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## News from the NW Synod 16 September 2015

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### 1: Andrew Mills' Induction

*Revd Nigel Uden, Revd Andrew Mills and Andy Braunston*



Around 200 people celebrated the official start of Andrew's ministry with us as our moderator last Saturday at St Peter's Church & Chaplaincy in Manchester. This four way Local Ecumenical Partnership has a modern building which is used by students as well as the resident congregation. The Chinese Choir from St Peter's sung to us before worship started and musicians drawn, mainly, from Bamford Chapel and Trinity, Moss Side led us in a mix of modern and traditional hymns in a service presided over

by Mr John Ellis, Moderator of General Assembly. The Revd Nigel Uden reflected on the clay jars that St Paul wrote about in 2 Corinthians 4 into which God entrusts extraordinary gifts. People from across our Synod led different parts of the service – the Revd Sarah Moore led the Call to Worship and Prayer of Approach, Angela Bogg from the South Area gave one of the readings (a young member of Andrew's former congregation in Staplehurst gave the other), the prayers were led by the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner Carol Sutcliffe and our clerk, Andy Braunston, outlined the process of the appointment and welcomed Andrew into this new role on behalf of the Synod. Andrew told us a little about his ecumenical spiritual journey which had led him into ministry and we were delighted to have Anglican, Baptist, Catholic and Methodist representatives there too. The service was an uplifting, and lively, start to Andrew's ministry amongst us.

*Andy Braunston Clerk, NW Synod 07944 378049*

**2: A set of keys were found** outside the Arts Council on Lever Street Manchester. The keys have a URC key fob and a 'Fitness All' fob. Please contact the office on 0161 789 5583 or [admin@nwsynod.org.uk](mailto:admin@nwsynod.org.uk)

### **3: Wedding Selfie**

In what is a first for Chorley United Reformed Church, the wedding of Karl Eastham and Steph Parkinson was 'paused' immediately after they had made their vows so that the couple could take a 'selfie'.

The couple were keen to capture the atmosphere of the day and to have a permanent record of that special moment when they really were 'newlywed'.

They had wanted to include a 'selfie' moment from their first wedding plans, but weren't sure how the minister would react or if it was even allowed.

They needn't have worried, the minister of Chorley United Reformed Church, Revd Martin Whiffen, was delighted. He said "We encourage couples to create their own wedding service, saying vows and including prayers that are personal to them. It's great when couples choose to include something quirky or off the wall to make their day special." Revd Whiffen was so taken by the idea of having a 'selfie' during the service, that he shared the moment himself by using his smartphone to take a photo of his own.

**4: URC North Western Synod is providing a local training event to help churches make the most of their Season of Invitation**, on: **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September at 7-30pm**  
The training will take place at: **The United Reformed Church of St Andrew & St George, Bolton, BL1 2BX.**

Michael Harvey (co-founder of Back to Church Sunday) will provide interactive and relevant training, which will be useful for ministers and any churchgoers interested in making the most of opportunities to invite people to church. Across the 2 hour workshop, you will

- Learn how to produce a unique mission field for your church at any given time
- Be given tools to identify distorted thinking in your church
- Discover the creative power of fear
- Receive a number of emotional mental and physical approaches for developing a culture of invitation
- Learn best practice from Season of Invitation

Please Book Your Place on the A Season of Invitation training at

<https://urcnorthwesterntraining.eventbrite.co.uk>. The training sessions are free to attend, **and the first 10 churches** to register for the initiative will receive a free **Traidcraft Invitation Pack**

### **Please Note**

Those attending the meeting who do not know this church may find the following information helpful:

There are a few steps immediately inside the front door, but there is a chair lift.

If anyone uses sat nav to find us, the church postcode is **BL1 2BX**. But car parking immediately outside the church is restricted to disabled permit holders only.

