



Together

NEWS FROM JRS UK WINTER 2020

accompany • serve • advocate

“To accompany refugees is to affirm that God is present in human history, even in most tragic episodes.”

– Jesuit Refugee Service charter



UNITED
KINGDOM



New Accompaniment in Action Series

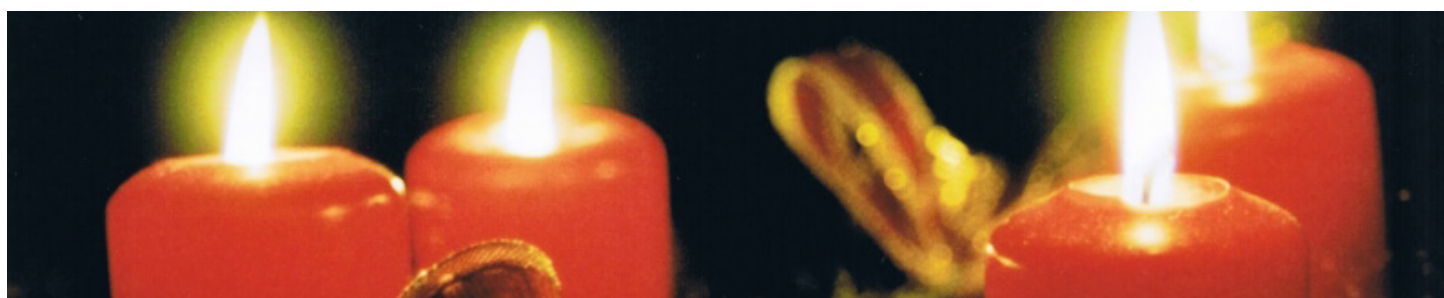


Accompaniment is at the heart of JRS' mission, and this year we celebrate 40 years of accompanying refugees across the world in the countries in which we work. The **Accompaniment in Action** series explores the ways accompaniment influences our support services and advocacy, as well as what it means to accompany refugees in the UK.

The regular online events feature refugee friends, staff and volunteers speaking about their work and experiences. The series gives you an opportunity to hear directly from the team about the work you make possible with your generous donations, support and prayers.

Previous events have included a panel discussion on our recent report *Detained and Dehumanised* and an Asylum Explained event - where our Legal Team shared their work, and a refugee friend shared her experience of the asylum system over the past decade.

You can watch these events again and sign-up to be a part of the next event on our website: jrsuk.net/accompaniment-in-action



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JRS UK's 2020 Advent Service will be streamed online on Tuesday 8th December 2020. Visit www.jrsuk.net/adventservice2020 to find out how to join!

Marking 40 Years of the Jesuit Refugee Service

November 14th marks 40 years of JRS existing to accompany refugees who find themselves in new land, seeking safety, as they navigate a new life. Unfortunately, as we see far too frequently in the UK, the process for seeking asylum and being granted it is convoluted, lengthy and unwelcoming. Bernard Elliot SJ was the Jesuit brother who established JRS in London in 1980, after receiving direction from the Superior General of the Society of Jesus at the time, Fr Pedro Arrupe.

Fr Arrupe was responding to the thousands of Vietnamese refugees fleeing their war-ridden country by boat to find relief elsewhere. Refugees were arriving to new countries speaking a different language, without money, food or know-how,

and Fr Arrupe insisted that accompanying them was the call of their time. That call is one that has continued 40 years on, and is being heard by almost 50 countries where JRS works.

"Saint Ignatius called us to go anywhere where we are most needed for the greater glory of God. The spiritual as well as the material need of more than 16 million refugees throughout the world today could scarcely be greater."

– Fr Pedro Arrupe's letter to Jesuit Superiors worldwide, November 1980.

continued on page 4

Message from the Director



2020 is a milestone year for JRS UK. Along with more than 50 country offices around the world, we mark 40 years of the Jesuit Refugee Service accompanying refugees.

It is uncomfortable to celebrate this milestone: JRS exists because people continue to need to flee for their life. Our work of welcome is needed because refugees continue to be greeted with hostility, suspicion and injustice. And yet we give thanks for the many generous hearted people who have been part of our mission, whether as staff, volunteers, refugee friends, or benefactors. We give thanks for 40 years of friendship, solidarity and community.

JRS UK has been working to put together a book that recounts some of the stories and personalities that built the foundations of JRS, along with those who continue to grow the JRS family. I hope you will be able to get your hands on this remarkable book, as it is a family that you are certainly an important part of. There will be more details soon on how to purchase this milestone memento.

As the final season of the year dawns, the team are yet to take a breath from the emergency response JRS UK have built to support refugees during the pandemic. At this time of the year, when family, food, hope and joy ordinarily fill homes, workplaces, public spaces and the country, instead uncertainty, loneliness and anxiety is increasing. For our refugee friends, these anxieties have worsened as they live destitute in London, many vulnerable to being homeless, others battling emotional trauma, and most awaiting to find some comfort and security while their immigration case remains in limbo.

