

@home in a strange place



off the shelf
a ready to use series for sacred conversation

'journeying'

introducing sacred conversation on migrating

'Sacred conversation' on migrating is aimed at local churches and/or church related groups to help in the exploring of issues around moving/migrating.

'Sacred' alongside conversations is intentional. It underscores a faith and biblical perspective on lived experiences and encounters. It invites honest engagement, intentional listening, transforming relationships and commitment to a different vision of home and belonging.

Working the theme '*at home in a strange place*', it is hoped that the resources: can generate a series of 'conversation points' to help people reflect together on their experiences, stories and encounters; and create opportunities for churches to connect faith, worship, advocacy, solidarity and practical engagement.



What follows here are some suggested conversation points that you may use as you find appropriate. It is not intended to be prescriptive. Consider these suggestions as pointing to possible ways of shaping your own conversation. At the end we have also provided pointers to additional resources.

All the materials can be located on line at <http://www.urc.org.uk/at-home-mission.html> Read especially the @home in a strange place flyer which offers suggestions on ways the materials can be used. Also, on this page materials will be added as received and suggested.

May our sacred conversations lead to deeper reflection, conversion of minds and attitudes *and* concrete acts towards a new vision of home and belonging in our common humanity!

Good adventure on your 'table talks'!

Art credit	Elizabeth Gray-King
Logo credit	Mark Robinson
Photos	Michael Jagessar
Resource Credit	World Mission Council, Church of Scotland (for use of Together we Walk)

We would very much appreciate if you can kindly provide us with any feedback that would help us to improve this and any of other the resources we have put together. Please use the feedback form which can be found among the online resources [titled your feedback matters].

stepping out

Read: Hebrews 13: 1-3

- Reflect on the times you have welcomed strangers and they became an unexpected blessing for you.
- Reflect on times when you were a stranger in a strange place and because you were welcomed you had an opportunity to be a blessing for someone.



Prisons are not only places with barred windows and locked doors. They can also be spiritual or emotional chains.

Can you imagine people in such places?

- Imagine you are in such a place with them: how you can help and how they might help you? What can you do for each other?
- Imagine people who are being mistreated, abused and oppressed: try to feel their pain and suffering as if it were your own.....



We are one body and when one part of the body hurts the pain is felt everywhere so we want a conversation on how we can heal this pain.

To inspire the conversation we start a journey in which we walk together to share experiences which will raise more questions..... So let's start the journey.

Praying together

Travelling Lord,

You called your disciples to follow in your way:

you are the Way, the Truth and the Life,

and so we come, seeking to follow in your footsteps.

Creator of the earth, as we journey, help us to walk lightly,

treasuring the world you have given us and cherishing each other.

And grant, we pray, that our daily walk may be part of your plan,

to care for creation seeking justice

and the coming of your Kingdom

on earth as it is in heaven.

Adapted Prayer from www.prayandfastfortheclimate.com

going further

'Journeying' is a timely focus: with so much in the news of refugees walking to find safety and shelter, pilgrims walking to Paris, the powerful image of the shoes left on the pavement in the Place de Republique because of the ban on the march in Paris, and the journeys we are all making in our own changing 'world'.

1st story- A past journey

- In pairs, share of a momentous journey you have made. What were the obstacles and the joys? Consider what you have each learnt from the journey.

Music

- If possible play an appropriate piece of music here. You may wish to consider: 'Moses I know you are the Man' by Estelle White. It can be found in a hymn book and both words and music are also available online.



2nd Story - A present journey

- Select and share some Bible verses and in small groups (no more than three) think about how the Bible passage relates to any physical, spiritual or personal development journeys you have encountered in your work or life. Here are some suggested bible texts. You may also select your own.

[Matthew 4: 18-25, Hebrews 11:8, Jeremiah 6:16, Leviticus 19: 34, Luke 9:3]

- Invite each group to *share just one or two thoughts with everyone.*

Story 3 - A future journey

- In pairs share something you would like to do over the next year, a goal you have set yourself or a change that is coming. This can be a personal, professional or spiritual goal. What do you need to do to achieve it? Who can help you? What will you need?

Read the story from Elizabeth Perry about her journey/pilgrimage to Paris, December 2015 to the UN climate change meeting.

