

THE LONDON CHURCHES FUND FOR DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS

England & Wales · Charity number 1121108

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	Trust
Registered	2007-10-09
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	St. Andrew's United Reformed Church London SE4 2SA
Phone	07377109453
Email	simon.banc@crcw.org.uk
Website	www.lcrf.org.uk

Activities

Objects: 1) TO ADVANCE EDUCATION AND RELIEVE SICKNESS AND FINANCIAL AND OTHER HARDSHIP AMONGST REFUGEES AND THOSE SEEKING ASYLUM IN THE GREATER LONDON AREA AND THEIR DEPENDENTS; EITHER DIRECTLY OR BY MAKING RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS WORKING TO ACHIEVE THE SAME OBJECT.2) TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL ABOUT THE ISSUES RELATING TO REFUGEES AND THOSE SEEKING ASYLUM.

Activities: The charity provides small grants to organizations within Greater London that are meeting the welfare needs of destitute asylum-seekers and refugees. Allocation is prioritised to member organizations of the London Churches Refugee Network, non-members may also apply. This ecumenical fund relies on donations from individuals, churches and other charitable foundations to relieve this form of destitu

Classification

- **How:** Makes Grants To Organisations, Acts As An Umbrella Or Resource Body
- **What:** Education/training, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, Other Defined Groups

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** GREATER LONDON AREA
- Throughout London

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-12-31	£55,470	£60,054	-	-
2023-12-31	£59,530	£54,785	-	-
2022-12-31	£50,751	£53,761	-	-
2021-12-31	£54,824	£46,228	-	-
2020-12-31	£42,437	£37,385	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Simon Loveitt	Chair	2023-06-22
BETHAN ANGHARAD LANT		2024-05-16
CHRIS BRICE		
Gillian Angela Dare		2020-06-26
Matthew Lloyd		2023-03-28
ROBINA ANNE PENELOPE RAFFERTY MBE, BA		

THE LONDON CHURCHES FUND FOR DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS

England & Wales - Charity number 1121108

Accounts

London Churches Refugee Fund

Charity number
1121108

Annual Report 2024



Service user Zadeh cooking the weekly lunch at EASE (Ealing and Acton Support Enterprise)

www.lcrf.org.uk

Letter from our Chair

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure as the newly elected **Chair of Trustees of LCRF** to say a huge thank you for the hundreds of supporters and churches who continue to give so generously to LCRF. Over the last year the amount donated rose and we were in receipt of a total of £55,470. This enabled us to contribute to 44 different frontline services helping totally destitute asylum seekers. These are among the most vulnerable people in our community, having no recourse to public funds.

I want to pay tribute to our Founding Chair, the **Rev Chris Brice** known to most of you. Chris has worked tirelessly since the charity was founded in 2007, as a driving force in the organisation ensuring that we are well placed to continue to grow. After 18 years, Chris has decided to stand down as Chair, which will free him up to continue fundraising and being an advocate for the charity, using his unique blend of passion and persuasion, and reaching out to churches and Christians wherever he can.

Our **Annual Speakers Event** in 2024, was very kindly hosted this year by Bloomsbury Baptist Church, and featured a passionate keynote address by the **Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal**, founding Director of the Cities and Churches of Sanctuary movement. 'Sanctuary' was his key message.



These photos were taken at LCRF's annual Speaker's Event, held at Bloomsbury Baptist Church in June 2024

I am very glad to report that the **London Churches Refugee Fund** and **London Churches Network** have amalgamated in 2024 and through our shared values and work we hope to offer you all more support and opportunities for dedicated networking events, to jointly address the challenges faced by all our partner organisations.

Our annual **Carol Singing** outside Highbury and Islington Station and the sale of Christmas Cards and Welcome gifts are key components of our fundraising. Our Christmas cards, both the one based on Cathy Young's painting and the Christmas Rose design by Rozhan from Iran and Ella aged 11 years, have proved as popular as ever.

Regular monthly donations are the backbone of our fundraising strategy, alongside a growing band of 'one-off' donors. It would be wonderful if you were able to continue to spread the word amongst your family, friends, and colleagues in your church or community to become a regular donor, hold a fundraising event, or invite us to speak at your church or community event.

As we continue our work, please keep **LCRF**, our refugee neighbours, and the refugee organisations in your thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Loveitt
Chair of LCRF

Who Did We Support in 2024?

In 2024 our Fund received £44,502 in donations. With Gift Aid and the sale of Christmas cards and Welcome Gifts, our total income was £55,470. We were able to make grants of £58,288 (our highest-ever figure) and incurred just £ 1,120 in overheads - half of which related to the printing and distribution of cards. In 2024, we were able to help 44 different organisations listed opposite each with grants of up to £1,000.

Grants are capped by the funds available at the time of the awards. We only rarely reject applications, and normally because these are not felt to contribute directly to the relief of destitution among refugee and asylum seekers in London.

• Where our money came from:

Foundation Donors	£ 19,268
Single donations	£ 19,503
Churches/organisations	£ 4,405
Carol singing collections	£ 1,326
HMRC Gift Aid	£ 8,215
Card/print sales	£ 2,753
Income received this year	£ 55,470

• Where our money went to:

Grants	£ 58,288
Administration	£ 1,120
Cards - printing/postage	£ 646
Total payments for the year	£ 60,054

LCRF bank balance at the start of the year	£ 39,919
LCRF bank balance at the end of the year	£ 35,335

Organisations supported in 2024

Action for Refugees Lewisham (AFRIL)
 African Refugee Community
 Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile
 Babylon Migrants Project
 Cartesian Academy
 Citizens of the World Choir
 CAWS Homeless Project
 Cotton Tree Trust
 Croydon Refugee Day Centre
 Ealing & Acton Support Enterprise
 Freedom from Torture
 Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
 Globe Community Project
 Hackney Doorways
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 Islington Mind
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 JCORE
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 Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network
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 London Catholic Worker
 New Citizens' Gateway
 NNLS Asylum Seekers Drop-in
 Notre Dame Refugee Centre
 Peaceful Borders
 Refugee Council
 Refugee & Migrant Forum of Essex & London (RAMFEL)
 Room to Heal
 St James' Piccadilly
 St. Jude and St. Paul's Church Mildmay
 St. Martin in the Fields Sunday International Group
 Salusbury World Refugee Centre
 The Separated Child Foundation
 Waging Peace
 Waltham Forest Migrant Action
 West London Welcome
 Women Against Rape
 Young Roots

On the Front Line - Case Studies from the projects we help

When Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL)'s caseworkers first met the S family, all six members were sharing a double room. The parents had no income to purchase nutritious food for their children because a Home Office error had caused their Aspen card to be blocked, so they could not access the asylum support they were entitled to. This resulted in their five year old daughter becoming malnourished, and health visitors and doctors in A&E confirming that the parents needed to purchase healthy food. Thanks to an LCRF grant, AFRIL were able to provide an emergency payment to purchase nutritious food that the children were able to eat and enjoy. Meanwhile AFRIL worked to resolve the ASPEN card issues, to ensure the family received their asylum support income, and supported them to access suitable asylum accommodation in London while they waited for the result of their asylum claim.

Without the provision of the emergency payment, the health consequences for the children would have been severe. In addition, knowing that they could put food on the table for their children relieved a significant amount of stress and anxiety for the parents, meaning that they the energy and capacity to engage with their AFRIL caseworker to resolve their income and housing issues.



Refugee administrative support and English classes at EASE (Ealing and Acton Support Enterprise)

The Co-ordinator of Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) first met D and her younger daughter J at an outreach session at their asylum hostel, not long after they entered the country. It took two more weeks before she met R, her teenage daughter, who was struggling with anxiety over leaving their hostel room, after traumatic experiences in her country of origin.

CRDC supported D with school applications for both children. J received a primary school place quickly, and CRDC helped with school uniform and essential clothing. When it became clear that R would not receive a school place for several months, CRDC arranged a referral to a specialist programme for out of school girls with English as a second language, and supported R with introductions, suitable clothing and travel costs.

R later said “Me and my mother was very worried about getting a (school) place. Then we met the CRDC Co-ordinator. I was nervous at first because I don't know what a school is like, because I have never been to one. Then she put me in (specialist provision) which helped me in this problem. It improved my English and maths, and I became more confident. They also took us to many famous places in London and made us do different activities which was so good”.

On the Front Line - Case Studies from the projects we help

When O came to the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS UK) he had been moving around different places in the UK after having missed a Home Office deadline to appeal his initial refusal because of slow internet connections in his local library. “I spent two months with no phone, and no access to the internet, two months of total isolation and disconnection.” Without internet, O found himself disconnected from everything, from the Home Office, from legal advice, from English classes, from his GP, and from family and friends.

Thanks to a grant from LCRF, JRS UK were able to give O vouchers for mobile credit and internet data. “The vouchers are special for me. They allow me to keep in touch with my family and my friends, and my solicitor. I use the data to access my college course, for doing my homework, for sending emails and booking essential appointments.”

Two young refugees had been sleeping outside Limehouse station before they came to Hackney Night Shelter (HNS). They were very anxious, both being young women from Eritrea who were sticking together for safety. They stayed with HNS for about two months until their benefits came through, and HNS could support them to move into a women’s project in Islington. During this time HNS used some of their LCRF grant to cover their essential travel costs. The young women were extremely grateful.



Providing a weekly hot lunch at EASE

A and his sister D, from Sudan, spent many months travelling to get to a safe place. They came to the African Refugee Community (ARC) after seeking asylum, needing support to get a lawyer, and to register with a GP and college. One of ARC’s volunteers worked closely with them, providing emotional support as well as advocacy. They had no money or warm clothes, but the volunteer worked with social services and statutory and voluntary agencies to provide them with basic items to survive. ARC assisted them with food, vouchers to buy clothes and shoes, and phone and travel cards.

Today they have been granted asylum and have decent accommodation. They go to college, and have started engaging with life in different communities. According to ARC, “they feel safe, loved, and are doing their best to rebuild their future. Without your financial support, I do not think they could have made it.”



Home Office monthly vigil

Refugees and asylum seekers: the UK and the world in 2024

The UNHCR reported record levels of forced displacement in 2024 with nearly 123 million people forced to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution by the end of June. Conflicts in Palestine, Sudan, Ukraine and DRC, to name just a few, fed into the numbers of people seeking safety.

The increase in global displacement is reflected in the UK picture, with 84,000 applications for asylum. At least 76 people died trying to cross the English Channel including a number of children. Despite the increase in applications, the backlog in the asylum system fell, but the percentage of grants of refugee status at first instance fell from around 75% in 2023, to just over 50%, and the backlog in the appeals system increased considerably.

This was a year of two halves in many ways, with a change of government following the general election in July. The few months of 2024 saw a continuation of refugee homelessness issues caused in part by the increases in grants of refugee status through the Streamlined Asylum Process at the end of 2023.

London Councils reported finding 311 refugees sleeping rough in January following eviction from asylum support accommodation and found that overall rough sleeping among refugees and asylum seekers in London had increased by 234% in a four month period.

The Conservative government continued to move asylum seekers to the Bibby Stockholm despite concerns being raised by many organisations and by whistleblowers among the barge's staff who said that the men were treated "like cattle", and noted a sharp deterioration in the mental health of many of those held onboard.

The Safety of Rwanda Act 2024 came into force in April, essentially asserting that Rwanda was a "safe third country" and constraining the ability of the courts to otherwise, and disapplying the powers of the European Court of Human Rights to stop removals. The then Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, pledged in his election campaign that if he were re-elected, removals to Rwanda would commence immediately.

The incoming Labour government announced shortly after their election that no further people would be moved to the Bibby Stockholm and that the barge would be decommissioned. However, they have continued to house people at Wethersfield Asylum Centre, a former RAF airfield which has been described by locals as "Stalag Wethersfield" due to the poor conditions.

The new government swiftly introduced the Illegal Migration Act 2023 (Amendment) Regulations 2024, which abolished the duty on the Secretary of State to remove from the UK anyone who had entered the country illegally, and removed from the Illegal Migration Act the provisions which prevented any person who had entered illegally from ever obtaining any kind of leave in the UK, which had effectively prevented large numbers of asylum applications from being processed. The government also indicated their intention to repeal the Safety of Rwanda Act.



Home Office monthly vigil

Refugees and asylum seekers: the UK and the world in 2024

In November 2024 it was announced that from February 2025, those who had entered the UK under the various Ukrainian schemes would be able to apply for a further leave to remain in the UK. However, the extension will be for only 18 months and it was again asserted that the leave granted will not count towards settlement in the UK.

Towards the end of the year, the Home Office, as part of its transition from a physical system of immigration documents to an electronic system (known as the eVisa system) stopped issuing Biometric Residence Permits to people granted refugee status. The resultant issues in obtaining evidence of status which would enable people to find employment and accommodation, open bank accounts or claim welfare benefits, led in part to an announcement of a temporary extension of the move on period from asylum accommodation for newly-granted refugees from 28 days notice to 56 days notice for a trial period to be reviewed in June 2025. The move was broadly welcomed by refugee and homelessness organisations although calls continue to make the change permanent.

The government also announced late last year a consultation on increasing fees for legal aid in immigration and asylum matters. It is hoped that this may lead to action which will stop the haemorrhaging of legal aid representatives out of the asylum and immigration system which has led to over 50% of those in the asylum system being without legal representation for their application.

