

THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK

MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE FAITH COMMUNITIES FORUM

at 2pm on Tuesday 5 October 2021

by Zoom

Co-Moderators: The Rt Revd Jonathan Clark; and Mr Malcolm Deboo.

Present: Judith Baker (Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations); the Revd Philip Brooks (United Reformed Church in the UK; Minister David Bruton (Spiritualists' National Union and FCF Moderator); Dr Deesha Chadha (Hindu Forum of Britain); Mr Mohinder Singh Chana (Network of Sikh Organisations (UK) and FCF Moderator); Ms Siriol Davies (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland/Churches Together in England); Major Samuel Edgar (Salvation Army); Major David Evans (Salvation Army); Ms Prudence Jones (Pagan Federation); Mr Rajnish Kashyap (Hindu Council (UK)); Dr Karishma Koka (Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe); Ms Sandra Lopez (Methodist Church in Britain); Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra (Muslim Council of Britain); Ms Smita Oza (BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha); Mr Neil Pitchford (Druid Network and FCF Moderator); Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala (Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of GB and FCF Moderator); Dr Natubhai Shah MBE (Jain Network); Mr Vinay Shah (Institute of Jainology and FCF Moderator); Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE (Network of Sikh Organisations (UK)); Mr Elliot Vanstone (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales); Professor Dr Paul Weller (Inter Faith Working Group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain); Lynda Williams (Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations); and Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg (Board of Deputies of British Jews and FCF Moderator).

Apologies: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Islamic Cultural Centre; Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board; Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK); Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK); and World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League.

Moderator apologies: Mr Hassan Joudi; and Dr Vinaya Sharma.

In attendance: Mrs Hannah Cassidy; Dr Harriet Crabtree; and Dr David Hampshire (Inter Faith Network for the UK).

FCF ToRs and nature of minutes

A copy of the Terms of Reference of the Faith Communities Forum of IFN (FCF) is at <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/about/governance>.

The minutes of the main sessions of the meeting of the FCF are made available beyond the FCF on the basis agreed by it in May 2017. The minutes follow FCF's agreed style: namely, points made by individuals are noted in the minutes and have the status of views of the individual who is present on behalf of their member organisation; any points agreed by the meeting are clearly identified as such. Comments are unattributed except where from the Chair or where the Executive Director or another staff member has been asked to give input or to provide a point of information, or in particular contexts where the

contributor has explicitly asked that their identity be noted. Within FCF meetings there is a chance for all bodies to contribute. Contributors carry responsibility for the accuracy of their contributions. Views expressed by contributors are not endorsed by IFN.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and apologies

1. The Rt Revd Jonathan Clark, in the chair, welcomed those present.
2. Apologies were noted.
3. A period of silence was observed, keeping in mind all those working for inter faith understanding and cooperation, and, as this was the last FCF meeting before COP26, those working for the preservation of the planet and to tackle climate change.
4. Bishop Clark explained, for the benefit of new members, that the FCF was a forum for member bodies of IFN in the category of national faith community representative body. It was a forum for discussion of current issues of interest and concern rather than a decision-making body. It enabled sharing of views and good practice and networking.
5. Anyone wishing not to be included in screenshots of the meeting should indicate. In keeping with the FCF's decision about the nature of minutes, apart from IFN matters, the relevant section of the minutes would be available to the public (unless the FCF request a closed session). Minutes would follow the usual style.

Agenda Item 3: COVID-19 and faith communities

a) Moving forward, changing patterns of worship and meeting

6. Bishop Clark drew attention to the information in the Background Note and invited members to offer updates and share experiences on reopening of places of worship and partial return to in-person faith and inter faith meetings.
7. One participant said that his synagogue was part of a larger national body with centralised COVID guidelines, which had been a blessing. The Jewish community had recently celebrated its High Holy Days season, including Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and Sukkot. There was usually high attendance at the service, so they had ensured that 1m social distancing was possible, asked people to wear masks and ensured that there was plenty of ventilation. This had limited the number of people who could attend so services had been organised in shifts. The response had been generally positive, although attendance not back to 100%. As an Orthodox synagogue, his synagogue had not been holding services online during Jewish festivals, but had done so during the week. There had been about 60 or 70% attendance at the beginning of the last month. In the week prior to the present meeting, they had celebrated Simchat Torah, (marking the conclusion of the cycle of the weekly Torah reading, after a year of reading the five books). For this they had held their first indoor social event, with a sit down lunch after the service. It was thought that as a result of this there had been a small COVID outbreak. Unfortunately, as people couldn't get PCR tests done in time, the synagogue had had to be closed for the first Shabbat of the new cycle. So, it had been a bitter sweet experience. There had been a lot of discussion and there was a feeling that social

