

+WEEKLY SERMON

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Jesus came to look for us

I visited the Tickled Trout Hotel today to speak with the Afghan refugees that are currently living there.

They have all been brought to the UK because they once worked with the UK Forces in Afghanistan and it isn't safe for them to live there anymore.

Some were police officers, some in the Army, some worked undercover for the security services - all had some duty to protect our soldiers.

They have come with their families and it's now been five months since they arrived.

I went to offer friendship to them.

Their hotel is surrounded by a fence. Entry is via 24-hour security. It's not completely safe for them - not because dissident forces from overseas will attack them - but because British people may harm them. There have been demonstrations outside and threats against them.

English classes are delivered on site. They spend most of their time in the hotel. They looked sad.

I didn't do a great deal but I did give them the opportunity to come and play in a football tournament.

Myself and our Lay Pioneer Minister, Kate Traynor, are running a Unity Cup event. We felt the need in the current political climate to make an effort to bring people together.

Participants have been invited who have Christian/Hindu/Muslim/Sikh/no faith and want to play football.

The Headteacher of St Stephen's School Preston, John Coxhead is allowing us to use his five-a-side pitch. We have a professional referee and the teams must be made of a mix of all faiths.

The atmosphere in the room changed completely. They started to smile, before my eyes they passed a list around and entered the names of everyone who wanted to play. Twenty-four people signed in 10 minutes.

As Christians we need to take the initiative in reaching out to others. Our Saviour came to seek us, so we must be always willing to leave our buildings, walk with, play football with and talk to those who may never meet a Christian.

Canon Andrew Pratt MBE, Interfaith Adviser

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