Despite some changes for the better, the asylum system is still rife with delays and a lack of adequate support which leaves applicants facing long waits for decisions in near destitution. This is a recipe for mental and physical health issues which are endemic among those seeking asylum. LCRF continues to support those organisations which seek to alleviate suffering and poverty among those seeking asylum and refugees, recognising that we are all beloved of God and should be treated as such.

We are desperately short of doctors and cannot wait the several years it takes to train new doctors or for them to gain experience. Many of the refugees have worked in agriculture all their lives and we urgently need agricultural workers for our farms. Others bring other skills and experience we urgently need to turn around our economy. Accepting refugees is a win for the UK and the communities that host them, not only for the refugee. By providing them with the right to work, to health, and to education, refugees can start building new lives here in the UK. The faster they can integrate into the labour force, the faster they can become productive members of society and contribute to the UK.

Nationally, the refugee organisations are advocating for a good humane asylum policy, compliant with our international obligations and common humanity as well as human rights. These include:

- Uphold access to the asylum system by considering all claims, no matter how someone arrives in the UK.
- Expand existing safe routes, such as family reunion, and pilot new ones, such as humanitarian visas.
- Roll out a more efficient process for making asylum decisions so that decisions are made swiftly and are right the first time
- Safe homes and by Providing the right support people need while waiting for an asylum decision, and after a decision, to recover and rebuild their lives.
- Improve support in the UK for refugees and people seeking asylum so they can engage effectively with the process, and for those who stay, integrate and contribute to society.

written by Bethan Lant, our newest *LCRF Trustee*



LCRF trustee meeting, held at our base in Shoreditch

Trustee Review of the Year

The work of LCRF continued apace during 2024, under the guidance of our committed group of trustees, each bringing different gifts to the organisation.

An important change during this year was the election of Simon Loveitt as our new Chair of Trustees. This has been planned for some time and has allowed Chris Brice to finally step down from the role, after brilliantly leading us right since the inception of LCRF nearly twenty years ago. Simon now brings us huge experience in the christian and community sector, particularly from working within the United Reformed Church.

We also welcomed Bethan Lant as a new trustee, bringing us further key skills, particularly from within the refugee sector. It now feels as though our Board of Trustees, with members old and new, is well prepared to face fresh challenges that we face all small charities like us in this changing world.

We continue to have the excellent assistance of valued volunteers: Palissa Ose-Owusu, looking after our social media and Clement and Anita Francis, who have used their technical skills to ensure that our communications and website are kept up to date. We so appreciate all they do as they keep LCRF technologically up to date in these increasingly digital times.

LCRF Trustees:

Simon Loveitt (chair), Stella Jeffrey (secretary), Chris Brice,
Gillian Dare, Robina Rafferty, Bethan Lant, Matthew Lloyd.
Treasurer: Dave Bond

As we have no paid staff, all that we do is dependent on our trustees and volunteers. The job of arranging the two rounds of grant applications has been ably organised as usual by trustees Gillian Dare and Robina Rafferty. Our Secretary Stella Jeffrey has kept excellent and accurate minutes throughout the year. Our Honorary Treasurer, Dave Bond, has continued to provide us with clear and accurate accounts and facilitated prompt payments to the groups that we have been able to support.

Our 2024 Speaker Meeting on the theme 'Church of Sanctuary' was held to a lively audience at the Bloomsbury Baptist Church in early June, with the Reverend Simon Woodman very kindly hosting us within his beautiful and superbly equipped building.

A major part of the fundraising undertaken by the trustees is the sale of Christmas cards and welcome gifts, which all successfully sold out this year. We were once again pleased to offer a card using a lovely painting once again by the acclaimed artist Cathy Young and a second one by Rozhan, an Iranian refugee in London. Thank you to both artists!



The central rose image was painted for our 2nd Christmas card by artist Rozhan from Iran. Rozhan says: "I love art. I love flowers and nature". The holly wreath was drawn by Ella (aged 11 yrs).

London Churches Refugee Fund

Charity number
1121108

Another of our regular public events is LCRF's annual carol-singing gathering, which this year took place on Friday 6 December at Highbury & Islington Station forecourt. This time we were graced with warmer weather than last year's arctic conditions, and enjoyed the support of both children coming home from school, passers by, evening commuters and even Arsenal football fans heading off for an evening match!



LCRF Carol Singing
December 2024 - Highbury & Islington tube station

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS Account for the year ended 31st December 2024		2024	2023
	Note	£	£
RECEIPTS			
Donations		44,502	48,603
HMRC reimbursements (Gift Aid)		8,215	7,823
Sales of Christmas cards		2,754	3,104
TOTAL RECEIPTS		<u>55,470</u>	<u>59,530</u>
PAYMENTS			
Total grants	2	58,288	53,400
Administration expenses	3	1,120	750
Christmas cards - production and distribution costs		<u>646</u>	<u>635</u>
TOTAL PAYMENTS		60,054	54,785
RECEIPTS less PAYMENTS for the year ended 31st December 2024		<u>(4,584)</u>	<u>4,745</u>

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as at 31st December 2024		2024	2023
		£	£
ASSETS			
Bank Balance			
Co-operative Bank Community Directplus Account		35,335	39,919
LIABILITIES			
		0	0
ASSETS less LIABILITIES		<u>35,335</u>	<u>39,919</u>
GENERAL FUND			
Balance brought forward 1st January		39,919	35,174
Receipts less Payments in 2024		(4,584)	4,745
Balance carried forward 31st December		<u>35,335</u>	<u>39,919</u>

The accounts were approved by the Trustees on 28 May 2025.
Signed on their behalf by Simon Loveitt

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND
NOTES TO ACCOUNTS
For the year ending 31 December 2024

1. Accounting policies

1.1 Charity information

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND is an unincorporated charity registered in England & Wales. It is registered as THE LONDON CHURCHES FUND FOR DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS; charity number 1121108.

1.2 Basis of preparation

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice" applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102)".
The charity is a public benefit entity as defined by FRS102.

1.3 Income and expenditure

Income and expenditure is recognised when there is a legal obligation, any performance conditions have been met and the amounts can be measured reliably.

1.4 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments. It only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments.

1.5 Charitable funds

The funds of the charity are classified as general and are all unrestricted and expendable at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objects of the charity.

2 Grants

During the year the charity provided grants to the following organisations:

	2024
	£
Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL)	1,750
African Refugee Community	1,750
Babylon Migrants Project	1,250
Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile	1,750.00
British Refugee Council	1,000
C4WS Homeless Project	1,738
Cartesian Academy	1,500
Citizens of the World Choir	1,750
Cotton Tree Trust	1,750
Croydon Refugee Day Centre	1,750
Ealing and Acton Support Enterprise	1,000
Freedom from Torture	1,750
Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group	750
Globe Community Project	500
Hackney Doorways	750
Hackney Migrants Centre	750
Happy Baby Community	1,750
HIAS/JCORE (Jewish Council for Racial Equality)	1,750
Holy Trinity Church Hounslow	750
Hope for the Young	750
Housing Justice	1,750
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants	1,750
Islington Mind	750
Islington Refugee and Migrant Forum (IRMF)	500
Jesuit Refugee Service	1,750
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network	1,750
The Life Seekers Aid	1,750
Sign London Catholic Worker	750
New Citizens' Gateway	1,000
New North London Synagogue Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-In	1,750
Notre Dame Refugee Centre	1,750
Peaceful Borders	750
Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL)	1,750
Room to Heal	1,750
St James' Church, Piccadilly	1,750
St Jude and St Paul's Church, Mildmay	1,750
St Martin-in-the-Fields Trust	800
Salisbury World Refugee Centre	750
The Separated Child Foundation	500
Waging Peace	1,750
Waltham Forest Migrant Action	750
West London Welcome	1,750
Women against Rape	1,750
Young Roots	750
Total grants	<u><u>58,288</u></u>

3 Administration expenses

The following expenses were incurred;

Printing	244
Speakers	237
Fees and subscriptions	445
Insurance	194
	<u><u>1,120</u></u>

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF
LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND (the charity) for the year ended 31 December 2024. These accounts have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein.

This report is made solely to the trustees in accordance with Sections 144-147 and 151-155 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiners' Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees for my examination work.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the charity, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

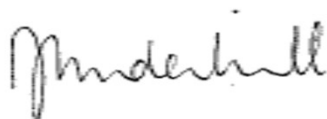
I report in respect of my examination of the accounts of the charity carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1) the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- 2) the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Virginia Underhill FCA
9 Bonhill Street
London
EC2A 4DJ

date 28 May 2025

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

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Happy Baby Community	1,750
HIAS/JCORE (Jewish Council for Racial Equality)	1,750
Holy Trinity Church Hounslow	750
Hope for the Young	750
Housing Justice	1,750
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants	1,750
Islington Mind	750
Islington Refugee and Migrant Forum (IRMF)	500
Jesuit Refugee Service	1,750
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network	1,750
The Life Seekers Aid	1,750
Sign London Catholic Worker	750
New Citizens' Gateway	1,000
New North London Synagogue Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-In	1,750
Notre Dame Refugee Centre	1,750
Peaceful Borders	750
Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL)	1,750
Room to Heal	1,750
St James' Church, Piccadilly	1,750
St Jude and St Paul's Church, Mildmay	1,750
St Martin-in-the-Fields Trust	800
Salisbury World Refugee Centre	750
The Separated Child Foundation	500
Waging Peace	1,750
Waltham Forest Migrant Action	750
West London Welcome	1,750
Women against Rape	1,750
Young Roots	750
Total grants	<u>58,288</u>

3 Administration expenses

The following expenses were incurred;

Printing	244
Speakers	237
Fees and subscriptions	445
Insurance	194
	<u>1,120</u>

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF
LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND (the charity) for the year ended 31 December 2024. These accounts have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein.

This report is made solely to the trustees in accordance with Sections 144-147 and 151-155 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiners' Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees for my examination work.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the charity, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

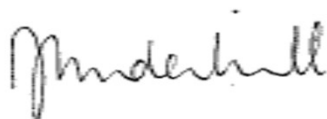
I report in respect of my examination of the accounts of the charity carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1) the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- 2) the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Virginia Underhill FCA
9 Bonhill Street
London
EC2A 4DJ

date 28 May 2025

THE LONDON CHURCHES FUND FOR DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS

England & Wales - Charity number 1121108

Accounts

London Churches Refugee Fund

Charity number
1121108

Annual Report 2023



Fundraising carol singing,
Highbury & Islington Station December 2023

Letter from our Chair

Dear friends

Since 2006 the London Churches refugee fund has awarded 570 grants totalling £437,985 to 96 different Refugee projects in London.

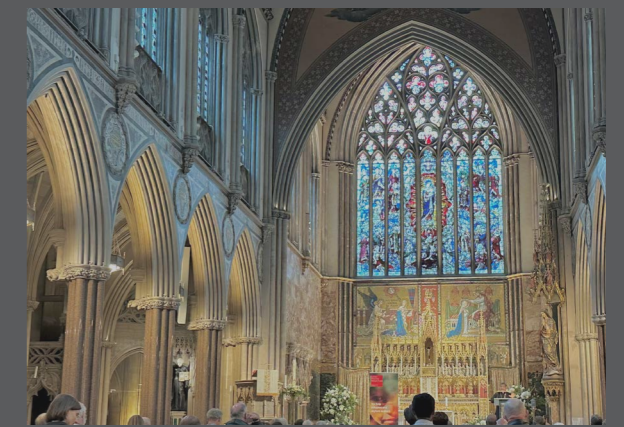
I want to say a huge “Thank you!” to the hundreds of individuals and scores of churches whose support and generosity has made this possible.

LCRF grants have to be used to purchase basic but ‘life-saving’ essentials to help the tens of thousands of destitute refugees in London, who come to these projects seeking help, such as:

Food vouchers, Nappies, underwear, Oyster cards, Phone credit, Hygiene packs, Sanitary products, Emergency payments.

The maximum Grant we currently award is £1000, and many refugee projects apply to LCRF regularly year after year. The need never goes away.

Surprisingly there are few, if any, similar sources of funding available to Refugee Projects in London aimed at meeting these basic needs of destitute asylum seekers. You can read in this Annual Report anonymous examples from the projects we support of the ways in which LCRF grants have made a life changing difference to refugees in London who are in desperate need.



These photos were taken at LCRF's annual Speaker's Event, held at the Church of the Immaculate Conception May 2023W

The London, Churches, Refugee Fund, a registered charity, has no staff, no office, and no equipment! The trustees, and three core volunteers, carry out all the work of the fund voluntarily using our own resources, experience, energy, time, and home equipment! As a result our overheads are minimal, which means that nearly every penny of every donation we receive goes directly into our grants, providing practical support for thousands of destitute refugees in London.

Please will you, dear reader, very kindly consider:

- Becoming a monthly donor, or
- Increasing your monthly donation, if you already make one
- Making a generous one-off donation
- Organising a fundraising event or collection for LCRF
- Recruiting a friend or family member to become a supporter of LCRF
- Inviting us to speak at your church about the work of LCRF
- Leaving a legacy to LCRF in your will.

And whatever you do – please pray for the work of LCRF and most especially for our refugee neighbours in need across London whom we seek to help.

Most sincerely,

Chris Brice

Chair of LCRF

Who Did We Support in 2023?