"Walk with me, for the journey is long"

When you're walking, it's a long way from London to Paris. It takes around two weeks – or at least that's what it took me (Elizabeth) and the other pilgrims on our [Pilgrimage2Paris](#). This might sound like a statement of the obvious, but I'd never really thought about long journeys in terms of walking before – I'm more used to thinking about anything more than a few miles or so in terms of cars, trains or planes.

We all had good equipment – robust walking boots, warm clothing, waterproof coats and trousers. Each night we knew where we would be staying and were welcomed with warmth. We received wonderful hospitality - food, shelter and the chance to recuperate in safety. Before we crossed the Channel we were given a detailed security briefing; our safety and well-being had been given careful consideration. How often we thought of people journeying in very different circumstances – and especially of those seeking refuge in Europe and the UK. What must it be like to travel with inadequate clothing and poor footwear, not knowing where you would be sleeping, exposed to the rain and cold? How much more difficult must it be with children? Where might your food come from? What if you can't speak the language? And then, having withstood all this, what must it be like to be met with hostility and contempt when you thought you were finally approaching journey's end?

None of the pilgrims embarked on our 200-mile journey without careful thought and preparation, and even with all the support and backup we had, the journey was long and hard. So what must it take to drive people from their homes to seek a new life elsewhere and endure such hardship? Knowing what I do now, I find it hard to imagine that the decision to undertake such a journey is made lightly, without a compelling reason. And I shiver as I imagine what that journey might entail. I suspect that this year, it is the journeys in the Christmas story that will resonate most for me: Mary and Joseph travelling to Bethlehem in less than ideal circumstances, the wise men journeying long distances to find Jesus, the shepherds leaving their flocks, the flight of Mary and Joseph into Egypt with the infant Jesus. Our God knows all about long, hard journeys... and, I believe, identifies with migrants and refugees fleeing hardship and persecution. On our Pilgrimage2Paris, the South African song, "Walk with me for the journey is long" became popular (unsurprisingly!). I wonder if, in it, I also hear an echo of God's heart.

moving on...

- What is the furthest you have ever walked? Was it enjoyable or a struggle?
- How desperate would you need to be to walk so far, for so long without knowing what you will find at the end?
- What would be the most important things you would want to have with you on such a journey?

Praying together

[As each line of prayer is said invite participants to take a step in any direction around the room.]

God who loves us so much,
 We know that we need each other.
 Let us find you in each other,
 Let us find each other in you.
 God, present in every movement of creation,
 Let us be responsible sharers of your garden of life.
 And as the sky in all its mystery and glory points out into the cosmos,
 So may our lives display the mystery and glory of love, you will for life on earth.
 Open our hearts to those who need our solidarity.
 We pray for people facing unpredictable and extreme weather,
 For people throughout the world who struggle to make a living in difficult circumstances.
 Let your will for justice and equity be done,
 That our love for our neighbour,
 Even those far from us,
 may make known our love for you.
 In the name of Christ.



Christian Aid – Prayers for our world

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/Climate-campaign-prayers-June-2014.pdf>

Compiled by Linda Mead Commitment for Life December 2015

a conversation partner

“...we did not leave, of our own free will choosing another land. Nor did we enter into a land, to stay there, if possible for ever. Merely, we fled. We are driven out, banned. Not a home, but an exile, shall the land be that took us in.”

[Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) on ‘Concerning the label Emigrant’ in *Refugees: An Anthology of Poems and Songs*, edited by Brian Coleman (Ottawa 1988)]

stepping out

Recalling our purpose - read: Hebrews 13: 1-3

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- Reflect on times when you were a stranger in a strange place and because you were welcomed you had an opportunity to be a blessing for someone



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Can you imagine people in such places?

- Imagine you are in such a place with them: how you can help and how they might help you? What can you do for each other?
- Imagine people who are being mistreated, abused and oppressed: try to feel their pain and suffering as if it were your own.....



We are one body and when one part of the body hurts the pain is felt everywhere so we want a conversation on how we can heal this pain.

To inspire the conversation we are using we continue the journey we started last week by imagining walking with the stranger.....

