

GENERAL SYNOD 2016

Council for Mission Motion: Refugees Proposer: The Revd Andrew Quill

**Embargoed Against Delivery
Check Against Delivery**

When thinking about how best to introduce this motion, I looked up lots of statistics relating to the refugee crisis, which I thought might help to illustrate how enormous this crisis is. However, having had many conversations with people on this very subject before, I realised that a lack of knowledge on the subject is not a real issue. Regular news items help to keep us, both informed and aware of the issues facing millions of people fleeing the conflicts in Syria and elsewhere. Just this week a reporter told of the many graves of unknown men, women and children – at least one burial each day of those who haven't been able to be identified, washed up after a failed attempt to reach safety.

The real issue is that our response is shaped by self-interest and self-preservation. 'But what about our jobs?', 'We are already struggling financially as a country as it is!', 'Terrorists could be among those seeking refuge!' These are just some of the responses that I have personally got from discussions on the refugee crisis.

As Christians we need to seek to live out our lives shaped by God's Word, which often runs counter-cultural. Jesus teaches us in Matthew 7:12: 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.'

If the roles were reversed – they were in our shoes and we were in theirs – how would we want them to treat us? What would we want them to do for us? How we answer questions like these can serve as a real challenge to how we respond to their current situation. We'll be more open to taking in our fair share of refugees.

Then as more and more refugees are welcomed into our country we need to help develop a right response to their presence by leading the way as God's people. God challenged his people in Leviticus 19:34: "The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

As a more long-term goal, the root causes of conflict and inequality must also be addressed but those who are currently seeking refuge need help now – countries with open arms not closed borders.

Therefore on behalf of the Council for Mission I propose:

That General Synod would ask the House of Bishops to remind the Government of the Republic of Ireland to implement the key recommendations of “Protection, Resettlement and Integration: Ireland’s Response to the Refugee and Migration ‘Crisis’”, a report compiled by a consortium of Irish advocacy and aid agencies, including Actionaid, Christian Aid, Trócaire, Oxfam Ireland, the Irish Refugee Council, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, and many others, and of which the Church of Ireland is a signatory; these recommendations including:

- (A) Enhance legal channels for migration, and take our fair share of refugees;
- (B) Develop community approaches to reception conditions and the long-term integration of asylum seekers and refugees; and to
- (C) Uphold in Ireland and in the European Union a strong commitment to human rights, humanitarian aid and to addressing the root causes of conflict and inequality.