

Pershore Abbey Iona Service 23rd February 2025 5pm

Theme: Refugees

Gathering Song: 🎵 (*Common Ground 4 verses 1, 4 & 5*)

Welcome and Introduction:

Opening Responses:

Leader: At the close of this day, we gather to worship God;

All: **at journey's end we give thanks for the road travelled and the open door.**

Leader: We offer to God our tiredness and our expectancy;

All: **we rejoice in a God who welcomes us just as we are.**

Leader: Here and now, we might entertain angels unaware;

All: **here and now we can meet Christ in one another.**

Bible Reading:

Reader 1: In Psalm 142, David cries out to God as he takes refuge in a cave.

I cry aloud to the Lord; I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.

I pour out before him my complaint; before him I tell my trouble.

When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who watch over my way.

In the path where I walk people have hidden a snare for me.

Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me.

I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.

I cry to you, Lord; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."

Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need;

rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me.

Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name.

Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.

For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us,
for the word of God within us,

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Reader 2: (*Reading adapted from Radical Hospitality*)

'I am a human being', is the sound of every single human heart. It is the cry we make against all that would make us less human, the cry of the darkest night of our lives, the cry of the abandoned, the misunderstood and the excluded. "I am like you. I am human."

I am not a token of my race or creed.

I am not a statistic.

I am not an AIDS patient.

I am not a sex object.

I am not a 'labourer'.

I am not an 'at-risk' child.

I am not a 'refugee'.

I have a mind. I have a heart. I have a soul. I dream. I feel. I care. I am human being.

Quiz about refugees

- 1) Is it possible to apply for asylum in the UK if you are not physically in the UK?
- 2) How many applications for asylum in the UK were made in the year ending September 2024? Nearly 8,000 / 80,000 / 800,000
- 3) According to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, what is the definition of a refugee?
 - A. Someone who has been displaced within their own country.
 - B. Someone who has applied for protection in another country.
 - C. Someone who has been granted protection because they are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted there.
- 4) Why do very few people fly to the UK to claim asylum?
 - A. Because it's illegal.
 - B. Because they are frightened of being stopped, turned back or arrested.
 - C. Because they do not have the right paperwork and passport to fly.

Time for discussion and to find out about Pershore Welcomes Refugees – a local group of people supporting newly arrived refugees.

Prayers of concern:

Leader: Jesus, we gather today in this shelter house of prayer, aware of centuries of prayers of joy and suffering, the stilling of the day's busy-ness, the outpouring of hearts.

Give us the grace to open our hearts to people who are different to us, inspire us to be a people of hospitality. Christ in your mercy,

All: **hear our prayer.**

Leader: Jesus, your family had to flee from an unstable and despotic ruler. We pray for asylum seekers fleeing in fear for their lives, for refugees starting their life anew, and for individuals and organisations who are there for them. Christ in your mercy,

All: **hear our prayer.**

Leader: Jesus, you led a wandering, vulnerable life. We pray for the millions of displaced people in our world. May those with power and influence listen to their wishes and respond with compassion and care. Christ in your mercy,

All: **hear our prayer.**

Leader: Jesus, you sat at table with the betrayed and rejected of Palestine. We pray for those today, who do not feel welcomed in their daily lives or communities. Christ in your mercy,

All: **hear our prayer.**

Leader: Jesus, may we be part of your story of love and transformation both in our own lives and the lives of others. Christ in your mercy,

All: **hear our prayer. Amen**

Song:

1. The love of God comes close, where stands an open door,
to let the stranger in, to mingle rich and poor:
the love of God is here to stay, embracing those who walk his way.
2. The peace of God comes close, to those caught in the storm,
forgoing lives of ease, to ease the lives forlorn:
the peace of God is here to stay, embracing those who walk his way.
3. The joy of God comes close, where faith encounters fears,
where heights and depths of life, are found through smiles and tears:
the joy of God is here to stay, embracing those who walk his way.

4. The grace of God comes close, to those whose grace is spent,
when hearts are tired and sore, and hope is bruised or bent:
the grace of God is here to stay, embracing those who walk his way.

Leader: *(from the United Congregation of Southern Africa)*

We must move on my people!

This is merely a resting place, a place of transit,
where humanity and God pause,
before taking to the road again.

Go, my people, you are ready to set sail, your country is not here.
You are awaited my people, and I declare to you, people of God,
I am going with you.

A Celtic Blessing:

**All: Bless to us, O God, the earth beneath our feet.
Bless to us, O God, the path whereon we go.
Bless to us, O God, the people whom we meet. Amen**

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Notes

According to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention definition someone seeking asylum has applied for protection, whereas a refugee has been granted protection.

It is not possible to claim asylum from outside the UK, and there is no visa which allows people to enter the UK in order to claim asylum.

Under UK law, "it is now an offence to enter the country without permission. This is despite the UK being signatory to international law treaties, such as the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, which state that asylum seekers and refugees should not be penalised for illegal entry."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9d5wj9l8e2o>

References:

Iona Abbey Music Book © The Iona Community *Common Ground* © The Iona Community
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Radical Hospitality © Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt refugee-action.org.uk
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**NEXT IONA SERVICE: 5pm Sunday 23rd March
in Pershore Abbey and via Zoom**