There is a good NCP pay car park very near to the church. This is known as Topp Way Car Park (BL1 2DJ). Vehicle entry is from a small link road off Topp Way (A673) if going from east to west, or from the same link road off St Georges Road if going from west to east. The pedestrian exit is at the opposite end of the car park. Leaving the car park on foot, turn right, walk down to the traffic lights (50 yds or so). The church is on the opposite corner.

## 5: Diaries and prayer handbooks

We will have a small stock of diaries and prayer handbooks available **at lunch time only** on a first come first served basis at the Synod meeting on 10 October at Greenmount URC.

Diaries are £7.

Midnight blue – hardback

Red – softback

Baby blue – softback

Purple – hardback

Prayer handbook, 'Hidden in plain sight' £6.50 or £10 Prayer handbook plus CD.

## 6: Prayers for the Prayer Handbook

You may be aware that we are changing the way we gather prayers for the United Reformed Church's *prayer handbook*.

We are, for the first time, including non-commissioned prayers and are positively encouraging submissions from every part of our diverse denomination.

The prayer handbook will continue to follow the lectionary, and we have added a theme – Feasts and Festivals – to help inspire our authors.

Further details, including guidelines and timetables, are available on the URC website [here](#) and I would be most grateful if you could widely promote these across your networks; and synods, please do add this news to your synod websites and newsletters, noting that the first deadline for receipt of prayers is 2 November.

*Emma Pearce PA to the press office*

**7: The United Reformed Church reviews historic abuse cases.** The United Reformed Church (URC) has started a confidential process of reviewing all ministers' files; the specialist team undertaking the work are looking for any historic incidents of inappropriate behaviour or abuse that may have been covered up or overlooked at the time they occurred.

The review process has been carefully structured and, in its first phase, specialist readers will review around 2,500 files – the records of everyone who has held ministerial office – both Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers – in the denomination since its inception in 1972. The specialist readers have a wide brief and are looking for evidence of anyone who has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child or vulnerable adult. The type of abuse that may be uncovered could include sexual or physical abuse, harassment and bullying. It is hoped that this initial triage will be completed by the end of November 2015.

Any files deemed to require further specialist scrutiny will be referred to an independent safeguarding consultant who will further examine these files. An anonymised report on these initial findings will be presented to the URC's Mission Council – its executive body – in March 2016, though urgent issues will be managed as they arise.

Phase two of the process – a six-month period of public consultation – will begin when phase one ends next spring. During these six months anyone with concerns about the past behaviour of any member of the United Reformed Church can report their concerns. "We will take each such allegation seriously, listen carefully and take such action as appropriate," said the Revd Richard Church, the URC's Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) who is responsible for managing the review process.

He added: “We are committed to appropriately addressing any cases of historic abuse that have occurred within a United Reformed church context, or by perpetrators connected with the denomination and we will work to ensure that appropriate care and support is available to all affected by the outworking of this process. I am satisfied that the process we have put in place is transparent, comprehensive and robust.”

The United Reformed Church has been in discussion with representatives of survivors groups and with other denominations in the UK that have run similar historic reviews. The URC’s safeguarding procedures have recently been updated and are [available here](#).

## 8: Pioneer Hub for Greater Manchester.



Home is a registered charity, community centre and café in Didsbury, and will act as host for the proposed Pioneer Hub - a hub for training, networking and resourcing those engaged in contextual mission in the region. The hub is open to all but with a particular focus on those interested, or currently involved in, pioneer ministry in all its forms.

There are three elements to the hub:

- 1: Resourcing Learning
- 2: Supporting Practitioners
- 3: Networking Strategically

We will be looking primarily to CMS to assist us with these three areas and view them as our main partner in this piece of work.

Hosting the hub events at Home (located in Emmanuel Church) is crucial to our pedagogy, as Home provides an example of contextual mission where theory and practice come together and is thus perfectly suited to our learning.

We will seek support from The Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Team under the leadership of +Chris, and through this hope that the Pioneer Hub becomes a resource for the three denominations involved with the Greater Manchester FEAST.

