugees in journeying towards and building the Kingdom of God. "God's plan is essentially inclusive and gives priority to those living on the .. peripheries. Among them are many migrants and refugees, displaced persons and victims of trafficking. The Kingdom of God is to be built with them, for without them it would not be the Kingdom that God wants."

PRAY

Lord, give us strength and compassion to welcome migrants and asylum-seekers who have journeyed so far to flee war, persecution and torture, sustained by faith in a just and compassionate society. They have left behind family and friends whom they may never see again. May we play our part in helping them to settle in decent homes, develop new relationships, and to access work, where appropriate. Give us also the courage to stand up for what is right, and challenge the unjust structures and attitudes in our society which are so hostile to those seeking asylum and cannot recognize their gifts to us.

We ask this in your name, O Lord.

Robina Raffety
Trustee

WEEK 3

SUNDAY 12TH MARCH

They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world. (John 4.42)

READINGS

Exodus 17.1-7

Psalms 95

Romans 5.1-11

John 4.5-42

CONSIDER

How we treat people in need of help, refugees and asylum seekers, women and children, and the most vulnerable is an indication of the society we proclaim to be. How do we welcome those running from persecution and violence? How do we make the traumatised and vulnerable feel safe? How do we extend a hand of welcome to those from a different land?

Jesus exemplifies this in this relational meeting with the Samaritan woman in the way he treats her, even though she is from a people against his people, a woman with an unconventional life scorned and shamed by others; he looks beyond this and sees her, acknowledges her.

Many all over the world, including in this country, could use this as a model to treat women with equitable openness, respect and dignity, whomever they are and wherever they are from. Where moments of vulnerability are not preyed upon, scorned or ridiculed but encompassed in a place of speaking the truth and listening. They become a place of safety.

For it is in this openness, this safeness, with all our wounds, physical and emotional, however, they may look, that those in need learn to live again, to trust again and to deal with past hurts. Life can be changed irreversibly.

REFLECT

Don't we all deserve the opportunity at our most vulnerable times to be encompassed in a place of safety? Don't all women deserve to be safe?

PRAY

Almighty and ever-loving God,
May your love forever be with us
in the messiness of life,
in the grief of life.
May your presence through
the life of your Son Jesus Christ,
continually challenge us
to transform and change
this world into a place where
all are accepted, and all are respected,
and where all are loved.
We pray that women seeking asylum,
who are refugees, fleeing
violence and torture and
carrying the effects of trauma
in their lives, find places
of safety and sanctuary.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

Revd. Roxane Liddell
Trustee



WEEK 4

SUNDAY 19TH MARCH

The Lord is my shepherd; therefore I lack nothing. (Psalm 23.1)

READINGS

1 Samuel 16.1-13

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5.1-14

John 9

CONSIDER

Travelling mercies

We are all travellers. We are all on a journey, whether across the world or in imagination. We may be travelling from danger to safety, from poverty to security, from being a nobody to fulfilment and recognition. Perhaps that's why Psalm 23, with its itinerant sheep, is so well-loved.

REFLECTION

The sheep who speaks Psalm 23 needs certain things – nourishment and rest and peace. A guiding hand and companionship through life's darkest hours. Rescue from getting stuck in a tight corner. And restoration, at the end of the journey, and dignity, and the chance to say thank you and to give something back.

We've probably all known that pattern over the course of our lives. We've experienced danger or desolation or both and been led, kindly, to a good conclusion. Psalm 23 is a template of how God works with us.

And if we have travelled across the world to find a place of safety, how much more is this psalm likely to resonate with us. Few refugees who end up in our city escape basic material want; most of them have a great longing for green pastures and still waters to

rest from the harshness of their environment; they need guidance and support to deal with foreign authorities in a foreign land in a foreign language. Sometimes it must feel as though their situation here is worse than the one they've left; that they've lost their way and wasted their life. How wonderful to be brought through to a place of celebration, where those who have disbelieved them are proved wrong. How wonderful to be able to live a life of thankfulness and service and giving back. Migrants long for travelling mercies.

And those of us who are settled here can do a lot to make their journey easier and more successful by our gifts and our friendship, and through speaking out against injustice and oppression. We can be the channel for some of those travelling mercies. It's a huge privilege.

PRAY

Good Shepherd,
who has guided us in our life's journey
and who guides us still,
we pray for the newcomers to our city and country
who have survived long and difficult journeys
and who have not yet found their new home.
May we know them as our fellow-travellers
and share with them some of the abundance
we have received from you;
kindness and generosity;
support and fresh hope when hope is wearing thin;
being believed and respected;
taking part in the dance of life;
finding a place;
serving others
as you served,

Revd. Maggie Hindley
Trustee



WEEK 5

SUNDAY 26TH MARCH

Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice; let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication. (Psalm 130 v 1,2)

READINGS

Ezekiel 37.1-14
Psalm 130
Romans 8.6-11
John 11.1-45

CONSIDER

Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice; let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication. "(Psalm 130 v 1,2)

From 12.30pm to 1.30pm on the third Monday of every month a group of about 20 Christians from a variety of denominations gather outside the Home Office in Marsham Street to pray that the UK Government would stop passing ever more hostile refugee and asylum legislation, and would instead adopt a much more positive and welcoming environment for all those people who arrive in the UK, by whatever means, in search of safety, sanctuary and security.

REFLECT

The liturgy at the monthly vigils consists of prayers, worship songs, a short homily, confession and Bible reading. And at every Vigil we read the names or details of the hundreds of people who have died in the corresponding month the previous year trying to obtain sanctuary in Europe or in the UK. We read them so as to honour their lives and to mourn the injustice of their deaths. Most are unknown, as in this extract from the list we read on Monday January 16th 2023. But, as *Pope Francis* said, "everyone has a name, a face, and a story". (Note the extraordinary number of those whose names are unknown).

On 30/01/22, a woman, called *Happiness Johans*, from Nigeria, died of burns in hospital in Nador, Morocco, after her shelter in a migrant camp caught fire; her three children were burned alive.

On 27/01/22 36 unknown people from Egypt, and Sudan, were drowned after their boat to Italy, capsized 44 km off Zarzis (Tunisia); 6 bodies found, 30 missing, 34 rescued.

On 25/01/22 18, unknown people from Africa were drowned on the way to the Canary Islands (Spain), emergency services, reacted too late; 9 rescued.

On 25/01/22 JK, a man, from Afghanistan, was hit by a train, his body was found next to the railway in Tabanovce (north Macedonia) near the Kosovo border.

On 16/01/22 45 unknown people, including 3 babies, 14 women, 26 men, were drowned, when their boat sank off the coast of Tarfaya (Morocco), on the way to the Canaries; 2 bodies were found, 43 missing, 10 rescued.

These are just **5** of the **40** separate tragic incidents recorded in January 2022, and read out at the Vigil on Monday 16th January 2023, outside the Home Office. That list recorded over 300 deaths that month. (A copy of the Vigil Liturgy and the full list of names and incidents from January's vigil can be found at www.lcrf.org.uk)

And it is "Out of the depths" that these dear souls cry to us from their anonymous graves in the oceans.....

PRAY

"Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace, Amen."

"Stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray, watch and pray x 3 (Taize).

PRAY *for the people listed in the extract in this reflection.*

VISIT *and read the full list of 40 tragic incidents listed in the January liturgy (see www.lcrf.org.uk).*

READ *pray and reflect on the full January liturgy.*

CONSIDER *putting time aside to attend the monthly vigils outside the Home Office in Marsham Street on the 3rd Monday of each month.*

**For further details contact info@lcrf.org.uk
Revd. Chris Brice, Chair**