In 2023 our Fund received £48,603 in donations. With Gift Aid and the sale of Christmas cards and Welcome Gifts, our total income was £59,530. We made grants of £53,400 (our highest-ever figure) and incurred just £ 1,385 in overheads – half of which related to the printing and distribution of cards. That produced a surplus of £4,745 for the year.

In 2023, we were able to help 41 different organisations listed opposite each with grants of up to £1,000. Grants are capped by the funds available at the time of the awards. In the rare cases when we reject an application it is normally because it is not felt to contribute directly to the relief of destitution among refugees and asylum seekers in London.



'Christmas Wishes'
One of LCRF's Christmas cards this year
Designed by artist Mehri, from West London Welcome

Organisations supported in 2023

Action for Refugees Lewisham (AFRIL)
African Refugee Community
Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile
Babylon Migrants Project
Citizens of the World Choir
CAWS Homeless Project
CARAS Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Care for Calais
Christ Church Feltham
Cotton Tree Trust
Croydon Refugee Day Centre
Dost Centre for Young Refugees and Migrants
Freedom from Torture
Hackney Migrant Centre
Happy Baby Community
Haringey Migrant Support Centre
Hope for the Young
Housing Justice
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants
JCORE
Jesuit Refugee Service
LEWCAS
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network
Migrant Voice
Migrants Organise
New Citizens' Gateway
NNLS Asylum Seekers Drop-in
Notre Dame Refugee Centre
Refugee Council
Room to Heal
Sapphire Project
South London Refugee Association
St James' Piccadilly
St. Martin in the Fields Sunday International Group
Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur
Union Chapel
Waging Peace
Waltham Forest Migrant Action
West London Welcome

On the Front Line - Case Studies from the projects we help

D from Nigeria was supported by the Refugee Council's Destitution Service (RC) between 2019 and 2022.

He was sleeping rough, and it was not clear where he was in the asylum process when he came to the UK. He had high levels of anxiety expressed through angry outbursts, and a reluctance to engage with the initial assessment. The project coordinator, Kellie, sensed that she would need to take time with him to build trust. D began regularly attending the drop-in service, where the RC was able to support him with meeting his basic needs, including providing travel passes provided by LCRF. Over time he began to engage with the RC and trust them. During 2020 and 2021, Kellie worked with partner agencies with casework support for D. This included getting him a hotel room via the "Everyone In" scheme during the pandemic, providing emotional support through the regular therapeutic zoom group, and ultimately getting him accommodation and financial support from the local authority due to his care needs. He recently told Kellie that he took a chance on her because he saw that she didn't give up on him, and that he never thought he could be helped like he had been. Kellie said: "This highlights how providing a trauma-informed service is an effective way of working with people who present with high levels of anxiety, distrust and a reluctance to engage. The drop-in service is an effective way of building trust: we provide a framework of safety through meeting basic needs - food, showers, laundry, travel money, being transparent and making sure everyone is treated with dignity and respect".



Images produced by refugees following an LCRF organised drawing competition

J is 16 years old and arrived in the UK in June 2021.

He was immediately arrested, and placed in Home Office accommodation. Despite telling the local authority that he was 16, he had been incorrectly visually assessed as an adult, and was being accommodated in a hotel alongside much older adults. He was terrified, and was sharing bathroom facilities with many people much older than him. He had no access to a keyworker or social services, and was at risk of mistreatment. He was brought to South London Refugee Association's (SLRA) office by a man he had met in the mosque. He was timid, scared, and had no idea what to do to resolve his situation. SLRA immediately made a safeguarding referral to the local authority, requesting that a full and proper age assessment be carried out. They found him a community care solicitor in order to put pressure on the local authority to fulfil their legal duty. Eventually the local authority agreed to conduct a full age assessment and to treat him as a looked after child in the interim. They moved him to accommodation which was suitable for a 16 year old, and he now had the necessary support from a key worker and social worker. Now that J is receiving the proper care, his mental and physical health has greatly improved. He receives daily support at his accommodation and has been able to make friends with young people his own age. SLRA has provided him with a laptop, which means that he is able to access ESOL classes and a youth group online. He has started college. From being frightened, lonely and distressed in unsuitable accommodation, he now has friends and opportunity.

On the Front Line - Case Studies from the projects we help

WS and her five year old daughter had been through harrowing trauma, including severe domestic violence, a period of street homelessness in London, and extreme deprivation as a result of unresolved immigration issues.

Hackney Migrant Centre was able to provide supermarket vouchers and mobile credit to support them, while also ensuring that they were referred to an immigration solicitor who is working on resolving their immigration issues to find a route out of their destitution and insecurity.

L came to Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) as an asylum-seeker.

She received leave to remain a few months ago, and returned to CRDC desperate because she didn't understand the systems, had no food and was very hungry. She was also very lonely. CRDC supplied emergency food parcels, but also worked with her to access their other services for social and wellbeing activities. She was delighted to make a human connection and be welcomed to these other activities. CRDC is continuing to support her to access services more effectively so that she does not end up feeling so alone again.

N, a pregnant mother arrived from Iraq in October 2022 with her three other children, speaking Kurdish Sorani.

Happy Baby Community (HBC) supported her with the birth of her twins, and the care of her three other children. The hotel food consisted of white bread and margarine for breakfast, pasta or rice for lunch, and vegetable rice for dinner. N was desperate for fresh fruit and vegetables, and her health and that of her babies and children depended on her having a healthy diet. HBC provided her with a huge weekly bag of fruit and vegetables such as oranges, avocados, tomatoes, mango and salad that she was able to store in her room (she had no access to cooking facilities). Thanks to food charities, they also accessed wholemeal bread, baby food, smoothies, and cereal bars that were high in protein suitable for the children. Ms N and her children are now managing to get by, and join the group every week.

London Churches Refugee Fund

**LONDON CHURCHES
REFUGEE FUND**

**Annual Speaker
Meeting**

Tuesday June 4th @ 6.30 pm

**Revd Dr Inderjit
Bhogal**

Founder and President of
City of Sanctuary

**“Church of Sanctuary:
Churches engaging with Refugees”**
(Plus: speakers from some of the frontline charities
supported by the London Churches Refugee Fund)

Email: info@lcrf.org.uk Website: lcrf.org.uk

**Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church
235 Shaftesbury Avenue WC2H 8EP
STARTS 6.30pm f/b meet & greet over refreshments**

Flyer for LCRF's
2024 Annual Speaker Meeting

Refugees and asylum seekers: the human costs and benefits

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:35-36). These words are a constant admonition to see in the migrant not simply a brother or sister in difficulty, but Christ himself, who knocks at our door.” Pope Francis

The last year has witnessed many more conflicts and increasing violence around the world, ethnic, political and religious discrimination and persecution, as well as devastating impacts of climate change such as water shortages, failed harvests from weather change, floods and desertification. Last year there were 27.1 million refugees of whom 41% are children who were forcibly displaced across the world, and the vast majority of them sought sanctuary in the poorest countries of the world. In total, the UK is home to just 1% of all refugees worldwide. The media, social media, politicians and other commentators have tended to reduce the plight and suffering of those who flee, to statistics or criminalise them rather than the victims of circumstances not of their own making.

The Home Office figures for 2023, state that 7,004 of the 30,000 people who sought refuge in the UK were referred as potential victims of modern slavery showing the reality and the scale of people who are trapped in exploitative situations, threats, violence and intimidation, apart from all those fleeing conflict. Each has a story to tell and a life, home, family or livelihood destroyed. The human cost for refugees is immense: loneliness, despair, mental and physical dislocation. For children and young people it usually means an end to education and a productive and positive future. All hope for most of them is lost.

While we have a reasonable record with regard to immigration (1.2m last year), UK policies towards refugees and asylum seekers have become increasingly harsh and more restrictive, based on the conventional view that the refugee is a burden on society, and is focussed on how we can prevent people from coming here, turn them away at sea or our borders, make life here so harsh in unsafe accommodation, inappropriate food, locked in compounds or cells or incarcerated in ships, and treated as criminals, that they suffer a second trauma. The government has passed the Illegal Migration Act into law. This will prevent most people fleeing war and persecution from claiming asylum in the UK, including when they are from places where we know people are likely to have reasons to flee, such as Afghanistan, Syria and Sudan.

The Europe-wide Coalition against Inhumanity of some 80 NGOs launched a campaign to stop the Inhumanity at Europe's Borders including those who come in small boats across the sea. There are limited safe ways for people to seek asylum in the UK and more people than previously are waiting over a year for an initial decision on their claim. Even newly recognised refugees are struggling after successfully applying for asylum. Many can't move from asylum support to mainstream benefits and employment within the 28-day period given to them by the Home Office. This year the period given them to move out of their asylum accommodation has been reduced to seven days. This is leading to devastating levels of destitution. The Rwanda policy, even if it gets through Parliament will not reduce the numbers or deter desperate people, because they have no other realistic options.

But we can challenge the conventional view. By allowing them to stay and work they can add to the wealth of our country and contribute taxes and not be a burden. Refugees bring many skills and expertise and a commitment to work. For example, about 1,200 medically qualified and experienced refugees both general practitioners and specialists, are registered with the British Medical Association. It is estimated that it costs around £25,000 to support a refugee doctor to practise in the UK. Training a new doctor costs between £200,000 and £250,000.

Refugees and asylum seekers: the human costs and benefits

We are desperately short of doctors and cannot wait the several years it takes to train new doctors or for them to gain experience. Many of the refugees have worked in agriculture all their lives and we urgently need agricultural workers for our farms. Others bring other skills and experience we urgently need to turn around our economy. Accepting refugees is a win for the UK and the communities that host them, not only for the refugee. By providing them with the right to work, to health, and to education, refugees can start building new lives here in the UK. The faster they can integrate into the labour force, the faster they can become productive members of society and contribute to the UK.

Nationally, the refugee organisations are advocating for a good humane asylum policy, compliant with our international obligations and common humanity as well as human rights. These include:

- Uphold access to the asylum system by considering all claims, no matter how someone arrives in the UK.
- Expand existing safe routes, such as family reunion, and pilot new ones, such as humanitarian visas.
- Roll out a more efficient process for making asylum decisions so that decisions are made swiftly and are right the first time
- Safe homes and by Providing the right support people need while waiting for an asylum decision, and after a decision, to recover and rebuild their lives.
- Improve support in the UK for refugees and people seeking asylum so they can engage effectively with the process, and for those who stay, integrate and contribute to society.

There are an increasing number of people who recognise that we can benefit from these refugees if we welcome them and integrate them into our communities. Welcoming people from other countries strengthens our own communities by making them more diverse, tolerant and flexible in our fast-changing world. Some of the most inspiring and influential people in the arts, science, politics and technology came originally as refugees, asylum seekers or migrants. Our partner front line refugee services are playing a wonderful compassionate Christian role in supporting them and helping them integrate into our communities.

The London Churches Refugee Fund exists to contribute to helping them support destitute refugees and asylum seekers and we are enabled to do this by the generous donations of many churches and Christians across London. As Christians, we are enjoined by Christ to welcome the stranger and support the vulnerable. The Pope and all the key Church Leaders remind us of our obligation laid on us to see Christ in the refugees and to treat strangers with dignity and hospitality.

'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Matthew 25 vs40



'Reclining Nativity'

One of LCRF's Christmas cards this year
Designed by artist Cathy Young

Trustee Review of the Year

2023 saw trustees move their meetings from the kitchen table at the home of Chris Brice to the office of Matthew Lloyd in Shoreditch with access to more modern technology but still with the benefit of cake from the host!

During 2023 we had nine business meetings reflecting our efforts on succession planning as the founding trustees begin to step back to allow new trustees to carry the charity forward. As part of a review of our goals at the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023, aided by input from Jack Brooks, we are aiming for a trustee body of ten people. However, in 2023 we had to say goodbye to John Murphy, Roxane Liddell and Maggie Hindley. We thank them for their years of service to LCRF which has been blessed by their wise counsels. We have been joined by Matthew Lloyd and Simon Loveitt who have both had useful previous experience in running charitable projects and so were able to 'hit the ground running' as new trustees. We hope that in 2024 we will be able to recruit additional trustees so that the tasks can be shared and particularly that the burden shouldered by Chris Brice as Chair can be reduced.

We continue to have the assistance of volunteers: Palissa Ose-Owusu, looking after our social media and Clement and Anita Francis, who have used their technical skills to ensure that our communications and website are kept up to date. We really appreciate all they do as they keep those of us who are retired aware of how we can improve how we work to become more effective. The 2023 Speaker Meeting on the theme 'Love the Stranger' was held at the Church of the Immaculate Conception led by Bishop Paul McAleen and Bishop John Perumbalath with a lively reception afterwards with some wonderful music.

As we have no paid staff, all that we do is dependent on our trustees and volunteers. The job of arranging the two rounds of grant applications has been ably organised by Gillian Dare, assisted by Robina Rafferty. Our Honorary Treasurer, Dave Bond, has provided us with clear and accurate accounts and facilitated prompt payments to the groups that we have been able to support.



LCRF Trustee meeting

A major part of the fundraising undertaken by the trustees is the sale of Christmas cards and welcome gifts. This year our online sales plummeted, but we still managed to sell virtually all of the 5000 cards, thanks mainly to the efforts of Chris Brice at churches in his part of north London. We were once again pleased to offer a card using a painting by Cathy Young and another by a refugee, Mehri from Iran. Thank you to both artists. Our other effort is our annual carol-singing event which this year took place at a very cold Highbury and Islington Station forecourt. Friday 6 December 2024 is already in the calendar for carol singing, but details have not been finalised so please await news nearer the time!