Those involved with hub will also be invited to commit to living by the Five Rhythms of Grace and becoming part of the Peregrini community. Each evening will start with Evening Prayer from the community, enabling the hub to be based in a commitment to a shared rule of life and pattern of prayer.

### **Year One: Sept 2015 – July 2016**

#### Events

- Launch Event - Saturday in Emmanuel Church, Home providing hospitality. Bishop invites people.
- Six events over the first year.
- Mixture of external speakers, local stories and small group learning circles.
- CMS help to resource, hosted locally and networked locally, promoted through the Diocese, CMS and other denominations.

## Development

Work with Diocese, other partner denomination and CMS to launch an Authorised Lay Pioneer Minister Scheme in Sept 2016.

## Year Two

- Increase to a pattern of eight events over the year but alongside this launch the ALPM scheme.
- ALPM scheme consists of three modules over the year:
  - 2 x CMS modules (perhaps starting with a week long intensive)
  - 1 x locally written module
- July 2017 – Service of authorisation with Bishop.

## Development

Train ALPM mentors to mentor ALPMs once authorised.

## Year Three

- Continue the pattern of eight events and the ALPM scheme.
- Launch mentoring scheme where experienced pioneers walk alongside those recently commission ALPM's.

*Ben Edson and Hannah Heasley*

## 9: Westminster College Open Day



### **Westminster College Open Day Saturday 17th October 2015 10am - 4.30pm**

Including the Service of Celebration and  
Commemoration of Benefactors

Theme: Westminster in the World



You are warmly invited to join us for our forthcoming annual Open Day. Whether you know the college well or are a newcomer, you'll be made most welcome. Come and get a flavour of life here in the URC's Resource Centre for Learning in the east and experience fascinating insights into the college's heritage and vision.

The Service of Celebration and Commemoration of Benefactors will take place in the college Chapel at 2.30pm. We're delighted that this year our preacher will be Revd Jesse Zink, Acting Director of the Centre for Christianity Worldwide.

Throughout the day there will be an opportunity to meet staff and students, attend taster events, browse the bookstall, buy homemade crafts and purchase delicacies prepared by our Chef.

The day is free and is for all URC members. Lunch will be served in the college dining room between 12midday and 2pm. Please let us know you are coming so that we can cater for all (including any dietary requirements).

Contact [admin@westminster.cam.ac.uk](mailto:admin@westminster.cam.ac.uk). Thank you.

Due to limited parking in the college grounds, please car-share where possible and use the Maddingley Road Park and Ride. Accessible parking bays are available on request, please contact the college office for more details.

The full Open Day Programme will be available on the college website  
[www.westminster.cam.ac.uk](http://www.westminster.cam.ac.uk)

## 10: Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe



Providing for Safe Passage to and through  
Europe Background and arguments

Europe is facing the consequences of the world's largest refugee crisis since the 2<sup>nd</sup> World war. Tens of thousands of refugees are fleeing from conflicts, wars and dictatorship to Europe. Christians all over Europe have been profoundly shocked and saddened by pictures of people drowning in the Mediterranean Sea or being found suffocated in trucks on their way to safer countries. On a daily basis, the plight of refugees is visible for example on the Greek islands, where they have to live in deplorable conditions, or at the land borders of various European countries where governments try to close borders to them. Many of the most vulnerable, among them families and children, have been driven to despair.

As a reaction various ecumenical organisations have in recent months adopted statements on the refugee crisis: the Conference of European Churches' governing board in its resolution ***Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers*** called in June 2015 for solidarity with boat people in the Mediterranean. In the same month the World Council of Churches Executive Committee adopted a statement "***Responses to Migrant Crises***". More recently, the Action of Churches Together ACT Alliance EU Office spoke out on the refugee crisis.

The statements highlighted that churches in Europe should seek to contact their respective government with a plea for the refugees and their welcome in Europe.