Praying together

[use your own prayer or see the resources online at <http://urc.org.uk/at-home-mission>]

**going further**

Read Reflections

- *A Walk with a Stranger* and *I knew the voice but not the face*, from @ Walking with a Stranger by Richard Becher from [online resources](#)[under model conversation]

Read: Luke 24: 13-35

Conversation Points

- Have you ever avoided a stranger because of how they were dressed?
- Reflect on opportunities missed in an encounter with a stranger because you felt intimidated.
- In such an encounter: are your first thoughts inspired by what you see or may have heard about people? What may happen if you walk with them and hear their story?
- Would you ask a stranger's story or just go by what you see?
- Would you walk with a stranger and help them find a place of rest? Or just point them in the right direction?
- What will you do next time you meet the stranger you met today?

moving on

Read the poem: *Imagine a world* by Karen Campbell from online resources

- Can you imagine such a world where you don't fit? What can we do to help people feel they do belong? Imagine another world is possible, what would it be like?



Praying together

See suggested prayers in the [worship resources section](#).

a conversation partner

“How can you judge a guy who has nothing, who is fleeing war and just wants a life for his family? People who are so desperate to flee that they will entrust their entire future to a leaking boat are examples of the man fallen among thieves. Jesus asks us today: who is their neighbour? Who will bind their wounds and carry them to a place of safety and pay for their rehabilitation? The man fallen among thieves did not recover overnight.”

Juliet Kilpin in 'Mission, Migrants and Refugees', p6

stepping out

Recalling our purpose - read: Hebrews 13: 1-3

- Ask the same questions as last week about whether you have met strangers who could have been angels to you....
- How did you respond?
- Was your attitude any different to what it might have been before?
- Did you listen to their story and is it possible that you have become an angel to them because you listened and they felt you were walking with them?



Praying together

[use your own prayer or see the resources online at <http://www.urchurch.org.uk/at-home-mission.html>]

going further

Play: The Yes/No Statement Game

Yes/No Statement Game

Place one large sign saying 'YES' at one side of the room and another saying 'NO' at the opposite side. Ask people to stand in the middle. Explain that you will be reading a statement and if they agree they should move to the 'YES' side of the room and if they disagree they should move to the 'NO' side of the room. Once the group has split, ask people to express their opinions ensuring they are met with respect and anyone who doesn't want to contribute is not forced to.

Statements (you can add to the list as is appropriate)

- Immigrants are people who choose to leave their own countries of their own free will.
- Immigrants come into our countries to steal our jobs.
- Immigration results in a more vibrant community of different exciting cultures.
- Our government should help immigrants with housing, healthcare and schooling.
- Christians should not be concerned about immigration.
- Groups of immigrants in our cities can be threatening.
- Immigrant, Refugee and Asylum seeker are all the same

Case Study

Place a diverse collection of images associated with migrants and migration on a table or floor. [These can be from newspapers, magazines, printed off webpages or from your own pictures.]

- Explain that you would like each person to pick one image that they feel drawn to and you will ask them to tell the rest of the group about it and why they picked it.

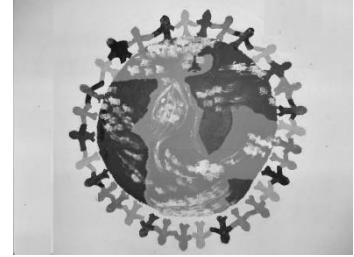
After this initial sharing, invite all to reflect further on the following questions

- What story does the picture tell you?
- What drew you to it?
- How would you feel if this was a photo of one of your friends?
- Does this photograph make you feel differently about immigrants and refugees?

In the sharing the leader may wish to share briefly about each image or photograph of the collection.

Read the Poem: *Where do I come from?* by Karen Campbell

- Where do you come from? Is it the same place where you are now living? Do you remember the place you came from? The places? The friends? How did you feel when you moved?



Read Matthew 2: 13-23:

- How do you think Mary and Joseph felt through these moves? What influenced the decisions for their moves and are we influenced in the same ways?
- Do you look back on somewhere (or some time) with nostalgia? Why and how do you feel?

Read John 1: 35-39

- Where was Jesus staying? What was his home like? Did he have somewhere to lay his head? (Matthew 8: 20)
- *"We are all here temporarily, after all,"* said one asylum seeker. Do you agree?

moving on

Praying together

- If the game was your reality what would you want to pray for from the experiences?
- See suggested prayers in the [worship resources section](#).

a conversation partner

"Leaving home is the most difficult thing...As soon as you leave, it hits you how much you miss everyone. You know that they are worrying about you every step of the way, and the journey is so dangerous. Those who make this journey are playing with their lives."