London Churches Refugee Fund

Charity number
1121108

• Where our money came from:

Foundation Donors	£17,274
Single donations	£17,147
Carol singing collections	£1,305
HMRC Gift Aid	£7,823
Card/print sales	£3,104
Income received this year =	£59,530

• Where our money went to:

Grants	£53,400
Administration	£750
Cards - printing/postage	£635

Grants given away this year = £54,785

LCRF bank balance at the start of the year: £35,174

LCRF bank balance at the end of the year: £39,919

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS Account for the year ended 31st December 2023	
RECEIPTS	
Donations	48,603.28
HMRC reimbursements	7,822.59
Sales of Christmas cards	3,104.32
TOTAL RECEIPTS	59,530.19
PAYMENTS	
Grants	
Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL)	1,900.00
African Refugee Community	1,900.00
Babylon Migrants Project	500.00
Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile	1,900.00
British Refugee Council	1,000.00
C4WS Homeless Project	900.00
CARAS	1,200.00
Care4Calais	900.00
Christ Church Feltham	500.00
Citizens of the World Choir	1,900.00
Cotton Tree Trust	1,900.00
Croydon Refugee Day Centre	1,900.00
Dost Centre for Young Refugees and Migrants	1,900.00
Freedom from Torture	1,000.00
Hackney Migrant Support Centre	1,000.00
Happy Baby Community	1,900.00
Haringey Migrant Support Centre	900.00
Hope for the Young	1,000.00
Housing Justice	1,900.00
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants	1,900.00
Jesuit Refugee Service	1,900.00
Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE)	1,900.00
LEWCAS	1,900.00
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network	900.00
Migrant Voice	1,000.00
Migrants Organise	1,000.00
New Citizens' Gateway	1,000.00
New North London Synagogue Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-In	1,900.00
Notre Dame Refugee Centre	1,900.00
Room to Heal	1,900.00
Samphire	900.00
Shrimad Rajchandra Mission	300.00
South London Refugee Association	900.00
St James' Church Piccadilly	900.00
St Martin-in-the-Fields Trust	900.00
Union Chapel	1,000.00
Waging Peace	1,900.00
Waltham Forest Migrant Action	600.00
West London Welcome	900.00
Women against Rape	1,900.00
	<u>53,400.00</u>
Administration	749.81
Christmas cards - production and distribution costs	635.64
TOTAL PAYMENTS	54,785.45
RECEIPTS less PAYMENTS for the year ended 31st December 2023	4,744.74

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st December 2023	
ASSETS	
Bank Balance	
Co-operative Bank Community Directplus Account	39,919.00
TOTAL ASSETS	39,919.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	0.00
ASSETS less LIABILITIES	39,919.00
GENERAL FUND	
Balance brought forward 1st January 2023	35,174.26
Receipts less Payments in 2023	4,744.74
Balance carried forward 31st December 2023	<u>39,919.00</u>

Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of London Churches Refugee Fund.

Charity Number: 1121108

On accounts for the year ended 31st December 2023

Set out on the preceding page.

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act")

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- Accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 20th

ould

March 2024

Michael John G

32 Elm Avenue, Upminster, Essex, RM14 2AY

THE LONDON CHURCHES FUND FOR DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS

England & Wales - Charity number 1121108

Accounts

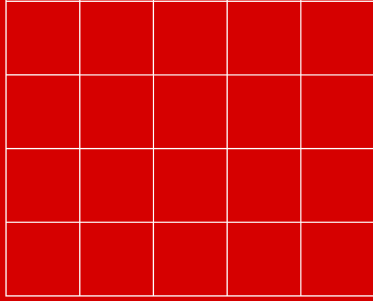
2022 ANNUAL REPORT



London Churches Refugee Fund

Charity Number
1121108

www.lcrf.org.uk



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear friends,

“Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;

Lord, hear my voice; let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.” (Psalm 130 v 1,2)

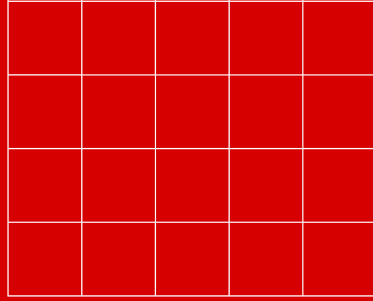
On my way to work, one cold winter morning years ago, as I was exiting Pimlico station I encountered a gentleman who was obviously homeless, inadequately dressed for the time of year, and suffering badly from the cold. Instinctively I took off my much loved, and very warm, Harris Tweed sports jacket and handed it to him. I’m not sure which of the two of us was more surprised! But the shivering man grasped the jacket gladly, and wrapped it around his freezing body.

At the time I was reading a biography of Saint Francis of Assisi, and it may well have been his spirit that inspired this spontaneous act of kindness to a stranger in need.

It was around this time (2006) that I helped to set up the London Churches Refugee Fund (LCRF). And since then the twice yearly grants that LCRF makes to numerous refugee projects in London have provided not only warm clothing, but travel and phone cards, nappies, sanitary packs, food vouchers, and emergency payments for thousands of destitute refugees and migrants across London - and today the need has never been greater.

No matter how these desperate people reach the shores of the United Kingdom, whether they are ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’, whether they are fleeing violence and oppression, or “simply” in search of a life worth living, if they are destitute, the London Churches Refugee Fund is there to help them as they “cry to us out of the depths”.





Jesus always respected the dignity of every individual he met, however, much they might be condemned, or rejected by society... the lives of the woman caught in adultery, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man born blind, were all transformed by their encounter with Jesus. And he never stopped to ask if they had reached him through official government safe routes, or were smuggled into his presence on a boat across the Sea of Galilee, or under straw hidden in a donkey cart. And he certainly never sent them on a one-way flight to Rwanda, insisting that they apply to him for help from there. And neither do we. We just try to help them, right where they are, in London.

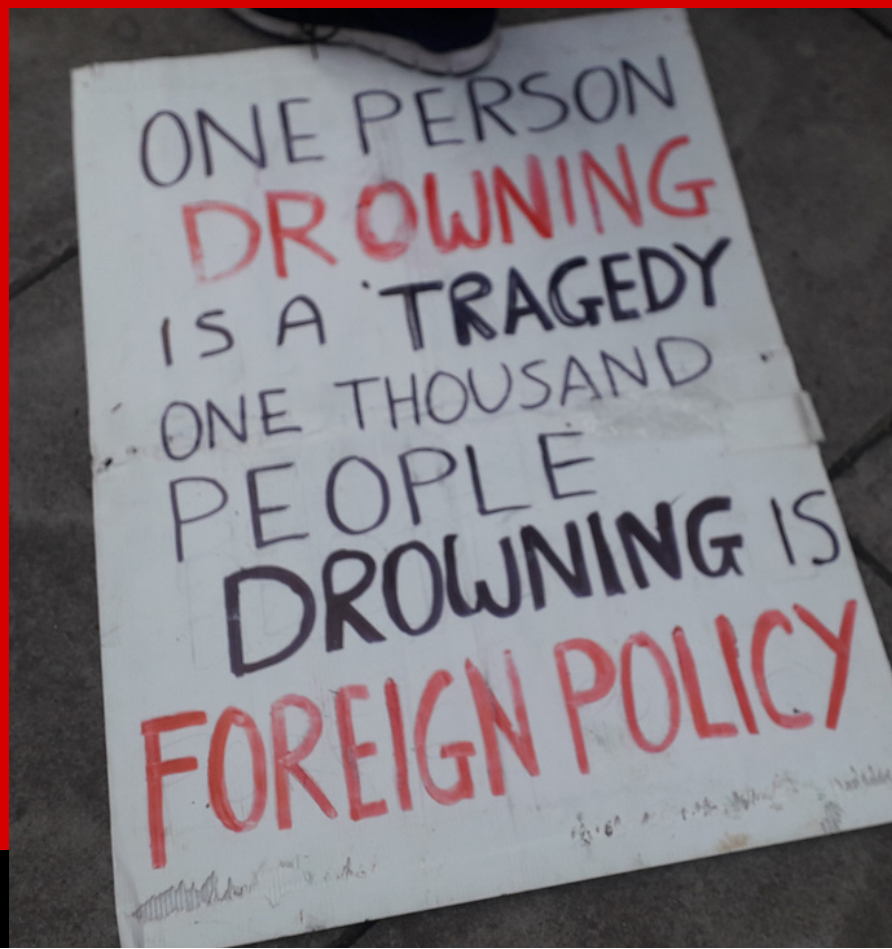
Thank you for your amazing support that makes all this possible. We hope you will be encouraged and inspired by all that you read in this year's Annual Report. Please share the good news of what we have achieved with your friends, family and colleaguesand ask them to join us!

With my love, and prayers, and heartfelt thanks,

Chris

Revd Chris Brice

Chair of LCRF



THE BIGGER PICTURE

Gillian Dare, LCRF Trustee

Seeking asylum is a human right”.

This year has seen ever growing numbers of people forced to flee their homes from war, drought and famine caused by climate change, often exacerbated by land seizures by commercial enterprises, violence especially against women, children and young people increasingly in response to persecution for their religious beliefs. The individual motivations which drive people to undertake perilous voyages and suffer privations, slavery and violence along the way are complex and we need to deepen our understanding in order to empathise with them and show compassion for our brothers and sisters. These are people like us not statistics. People who lived normal lives going to school or work, cultivating their land to feed their families, marrying and having children until disasters not of their making, struck them and their communities.

Sadly development funds which were established by the wealthier countries and international agencies, which were intended to strengthen communities in the poorer countries and enhance their ability to withstand such shocks and grow their economies, have been heavily cut in the last eighteen months and in the UK, the Government admitted to Parliament that it had spent a third of its international aid budget at home last year on refugees, causing “major disruption” to international development, according to the Government’s own independent watchdog’s report. The Government needs to respond to the refugees and asylum seekers and victims of humanitarian crises who make it to Britain, but with the diversion of vital funds meant for tackling the root causes of global poverty and conflict, we are seeing more people fleeing to the wealthier countries.


Our sisters and brothers around the world — including in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Eritrea and both Sudans, Palestine — are daily facing the impact of conflict and food scarcity, as well as climate change, increasing pressure on both the countries from which refugees come and on our own national domestic resources. And as ever, women and children have borne the brunt. In 2021, even before Putin’s war, a report produced by Save the Children found that over 450 million children worldwide (or 1 in 6) were living in a conflict zone, a 5% increase from 2019. While the 2021 statistics show the highest numbers of children in conflict in 20 years, Putin’s war added an extra 7.5 million children to this data according to UNICEF.

Separated refugee children in the UK wherever they come from, are alone and vulnerable. Following questions in Parliament, the Government has admitted that since July 2021, it is housing some 4,600 separated children many under 11 years of age, alone in hotels, making them vulnerable to anyone who wants to prey on them and to organised crime gangs. Every child needs its parents, but thousands of refugee children are struggling to cope on their own – experiencing immense trauma and deteriorating mental health. Many go missing altogether. This is only worsened by being separated from their loved ones, especially when they need them the most. Family separation is incredibly painful at any age, but it's particularly hard for children especially when they know their families are still in danger back home. The UK's harsh rules make it an outlier in Europe. All of our closest neighbours allow separated refugee children to sponsor their parents to join them in safety.

As part of Families Together, a coalition of 100 different organisations, the Refugee Council is calling for a change in the law that would allow separated children to be joined by their families in the UK. Meanwhile, the front-line refugee services to which we contribute are doing all they can to support the children, often playing the role over-stretched local authorities should be fulfilling.

While the eyes of the world have been fixed on Ukraine, other calamities continue to take place. Humanitarian organisations have warned that with attention elsewhere, there is a risk that the cries of millions of marginalised and oppressed people are going unheard, and that many more thousands of people will be forced to flee and fall prey to violent and predatory criminals who lure people with false promises of assistance and security. The situation is worsened in this country as, despite the fact that the Government has increased the numbers of officials dealing with claims, the time taken in dealing with them has increased substantially resulting in more asylum seekers being left destitute for longer.

British Government policies reflect a harsher less compassionate approach to dealing with these desperate people. We have seen the enactment of the Nationality and Borders Act, the policy to send refugees to Rwanda, a country already on watch lists for abuse of human rights, and most recently the new Asylum Bill to stop small boat crossings introduced by the Government which, if passed into law, could become the reality for people who seek protection in the UK.



The Bill seeks to ensure that anyone who arrives on a small boat will have their asylum claim deemed “inadmissible”, meaning that the Home Office won’t even consider someone’s claim. This is despite the fact that two thirds of all people who crossed the Channel last year would have their claim for asylum accepted if their claim was submitted. Everyone arriving on a small boat will be detained and removed. This means people who have committed no crime will be locked up and re-traumatized at a huge cost and despite the lack of space already in detention centres. Nor is there any indication of where they would then be sent.

All this has criminalised refugees and asylum seekers despite being contrary to international law which Britain was the lead country in drafting. Refugee, Asylum and Faith Bodies have all campaigned to persuade the government to provide more accessible safe routes to the UK which would help to reduce the number of people crossing the Channel and reduce the numbers of people drowned. We at London Churches Refugee Fund and our many supporters and partners have signed petitions and written to MPs to ask them to reverse or at least ameliorate these policies, but the Government’s new plan will not give any additional refugees vital access to safe routes.