The "Safe Passage" project coordinated by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe has outlined a number of demands, and here we wish to explain further their rationale and provide additional arguments. They are reproduced in the following lines and explained in more detail. It is important to underline that the demands are complementary to each other and as described in the ecumenical recommendations for safe and legal pathways to Europe, provide for a "Toolbox" providing various instruments. The crisis is too big for one instrument alone being sufficient to reach solutions.

Establishing and maintaining, preferably civilian, search and rescue operations at sea with a rather wide scope:

**RATIONALE:** The continued deaths in the Mediterranean are unacceptable. Experience has shown that the number of deaths in the Mediterranean can dramatically be reduced by adequately resourced search and rescue operations. The loss of life can in particular be avoided if the crews on ship doing search and rescue are adequately trained, as the rescue can be a complicated process.

**Arguments:**

Many private ships participate in rescue operations according to the International Law of the Sea, but require that they can take the persons to the next harbour. Italy has generously allowed landing at Italian shores over the past 2 years.

Successful search and rescue operations require good communication and cooperation between authorities and private actors. A civilian operation would require fewer resources, but commitment of the national authorities to cooperate.

It has been argued that search and rescue operations create a “pull effect”. However, when the Italian operation *Mare Nostrum* was ended at the end of 2014, an incredibly high number of deaths was the consequence; the number of refugees and migrants in despair has increased in the Middle East and North Africa, and in the absence of safe and legal routes, many decided to take the risky routes.

- **Reception conditions** for persons seeking protection, at least in line with EU minimum standards, and access to asylum procedures:

**RATIONALE:** There is a European framework for reception conditions – the EU directive providing for common standards which 28 countries have agreed to respect.<sup>1</sup> These standards represent the basic necessities which should be in place to guarantee refugees a dignified life. EU member states<sup>2</sup> have been receiving EU money since 2000 to allow them to create such conditions. However, transposition has not been achieved by all Member States, and follow-up by the European Commission can only now start. It is therefore a question of respect of agreed rules to respect minimum standards rather than creating something new.

**Arguments:** Some politicians argue that providing better standards than other countries create a pull effect and secondary movement of asylum applicants. While the absence and non-application of EU standards can be attributed to some onward movement, there is no evidence that higher standards determine that refugees would want to go there.

**Access to the asylum procedure** is a key element of the Common European Asylum System. Yet, while e.g. in Greece the majority of refugees and migrants are registered upon arrival, it has been very difficult for large numbers to have even a first appointment at the Asylum Service. The referral between different authorities at national level, from Border Police to Asylum Services, often requires waiting times during which no services such as shelter, food, medical care are provided. In the current situation with high numbers, one can understand some delays, however, inaccessibility and unclear referrals have been observed before. This is where practice need to improve to be in line with European legislation.

- Considerable increase of places for the **resettlement of refugees** from different crisis regions to European countries:

**RATIONALE:** Resettlement is the process by which refugees from country A (e.g. Syria) who have fled to country B (e.g. Lebanon), but cannot stay there are settled on to country C (e.g. Denmark or US). This option is most important, as it will help most vulnerable refugees who are in camps without a chance to escape otherwise. Resettlement gives a chance to the most vulnerable refugees to rebuild their lives, and at the same time resettlement is an expression of solidarity with the countries which are hosting the majority of refugees in a crisis situation.

**Arguments:** The EU has agreed in 2012 to have an EU Refugee Resettlement Scheme and the European Commission provides for specific funding of national resettlement programmes. Already in 2014, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees had pleaded to resettle 10 % of Syrian refugees from neighbouring countries, at that time 370.000 persons. As pledges by the international community did not meet the targets, and funding for the hosting countries also did not meet

the needs, governments of some neighbouring countries have restricted the number of refugees. The situation has become rather tensed, therefore those refugees who can seek to leave. If numbers were sufficiently high to provide for realistic chances to be resettled, and if funding for hosting refugees in the region would at least cover a decent minimum, refugees might not feel obliged to look for alternatives themselves.