and cultural events should continue because they were central to the community, but it would need to be taken one step at a time. Whatever the Government said, there was still a danger. People did seem to want to get back to in person events and Zoom attendance was drying up. That had created a separate problem because those who were not mobile now felt left out again. Bishop Clark said that the experience was mirrored in many churches.

b) Responding to social needs

8. Bishop Clark drew attention to the information in the Background Note and invited members to share news and reflections on response to social need and also the Faith New Deal Pilot Fund. He noted that there was a feeling within the churches that they would need to do a lot more on foodbanks, particularly with the reduction in Universal Credit.
9. Dr Crabtree said that a number of people had been in touch with the IFN office across the previous week, who had been considering whether to apply to the Faith New Deal Pilot Fund. There had been some confusion about whether the closing date was 7 or 14 October. The IFN office had been in touch with the relevant Government department about this but had not yet had a response.
10. One participant drew attention to a recently published report by the Salvation Army and the Institute for Employment Studies, *Understanding People, Understanding Places: A Report on the Levelling Up Agenda*. Information about this could be found on the Salvation Army website. <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/levelling-up>

Agenda Item 3: Faith communities and response to refugees and asylum seekers

11. Bishop Clark said that this was a significant issue and faith communities continued to have concern for asylum seekers and refugees. He drew attention to the information in the Background Note. He explained that in the light of members' interest in hearing more about different faith perspectives, the FCF Agenda had regularly included, prior to the pandemic, a short reflection, relating to an Agenda theme, from a representative of a different faith community member body about its bases for engaging with that theme. It was planned to include it again more regularly.
12. He invited Mr Elliot Vanstone, Mission Adviser, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, to offer a short opening reflection about bases in the Christian tradition for engaging with the theme of response to refugees. A copy of Mr Vanstone's reflection is at Annex A to these minutes.
13. Bishop Clark thanked Mr Vanstone for his reflection, noting that many of these views were reflected across all denominations of the Christian faith.

a) Faith community responses

14. Bishop Clark drew attention to the information in the Background Note and invited members to share news about how their communities had been impacted by issues of refuge and asylum and how their communities had been helping those in need.
15. In discussion the following points were made:

- The majority of refugees and asylum seekers coming to the UK from Afghanistan had a Muslim faith background. It was amazing that people in the UK had been so welcoming, hospitable and warm in providing them safety, protection and a home. Sometimes, though, when people, in their enthusiasm, tried to help, they overlooked the religious and cultural needs of those they were trying to help, such as dietary requirements, social norms and customs, and also the wellbeing of their children in terms of their cultural and social interaction with the host communities, in school, in college and in other places. There was concern in some quarters that if attention was not paid to retaining and supporting cultural and religious values those could be eroded, leading to assimilation, rather than integration.
- There had been some conversations about the opportunity and the dilemma that was presented by the Government resettlement programme. It was an opportunity to welcome those included in the programme, but also there was the injustice that if a person had desperately made it to the UK using their own initiative, they did not qualify for the programme. There was therefore now a two-tier system of 'good asylum seekers' and 'bad asylum seekers'. That injustice was one that needed to be continually held before society and Government.
- The Salvation Army had been involved in helping refugees after the First World War, after the Second World War and after the Gulf Wars, when a number of Iraqi Kurds, mainly Muslim, ended up in Kent. The Government had been concerned about the pressure on the local infrastructure and had dispersed them across the country. In Wales, where the participant had been based, over 400 Iraqi Kurds had come over a period of years. Lots of places of worship had supported them, and others from outside the area. Religions had a responsibility to help. As a nation, the UK had contributed historically to the problems that had made people need to leave their homes in the first place.
- It was important to do all that could be done through channels of help and practical support when refugees arrived and through lobbying Government for a change in policy in a more humanitarian direction. It was important not to forget that a number of faith groups over the last 30 or 40 years had also, when necessary, taken even more radical actions. The word 'sanctuary' had now become a more generalised term for what refugees sought. However, in the 1980s and 1990s there were many faith groups that had literally and physically given sanctuary to refugees and asylum seekers under threat of being deported. Through that they had been challenging and bearing prophetic witness in relation to human need. Sometimes talk could be generalised terms, but within faith communities there was a history and tradition of taking sharper action when necessary.
- The numbers of refugees and asylum seekers coming to the UK was relatively small compared to other countries. Lebanon, and other countries bordering major areas of refugee movement, were taking in millions of refugees. Faith groups were involved similarly in those countries. Almost 50% of the population of Lebanon were now refugees. In 2016 half a million refugees were taken in by Germany. It had been wonderful that when there had recently been serious flooding in the Ahr Valley in Germany, many of those former Syrian refugees had given of their own time, money and help to assist those in need.
- Some synagogues in London had run drop-in centres pre-COVID and outdoor distribution centres during COVID for asylum seekers. Assistance was given, for example, to help people fill in paperwork and to get guidance from professionals. The Jewish community had an affinity with refugees because of their own history. Among the refugees that had come to the Jewish communities in the last 25 years were economic migrants from South Africa and French refugees. Refugees of all faiths were supported. It sent a message that religious people cared about social

issues and it had galvanised a lot of people within the community who did not connect with worship services, but did connect with volunteering. Many Jewish people in the UK were second or third generation immigrants and it was a good reminder of that. A relatively small number of people were being helped but one had to start somewhere and it was very worthwhile.

b) Public life statement on faith communities and refugees

16. Bishop Clark drew attention to the draft public life statement on faith communities and refugees. He noted that there had been a request for an 'urgent' statement about the Government's 'push back' policy but that he and his fellow Co-Moderator, Mr Malcolm Deboo, had taken the view that a broader statement would be more appropriate, particularly because the immediate controversy about that particular issue had passed by that point. He noted that the statement was currently only a draft and not for wider circulation.
17. Dr Crabtree said that the term 'urgent' for 'urgent statements' referred, as IFN's statement on the making of policies explained, to very specific contexts where there was a tight timetable, ie where there was a very immediate situation. There had already been serious concerns about refugee issues which pointed to the item being on the Agenda for the present meeting. After discussion, the Co-Moderators and Co-Chairs had recommended the issuing of a 'public life' statement, which meant that the whole FCF was consulted and it potentially had a broader reach. It was a clear statement about the values at the heart of different faith traditions and their application in a particular policy context. There would always be different views over some specific aspects of policy.
18. Lord Singh of Wimbledon, who had requested the urgent statement, said that it was a given that people should be kind to refugees. That was reflected in all religious teachings. Statements could be made to that effect, but that was not enough. As members of IFN there was a need to make sure the voice of IFN was heard in circles where it counted. He had asked sometime back for an urgent statement to be issued on the way migrants were being treated by this Government and the 'push back' policy. If IFN was silent at that time, there was no point in pious platitudes or people just saying nice things to each other. It was what IFN did as a body that counted. There was a religious duty to move society to a place of better of responsibility, away from cruelty, away from irresponsibility. It was the impact that IFN made on society that was important. It must be a positive impact in the direction of greater compassion for those who were struggling. A generalised statement was a diffused statement. It did not pinpoint a real concern. If IFN made statements about things being good it did not have much impact. But if IFN spoke up as a body when things were wrong, such as pushing immigrant boats back, which was against the teachings of all members of IFN, and condemned it, it might have an impact and make politicians think a little more. Generalised statements would never make headlines and would never influence society. IFN should try to move society in a more positive direction as taught by religions. Issuing something direct and clear would enhance the status of IFN itself.
19. In discussion the following points were made:
 - It would be good to issue a call, as a pay off to the statement, to ask the UK Government to review its stance on asylum seekers and refugees, because it was

inhumane. It was a point in time where faith communities should stand together and make that call to Government.