Faith communities are regularly the first responders when conflicts or emergencies strike and are often the last ones on the ground too, continuing to re-build communities and support those driven from their homes and countries, when governments and non-governmental organizations have dropped out or been overwhelmed. That is why Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders have joined forces to strengthen their shared response to this unprecedented refugee crisis both at home and overseas. A joint pledge arose from the Global Refugee Forum in 2019 to step up interfaith co-operation to enhance efforts and take responsibility on the ground.

We can thank God for the many compassionate people who have set up frontline services and work with a deep commitment and often voluntarily with those who make it to our shores. The London Churches Refugee Fund has been proud to support some 40 such services each year in the London region with donations from individual Christians and churches. But our assistance is only a fraction of what is needed to help the most destitute refugees and asylum seekers in our midst. All those working with refugees are calling for an approach that replaces the chaos and cost of what we have now and focuses on compassion and competence.

In the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, we are given principles about how we, his people, are to treat strangers or foreigners. Jesus said “ I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you visited me”—Matthew 25:

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1

A arrived in the UK in 2017 as a very young teenager from Afghanistan. He had become the head of the family when his father was murdered and was coerced by the local Taliban commander into joining their ranks. He witnessed torture and endured harsh conditions, captivity, beatings and forced gun training, all terrifying for anyone to experience, much less someone so young. Eventually he escaped and his mother scraped some money together to help him to flee the country. After a frightening and dangerous journey, he arrived in the UK and was placed in foster care, but when he was age-assessed by the Home Office as over 18, he was abandoned by the local authority and moved to substandard and uninhabitable accommodation at even greater risk. A's mental health deteriorated, compounded by his experiences and trauma, and he attempted to take his own life.

Thankfully, he was referred to the Baobab Centre. He was struggling with poor mental health, grieving for his father and separation from his family. He had little or no trust in adults and was burdened with loneliness, hopelessness and fear. At the Centre he began attending weekly individual psychotherapy and was given real practical help and support with his age dispute and asylum claims. His mental health has improved, and he is noticeably more confident. His English language skills have developed and he is studying for qualifications in plumbing. His development as a young person is back on track and he feels more hopeful about his future.

CASE STUDY 2

M is from Ghana, living in Home Office accommodation. He has urine incontinence and there is only one toilet separated from his room by stairs. He also walks on crutches, so accessing the toilet is very difficult. He has requested relocation, but while his request is pending, he has run out of disposable urine bottles given to him by the hospital. He only has an ASPEN card and cannot make purchases online. Using Destitution Funds Samphire were able to purchase some reusable urine bottles for him until a GP could authorise an NHS prescription. Samphire are also assisting him to chase up his relocation request.



CASE STUDY 3

S, from the Gambia, never knew her father and her mother died with HIV when she was eight years old. She went to live with her grandmother in a rural area, and no longer attended school. When she was 18, her grandmother arranged for her to join a man in London. She was kept as a domestic servant and sexually abused. When she became pregnant he became violent towards her and she fled with someone she believed would help. After a short time, she was subject to domestic abuse again and decided to go to the authorities and apply for asylum. She has been moved around regularly and was threatened with dispersal to Scotland. She currently lives with three children in one room and continues to pursue her claim, supported by Lewisham Churches for Asylum Seekers (LewCAS). She makes good use of the travel card funded by LCRF to see her lawyer who is based in Stratford.

CASE STUDY 4

H fled her country because she was expected to take on the hereditary role of an FGM practitioner which she could not countenance. She was an FGM survivor herself and had lost her sister to FGM. When she came to the Cotton Tree Trust (CTT) she was in great distress, street homeless and without money or any means of support. LCRF's grant enabled CTT to provide food, toiletries and phone top-ups while they found her a place to stay. She is now receiving medical and psychological support there while her claim is processed.

CASE STUDY 5

The Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE) has been running the JCORE Unaccompanied Minors Project (JUMP) since 2007. G, a young asylum seeker from Sudan, arrived in the UK two years ago. He is currently housed by the Home Office and is a passionate and hard-working college student. The hardship fund met a critical need for mobile data, allowing G to access an online course to train as an interpreter as there is no wi-fi in his hotel. As a result of his journey to the UK, G is able to speak many languages, and this course will help him find employment once he has asylum status. JUMP also provided food vouchers for the summer break when he could not access college meals and could not afford grocery shopping amid rising prices.

CASE STUDY 6

D, a single mother with four children from Nigeria, applied for asylum a few years ago and has been living in temporary accommodation. Recently she was granted refugee status and was offered permanent unfurnished accommodation. She applied for Universal Credit but her application took a long time to be considered as she did not have a BRP card nor a National Insurance number. With the grant received from LCRF, the African Refugee Community (ARC) were able to provide her with food telephone credit and data (as she needed to be in contact with many agencies), fares and sanitary products. The family greatly appreciated ARC's practical support while waiting for their state benefits; they spent time cooking and eating together, and their confidence and general well-being increased.

Recently D got a job as a cleaner and started to volunteer with ARC, supporting women struggling to integrate due to language barriers and domestic violence. She is now an ARC Champion and offers a few hours a week to visit and support the most vulnerable ones. LCRF's grant had a very positive impact when D was struggling and crying in silence.

TRUSTEES ACTIVITIES

“

This year saw a transition from meetings via Zoom to full in-person meetings usually round the kitchen table at the home of Chris Brice. We held six meetings plus a summer get together with volunteers and spouses. Palissa Ose-Owusu takes care of our social media output and Clement Francis and his wife, Anitha, have been taking on much of the IT, helping us to stay in touch with supporters via the website and mailouts.

During the year we had some unconscious bias training with Sandra Ackroyd and Darnette Whitby-Reid which fed into sessions later in the year with Jack Brooks focussing on our setting of goals for the next few years. We are very grateful to Sandra, Darnette and Jack for giving up their time to help us. One of the goals we decided was essential was to recruit more trustees, hopefully younger and more diverse, especially as we lost three of our trustees: John Murphy, one of the founding trustees, found that pressure of work with the charity he runs made it difficult to play an active role in LCRF; Onome Ugbeye has withdrawn for health reasons; Martin Ashford, who did so much to ensure we were an efficiently-run organisation, has moved to Bristol. We thank them all for their hard work and enthusiasm.

Two of our patrons have also retired, Bishop Jonathan Clark and Baroness Richardson. However Andrew Prasad has now been joined by Shermara Fletcher and Alfred Enoch and we have been seeking further patrons to ensure we can reach out to all Christian denominations.

A number of our trustees have joined others in the monthly vigil outside the Home Office on behalf of asylum seekers. Our speaker meeting in June at St. Martin-in-the-Fields included a clear call to help displaced people from Dr. Sam Wells and was well attended. We very much appreciated the hospitality from the team there. Trustees also took bucket collections in Refugee Week.

In addition to the Lent Resources, a major part of the fund-raising directly undertaken by trustees centres around Christmas. We sold around 5,000 Christmas cards this year. Cathy Young designed one of them, following the success of her cards in previous years and in addition we were able to use an image embroidered by Pari from Iraqi Kurdistan which was part of a competition we ran for refugees for another card. This year we were able to return to Oxford Circus tube station for our marathon carol singing. Thanks to all the musicians and bucket-shakers who came to share in that event.

GRANTS 2022

Another record-breaking year! Thanks to our supporters we were able To distribute £52,000 in grants, £8,000 more than in 2021. We helped 40 different agencies working with asylum seekers and refugees in many different parts of Greater London. They are listed below. Many have made regular applications to us but there were some new ones too.

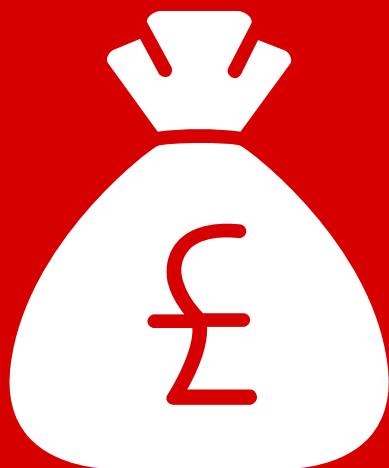
Action for Refugees in Lewisham
Akwaaba
African Refugee Community
Baobab Centre for Young Survivors
British Red Cross
CARAS
C4WS Homeless project
Centre for Armenian Information and Advice
Citizens of the World Choir
Croydon Health Charity
Croydon Refugee Day Centre
Communities First Foundation
Cotton Tree Trust
Hackney Migrants Centre
Hackney Night Winter Shelter
Happy Baby Community
Haringey Migrants Support Centre
Hope Church Hounslow
Hope for the Young
Housing Justice
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants
JCT
Jewish Council for Racial Equality
Jesuit Refugee Service
Lewisham Churches for Asylum Seekers
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network
Migrants Organise Ltd
NNLS Asylum Seekers Drop-In
Notre Dame Refugee Centre
Ramfel
Refugee Action Kingston
Room to Heal
St. Martin-in-the-Fields Sunday International Group
Salisbury World Refugee Centre
Samphire
Springboard Academy
South London Refugee Association
Waging Peace
West London Welcome
Women Against Rape (Asylum from Rape)

Charities interested in applying for grants should see the information on our website at www.lcrf.org.uk/grants There are two grant meetings per year in May and November. The deadlines for applications are usually April 30 and October 31.

LCRF ACCOUNTS

A full copy of the audited accounts is available on request

Income £50,751



Foundation donors **£17,054**

Single donations **£15,678**

Churches/organisations **£ 6,970**

Card and art print sales **£2,881**

Carol singing **£2,037**

HMRC Gift Aid **£6,131**

And where it went

Total payments £53,761

Grants £52,400

Cards p&p £634

Administration £727

2022 Deficit £3009



Your Balance brought forward on January 1, 2022 **£38,183**

Balance carried forward on December 31, 2022 **£35,174**

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS Account for the year ended 31st December 2022

RECEIPTS

Donations	41,738.73
HMRC reimbursements	6,131.67
Sales of Christmas cards and Art Prints	2,881.50
TOTAL RECEIPTS	50,751.90

PAYMENTS

Grants

Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL)	850.00
African Refugee Community	1,850.00
Akwaaba	1,000.00
Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile	1,850.00
British Red Cross	850.00
C4WS Homeless Project	1,850.00
CARAS	850.00
Centre for Armenian Information and Advice	500.00
Citizens of the World Choir	1,500.00
Communities First Foundation	960.00
Cotton Tree Trust	1,850.00
Croydon Health Charity	850.00
Croydon Refugee Day Centre	1,850.00
Hackney Migrant Centre	1,000.00
Hackney Night Shelter	1,000.00
Happy Baby Community	1,850.00
Haringey Migrant Support Centre	1,000.00
Hope Church Hounslow	1,850.00
Hope for the Young	1,000.00
Housing Justice	1,850.00
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants	1,850.00
Jesuit Refugee Service	1,850.00
Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE)	1,850.00
LEWCAS	850.00
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network	850.00
Migrants Organise	1,850.00
New North London Synagogue Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-	1,850.00
Notre Dame Refugee Centre	1,850.00
Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London (RAMFEL)	1,000.00
Refugee Action Kingston	1,850.00
Room to Heal	1,850.00
Salisbury World Refugee Centre	850.00
Samphire	790.00
South London Refugee Association	850.00

Springboard Youth Academy	700.00	
St Martin-in-the-Fields Trust	1,000.00	
Waging Peace	1,850.00	
West London Welcome	850.00	
Women against Rape	1,850.00	
		52,400.00
Administration		727.45
Christmas cards - production and distribution costs		634.08
TOTAL PAYMENTS		53,761.53
RECEIPTS less PAYMENTS for the year ended 31st December 2022		-3,009.63

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st December 2022		
ASSETS		
Bank Balance		
Co-operative Bank Community Directplus Account		35,174.26
TOTAL ASSETS		35,174.26
TOTAL LIABILITIES		0.00
ASSETS less LIABILITIES		35,174.26
GENERAL FUND		
Balance brought forward 1st January 2022		38,183.89
Receipts less Payments in 2022		-3,009.63
Balance carried forward 31st December 2022		35,174.26

Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of London Churches Refugee Fund.

Charity Number: 1121108

On accounts for the year ended 31st December 2022

Set out on the preceding page.

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st December 2022.

Responsibilities and basis of report.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act")

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- Accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



7th March 2023

Michael John Gould

32 Elm Avenue, Upminster, Essex, RM14 2AY

THE LONDON CHURCHES FUND FOR DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS

England & Wales - Charity number 1121108

Accounts

Here I am!

I stand at the door

and knock

London
Churches
Refugee Fund

Charity Number
1121108

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

www.lcrf.org.uk

Letter from the Chair

Dear friends,

Writing in the shadow of the horrors of the war in Ukraine brings home all too starkly the burden of sin and evil under which our world labours, and has laboured, for millennia.

Our Judaeo-Christian story shows human beings, made in God's loving and creative image, all too quickly falling into deceit, lies, disobedience to God's moral law, and selfishness. They are lured by the wiles of the 'enemy' who is intent on destroying God's beautiful new creation out of jealousy, bitter rage and spite. From this follow all war and hatred, and the desire to exercise tyrannical power that we see demonstrated so tragically today in Syria, in Ukraine, in Myanmar, in Yemen, in Eritrea, in Afghanistan, in Sudan and in so many other countries.

