

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

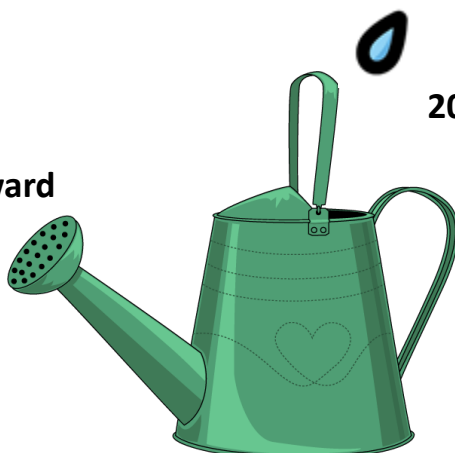


Administration
£913



£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