- The draft statement referred to faith communities acting 'as a critical friend to Government'. It was understood why that form of wording was used, but it would be preferable to talk about solidarity with refugees and asylum.

20. Dr Crabtree said that 'urgent', by contrast to 'public life', statements were made in a particular context. The 'push back' policy had been announced in July, so it was not automatically an 'urgent statement' issue. A call to a Government to stop or change one particular policy, whatever policy, raised questions about how further policy concerns should/would be addressed. For instance, was IFN going to develop a secretariat to regularly issue statements when difficult policies were announced or put into action? Some within faith communities felt equally strongly, for example, about the overall Nationality and Borders Bill currently going through its readings. Bishop Clark said that there would not be time at the present meeting to pick up those issues, but it was useful to hear them now so that FCF members had an indication of the sorts of issues that needed to be dealt with in relation to IFN's various policies.

21. In further discussion the following points were made. Responses from the Executive Director are in italics.

- A number of the Churches had public affairs groups which dealt directly with Government. Did IFN have any such direct links with Government to make feelings known quickly and strongly?
- A number of Church of England bishops had issued a statement on the matter.
- The Joint Public Issues Team of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church spoke out on public issues. For those pressure groups it was often hard to get the ear of Government. If there was a combined statement from member faith communities of IFN it would enormously help the lobbying process. This was the sort of issue where all faiths would speak with one voice and an area where they could make a difference.
- Speaking out on one issue might provoke questions about why IFN had not spoken out on other issues. What had happened in the past? Had it led to a sense that IFN was being selective? *Very few public life statements had been issued in the past and IFN had not had an approach of responding to individual policies (although such responses were not precluded). There had been a few longer statements, for example on religion and public life. There had also been statements on particular issues such as terrorist attacks or hate crime or problems in the run up to elections. What IFN had not done, to this point, was to issue regular statements or calls to Government on particular policies. IFN did not have a parliamentary liaison team and had very few staff to do this kind of work. Moderators were consulted on draft statements in the first instance and, if the statements were public life ones, they then came in draft also to the FCF. If a statement was an 'urgent' one, only the Moderators were consulted.*

22. Bishop Clark said that it was important that the views of all were shared if a statement was being issued on behalf of the whole FCF. He thanked the FCF for the helpful reflections they had offered which would be taken back to the Moderators to work further on the draft statement. He thanked Lord Singh for the issues he had raised.

Action: Further work to be done on draft statement on faith communities and refugees in light of FCF reflections.

Agenda Item 4: IICSA report on 'Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings'

23. Bishop Clark drew attention to the information in the Background Note about the statement in response to the latest IICSA report. He noted that the final statement was embargoed until the following morning.
24. In discussion the following points were made:
 - In some areas there were already meetings taking place locally between different faith groups to discuss the report and to take seriously the need for faith groups to support and learn from each other in terms of improving the situation and providing better support for children and vulnerable adults.
 - The Church of England, as a national structure, had paid staff working on safeguarding issues and material. In Croydon, churches from some other denominations had asked to see the material as a starting point for creating their own. That type of sharing might work across different faiths as well as across denominations within faiths.
 - It was not just faith groups which needed to work together. It was also good to look at how secular organisations cared for others within their remit. For example, the Scouts had put together a list of safeguarding principles, which some churches had used as a basis for their own frameworks.
25. Bishop Clark invited FCF members to circulate the final statement more widely once it had been published the following morning.

Agenda Item 5: Inter faith engagement of faith communities – including joint working on climate issues in the run up to COP26 - and issues of current interest and concern

26. Mr Malcolm Deboo, taking the chair, explained that these two agenda items were often taken together and they had again been combined on this occasion. He drew attention to the material in the Background Note on the inter faith engagement of faith communities, also dealing with climate issues in the run up to COP26. Members had been invited to submit information in advance and the material that had been submitted was included as an Annex to the Background Note.
27. In discussion the following points were made:
 - Modern Paganism was an earth-based religion, seeking to align human life intelligently with the cycles of nature, following the ancient stoics among others. It was good to see so many other religions recognising the importance of ecological harmony at this time. There was not anything to report for COP26 at a national level but there was a lot taking place on an individual level. Individual Pagans were involved with organisations such as Pagan Aid, fighting poverty and protecting mother earth, the Woodland Trust, and the Pagan Federation's President had recently been involved with the Faith for Ecocide Law which was a coalition working to make ecocide a crime.
 - On 31 October Interfaith Scotland and Interfaith Glasgow would be holding an inter faith vigil in George Square in Glasgow. There was a lot of activity starting to build in Scotland in preparation for COP26. It was providing a strong focus point for all communities, including Druid and Pagan.