[Harriet Paintin talks to Pakistani refugees]

stepping out

Recalling our purpose - read: Hebrews 13: 1-3

- Have you met a stranger yet or can you remember when you might have let an angel walk on by?
- Have you been the stranger who has been like an angel to someone and could be helping them to find a home in a strange place?
- Have you seen anyone in the news or heard about any in a story who you have felt you would like to help?
- You are also a stranger to someone who is a stranger to you: so who is the angel?



Praying together

[use your own prayer or see the resources online at <http://www.urch.org.uk/at-home-mission.html>]

going further

Read: Luke 10: 25-37

Read the reflection and poem

Where is my Samaritan? by Richard Becher from *@Home Walking with the Stranger* in the model conversations resource section.

Conversation points

- Are there times when the church see people in need and walk by on the other side? does the same happen in politics? Are there ever reasons to justify doing so?
- Have you been like a Samaritan to someone or has someone been like a Samaritan to you?
- Who are the people who help the Samaritan? Who enables the healing?
- What's the difference between a Samaritan and an angel?

Read the poem

Who is my neighbour by Karen Campbell and discuss the questions it raises.

- How do you make them feel? Does your body speak the same language as your words?

[you may also look at the reflections in the resource **Walking with the Stranger** by Richard Becher, especially '*In the language of a Smile*' and '*Body Language*' to discuss this question



Read and Reflect on:

The Birmingham Declaration 2014 and United Reformed Church Resolutions [find at <http://www.urch.org.uk/at-home-mission.html>]

- Do you agree with these intentions? Are we and our churches doing anything about them?
- What would you want to change, if anything, in the statements and resolutions?

Praying together

a conversation partner

"Migrants and refugees are people with names, histories, needs and desires and this makes us neighbours with common interests. For, as long as the migrants are unnamed and faceless, they become less human to us, and therefore threatening."

Juliet Kilpin in 'Mission, Migrants and Refugees', p6

Resourcing Sacred Conversations

[The suggested list of materials (and more) can be found on the URC webpage at <http://www.urb.org.uk/at-home-mission.html>]

Other study material

1. Hospitality and sanctuary: a resource with material for four sessions by Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal <https://ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-2015/>
2. USPG Lent course 2016: reflections, prayer and bible study for five sessions
3. Together we walk - a resource from the Church of Scotland for one session

Mix and match - resources for conversation

1. an explanation of the European refugee crisis (4 minutes 30 seconds)
<https://youtu.be/v13kTeAHY4c>
2. an Egyptian billionaire wants to buy an island for refugees.(2 minutes 20 secs)
https://youtu.be/AmzBPd_Tajc
3. We Walk Together: a Syrian refugee family's journey to the heart of Europe (17 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubGhzVdnhQw>

Helpful Information and Quotes (to inform conversation)

1. Global refugee crisis PIC — good to print and share or can be used for leaders reference
2. Various Quotes for flyers and conversation

Poems

1. Imagine a World (Karen Campbell)
2. They ask me where I come from (Karen Campbell)
3. Who is your neighbour (Karen Campbell)
4. Home (Warshan Shire) <http://seekershut.org/blog/2015/09/home-warsan-shire/>

Reading Time (articles for personal reading and reflection)

1. The Other is my Neighbour (WCC)

Game

Yes/No Statement Game

Place one large sign saying 'YES' at one side of the room and another saying 'NO' at the opposite side. Ask people to stand in the middle. Explain that you will be reading a statement and if they agree they should move to the 'YES' side of the room and if they disagree they should move to the 'NO' side of the room. Once the group has split, ask people to express their opinions ensuring they are met with respect and anyone who doesn't want to contribute is not forced to.

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In the sharing the leader may wish to share briefly about each image or photograph of the collection.

Worship Resources

Prayer

Prayer is a conversation with God and doesn't need to be something which is creative and well written, but something from the heart. It is like telling your story to God, but, of course, God already knows it, so just say what you want to say and let it be your prayer.]

All the Sacred Conversation worship resources including prayers can be found on the URC webpage located at: <http://www.unc.org.uk/at-home-mission.html>

Hymns and Music

This list will include suggested titles found in various hymnals and Contemporary Christian Song Books. Most of the songs/music will be found online. We also offer some written by colleagues who have given permission to use.

Kindly check out the Sacred Conversation Worship resources found on the URC webpage at: <http://www.unc.org.uk/at-home-mission.html>

Music 'Walk with me for the journey is long' (YOUTUBE)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCB6uGFYYzk>

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United Reformed Church/Mission

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