**Refugees**

*"you have to understand,
no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land."*

*(Somali-British poet Warsan Shire)*

***Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left during the night for Egypt (Matthew 2:14)***

* The refugee crisis is a global crisis; the problem is not unique to Europe, it just so happens that Europe hasn’t seen anything like it in recent decades. 86% of refugees globally are hosted in developing countries. 1 in 3 people in Jordan is a refugee, 1 in 4 in Lebanon. In the UK it is 1 in 525.
* People flee because they have reasons to fear for their lives. It is a rational survival strategy once other options have been exhausted. Refugees all have places they call home and where they would rather be. They have lost most of their possessions, they have often lost loves ones and most of all, they have lost hope.
* Global refugee conventions and protocols are still important but are largely framed around individual cases; when there are mass movements of people, the normal procedures cannot be adhered to. (Under optimal circumstances Greece could process 1,500 refugees a month; arrivals on single days have often exceeded this number).
* The distinction between refugees and economic migrants is not easy to make. Most so-called economic migrants arriving on Europe’s shores have risked their lives; have been exploited by people smugglers and officials and have usually escaped situations where hope is very limited or absent.

Whatever we do for refugees, we should consider the following questions:

1. Can we enhance safety and dignity and avoid negative consequences when we try to help?
2. Can we provide the basics without barriers? (Who do we give any material support to, have we considered those without a voice or whose voices may not easily be heard?)
3. Have we asked people what they need and did we go back to them to check that we did the right thing; did we listen to their comments and complaints?
4. Do we give opportunities to refugees to think and act for themselves? Have we considered what their skills are, what knowledge they have and what their networks are, etc.? How can we help them claim their rights and entitlements? How do we give them the opportunity to step out of dependency and do things for themselves?

**Give**: support development agencies and refugee support organisations; be careful with donations in kind.

**Act:** support the strangers in our midst; challenge language that degrades and de-humanises, challenge fear and hatred, correct misconceptions, do not allow anyone to disown the problem.

**Pray**: for an end to violence, for hope, for a change of heart of those who have it within their power to bring about change, for international collaboration and for people to do the right things.

***When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.*** *(Leviticus 19:33-34)*