- A lot of people could feel that activism on the streets was quite demanding. There was an online course being run by Woodbrooke, the Quaker Conference Centre in Birmingham, to help people in their spiritual development and resilience for COP26. It helped to keep grounded spiritually amid the outward facing action that people were taking. The next one was being held on 19 October.
 - Information was shared in the 'Chat' about an event being held by the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe. [Note: The function to save Chat was not enabled, so it was agreed that the IFN office would circulate details by email.]
28. Bishop Clark noted the joint Appeal for COP26 that had been made by the Pope and other faith leaders the previous day, seeking to galvanise both world leaders and members of all faiths to think of these issues as being at the heart of our own faith life, rather than just for someone else. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/holy-see-faith-and-science-an-appeal-for-cop26>

Agenda Item 6: Inter Faith Week

29. Mr Deboo drew attention to the information in the Background Note about Inter Faith Week (IFW) and invited Mr Ashley Beck, IFN's Inter Faith Development Officer, to introduce this item.
30. Mr Ashley Beck said that the Background Note began with some updates on where had been reached in the IFW programme cycle, which was almost a year long. A report had recently been published on the 2020 Week. This was the most detailed IFW report since its first year (2009), reflecting the fact that it had been a very different type of week with up to 75% of activities taking place virtually. The report had been widely circulated. Two particular sections of the report were referenced in the Background Note: one on how the pandemic had shaped activities, highlighting how faiths had been serving their communities; and one on how there had been different patterns of interaction and engagement. The IFN office had now started to send out IFW packs. These contained posters, flyers, stickers, a branded A3 card on which to write messages for social media and also guidance sheets on, for instance, evaluating impact. Packs would be sent to main contacts for all FCF member bodies. The first few activities had been published on the website but the vast majority of events tended to be submitted closer to the Week. Last year the FCF had invited faith community bodies and leaders to share messages and reflections on social media related to IFW. Twenty had done so. There was a two-page section on those in the 2020 IFW report and also a page on the IFW website. The impact of the messages had been significant and had also brought a wider reach on social media. The FCF might wish to consider asking faith community bodies and their leaders to do so again.
31. Dr Crabtree encouraged FCF members to look at the 2020 IFW report. It demonstrated the serious contribution that IFW had made at the time of the pandemic. IFW was a year round programme with a Week in the middle of it. The report had been circulated separately to all those bodies referenced in it. In terms of the faith community body and faith leader messages, last year the focus had been on how faith groups worked together on particular social issues. The FCF might wish to consider inviting messages about solidarity on social issues.
32. In discussion the following points were made. Responses from the Executive Director are in italics.

- All involved in producing the IFW 2020 report were to be congratulated. It was a very good report and was getting positive feedback. The faith leader statements suggested for this year's IFW about solidarity were a good idea. It would help people to see the commonalities across faiths.
- How should groups best report to IFN on their IFW activities? *The most important priorities at present were to set up the IFW activities and to submit them on the IFW website. After IFW, it would be very good to receive reports on activities and if people could respond to the survey. Many communities' reports on activities had been included in the IFW 2020 report.*
- The concept of solidarity, both with each other and with nature, was a very beautiful concept. This idea of solidarity was a very deep concept and would make a good theme for positive messages. IFW would be just after COP26, which would itself be just after the Parliament of the World's Religions. IFW was about coming together in solidarity and fellowship to help build solutions to achieve something good.
- The idea of sharing messages on solidarity was a good one.