It was from such oppression, enslavement and genocide that God called and rescued the children of Israel, enabling them to escape from the hell on earth that was the rule of the Pharaohs and to flee across the sea to a place of safety and security, flowing with milk and honey.

And still today this Exodus is enacted again and again as our persecuted, oppressed, and traumatised sisters and brothers flee in fear of their lives from war-torn countries across the world in search of succour and safety. 28,000 of them last year crossed, not the Red Sea, but the English Channel – pursued by their nightmares of torture, death, rape and imprisonment.



And it is these very people, when they arrive exhausted, alone, destitute, and distraught on the streets of London, with no means of support or shelter, that the London Churches Refugee Fund is there to help (help we would be unable to continue to offer if they were sent on a one-way ticket to Rwanda...).

Thank you for your continuing generosity that makes this possible, and please: consider exploring whether you could arrange to give regularly by monthly donation or, if you already do so, to give even more generously.

We hope that you will be inspired by the heart-rending, heart-warming stories of the people we have helped that interlace this Annual Report. They are lights shining in the darkness of war and suffering ... and, thanks to your generosity, the darkness will not overcome that light.

With my love and prayers, and my heartfelt thanks for your wonderful continuing support for the work of LCRF.

Chris

Revd Chris Brice, Chair

Case Study

Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants (ICRM) assisted a young single mother with a one-year-old baby, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo. S is a refused asylum seeker working towards a fresh claim with her solicitor. Thanks to the generosity of the Fund, ICRM provided S with support packages so that she could obtain food, travel to essential appointments, and keep connected during the pandemic by attending ICRM's online classes and working towards a college place. This helped to reduce S's isolation during this difficult time, as well as keeping her child fed. She has now started a college course.

Making a joyful noise... again!

Lockdown prevented our annual carol-singing from going ahead in 2020 but we were determined to bring it back in 2021! With Covid-19 still a very real threat, we sang out of doors at Highbury & Islington Underground station, raising almost £1,400 including Gift Aid. Huge thanks to all who took part, and to Martin Stogden and Four Hills Music for bringing a wonderful brass section. We also had another very successful season of Christmas card sales, with a net profit of over £3,000: big thanks to Cathy Young for her two lovely designs.

Behind the statistics

“We are reminded that behind the statistics lie real lives, driven by desperation and simply wanting a safer future...” Caroline Lucas, MP

In 2021 we witnessed a mixed picture for refugees, refugee services, government response and public attitudes. We saw new waves of refugees fleeing from conflicts, persecution and extermination from an ever-growing number of countries around the world, culminating in the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. Public sympathy for asylum seekers had seemed to waver but Afghanistan, and now Ukraine, have impacted on both public opinion, as people saw the horrors that were unleashed there, and government policy. Over Ukraine, at least, hostile government policies were seen to be ‘tone deaf’ to public compassion.

While Afghanistan and Ukraine have helped people to understand the reasons for the flight of so many people, there are many longer and just as devastating conflicts elsewhere. Yemen, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo are just a few we can name. Humanitarian organisations have warned that, with attention elsewhere, the cries of millions of marginalised and oppressed people risk going unheard. In 2021, before Putin’s war, a report produced by Save the Children found that over 450 million children worldwide (or 1 in 6) were living in a conflict zone, a 5% increase from 2019 and the highest number in 20 years. Ukraine would add another 7.5 million children. The frontline refugee and asylum services which LCRF supports in London assist people fleeing to the UK for sanctuary from all over the world.

During the worst of the COVID pandemic, the government did take some positive steps towards protecting refugees and asylum seekers, but our laws, and government policy and guidance, continue to cause needless suffering to people who are already vulnerable and traumatised.

According to the Refugee Council, nearly 25% of people granted refugee status wait 4-6 weeks or more to receive documents they need to get accommodation or a source of income, but are only allowed to stay in asylum support accommodation for 28 days, putting them at risk of homelessness. One small example of the ‘hostile environment’ in action.

Such harshness can sometimes be challenged. Following a legal challenge by Islington Law Centre and the Migrant and Refugee Children's Legal Unit (MiCLU), and campaigning by the organisation We Belong, in October 2021 the Home Office announced a concession for some young people who have been granted periods of limited leave. Immigration rules allow applications for leave to remain in the UK from people between 18 and 24 years old who have lived continuously in the UK for more than half their lives. Young people granted limited leave to remain under this route can



now apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain after five years. One small victory. Similarly, a legal challenge by four organisations recently forced the abandonment of Home Office plans to 'push back' refugee boats.

The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, in part drafted by the UK, sets out the rules for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, and their rights. It stipulates they should not be penalised for illegal entry or stay in a country in which they are seeking asylum, recognising that their circumstances may require them to breach normal immigration rules, and prohibits the country where the claim is being made from charging them with immigration or criminal offences relating to the seeking of asylum. Asylum

can only be claimed when a person has arrived in the destination country so they cannot be treated as illegal immigrants. The Convention also lays down minimum basic standards for the treatment of refugees including rights of access to courts, primary education, work and the provision of documentation.

In January 2021, the UK government already introduced new rules through which they can decide that an asylum claim is 'inadmissible', meaning it will not be considered in the UK. A year on, the inadmissibility rules are part of the new Nationality and Borders Bill that just went

through parliament, but they have been used by the Home Office since January last year, replacing the Dublin Regulations which no longer applied in the UK once the UK left the EU.

The new Bill is just the latest of a raft of measures which severely compromise the rights and safety of asylum seekers and arguably breach the UN Convention. Three policies stand out as of particular concern: the increasing criminalisation of refugees and asylum seekers with no regard to the desperate situations which have driven them from their home countries and their safety; the lack of provision of safe routes to the UK except from one or two specific countries; and our refusal to allow people to work while their claims are being considered.

The inadmissibility rules are being further tightened, with asylum seekers at threat of removal to a third country without considering their claim substantively and even if they have no connection with that country nor travelled through it. This enables the government to



introduce its plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, a policy we deplore.

The government is also criminalising not just those seeking asylum but even those seeking to save lives. Making it a criminal offence to rescue refugees at sea who get into trouble is in direct contravention of international law which places an obligation on all vessels to rescue people at sea. It even threatens the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) whose objects require them to do so. Thankfully, the RNLI have refused to comply and the government have refrained from prosecuting them.

The House of Lords mounted fierce and dogged resistance to the Nationality and Borders Bill and yet, just before we went to press, the

government pushed it through. So, what more can be done and how should we be helping to change policies? We thank all our donors and supporters for your contributions and the compassion which you have demonstrated. At the very least we also urge you both to read up on the pernicious policies being pursued by the government in our name and to try to explain the consequences to those who are unaware. Join any of the advocacy campaigns that are fighting for refugees, challenge misleading journalism and widespread prejudice. Write to your MP, perhaps join the vigils outside the Home Office. Pray and – please – don't give up.

Faith communities are regularly in the front line, responding to conflicts or emergencies and striving to rebuild local communities in their wake. Their work may go unrecognised but it is vital to avoid people being forced from their homes to seek refuge elsewhere. That is why Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders have united to strengthen their shared response to the world's unprecedented refugee crisis. At the Global Refugee Forum in 2019 they signed a joint pledge to increase inter-faith cooperation, based on the belief that together we can make a difference. In the words of UNHCR, "As we look to the future, these commitments must be rapidly translated into concrete outcomes."

A summary of the Forum's outcomes can be read at:

<https://www.unhcr.org/5ecd458c4.pdf>.

Gillian Dare, LCRF Trustee

Case Study

A was trafficked to the UK in 2005 after meeting a man in Lagos who promised her a job in London. She was left in his house, threatened, and required to work as a housekeeper. She escaped after three years but was afraid to go to the authorities and kept under the radar. In 2011 her daughter was born with Downs syndrome. A applied for asylum in 2018 but is still waiting for a decision from the Home Office. She lives with her daughter in one room in a hostel and has been coming to Lewisham Churches for Asylum Seekers (LEWCAS) for food supplies during the pandemic, using the bus pass provided by LEWCAS with the assistance of a grant from LCRF.

Case Study

F, pregnant with twins, was referred to the Happy Baby Community (HBC). She had been trafficked from Albania, and had survived several years of sexual abuse at the hands of the traffickers. She was very frightened, and struggling to trust the support of statutory services. She had no maternity clothes, and despite being housed by the Home Office had not been able to access asylum support because she had no legal representation. F was supported by the HBC perinatal team to have support both before and after the babies were born, including a birth companion at the hospital. They provided her with maternity clothes, a hospital bag with new underwear, nightdress and toiletries, clothing for the babies and necessary equipment, including a double buggy. The HBC welfare team supported her to get legal advice and the correct support from the Home Office.



Case Study

“I do not have words to thank you enough for the money you are giving me. Thanks to you, I don't worry about how I can get money to buy my medications for my mental health and blood pressure. Please pass on my thank you message for anyone who is arranging to give this money.” (Client supported by Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network)

Case Study

T had been staying in a night shelter before entering the Housing Justice Hosting Project (HJHP) last summer. She was reaching the end of her stay, and because of her immigration status would have had nowhere else to turn if not for hosting. Since moving in with her host in South London, she has gained much more stability in her life, and has been able to progress her immigration case with her solicitor. She has also started volunteering several days a week in a local charity shop, and one day a week at a church, alongside her host, with whom she is getting on very well and integrating into the household. Once she receives her Leave to Remain, she hopes to find work as a carer, and is looking forward to this next step in her life.



Case Study

The Croydon Refugee Day Centre (CRDC) has developed close working relationships with the managers of two hotels in the Croydon area commissioned to accommodate refugees from Afghanistan. Many of these have travelled light from Afghanistan, sometimes with just the clothes they were wearing. Volunteers from the CDRC have arranged deliveries of suitable clothing to the hotel car parks where the refugees could be served safely outdoors. While the CDRC has received many donations of second hand clothing, they have had to buy high-demand items, including new underwear and socks, from their funds, so grants from LCRF are greatly appreciated.

Grants in 2021

Grant-making is at the heart of what we do and in 2021 we again broke our own record for the amount distributed, totalling £44,400. That was more than three times what we paid out a decade earlier, in 2011.

Thanks to your support, in 2021 we were able to make 40 grants in all to the following 27 agencies:

Action for Refugees in Lewisham	Jewish Council for Racial Equality
African Refugee Community	LEWCAS
All People All Places	Lewisham Refugee and Migrant
Baobab Centre for young survivors in exile	Network
C4WS Homeless Project	Migrants Organise
CARAS	New North London Synagogue
Citizens of the World Choir	Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-In
Cotton Tree	Notre Dame Refugee Centre
Croydon Refugee Day Centre	Refugee and Migrant Network
Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group	(Sutton)
Happy Baby Community	Refugee Council
Housing Justice	Refugees at Home
Islington Centre for Refugees & Migrants	Room to Heal
Jesuit Refugee Service	Waging Peace
	West London Welcome
	Women against Rape

Charities interested in applying for grants should see the information on our website, at www.lcrf.org.uk/grants. The application deadline for Spring 2022 has passed, the autumn round will be open in October.

How to donate

We can only give out in grants what we receive from you, our supporters. You will find all the information you need, including a link to online giving, details of Gift Aid and a standing order form, at www.lcrf.org.uk/donate.

If you are not an 'online' kind of person, please write for information to our Treasurer, Dave Bond, at 144 Ladywell Road, London SE13 7HU.

A public meeting in your living room...

The last time we held a public meeting in person was on 7th Jan 2020 when the Bishop of London, Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, was the keynote speaker. Then came Covid and months of lockdown. Trustee meetings were easy enough to hold online, once we had learnt the art of Zoom. But what about public meetings?

We felt it was vital to continue 'talking' to our supporters and listening to key inputs from those we support. So, on 25th March 2021, we held our first online speaker meeting under the title 'All Sisters and Brothers', with a keynote speech from Fr Timothy Radcliffe. We received much support, not least with technology, from the Church Times. And we had great contributions too from Zrinka Bralo, CEO of Migrants Organise, and our Patrons Alfred Enoch and Revd Dr Andrew Prasad. Videos of the event can still be accessed through our website, www.lcrf.org.uk.

Our 2022 speaker meeting will be held in person but should also, we hope, be available as a livestream – email info@lcrf.org.uk if you want information on that. Who said you can't have your cake and eat it?

Case Study

R suffered extreme human rights abuse in Africa. Now in the UK, she continues to suffer from PTSD and finds it hard to trust others. During the pandemic lockdowns, R had to self-isolate as she suffers from a number of underlying physical health issues. Deprived of social interaction and movement, R experienced more PTSD symptoms (flashbacks, sleep disturbance), depression and anxiety.

R joined Room to Heal (RtH)'s weekly group therapy sessions online via Zoom, helping ease her isolation and fear. When RtH was able to return to face-to-face services, a travel grant from LCRF gave R the long-awaited opportunity to meet up again regularly with trusted staff and community members. Through their group therapy, gardening sessions and social activities, R began to develop the confidence to rebuild relationships. And restorative time in the fresh air, in RtH's beautiful garden space, has started to improve her mental and physical wellbeing.

