

LEST WE FORGET – WE’VE FORGOT

I write this between the days when churches across the land have commemorated All Saints and All Souls days; and before Remembrance Day this Sunday. It also happens to be just after the second Lancashire ‘Sanctuary Conference’ held on Friday in County Hall.

As we prepare to mark the anniversary of the end of the ‘War to end all Wars’ we seem to have forgotten the suffering and misery that it caused, and the misery and suffering that is still being caused by the wars and injustices being visited upon people throughout the world. Injustices which are magnified when refugees and asylum seekers arrive on our shores.

People attending the conference were surprised to find that they were not allowed to enter the venue, or even get that first drink, after they had registered.

There were many hurdles for them to cross before they could get to the conference: border control, interviews about housing, interviews with the Home Office; interviews with health providers – often in a language that they couldn’t understand.

Unwittingly they were taking part in a role play of a refugee or asylum seeker entering the country. It opened their eyes; and if you want to hear some first-hand comments about it go to <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p001d7vn/clips> .

There are many churches and other groups, throughout the Diocese, working with asylum seekers and refugees; providing support with form filling; conversation groups to improve their English language; help with housing problems and working through the complex system which we take for granted. Do you know where your nearest group is?

Could you volunteer to talk with the refugees or asylum seekers? Could you just make cups of tea and wash up? These are some of the tasks people are needed for.

These days we often hear shouts of ‘they are going to take our jobs take our homes fill our schools ruin the health service ’ and so we need, from our Christian perspective, to tell a different story.

Individually they are often fleeing from oppression or war. They have risked all to get to a place of safety and many of them are well educated in their own country and would happily contribute to this country, if they are allowed to.

As the Christmas story reminds us, Jesus himself became a refugee. Christian care and compassion dictates that we should show that same care and compassion to those in need today, lest we forget the horrors of war they fled.

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