33. Dr Crabtree said that it might be helpful for faith leaders to have the freedom to choose their own solidarity issues, whether that be on the environment, responding to poverty or other matters. She would liaise with the Co-Moderators and Co-Chairs about the final framing of asking faith leaders to share an IFW message on the theme of inter faith solidarity.

Action: Executive Director to liaise with Co-Moderators and Co-Chairs about the final framing of asking faith leaders to share an Inter Faith Week message on the theme of inter faith solidarity.

INTER FAITH NETWORK MATTERS SESSION

[Paragraphs 34 to 41]

Close of meeting

42. Mr Deboo thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions. He also thanked IFN staff for their preparatory work.
43. The next FCF meeting would be held, virtually, from 2.30pm to 4.30pm on Monday 29 November. This would be an opportunity to thank Bishop Clark and wish him well.

11 November 2021

**Opening reflection for Agenda Item 3 about bases in the Christian tradition for engaging with the theme of response to refugees
- Mr Elliot Vanstone, Mission Adviser, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales**

I've been asked today to talk about Migration and Refugees. A topic that has dominated the 6 o'clock news for as long as I can remember, however I'm going to give a brief overview of the catholic/Christian perspective on the highly debated subject.

Migration of people, both voluntary and involuntary "has turned into a structural reality of contemporary society". It is a global phenomenon, touching all regions, crossing all ecclesiastical and national boundaries and it affects millions of human beings. As has been the case throughout history, migration is conditioned by a combination of the attraction exerted by the countries of destination ('pull' factors) and the forces which prompt people to move or flee from their countries viz. conflicts, human rights violations, economic deprivation and environmental or ecological disasters ('push' factors). In 1967 Pope Paul VI released his powerful encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (On the development of Peoples). In this encyclical Pope Paul VI called on Catholics, and all people of goodwill, to stand up for the lives and dignity of poor and vulnerable not only in our own societies but around the world. In particular, he called on us to be in solidarity with those who seek to "escape from hunger, misery, endemic disease and ignorance". As well as this, from a Christian perspective we have to acknowledge that Jesus himself was born into life as a refugee. Mary and Joseph had been forced to flee from their own land to save the life of their child. This was no accident but was central to the life of the Holy Family and would become a central teaching of the Church – hospitality and protection for the stranger in our midst. Catholic Social Teaching, from Scripture, through the example of the saints throughout history and from formal teachings of the Church have emphasised the importance of welcoming the outsider, especially the ones who are poor and marginalised.

The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church draws on this scriptural tradition as it embraces and promotes the human rights and dignity of migrants. As a response to the injustices of the Industrial Revolution, Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (The Condition of Labour, 1891) spelt out that human beings and their labour have a God-given dignity that calls for respect, solidarity and the common good. The opening lines of Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965) help us to understand the solidarity with migrants that has been part of our history as Church, and why this solidarity must continue to characterise our life as a believing community - "the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts." Since then Popes, Bishops and the Church's teaching documents have constantly re-emphasised three basic principles that encapsulate our attitude and responses to migration:

- People have a right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families.
- A country has the right to regulate its borders and control migration.
- A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy, and recognise and respect the human dignity and rights of migrants.

What these principles articulate is that a migrant's legal status is quite separate from his or her human dignity, since all of them without exception are endowed with inalienable

rights, which can neither be violated nor ignored. For the Catholic Church migration is both a faith issue as well as an ethical issue, but with no political or ideological agenda. As the CBCEW said in their 1997 Statement on the Common Good, “The Church has the right and the duty to advocate a social order in which the human dignity of all is fostered and to protest when it is in any way threatened”. As a Church we are called to welcome Christ in the migrant and welcome the migrant like Christ as is reinforced in Matthew chapter 25 verse 40, which we will all be familiar with, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me”.

In conclusion as a church our mission to migrants therefore forms an integral part of the Church’s Mission. This is something which Pope Francis has addressed numerous times and I’m going to end my little introduction with an Address of Pope Francis to a joint meeting of the United States Congress on the 24th September 2015: “We must not be taken aback by their numbers, but rather view them as persons, seeing their faces and listening to their stories, trying to respond to their stories, trying to respond as best we can to their situation. To respond in a way which is always, humane, just and fraternal”.