

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH: NORTHERN SYNOD**  
**EMERGENCY RESOLUTION ON THE REFUGEE CRISIS**

**Proposor: Meg Robb – Convenor, Mission Committee**

**Seconder: Ron Forster – Member, Mission Committee**

Due to the current migrant crisis and to the fact that East Midlands Synod has produced a resolution to lobby the UK Government, as convenor of Northern Synod's Mission Committee, I propose that Northern Synod adopt a very similar resolution. There has not been time to take this formally though Mission Committee, but this would fit with the feel of our last meeting. Revd John Durell has agreed to second this proposal. The explanatory text below has been prepared by the East Midlands Synod.

Deeply embedded in the faith memory of all Christians is the command to 'love the stranger', and this command comes always with a reminder, that we were once strangers ourselves. The whole biblical story is of a people called, or driven, to leave a settled existence and move on and out to a strange land. Within our own tradition we look back to stories of ejection from the established church, and for some that meant travelling across the Atlantic in a tiny ship to find a safe place to live and worship. As the hymn says: 'We're a travelling, wandering race, we're the people of God'.

It is because we ourselves are strangers that Christians are glad to offer true hospitality and welcome to those who come to us as strangers, and especially those who come because they are fleeing war and persecution.

As hundreds of thousands flee war zones and travel across the Mediterranean in leaky boats and walk thousands of miles across one European country after another seeking security – a roof, food, a job, education – how can we as Christians respond in any other way than with the open arms of welcome, generosity and compassion? We have seen the people of Germany coming out and applauding the refugees arriving at their railway stations. We have seen too an outpouring of compassion here, as people offer their homes, clothes, blankets and money to help.

But our government does not seem to show the same generosity. We are the only country in the whole European Union which has refused to take part in the scheme to allocate quotas of refugees arriving in Europe to member states. The government has offered places to Syrian refugees, a tiny number of 4,000 a year for 5 years, hand-picked from the refugee camps, but not to those who have arrived in Europe. It sets up innumerable barriers to refugees, to asylum seekers, to migrants, and as we will be discussing later, to people legitimately working here who seek to renew their visas. Yet we are very rich country, we can easily offer places to many more refugees, as we have done for hundreds of years. We know that far from being a burden on the state, they will bring much needed skills and experience which will enrich and not impoverish us. So, we call on Synod not just to ask our churches to show welcome and compassion, but to ask the same of our government.

**Resolution:**

**15. Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church calls upon Her Majesty's Government to:**

- **Recognise its responsibility to help protect refugees arriving in Europe**
- **With European partners, to provide safe and legal routes into Europe to tackle people smuggling**
- **Promote the establishment of proper, EU run, processing centres at key borders**
- **Accept its fair share of refugees who have arrived in Europe, in cooperation with other member states of the European Union**
- **Make necessary arrangements to provide immediate shelter and support for refugees, and longer term to arrange for full resettlement for those wishing to remain**
- **To provide local authorities who are taking refugees with additional financial resources to help meet the costs**