



Christians at work in Luton Refugee Service at Hope Church

We are grateful for the opportunities of celebrating lives in our Refugee Services at Hope Church. It has been one year since we started our Refugee drop-in called Global Cafe and it has been a great opportunity to serve the Refugee Community in Luton in a holistic way. Our goal as a church is to be able to provide safe spaces where we can listen to them, develop friendships, support them regarding their urgent needs, play games and provide pastoral care. As a team, we seek to develop activities with them and not just for them. We seek to listen to their points of view and, through assessments, to understand what they really want to do in terms of activities and what they really need in terms of the support we could offer to them.



We started receiving between 15 to 25 people per week, and since then the numbers have been rising to 25 to 40 people per week. Some of our volunteers are also part of the refugee community and they seem very appreciative and supportive of what we have been doing. The other participants also have been showing appreciation and some of them have shared how it has been good for their wellbeing. Most of our participants are men, but we also have been receiving women and kids in our drop-in.

Their nationalities are: Iran, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Sudan, Uganda, Chad, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Türkiye, Uganda, Congo, Sierra Leone, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Ukraine. Since April last year, we have received around 200 different people at Global Cafe.

As part of our natural goal of celebrating lives, we have been organising special meals to celebrate our diversity of cultures and religious backgrounds. We organised a big Christmas celebration and dinner last year and we hosted about 80 people for that event. Recently, we organised three celebrations with the Refugee Community and, through great team work, we were able to celebrate Nowruz with the Persian community and Eid with the Muslim community and others who are not Persian or Muslim also participated. During our amazing Eid dinner with around 65 people, one of our friends from Sudan has asked to share from the front to everyone that Hope Church is his favourite place in the UK as he does feel welcome in our community. It was so encouraging to hear this as we have been working on different ways to support them and welcome them. We recently organised an Easter celebration and shared this heartfelt message, full of love and power, in a more direct and clear way. Around 70 people joined it in total.



Another young man from Iran shared with us that Hope Church is like a shelter for the Refugee Community in Luton. It was so encouraging to hear as I have been learning so much about community and humanity as I serve them. I have been learning that serving refugees is about food, dancing and friendships. But it is also about prayers, holistic care and listening to sad and challenging stories. In this way we proceed with our services aiming to celebrate lives and provide holistic care for them day by day

Recently we finished our fifth men's emotional support group. In our Bible study group, one of the men who was persecuted in a closed country for being a Christian told us, "I always dreamed of the day when I would have someone answer my biblical questions, and now I have you." May the Lord continue to use us in this man's life. .

We recently joined another organisation that works in partnership with our church in the areas of gardening in public places in the town and also with a community garden. It has been an opportunity not only to deepen relationships, but also to develop a project in the area of Creation Care that also has therapeutic aspects due to contact with the earth. It has been so encouraging to serve alongside other organisations and churches and provide pastoral and holistic care to our refugee friends.

God is at work in our church. God is at work amongst the Refugee Community in Luton. God is at work in our town as we serve together and what a privilege to be part of it.
Filipe Almeida



Would the community perceive the absence of your church or organisation? Chances are they would, considering the valuable ministries and services it offers. Stay tuned for further updates on the thriving church in Luton as it remains actively engaged with the community