- **Suspension of visa requirements** for refugees from war areas and dictatorships like Syria and Eritrea:

**RATIONALE:** This would allow for those coming from the worst affected countries to directly travel to various destinations and apply for protection in Europe, using ordinary means of transport.

**Arguments:** While it is likely that more people would come, the majority would still stay in neighbouring countries for various reasons – their passports have expired already, they do not want to go far away but rather stay close to home, they fear a different culture and life. Lifting visa requirement would also provide opportunities for persons to go for study and work more easily. This would allow for an orderly arrival for a better overview of who is coming, as the persons would enter European countries legally. They would no longer be forced into the hands of smugglers and criminals, and they would save a lot of money which they could invest in their new beginning rather than paying smugglers.

In some countries (like Lebanon at the moment), even access to embassies is controlled by gangs making money out of the plight of people. Appointments for family reunification visa at EU embassies are apparently delayed for many months, even a year. Particularly family members would benefit from lifting visa requirements, even if they only came to visit and not to stay.

- **Humanitarian visa** for refugees from crisis regions:

**RATIONALE:** Not all refugees will come from countries from which resettlement or visa free travel is possible. Some will come from additional countries. Also individuals at risk could receive a visa to leave. For them it is important to obtain a legal title, which allows them to travel enter Europe legally. Their asylum application would be lodged and decided once they are in the EU.

**Arguments:** Some countries have used humanitarian visa extensively. A humanitarian visa could be issued for several reasons: leave a situation of high risk, but also undergo medical treatment in an other country. Christian organisations are advocating with the EU institutions to foresee a clause on humanitarian visa in the current revision of the Schengen Visa Code.

- **More flexible and generous opportunities for family reunification for refugees:**

**RATIONALE:** Families are often torn apart by war and conflict, often at a high cost for children and parents suffering under this separation. A generous family reunification policy would allow families to reunite, at fairly minimal costs as families will often take responsibility for each other's costs.

**Arguments:** The EU Family Reunification Directive foresees the right for family reunification for refugees for the core family. However, exceptions are still foreseen for persons under subsidiary protection. Not all EU member states handle family reunification of refugees with the speed, and wider scope which the directive would allow. Particularly in the current situation, allowing also cousins, uncles and aunts

to apply for their relatives to join them could alleviate the situation and provide for legal ways to find safety.

- **Mutual recognition of positive asylum decisions** within EU and Schengen member states:

**RATIONALE:** While negative asylum decisions and subsequent expulsion orders are valid throughout the EU plus Schengen countries Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, positive protection decisions are so far limited to one country until a long-term residence permit has been granted (for which a minimum legal residence of 5 years is required). A mutual recognition of protection status would make it possible for recognised refugees to move between EU member states, thus giving them a better chance to rebuild their lives.

**Arguments:** Freedom of movement is a fundamental value of the European Union. An approximation of rights, particularly for refugees, to those of EU citizens has been a declared aim of the EU when it started to map out an EU migration and asylum policy. In 2008, a proposal for the mutual recognition of asylum decisions was planned to complete the Common European Asylum System framework. This is still outstanding, and a missing piece in this policy area.

Rather than being unemployed in one country, refugees could find employment in another and move without risking their protection status.

- **Fair sharing of responsibility for refugee reception between EU member states,** inter alia relocation and reception of refugees from Greece and Italy to other EU member states.

**RATIONALE:** Solidarity between member states is essential for a fair distribution of responsibility between member states. This means that the responsibility for reception cannot be left to those states at the external EU border alone, nor to those receiving the majority of refugees and asylum applicants.

**Arguments:** As we have seen over the past 3 years, asylum systems particularly of Southern and some Eastern EU member states have not been able to deal with the increasing number of arrivals. To uphold an asylum system according to EU standards would be helped by a system of fair distribution and relocation. Whether this is a fixed distribution key or based on pledges by EU member states is secondary if a meaningful number of places for relocation can be achieved, and not merely a symbolic figure.

