

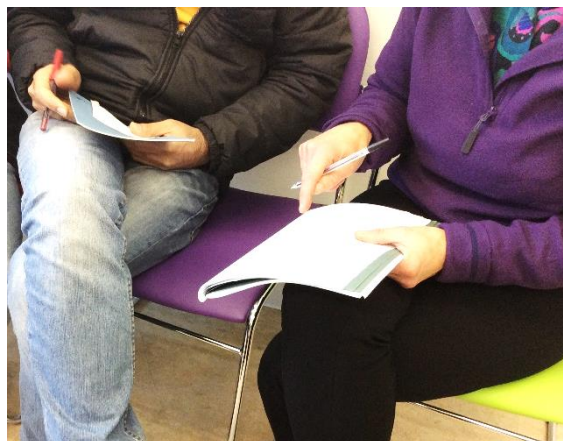


St Chad's Sanctuary

I was a stranger and you made me welcome.

Christmas 2017

St. Chad's Sanctuary wishes you joy and peace this Christmas and throughout 2018. We send you special greetings and much gratitude for your support during the past year. Most of all we thank you for your encouragement and your prayers. May you experience great joy and good cheer in your own households and may you continue to find ways to be Good News to others especially those most alone and vulnerable.



It is both humbling and amazing to know that St. Chad's Sanctuary has been able to bring much comfort and hope to so many asylum and refugee families over the past twelve months. Every day we meet those who have been through the most horrendous mental and physical suffering and who continue to go through nightmares of grief and anxiety. It is wonderful to see their worried faces light up when they are shown a little bit kindness and then to rejoice and celebrate with them when they get permission to stay in the UK; it is such a privilege to help them to start building a new life for themselves and their families. Many have found employment and have become integrated into their local communities and their children are often star pupils in local schools. The lovely Fatima whom we first met in 2010 is now beginning to realise her dream of studying medicine and handsome



Mohammad is a student at Wolverhampton University and still manages to volunteer with us whenever he can. Many still find time to come back and to express their gratitude and remind us that we are their extended family in the UK. Some are now on our Sanctuary Team. It is often hard to realise that we once put shoes on their feet, clothes on their backs and gave them their first English lessons!

A place of welcome and hospitality for asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants.

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However, for so many, there seems to be no let-up in their struggle to find a place of safety and protection. They face disappointment, followed by more disappointment as those dreaded refusal letters keep coming. Sometimes we find that all our efforts to help go unheeded; finally, we can only stand with them in silent solidarity, praying that some way forward can be found before they are picked up, detained and deported. The work of St. Chad's Sanctuary is full of joy, sorrow and heartbreak. We are blessed to have an amazing team of people who make it a place of welcome and who do so much hard work to meet the needs of those who come for help.



We are privileged to be able to journey with asylum seekers and refugees; every day we marvel at their courage and resilience. They are so gracious! Without the help of so many benefactors this work could not be done. I want to pay special tribute to those hidden helpers who do so much behind the scenes; who remain nameless and faceless to us but who work so hard so that we can have the clothing, hygiene products, the food and the funds to keep going. May God who knows you by name, bless you and your loved ones.

During this Christmastide let us reflect on Christ the light of the world, who was born into the darkness of the stable and into the cruelty of Herod's regime where so soon in his young life was to see him and his parents flee to Egypt in search of safety and protection. Let us welcome the strangers in our own communities especially those who have had to escape persecution, leaving behind loved ones and their beloved lands. We pray to see in them the face of Christ and be for them beacons of light and hope.



*With love, prayer
and every good wish
for Christmas and
the New Year.*

Margaret Walsh IJS.

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