

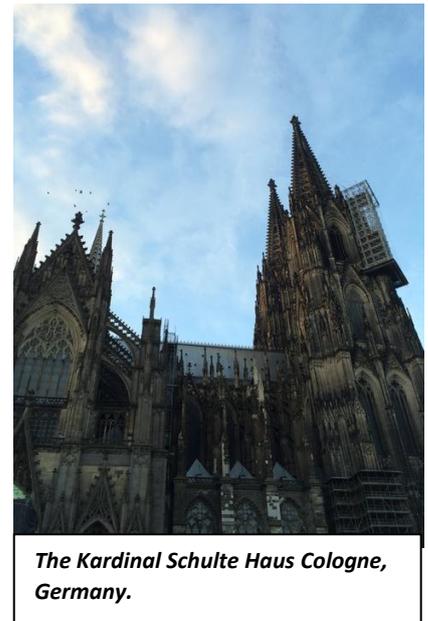
COLOGNE REFUGEE TELE-CONFERENCE

24 October 2016

By Fr David Greenwood, Priest-in-Charge, All Saints' Marseille

On October 11, Mrs Roxana Tenea Teleman represented our All Saints' Marseille chaplaincy at a consultation on refugee ministry in Cologne, Germany. Our two bishops, the Rt. Revd Robert Innes and the Rt. Revd David Hamid encouraged the Anglican Alliance and USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel) to organise the event at the *Kardinal Schulte Haus*. The building was built in 1924 as a seminary and is a registered historical monument.

The conference was conducted over two days, but for one hour on day two, there was a teleconference portion in which participants from around the world could join the conversation. I was fortunate to watch for the full hour from my home in Marseille.



A New Definition of Charity

The presenters were very clear that the notion of “**Charity**” has two very different faces. “Charity” can be either “**Transactional**” or “**Relational**”. Initially the difference is due to distance, but it is really an attitudinal issue. “Transactional” has often been our approach to charity. It means collecting clothing, making a financial contribution, sharing; but from a distance. Transitional Charity happens over there, somewhere else and WE send support to THEM. “Relational Charity is congregational/residential based, we meet, we share, we grow together, we engage the issue at heart, and together as part of a community... the recipients are our friends. The WE/THEM dialectic, becomes “US”.

The goal of the presenters was for us to explore how to change the narrative of Europe having a migrant or refugee “problem” to being a welcoming community.

It is important for us to remember that refugees are people just like you and me but coming from exceptional, extraordinary, often tragic situations. Refugees have skills too. They speak many languages, can assist Europe in being gatekeepers/translators; most can cook the local familiar foods from the countries of origin and help to act as hosts. This is important for congregations to know, that migrants and refugees in their midst, can become congregation members themselves; they can give a church family a global view; and help in the reception/welcoming process of others.

Who are New Residents in Europe?

People come to Europe for many reasons.

- Some are **Tourists** and they can stay for less than six months.
- Some come to retire here or work here and we call them **Expats** – to stay for more than six months they require a long-term stay visa.
- Some are here illegally, perhaps looking for employment – we often call these people **Illegal aliens** or **Economic migrants**. They have no visa, no papers at all, and they have no right to be here, to have residency; if found or arrested they can be deported. They are not citizens but their basic human rights are protected under the UN Charter of Human Rights.
- Some are here because they are fleeing war or persecution and, again under the UN Charter, they have the right to claim refugee status. **Refugees** have unique rights under the law: They have a right to have their refugee claim received, acknowledged, investigated and processed. This may take time, and until the investigation is complete they must be provided with shelter and food in their country of asylum. Refugees are required to remain within and recover aid from the country in which they

first declare their refugee status- their country of asylum. This host country provides them with the basic resources but also must offer them:

1. Voluntary repatriation back home if the situation has become stable or improved;
 2. Some form of a pathway to citizenship as a member of the host country; and
 3. The option of resettlement to a third country, of the third country and the refugee agrees.
- Only one percent of all refugees take advantage of this option.

Episcopal Migration Ministries

A short presentation was made by an American Anglican charity called “Episcopal Migration Ministries” (EMM). EMM is an effort of \The Episcopal Church in partnership with the Federal Government. EMM has 30 affiliates in 22 states and within many dioceses and receives 6,000 refugees, mostly Haitian, every year. Though it started due to the influx of refugees during WWII, EMM has now partnered with the Government under the formal legislation under the Department of Health and Human Services.

The role of the Episcopal Church’s EMM Branches is to:

1. Resource and Information gathering: Working with landlords and local resettlement offices and train parishes to know how the Government Social Services system works so that misinformation and exaggerations can be dismissed (in both directions)
2. Gift Discernment, encourage parishes to become involved in:
 - a. “Asset mapping” which asks congregations to identify their gifts: Hands (knitting, gardening, cooking), Heads (teaching), Heart (calm, friendly welcome) and their Human gifts (knowledge of what is available from Government; other denominational nearby churches; local food, clothing and furniture banks; and people who can speak different languages)
 - b. Using their church building or hall to provide a craft working space whereby guests can make sellable items... or for the church to transform during the week to become a refuge and community centre
 - c. To learn Integration versus assimilation
 - d. Assist refugees to overcome psychological barriers. They can teach and provide cultural and language training and how to establish a bank account and write cheques to pay their bills with the goal to create independence

EMM see the most valuable role of a church alongside their refugee members is to discern how self-sufficiency can be developed. EMM asks churches, “Are newcomers connected to wider community programs and do they feel connected, secure and do they feel this community is their own?”

EMM says that churches are uniquely positioned within society to ask refugees to consider “Where is God in this experience...?” EMM challenges congregations to tell their story in the public sphere to change the narrative to create even more understanding and support.

Mapping the Resources within a Community

The final presentation and discussion focused on the recognition that one church, parish or chaplaincy cannot do it all. But every congregation can and must be involved with an exercise of mapping of services in the community so that the parish leadership is aware of what is available and resources and efforts are not wasted in duplicating efforts.

How do you go about mapping the resources within a community? A “Refugee Aid App” is available in England and Greece but in the absence of such an aid, chaplaincy leadership needs to consult with those around them to identify:

- Where is the nearest immigration office?
- How do you enrol into school? What are the requirements? Some may have to start at a lower age.
- Where are the local area Non-Governmental Offices (NGOs) such as food banks, etc
- What and where are the other local area church resources
- Who are the local low-cost lawyers
- Who are the landlords who will rent to those in low income situations
- Who and where are the entry-level employers
- What language and cultural skills can your present congregational refugee members provide?
- Which of your current congregational members, who were refugees themselves, help with language translation, cultural liaison, and the provision of welcome foods.

Closing Comments from a Refugee

A Refugee who was attending the conference was asked, “How can a local church help?” and he replied, “They need to have contacts with a good lawyer to help the person file for an appeal and obtain proper documents... and in the absence of government support, or until such support is provided, it is paramount that a church needs to be able to provide a safe area for daily sleep, socks, clothes, and food.