



# Pompey Churches

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# 'We have to help those in desperate need'

Syrian refugees scramble onto a Greek beach after sailing from Turkey in an inflatable boat

Photo: UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

**AS thousands of refugees have been driven from their homes, Christians from our diocese have been inspired to action.**

Churches have collected donations of food, clothing and medical supplies that have been taken to refugees in Calais. They have raised money and prayed for those affected.

Worshippers at St Mary's, Liss, are hoping to work with other churches in the area to offer a house as a safe haven for those fleeing conflict in Syria and elsewhere. Others have offered to foster unaccompanied children.

Adam Bullivant, from St Wilfrid's Church in Fratton, has travelled to Hungary with a team from the Taizé Community in France to work with refugees there. The team will seek to befriend young people and show them love.

Conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Eritrea and other parts of

the Middle East and Africa have prompted desperate refugees to flee to Europe, seeking a place of sanctuary. Many have tried to enter the EU by sailing from Turkey to one of the Greek islands, or by travelling through Hungary.

Bishop Christopher said: "I add my voice to those calling for a more generous welcome to those who have suffered so much and who have paid such a high price to reach our borders. As we open our doors and our hearts, I am sure that the small price we pay to welcome them will be vastly outweighed by what we gain by their presence among us."

Worshippers from St Simon's and St Jude's Churches in Southsea have helped a group based at Al Burrito cafe in Albert Road, who decided to take direct action and drive to Calais with supplies for refugees camped there.

The cafe owners created the group 'Don't Hate, Donate' and filled six vans with food, clothing, tents and medical supplies donated

by kind-hearted people, including many from churches. Now they've been given a warehouse by Portsmouth City Council to collect supplies to take deeper into Europe.

Jerry Brown, formerly from St Simon's Church, mobilised his church friends to help after hearing of the need.

"They were just a bunch of guys who wanted to do something," he said. "Initially they were going to fill a Landrover and drive to Calais, but it ended up being six van loads. They were inundated with donations, and people just walking down the road saw what was going on and gave them cash.

"Lots of people at church were grateful of the chance to do something to help. We know it's just a band aid – we can't fix the underlying issues ourselves, but at least we can help to alleviate the immediate suffering.

"For the next trip, we're collecting medical supplies and looking for doctors, nurses and

people with medical expertise as disease can quickly spread where people are jammed together."

Various churches, including our cathedral, St Simon's Church in Southsea and St Francis Church in Leigh Park offered to be collection points for donations. Fran Carabott, from St Jude's Church, lent the group his trailer.

On the Isle of Wight, Chloe Wells, daughter of Ventnor vicar the Rev Hugh Wright, is co-ordinating donations on behalf of Samara's Aid Appeal, which helps refugees in the Middle East. Among the humanitarian aid it delivers are care packs for pregnant women, with messages written in Kurdish and Arabic.

"There has been a big response recently because people have wanted to help," she said. "There's a range of places on the Isle of Wight where people can donate – just email me on chloe\_w89@hotmail.co.uk. People from St Catherine's, Ventnor, have already sent three boxes of donations."

Hart Plain Church has also donated towards Samara's Aid Appeal, which was launched last year by a young mum moved by the plight of Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Worshipers sent 33 boxes of clothes and blankets via this appeal last year.

And the ongoing work at All Saints Church in Portsmouth to help refugees and asylum seekers who end up in the city continues. Their drop-in events, run by Friends Without Borders, provide food, clothing and legal advice to those who don't know where else to turn. Details are on [www.friendswithoutborders.org.uk](http://www.friendswithoutborders.org.uk).

Meanwhile, our cathedral has been hosting lectures by David Carpenter from the University of Portsmouth on social ethics. The first two, entitled 'Who is my neighbour' dealt with the current refugee crisis. Subsequent lectures include discussions on medical ethics and criminal justice.

Find out how to help on [www.portsmouth.anglican.org/refugees](http://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/refugees).