

June 2016

Providing Hospitality Support for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Introduction

This note suggests ways in which parishes and parishioners can provide hospitality support to asylum seekers and refugees. It includes case studies of Anglican agencies and parishes, to show some activities that are already being provided, and what is possible.

Each Parish will decide how it is best able to assist asylum seekers and refugees, having regard to the people and skills, and the financial resources available to the Parish.

We all need to meet, communicate and laugh with others, and to feel that we are valued and accepted, especially when we are in a new environment. Asylum seekers and refugees are no exception.

Providing hospitality need not be expensive, but requires us to give our time and friendship to welcome the 'strangers' in our midst so that they may feel valued as our friends and neighbours.

For further information, please contact: Archdeacon Jan Crombie,
email jcrombie@melbourneanglican.org.au.

We can also put you in touch with other parishes and agencies who can give you expert and practical advice.

Forms of Hospitality Support

There are many ways that we can provide support, limited only by our imagination. Some of the more common forms of support are

- Helping asylum seekers navigate their way around our community services and resources, including Centrelink, hospitals, transport, schools, asylum seeker support services such as the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Anglicare and other support agencies, and so on.
- Helping families move into new premises – helping them to obtain basic items of furniture, fridge, microwave oven, beds, bedclothing etc, and helping them to move their belongings into a new residence.
- Visiting asylum seeker and refugee families in their homes for a cup of tea and a short talk. These visits can help put asylum seekers at their ease, to help them get to know you better, to discuss problems they may be experiencing, for example with food or furnishing needs, children's education, how to get help with expenses, how to take care of the garden.
- Hosting a periodic get-together in your neighbourhood of asylum seekers and refugees, together with your friends or acquaintances, to share each others' company and food.
- Taking asylum seekers out on an excursion, with your family and an asylum seeker family, or in a larger group.



Things you will need to consider

Before offering hospitality support, you will need to consider the implications of providing support. We have set out a range of things for you to consider before proceeding with your project - see the resource 'Assisting Asylum Seekers and Refugees – Discerning Parish Capacity'.

Case study:

St. Mary's Anglican and St. Andrew's Uniting churches, Sunbury, held a weekend-long event in November 2015 to welcome asylum seekers.

The weekend included hosting asylum seekers in homes, a picnic at Hanging Rock, a bush dance and dinner on the Saturday night, and a picnic on Sunday after church. Asylum seekers all attended church services on the Sunday with a number sharing their story in the services, accompanied by the tears of parishioners. One parishioner summed up the weekend by stating: "This has been fantastic. I had formed an opinion about asylum seekers from what I had seen on the news. Now I have met them and got to know them as people, I have changed my view completely".



For other examples of Anglican parishes working in a range of ways to support refugees and asylum seekers see the *TMA* website at <http://tma.melbourneanglican.org.au/parishes/asylum-seekers>

See what other churches are doing:

Case study:

St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish, Blackburn

The Social Justice Group, which works together with the local St Vincent de Paul (SVdP) conference, is very active in supporting asylum seekers, with the following activities undertaken consistently –

- Letter writing to MPs and others
- Frequent visits to the Broadmeadows Detention Centre. All visits are co-ordinated by a member of the Group.
- Every February the school and parish come together to make up a very large food gathering and Living Collections week. Sr. Brigid Arthur visits the parish and talks to the schoolchildren beforehand. The goods collected are given to the ASRC and the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project. During this week, parishioners are invited to donate to a special Social Justice Group bank account if they want to, or have difficulty bringing goods to church or school during the week. Funds raised are used to assist asylum seekers and refugee families .
- Visiting some asylum seeker families at home to show hospitality through referrals from Red Cross, Villa Maria, etc.
- Documenting government policies and the Parish's response to those policies.
- Contribute frequently to the parish newsletter.