Comings and goings

LCRF is hugely dependent on the time and energies our patrons, trustees and volunteers give us from their busy lives.

Two of our **Patrons** stood down for health reasons but we have been blessed with their replacements. We said farewell with great thanks to Bishop Jonathan Clark and Bishop Joe Aldred. And we welcome the Ven Dr Rosemarie Mallett, Archdeacon of Croydon, and Shermara Fletcher, Principal Officer for Pentecostal, Charismatic and Multi-cultural Relations at Churches Together in England and Wales. We look forward very much to getting to know them both over the coming years.



We have also been very fortunate to appoint a new **Trustee**, Onome Ugbeye, and to get to know her over recent months. Onome brings the invaluable experience of having herself had to navigate the Home Office's processes while suffering much hardship as she sought to build a new life in the UK. She also volunteers with a frontline refugee charity in London as well as in the Higher Education sector. Not to mention being a

mum and working part-time in retail. You can tell what a busy person she is! – and yet she finds time to give to our work, too. Welcome, Onome!

Sometimes it seems hard to find willing hands but sometimes people just arrive at your door offering to help! One who did just that is Palissa Osei-Owusu who is now our Governance and Social Media **Volunteer**. Palissa works in business in a governance role, and we were delighted to have her take charge of our policies and procedures and support our statutory compliance duties. In addition, she has lifted our presence on social media quite magnificently, especially with near-daily posts on Twitter. Thanks, Palissa!

Returning to our trustee group, we are very sad to be saying goodbye to Martin Ashford as he and his wife move away later this year to start a new life in Bristol, taking his immense skills with him! Bristol's gain will be our loss. Martin will be resigning as a trustee, but he has kindly agreed to continue to maintain our website and database until we appoint a successor to oversee these important functions

Since our inception in 2006 we have been a 'kitchen table' charity, run voluntarily by the trustees, with no staff or office. We have always striven to conform rigorously to best practice and due process but, since Martin joined the trustees ten years ago, he has played a pivotal role in the further development of LCRF. His skills have helped raise our profile significantly and improve our efficiency, and the creation of our excellent website and supporter database is entirely his work.

So is the streamlined system for reviewing applications for grants and checking the safeguarding policies of the refugee projects who apply for an LCRF grant. Donors can be assured that LCRF's funds are properly applied to serve the needs of destitute asylum seekers in London. Martin has also worked with others to ensure compliance with Charity Commission requirements, devising (and regularly updating) our policies and procedures.

Then there's setting up an online shop for our Christmas cards, editing materials (this being his last Annual Report) and encouraging our LCRF carol singing on his saxophone for five hours every December. And he has loads of (mostly) sensible things to say at Trustee Meetings!

Thank you, Martin, for all you've done, and for being such a good friend to us all! We wish you and Jean all the very best, and our prayers go with you both as you take up residence in Bristol.



London
Churches
Refugee Fund



Charity
number
1121108

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

www.lcrf.org.uk

Revd Dr Sam Wells

Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields

“A Home for Everyone”

- *Responding to the Displacement of Populations*

(with speakers from some of the frontline charities supported by the London Churches Refugee Fund)

Followed by refreshments, meeting and greeting

Further details: info@lcrf.org.uk

Mon 20th June 2022 @ 7pm
St Martin-in-the-Fields WC2N 4JH



Use your IT & Admin skills to help raise funds for destitute asylum seekers in London

The London Churches Refugee Fund makes grants twice a year to numerous frontline church and community refugee projects across London so they can purchase travel cards, phone top-ups, sanitary and health packs, food, and other basics for thousands of destitute refugees who come to them for help.

We are currently seeking volunteers to help us maintain and develop our:

- Website and social media
- Supporter database management
- Mailchimp
- Online web shop management
- Design and publication of web-based & paper resources for fundraising campaigns, supporter communications, marketing, worship material, awareness raising

In 2021 we awarded a total of nearly £45,000 to 30 different refugee projects in London. All the work of the Fund is undertaken voluntarily by the Trustees or others.

The expected time commitment for volunteers is very flexible: some weeks it might involve about half a day, many other weeks much less, or no work at all! - and it would be entirely at the discretion of whoever takes on these roles.

We think you will really enjoy being part of this skilled and friendly team drawn from many different Christian denominations.

We meet on Zoom or around our Chair's kitchen table. We work hard raising funds from individuals, churches and events. We are highly valued by the 80+ refugee projects who have received our grants. And, crucially, we keep the plight of refugees at the heart church life in London.

Interested?

See www.lcrf.org.uk

Contact LCRF Chair Revd Chris Brice: chris.brice2@btinternet.com

LCRF Receipts and Payments for the year to 31 Dec 2021

A full copy of the audited accounts is available on request

Where the money came from



£54,824



Foundation Donors
£16,449



Single donations
£23,903



Churches / organisations
£4,039



Card sales
£3,647



Carol singing
£1,113

giftaid it

HMRC Gift Aid
£5,673

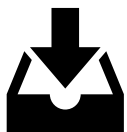
And where it went



Grants
£44,400



Card print/postage
£914

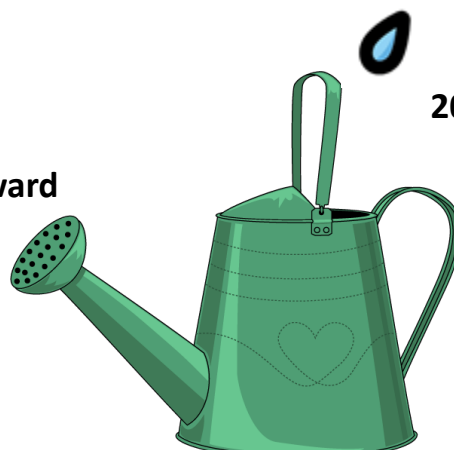


Administration
£913



£46,227

Balance brought forward
£29,587



2021 surplus
£8,597

Balance at year end
£38,184

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS Account for the year ended 31st December 2021	
RECEIPTS	
Donations	45,504.07
HMRC reimbursements	5,672.63
Sales of Christmas cards	3,647.20
TOTAL RECEIPTS	54,823.90
PAYMENTS	
Grants	
Action for Refugees in Lewisham	2,400.00
African Refugee Community	900.00
All People All Places	1,000.00
Baobab Centre	900.00
C4WS Homeless Project	900.00
CARAS	900.00
Citizens of the World Choir	1,900.00
Cotton Tree Trust	1,900.00
Croydon Refugee Day Centre	1,500.00
Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group	1,000.00
Happy Baby Community	1,500.00
Housing Justice	2,400.00
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants	2,400.00
Jesuit Refugee Service	2,400.00
Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE)	900.00
LEWCAS	2,400.00
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network	1,500.00
Migrants Organise	1,900.00
New North London Synagogue Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-In	1,900.00
Notre Dame Refugee Centre	2,400.00
Refugee and Migrant Network Sutton	900.00
Refugee Council	900.00
Refugees at Home	900.00
Room to Heal	1,500.00
Waging Peace	2,400.00
West London Welcome	2,400.00
Women against Rape	2,400.00
	44,400.00
Administration	913.23
Christmas cards - production and distribution costs	914.37
TOTAL PAYMENTS	46,227.60
RECEIPTS less PAYMENTS for the year ended 31st December 2021	8,596.30

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st December 2021	
ASSETS	
Bank Balance	
Co-operative Bank Community Directplus Account	38,183.89
TOTAL ASSETS	38,183.89
TOTAL LIABILITIES	0.00
ASSETS less LIABILITIES	38,183.89
GENERAL FUND	
Balance brought forward 1st January 2021	29,587.59
Receipts less Payments in 2021	8,596.30
Balance carried forward 31st December 2021	38,183.89

Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of London Churches Refugee Fund.

Charity Number: 1121108

On accounts for the year ended 31st December 2021

Set out on the preceding page.

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st December 2021.

Responsibilities and basis of report.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act")

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- Accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



2nd April 2022

Michael John Gould

32 Elm Avenue, Upminster, Essex, RM14 2AY

THE LONDON CHURCHES FUND FOR DESTITUTE ASYLUM SEEKERS

England & Wales - Charity number 1121108

Accounts

*Showing love in the
time of pandemic*

Image by Donna Hovey from Pixabay

London
Churches
Refugee Fund

Charity Number
1121108

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

www.lcrf.org.uk

Letter from the Chair

Dear friends,

So, God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus.

On these two verses from the Jewish and Christian scriptures hangs all that is good, loving, generous and dignified in the affairs of men and women across the world, over the past 2000 years.

They are the foundation of human rights legislation and of the Refugee Convention 1951 and its 1967 Protocol, designed to remedy the problems that arise when people can no longer rely on their state to protect their most fundamental rights and are forced to seek that protection in another country. They tell us that every human being, made in the image of God, is deserving of being treated with equal dignity by every other human being, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or any other human characteristic. In short, that every human being is my neighbour.

The implication is that, by whatever means human beings from other nations, states, communities, or continents reach the shores of the United Kingdom, seeking sanctuary as they flee from places where their most fundamental rights are no longer protected, they ought to be welcomed and helped with dignity, kindness, love, and respect as a sister or a brother – members with us of the human family to which we all belong.

Tragically, in this crazy, muddled, compromised (fallen) world in which we live, these human rights and international laws of refuge are often very inadequately fulfilled, and sometimes they are totally ignored. This is something that happens far too frequently here in the UK, and results in many thousands of our brothers and sisters becoming destitute or



suffering oppression and detention – either by the unintended ‘sin’ of negligence, bureaucracy and administrative failure, or through deliberate government policy.

We thank God that across London there are hundreds of frontline refugee projects whose sole aim is to welcome, support, and succour those refugees and asylum seekers who are left destitute in this way.

The London Churches Refugee Fund is humbled by the stories we hear as we play our small part in bringing help and support to our brothers and sisters in need, through our twice-yearly grants to scores of refugee



projects across London. The projects use our grants to purchase phone and travel cards, to make emergency payments or provide food or toiletries. Services that help destitute asylum seekers survive, keep in touch with family friends and seek legal aid and other vital help.

So many projects have shown their love for refugees and asylum seekers in amazing ways in this time of pandemic, going the extra mile time after time. Your generosity is helping vulnerable people rediscover their dignity, and to know that they are loved and respected, so that they too can eventually contribute to the common good with the skills, energy, and new life that they bring to our needy nation.

Please continue helping us to help them, by making either a one-off or regular monthly donation to the London Churches Refugee Fund. You will find more details of how to give later in this report.

With thanks, love and prayers -

Chris

Revd Chris Brice, Chair

The images seen here are details from Cathy Young’s wonderful painting that was the basis for our Christmas card 2020. With huge thanks to the artist.

On the front line – case studies from projects we help

Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants assisted P, from Sierra Leone, who was trying to submit a fresh claim on the basis of Article 8 of the Human Rights Act (Right to Family Life). He has a daughter living in Huddersfield but, as an asylum seeker, he could not afford to travel. Not to do so would both break his contact with his daughter and undermine his asylum case in the process. Thanks to the Fund's grant, Islington were able to provide him with the overnight bus fare so that he could attend his contact visit. His case has been taken on by a new solicitor, via the Jesuit Refugee Service, and he is now progressing his fresh claim.

T, aged 54, an asylum-seeker being supported by **Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network** (LRMN), was housed during the Covid pandemic in a hostel in Romford, East London, sharing with 12 other people. She has diabetes and cancer-related long-term illness, putting her in a high-risk category for Covid. She approached LRMN's Women's Project Team requesting food delivery, as well as some financial support to buy essentials, including sanitizer, toiletries, laundry items and phone top-up. LRMN provided £50 support so she could stock up on essentials and self-isolate as much as possible, and also arranged for Refugee Solidarity South London to deliver an emergency food pack.

A left Sudan in 2017 after government persecution for being accused of supporting rebels. He was trafficked while in Libya, held with as many as 200 people, ransomed and sold several times, working without pay and with minimal food. He finally crossed the Mediterranean in February 2019, eventually reaching Calais before making the journey across the Channel in September 2020. He was rushed to hospital on arrival due to immediate medical problems, but was discharged to a hotel without any understanding of how to seek further medical support, despite suffering diabetes and the lingering effects of torture to his feet. Inappropriate food in the hotel, and its irregular arrival, put him at huge risk of further complications. **Waging Peace** were able to offer A a small grant of £40 to buy food items to manage his blood sugar levels, made him a local GP appointment, connected him to Sudanese community groups, sourced winter clothing for him and helped him with his claim.

C had been accommodated by the **Housing Justice** hosting project for three years when he was finally granted refugee status, fourteen years after arriving in the UK. As he prepared to leave the project and move on to the next stage of his life, he expressed how he feels he has benefitted from the project:

“The hosting project has made a really big difference to my life, more than I can say in words. I’ll never forget it. Having somewhere to live is the most important thing in life. Before this I was sleeping on the streets for six years. When I was finally able to stay in a house, I couldn’t believe it. It was like a dream. I used not to be able to think well, sleeping on the street; my thoughts were very slow and confused, and I was depressed. Since being given somewhere to stay, I have been so much happier and more optimistic. I didn’t go to church when I was sleeping on the streets because I was self-conscious about my appearance and hygiene. I didn’t think the other people at church would want me there or want to be close to me. Now I go to church regularly, and I am proud that I am taking care of myself and I am much more confident. I feel like a different person. Now I’m looking forward to the future, hoping to find a job and move on to my own flat, so I can live my own life.”

