

## Quick Guide to Prayer

Below are some ideas you may find helpful.

### Prayer for asylum seekers and refugees

Pray for individuals you know. Not just for their immediate physical needs, but for their mental and spiritual health as well. They may be suffering trauma, or grief at separation from friends and family. Pray for their asylum case, for their integration into society, and for good friendships.

If you don't know any personally, then pray for those making the hazardous journey to Europe, for their safety, health and that they find sanctuary.

When someone gets refugee status, it's not the end of their problems. Finding accommodation, navigating the benefits system, paying the bills and finding a job are all immensely more difficult for someone who is not British.

- *If you work in a Christian refugee organisation, start the day with prayer. It's the most productive thing you can do!*
- *If you have asylum seekers or refugees in your church, then pray with and for them. You could even have a special meeting to do that.*

### Prayer for decision-makers

Many asylum caseworkers are very young, just a year or two out of university. They have a huge responsibility, making decisions that will affect lives for many years to come. Pray for wisdom and compassion. Often they are constrained by the guidance they are given, but you can pray that they allow their clients to tell their story, and ask reasonable questions. Above all pray that they treat asylum seekers with fairness and dignity.

Pray also for the immigration judges who decide asylum appeals. Once an appeal has been refused, it is difficult to challenge the decision and to find evidence for a fresh asylum claim. Pray that they are able to put themselves in the shoes of those they are judging. This is not easy for people who have lived privileged, sheltered lives in a safe country. Pray too that they accept the testimony of Christian leaders in conversion cases.

### Prayer for a just system

Most of all, pray for an asylum system based not on fear and the desire to limit numbers, but on compassion and respect. Unlike the criminal justice system, where innocence is assumed until otherwise proven, asylum seekers have to prove their claim. Often that is impossible to do, as documentary evidence is difficult to obtain and, if caught with it when fleeing their country of origin, it would almost certainly lead to imprisonment, torture and even death.

Over the past 20 years, asylum policy has become harsher. Every Immigration Act since 1999 has made life here tougher for those seeking sanctuary. Asylum benefits are well below the poverty line, detentions for those who have committed no crime have increased year on year, and the 1951 Refugee Convention is interpreted narrowly in the UK to prevent more positive decisions. Many genuine refugees are refused asylum and made destitute, with no recourse to public funds. The system needs a radical overhaul.

- *Look out for new policies and legislation around asylum and immigration. Often these are brought in without a parliamentary vote: pray that unjust legislation will not come into force.*
- *Pray for the Prime Minister, Home Secretary and Immigration Minister. They are the ones that ultimately make the policies and ensure they are implemented.*
- *Pray for those solicitors and human rights organisations that challenge injustice in the system and lobby for change.*
- *Pray for the All Party Parliamentary Groups that scrutinise areas of government and make recommendations, especially the APPGs on Religious Freedom and Refugees.*

### **Prayer for the countries of origin**

There would be no need to offer sanctuary for refugees if their countries of origin respected human rights and were free from corruption and war. You can find out which countries are producing the refugees on the [Refugee Council Website](#) in their quarterly statistical updates. Some states, such as Eritrea, Iran and Pakistan, persecute Christians and other minorities. Others, such as Afghanistan and Somalia, are ruled by warlords and ethnic factions. A little research will help you to pray with understanding.

- *If you have a number of believers from a specific country in your church, why not organise an information and prayer event? It will educate your fellow Christians, bless your refugees and, above all, please God!*

### **Prayer for a culture of welcome**

With a press that is largely anti-immigrant and a government that has promised a hostile environment for those it deems should not be here, newly arrived sanctuary seekers are likely to feel they are not welcome. Praying that they will be welcomed, especially by those in the Church, can be the difference between isolation and integration. Pray for the [City of Sanctuary](#) movement to grow and gain in influence, and for all asylum seekers to find friendship in the UK.

### **Prayer for the media**

The way that refugees are portrayed in the media, especially the newspapers, influences huge numbers of people. Often the portrayal is biased or factually inaccurate, but refugees are not in a position to challenge or correct the errors. As a result many people view refugees as terrorists, rapists or thugs, and assume that the country is being 'swamped' by them. They are blamed for everything from the pressures on schools and the NHS to the shortage of housing in the UK. Pray for accurate reporting and positive stories as well as negative ones.