Relocation needs to take into consideration the preferences and often good reasons of refugees to want to go to a specific country: they might know the language, have studied or undergone training in a place, they may have friends willing to host them or offer them employment, or they may have a scholarship offer. It may not always be possible to match preferences, but wherever possible this ought to be done: this will increase the motivation of refugees to integrate, feel welcome, and to take their lives into their own hands, rather than depending on assistance.

September 2015

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, which had to be transposed into national legislation by 21 July 2015

## 11: World Council of Churches



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe



Conference of European Churches



World Council  
of Churches

To the  
Member Churches and Associated Organizations of  
the World Council of Churches  
Conference of European Churches and the  
Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

9 September 2015

### **European refugee situation: churches' initiatives for refugees and other migrants Priority for Safe Passage**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,  
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

In light of the on-going migration of refugees, we write to reiterate the calls issued by our respective organizations for a compassionate ecumenical response to the people most affected by this crisis – desperate people arriving in Europe after great suffering and danger.

We also wish to share some of the stories of responses by churches and related organizations to current needs, and to solicit stories from your own communities.

Over the past weeks, we all have observed dramatic developments regarding refugee and migrant arrivals on the shores and at the borders of Europe. The most recent news and images have been especially moving, as thousands of refugees assembled around Budapest train station, and there seemed no solution. But then Austria and Germany agreed with Hungary to open the borders and let the refugees move on, and the new arrivals have been welcomed warmly in these countries by citizens including church leaders. Though not as widely reported, support by citizens – particularly in Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary and Italy – has been essential so that people on the move may survive and regain strength.

Arrival of tens of thousands of migrants in Greece or Italy has not meant that refugees find a safe place and the protection they deserve. Thousands of refugees continue to make their way onward.

The most dramatic refugee crisis remains in countries bordering Syria. Of the estimated total of 12 million Syrians displaced by the ongoing unresolved conflict, 4 million have crossed into neighbouring countries, with Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey hosting the majority of them. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has pleaded with the international community to act urgently and effectively to respond to the biggest refugee crisis since World War II.

Conference of European Churches - Conférence des Églises européennes - Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen

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Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe - Commission des Églises auprès des Migrants en Europe - Kommission der Kirchen für Migranten in Europa

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World Council of Churches - Conseil Océuménique des Églises - Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen

150 Route de Ferney - CH-1211 Geneva 2 - Switzerland

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But as the international community's response has been insufficient to meet the emergency humanitarian needs – let alone bring about an end to the brutal conflict – those refugees who can are trying to find their own way. As no safe legal channels have been opened, they turn to smugglers, sometimes falling prey to groups trafficking in human beings. Increased loss of life in the Mediterranean is a shocking reality.

### **Policies and positions on refugees and migration**

On 12 June 2015 the World Council of Churches (WCC) Executive Committee, in its statement on responses to migrant crises, invited “WCC member churches and ecumenical partners, together with all people of goodwill, to promote a more open and welcoming approach to the ‘stranger’ and to the neighbour in need and distress, and to help receive and care for refugees and migrants in full respect for their God-given human dignity.”

The governing board of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), in its statement “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers” of 3 June 2015, requested churches in Europe to:

- Continue to pray for those who flee conflict, war and destruction;
- Commemorate those who have lost their lives on their way to Europe and use material developed for the annual day of commemoration (21 June 2015) proposed by CEC and the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME);
- Continue to work on addressing the root causes of forced displacement;
- Build up capacity to welcome refugees, commending the examples given by churches in the Mediterranean and elsewhere;
- Provide places where fears about the arrival of strangers can be discussed and constructive ways of living together can be found;
- Cooperate in changing policies in the EU and associated states from migration deterrence to those putting the human at the heart of migration policies, including by cooperating with CCME in the “safe passage” project;
- Address national governments and responsible authorities in EU member states in order to support such human centred migration policies.