F and her 8-year-old daughter were destitute and being sheltered by a church when they were referred to **Streatham Day Centre** (SDS). She was given a small grant of £10 and the bus fare to visit a local food bank. Over a period of six months she visited the Centre on a regular basis for ongoing advice, and was also assisted by the NHS Health Inclusion Team. Before Covid, mother and daughter attended SDS’s programme of educational, community and fun activities. Transport costs were provided to various appointments, helping the family secure accommodation and subsistence support from the local authority. Both joined SDS’s Saturday homework and family learning project, where F became a volunteer. Through a partnership with a local TechAid project, a laptop was provided so that they could continue to participate in online learning and activities during the pandemic. But they are still awaiting a decision on their status.

See also a very special case study on p11.

Grants in 2020

Grant-making is at the heart of what we do and 2020 saw our highest-ever total paid out in grants to refugee charities and projects. We made 45 grants in all, totalling £36,353.

Thanks to your support, in 2020 we were able to support the following 29 agencies:

Action for Refugees in Lewisham	Jewish Council for Racial Equality
African Refugee Community	(JCORE)
All People All Places	Lewisham Refugee and Migrant
Article 1 Charitable Trust	Network
Asylum from Rape	London Catholic Worker - Refugee
Barnet Refugee Service	Shelter
C4WS Homeless Project	London Jesus Centre
Citizens of the World Choir	Migrants Organise
Cotton Tree	Migrateful
Croydon Refugee Day Centre	New North London Synagogue
Freedom from Torture	Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-In
Hackney Migrant Centre	Notre Dame Refugee Centre
Happy Baby Community	Refugee Council
Housing Justice	Room to Heal
Islington Centre for Refugees and	Samphire
Migrants	Streatham Drop-In Centre
Jesuit Refugee Service	West London Welcome

Charities interested in applying for grants should see the information on our website, at www.lcrf.org.uk/grants. The application deadline for Spring 2021 has passed, the autumn round will be open in October.

How to donate

We can only give out in grants what we receive from you, our supporters. You will find all the information you need, including a link to online giving, details of Gift Aid and a standing order form, at www.lcrf.org.uk/donate.

If you are not an 'online' kind of person, please write for information to our Treasurer, Dave Bond, at 144 Ladywell Road, London SE13 7HU.

No singing? What shall we do?

Lockdown meant we had to cancel our usual carol singing marathon at Oxford Circus station, but as that would have left a huge hole in our fundraising we decided to redirect our energies into selling Christmas cards. Although we had sold a small number of cards in previous years, once we saw the beautiful painting of the 'Flight into Egypt' which Cathy Young donated to us we knew we were onto a winner!

We quickly set up a webshop to handle orders, printers were found, text was agreed and we were off! There was then the small matter of counting thousands of cards into bundles of ten with envelopes and tying them up with minimal wasteful packaging but robustly enough for the Royal Mail. A small cottage industry! This was straightforward but time-consuming, a useful distraction when all outside social activities were curtailed.

The first cards were sent out at the end of September and sales really took off in October and November so that we had to re-order three times. As one of the 'packer-posters' I repeatedly joined the socially-distanced queue at my local post office, hoping that the counter staff didn't dread my repeated appearances there. HUGE thanks to all who bought cards!

Stella Jeffrey, LCRF Trustee

Other highlights of the year

2020 began with a public meeting on Jan 7th at which the Bishop of London, Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, was the keynote speaker.

Then came Covid and the long months of lockdown so the Trustees had to learn the art of Zoom meetings. Our website was completely overhauled at this time and we also produced Lenten reflections and a Refugee Week resource, both well received. All our materials, and summaries of speaker events, can now be found at the new site, www.lcrf.org.uk.

LCRF has no staff. All activities are carried out by the Trustees and other volunteers. We were delighted to welcome Gillian Dare OBE as a new Trustee in 2020, and Alfred Enoch as a new patron. If you feel you could help our work in any way, get in touch!

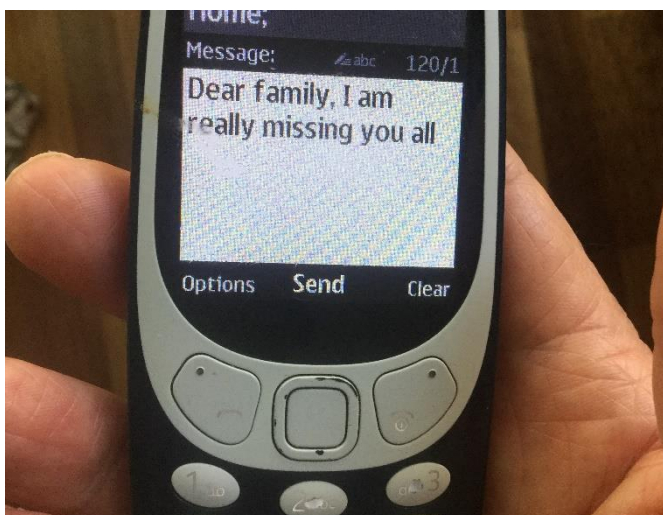
The forgotten people: refugees in a time of Covid

2020 will be remembered as the year of a global pandemic, but sadly also as a year when UK government policy hardened further against refugees and asylum seekers.

Tough though the last year has been for many people, the Covid pandemic has impacted on refugees and asylum seekers twice over. In the countries from which they have fled, through which they have passed and again on reaching the UK, they have been subjected to a hostile environment and a tightening of measures against them, as well as exposure to the virus itself.

Stemming from the UK's hostile environment policy and its implementation, there are no legal routes into the UK open to those who are fleeing for their lives. This means that refugees feel forced to make dangerous journeys, like crossing the channel in small boats, and can fall victim to trafficking and dangerous smuggling practices. We should not blame them and treat them as illegal immigrants or criminals, and yet the government seems determined to do just that.

Refugees hope to find safety in the UK. But, shockingly, homelessness, poverty and hardship is the everyday reality. Many have been placed in former army camps like Napier and Penally, which were previously condemned as unfit but have been brought back into use. The conditions in these camps have been terrible – insanitary, no social distancing, very limited access to healthcare, inedible food. Even seeking help is difficult as asylum seekers' phones were often confiscated at the border. Those placed in camps have effectively been under detention.



And those in hotel or hostel accommodation have fared little better. We remain concerned about the wellbeing of people accommodated in hotels for long periods, as well as about the use of former military barracks. The accommodation in both hotels and the camps is generally of an

unacceptably low standard. Until their use is ended, urgent attention must be paid to the health and safety of the people living there.

All this has placed the refugee support organisations under increased pressure as they have had to adapt their own processes (for example, providing advice and counselling by phone) while continuing to support the physical needs of refugees and asylum seekers as best they can. Many of them will have made heavy use of their hardship funds, for which they often seek grants from the London Churches Refugee Fund.

And poor housing is just the start. Language and employment barriers cause further isolation. Public information on Covid is generally in English – not the first language of refugees – leading to uncertainty, misinformation and fear. Acute mental health problems are an ongoing struggle for so many refugees due to lack of jobs, emotional stress, loneliness and the loss of relatives and friends. Fear of Covid itself added to all those existing stresses.

“Being suspended in limbo, in an incomprehensible state, where time stands still, with no control over what is going to happen. Being isolated from family and friends. And in a different country. Being resourceful. Surviving adversity. These are all everyday experiences for asylum seekers but which many more of us have experienced in this enforced lockdown period,” says Marie Gillespie, Professor of Sociology at the Open University.

Another consequence of the pandemic has been disruption to asylum processes and welfare support services. By September 2020, over 46,000 people were waiting for initial asylum decisions, up 76% on a year before. Child migrants have been particularly hit, with the rights of many teenagers close to adulthood disappearing while still waiting to be granted asylum.

Many refugees are capable, qualified and skilful and want to be integrated and contribute to British society. We need them and their skills and



experience as much as they need us. But getting an overseas qualification recognised here, or converting that to a secure job in the UK, is often an uphill struggle.

During this period, the government has made some efforts to help refugees and asylum seekers. The 'Everyone In' policy to keep people off the streets, and the temporary suspension of evictions from asylum accommodation for people who have been granted status, were well intentioned if not always well executed. Home Office procedures have been adapted, to an extent, to reduce Covid risks. But, positive as this has been, it is not enough.

Many have still fallen through the cracks and have become the 'forgotten' people – which is why we are still calling on the government to do more to protect refugees. Looking to the future, we need to encourage a new compassionate, welcoming governmental approach to refugees and asylum seekers. Sadly, the 'new plan' announced by the Home Secretary on 24th March 2021 appears to be heading in the opposite direction. But that will have to be the subject of a future article.

Gillian Dare, LCRF Trustee



Cathy Young's original artwork, 'Flight into Egypt', used for our 2020 card.

A final case study – in memory of a special person

The case study below shows how Covid has called for new and creative responses from frontline projects. It came to us from the Croydon Refugee Day Centre and is poignant because the charity's long-standing manager, Peter Hall, died on 24th January 2021. He had been suffering from cancer, compounded by Covid. Peter will be hugely missed in Croydon. He also spoke at our last in-person public meeting in January 2020, before lockdown intervened. We have included this case study as our tribute to Peter and as a demonstration of what 'going the extra mile' can mean.



For all organisations in the sector, lockdown meant changes in working practices had to be made very quickly to meet very different needs. In Croydon, the Home Office released more than 200 people from detention, and **Croydon Refugee Day Centre** (CRDC) were approached to support a number of ex-detainees.

B was picked up by the Homeless Outreach Team and put in a temporary hostel with Croydon's No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Team having agreed to support him, as no food was provided. Unfortunately, this support was very slow to come, so CRDC gave him an emergency food parcel and a small cash grant on a Friday to tide him over until Monday. However, on Saturday he rang to say he was not allowed to share cooking pots, crockery, cutlery etc with others, so CRDC gave him the necessary equipment, even a cheap rice cooker as he came originally from a country where rice was eaten with every meal.

Unfortunately the NRPF Team was overwhelmed and were unable to provide support for the next week, so CDRC gave him more food. They also put him in touch with the Samphire Project (ex-detainees support) who were prepared to give him a small grant. Because he didn't have a bank account, CRDC agreed to receive the Samphire grant and gave B the cash.

LCRF Receipts and Payments for the year to 31 Dec 2020

A full copy of the audited accounts is available on request

Where the money came from



Foundation Donors
£13,134

Single donations
£15,269

Churches / organisations
£6,099

Card sales
£3,159

HMRC
£4,776

And where it went



Grants
£36,353

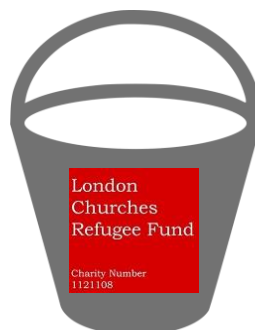
Card print/postage
£782

Administration
£251



2020 surplus
£5,051

Balance brought forward
£24,536



Balance at year end
£29,587

LONDON CHURCHES REFUGEE FUND

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS Account for the year ended 31st December 2020	
RECEIPTS	
Donations	34,502.11
HMRC reimbursements	4,775.95
Sales of Christmas cards	3,158.68
TOTAL RECEIPTS	42,436.74
PAYMENTS	
Grants	
Action for Refugees in Lewisham	1,650.00
African Refugee Community	1,650.00
All People All Places	800.00
Article 1 Charitable Trust	1,650.00
Asylum from Rape	1,650.00
Barnet Refugee Service	800.00
C4WS Homeless Project	653.00
Citizens of the World Choir	850.00
Cotton Tree Trust	1,650.00
Croydon Refugee Day Centre	850.00
Freedom from Torture	1,650.00
Hackney Migrant Centre	850.00
Happy Baby Community	1,650.00
Housing Justice	1,650.00
Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants	1,650.00
Jesuit Refugee Service	1,650.00
Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE)	700.00
Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network	1,650.00
London Catholic Worker	800.00
London Jesus Centre	1,200.00
Migrants Organise	1,650.00
Migrateful	800.00
New North London Synagogue Destitute Asylum Seekers Drop-In	1,650.00
Notre Dame Refugee Centre	1,650.00
Refugee Council	850.00
Room to Heal	800.00
Samphire	800.00
Streatham Drop In Centre	850.00
West London Welcome	1,650.00
	36,353.00
Administration	250.53
Christmas cards - production and distribution costs	781.89
TOTAL PAYMENTS	37,385.42
RECEIPTS less PAYMENTS for the year ended 31st December 2020	5,051.32

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st December 2020	
ASSETS	
Bank Balance	
Co-operative Bank Community Directplus Account	29,587.59
TOTAL ASSETS	29,587.59
TOTAL LIABILITIES	0.00
ASSETS less LIABILITIES	29,587.59
GENERAL FUND	
Balance brought forward 1st January 2020	24,536.27
Receipts less Payments in 2020	5,051.32
Balance carried forward 31st December 2020	29,587.59

Independent Examiner's Report to the trustees of London Churches Refugee Fund.

Charity Number: 1121108

On accounts for the year ended 31st December 2020.

Set out on the preceding page.

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31st December 2020.

Responsibilities and basis of report.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act")

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- Accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Michael John Gould

3rd May 2021

32 Elm Avenue, Upminster, Essex, RM14 2AY