

Herts Welcomes Syrian Families

Update from Katie Seaton 15th November 2015

Taken from the minutes of the Council meeting on 28 October 2015:

Katharine Seaton, a resident of Hertford, stated that she was on the steering group of the community network, Herts Welcomes Syrian Families, which had formed to encourage Hertfordshire councils to participate in the government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme for Syrian nationals. On behalf of her network; she asked the Leader of the Council how cast Herts Council intended to implement the scheme locally, what was the most optimistic timescale possible for bringing the first family here, and what could her network do to support the Council practically to achieve this.

In reply, the Leader of the Council agreed that the deplorable plight of many Syrian people deserved support. She referred to the Prime Minister's statement of 7 September 2015, in which the process, nationally, for accepting up to 20,000 people over the next five years had been outlined. The Council was participating fully with neighbouring councils and other agencies to provide a coordinated strategy that would assist in helping Syrian families arriving in the coming weeks and months. The position was changing on an almost daily basis and although the Leader was unable to confirm the timescale for the first arrivals in Hertfordshire, she provided assurance that the Council would play its full part.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader undertook for the Council to keep Herts Welcomes Syrian Families informed of progress.

The Housing Services Manager at East Herts has now written to advise us that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) was recently contacted by the Home Office regarding Hertfordshire's willingness to be involved in the Syrian Refugee scheme. HCC in turn has been in touch with District Councils to let them know of the Home Office's contact and their wish to progress with the resettlement.

We, HWSF, are arranging to meet with the Housing Services Manager shortly to discuss how to coordinate the support we offer as a whole. Readers should contact me if they

would like to be sent a detailed questionnaire about what they can offer.

It turns out that Stevenage Council has been pressing ahead and is expecting 20 refugees to arrive within 3 weeks. Other areas are hotting up too; the Jewish community in Elstree are rallying round and hopefully leading on efforts in Hertsmere, which looks very promising. Watford have an existing refugee support group and we now have one of their volunteers on our steering group.

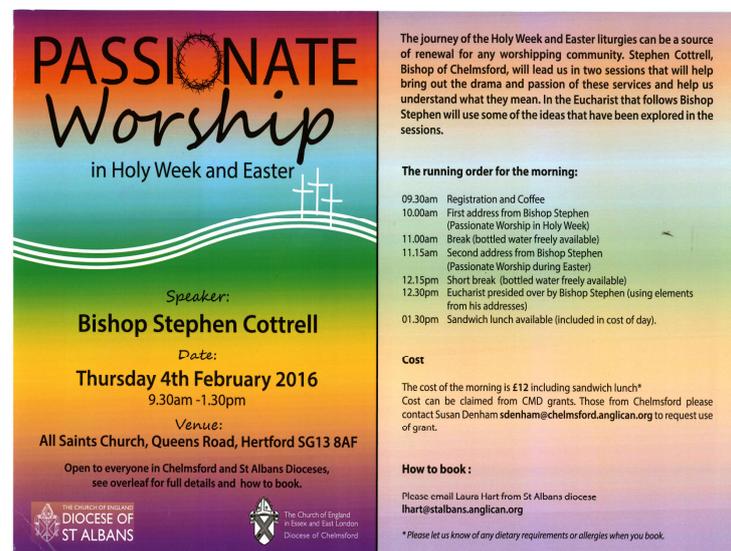
Irene Austin and I spoke on a panel with Richard Howitt MEP and Cllr Michelline Safi Ngongo from Islington Council, who is a refugee from the DRC, at the East of England Labour Conference. I found that a really positive and interesting experience.

The usual plea for any housing - not rooms in a house, but a home - continues. If readers know anywhere, please contact Maria, who is our designated housing scout.

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PASSIONATE Worship
in Holy Week and Easter

Speaker:
Bishop Stephen Cottrell

Date:
Thursday 4th February 2016
9.30am - 1.30pm

Venue:
All Saints Church, Queens Road, Hertford SG13 8AF

Open to everyone in Chelmsford and St Albans Dioceses, see overleaf for full details and how to book.

The journey of the Holy Week and Easter liturgies can be a source of renewal for any worshipping community. Bishop Cottrell, Bishop of Chelmsford, will lead us in two sessions that will help bring out the drama and passion of these services and help us understand what they mean. In the Eucharist that follows Bishop Stephen will use some of the ideas that have been explored in the sessions.

The running order for the morning:

- 09.30am Registration and Coffee
- 10.00am First address from Bishop Stephen (Passionate Worship in Holy Week)
- 11.00am Break (bottled water freely available)
- 11.15am Second address from Bishop Stephen (Passionate Worship during Easter)
- 12.15pm Short break (bottled water freely available)
- 12.30pm Eucharist presided over by Bishop Stephen (using elements from his addresses)
- 01.30pm Sandwich lunch available (included in cost of day).

Cost

The cost of the morning is £12 including sandwich lunch*
Cost can be claimed from CMD grants. Those from Chelmsford please contact Susan Denham sdenham@chelmsford.anglican.org to request use of grants.

How to book:

Please email Laura Hart from St Albans diocese lhart@stalbans.anglican.org

*Please let us know of any dietary requirements or allergies when you book.