The CCME Assembly 2014 called for

“a change of attitudes regarding migration in accordance with European values. This also implies a truly human approach to refugee protection in line with the relevant European and international conventions. This includes legal and secure access to Europe for those in need of protection

We advocate for a Common European Asylum System including decent reception conditions as well as a Common European Resettlement Scheme that puts the human being and his/her dignity at the centre of the processes. Therefore, we call upon the European governments to embark upon policies that aim to address the main causes for forced migration.

We urge the European governments to take responsibility in particular for the situation of minors, the most vulnerable group, who are often deprived of basic stability, a full family life and education.”

As the EU Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs, Dimitris Avramopoulos, declared in December 2014 at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Conference: “Europe can and must do more” The urgency of the situation requires our prayers, compassion and action.

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Indeed, during the last months, Europe has seen a widespread movement of solidarity with refugees among the WCC and CEC member churches and ecumenical partners.

**Select examples of practical action by churches and ecumenical bodies:**

- In many parts of Greece, churches are supporting newly arrived refugees. On the Aegean islands, some parishes are providing for the basic needs for those arriving from neighbouring Turkey. On the Greek mainland, churches are helping in various ways ranging from soup kitchens to providing items needed by refugees in reception centres. This emergency help is accompanied by legal support services particularly by the Ecumenical Refugee Programme of the Church of Greece.
- In Hungary, the Reformed Church has been catering in various ways for refugees, and is currently providing medical services in one of the country's refugee camps. The Lutheran Church and the Hungarian Interchurch Aid are also active in this emergency situation.
- Church-related humanitarian aid agencies in the Nordic countries and Germany have committed to helping improve the reception of refugees in Southern European countries. Calls for donations have been launched and the agencies are rolling out their work in cooperation with partners in the region.
- In the UK, numerous church leaders have spoken out on the refugee crisis at Calais near the Eurotunnel, calling for compassion and humanitarian responses to the situation.
- In Germany, churches have initiated and supported local initiatives supporting refugees. Synods have spoken out in favour of refugee reception and resettlement, and churches are generously donating money to solidarity activities in other countries.
- In Sweden, churches are providing the ground for a continued reception of refugees under the slogan "make space!"
- In Italy, the Federation of Protestant Churches is monitoring the situation on the island of Lampedusa, and providing reception and meeting spaces between the local population and newly arrived refugees in Sicily. Churches are playing an important role in the reception of refugees throughout the country.
- In the Czech Republic, the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren has appealed to the government to allow for the resettlement of Syrian refugees with special needs.
- The Protestant Church in the Netherlands has in a public statement assured the state authorities of its support in securing reception places for refugees in the municipalities and asked for safe and legal pathways into Europe.
- Churches from Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and other countries have sent solidarity delegations to Italy or Greece to express their support to the churches in these countries and their work for refugees.
- ACT Alliance through its members in Greece (IOCC/Apostoli), Hungary (Hungarian Interchurch Aid) and Serbia (Philanthropy) have begun to provide humanitarian assistance in this complex situation. An ACT appeal issued on 9 September will enable a continued and expanded response. A coordination structure under the ACT Europe Emergency Response Group will be established, and a meeting will be held in Belgrade/Serbia on 16 and 17 September in order to ensure that all members of ACT work collaboratively within this ACT response.

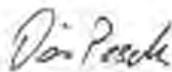
This list is far from exhaustive. But these activities for support, reception and advocacy provide examples of how churches can further engage in responding to the refugee crisis. In this critical moment, ecumenical cooperation in the response is especially important, in order to enhance the collective impact of our various activities, to encourage others and to give a common witness of compassion, justice and peace.

The nature of this crisis calls for both humanitarian support and advocacy with governments. To assist you in your advocacy work, please find attached a summary of the most important advocacy points.

And please let us know of the commitments and engagement of your own church or organization, in response to our common Christian calling,

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." Matthew 25:35

Yours sincerely,



Doris Peschke  
CCME General Secretary



Rev. Dr. Guy Liagre  
CEC General Secretary



Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit  
WCC General Secretary