This year has been tough: certainly it has been testing! However, the support from people like you, your donations, prayers and well wishes, have helped find ways to continue our work to accompany refugee friends. We are extremely grateful and hope that you will continue walking alongside refugees into the New Year and beyond, for as long as it is needed.

With grateful thanks,

Sarah Teather, Director

Sharing Good News

As an important part of the JRS family, we wanted to share with you that the following refugee friends have secured leave to remain in the UK: **Expoir, Zeragabir, Priscille and Pious**

To all JRS I would like to thank you for all your cooperation on this matter, thank you very much. I am happy with JRS' support for me, and I support JRS. Thank you so much for helping me."

– Zeragabir



Marking 40 Years of the Jesuit Refugee Service

continued from page 2

JRS UK are fortunate enough to have a team member who has been connected with JRS and Brother Bernard since the 1980's. Sou, now the team's Finance Assistant, fondly remembers Brother Bernard Elliot who worked swiftly to release her and 18 other Cambodian refugees from detention in the UK in 1986.

"I feel like he is my second father" Sou says while remembering how Brother Bernard helped her out of detention, organised a home in a country where she didn't yet understand the language, referred and accompanied her to see a solicitor and when she finished her study, offered her work experience with JRS as Office Administrator. Six months later, Sou was offered a permanent job and has carried on the mission of JRS ever since.

"I came to this country and I didn't know anybody. One time I had an appointment at the hospital, but because of the language barrier Brother Elliot offered to come and collect me from my place, take me to the hospital, wait for me to finish my appointment, and then take me home...it's a relief to have someone accompany you...you don't feel anxious as much as you would on your own."

Sou has continued to work to support other refugees who feel those same uncertain feelings she did upon arriving in the UK, she comments on what's changed and what has stayed the same at JRS:

"What has changed is where our Day Centre is. We started in Brixton renting three rooms, then moved to Osterley and then to London Bridge where we rented a large room with office space, welcoming more than 100 refugees including mothers and babies.

"The way we look after our friends has remained the same. The welcoming...trying to solve problems and if we can't we'll refer them to another organisation. The service at the Day Centre that we provide has stayed the same, but we are expanding to other important projects."

Sou refers to programs like 'At Home' or the Legal Project, which have come to fruition after years of accompanying refugees in the UK. Over the past 40 years JRS has grown to be able to shelter, refer, advise, support (practically and emotionally) and advocate for the rights of refugees, so that their dignity is upheld and their hope maintained.

Remarkably, as Sou mentions, the JRS community has continued to accompany our refugee friends old and new through difficult times and joyful ones thanks to prayers, financial support, time and dedication. As 2020 marks a milestone for JRS worldwide, it also highlights that no matter the crisis, personal or pandemic, JRS will walk alongside refugees so that those who have to flee their homes are welcomed with love.



Sou (fourth from the left) alongside Brother Bernard, JRS staff, volunteers and refugee friends in 2005 at the London Bridge office

Keep your eye out for our 40 Year Anniversary special book, including memories, faces and a history of JRS UK.

Finding Courage



Debbie started to volunteer with JRS UK during the lockdown to deliver essential items to refugee friends in London. She shares her insights into accompaniment and courage.

Every morning at the JRS UK morning prayer call we pray the JRS prayer starting with –

“Give us courage to accompany others, for in walking at their side we find You there present with us.”

Why do we ask for courage to accompany? What courage does it take for me to drive and deliver food to people for whom courage is a daily currency and necessity? That I, walking at their side might find you, Christ, present with me.

40 years ago, as JRS began their journey, I arrived in London, no career, no job, no income and no home – sleeping on floors of friends and family. This was only for a couple of months, but much of my life growing up was a story of arriving and leaving; of being the outsider, new, a stranger (even within parts of the UK!) – a life of broken pieces and scars. Some of those pieces fuelled a desire to offer hospitality, welcome, a home. It is here perhaps that my journey with JRS was planted – becoming reality a few decades later! My connection with the wider work of Jesuit retreats had begun at St Buenos Spirituality Centre – on a weekend cooking retreat and followed by a number of silent retreats – where I'd seen JRS news, though without

connecting the work of St Buenos with the work of JRS.

I joined JRS properly as the coronavirus lockdown started, responding to an invitation to give time and money – delivering food bags, deeply conscious of inequalities in my life and that of refugee friends, and others. I have begun to learn why we ask for courage to accompany others. It is hard to live with being unequal; to pray is to be changed. I could feel it is enough to do a good deed for another, or allow myself to be open, realising deeper down I am being asked more than that: to be vulnerable alongside and with another.

This can be uncomfortable, and transformative. In accompanying someone else I need courage to face the broken pieces inside me – the past I would rather avoid or be insulated from. The place in me where I am homeless – in this place where Christ is present, and makes a home in me as I am taught to see where Christ is at home in the other beneath all our external differences.

Jesus is found at the edges – He sends us there to accompany – and be accompanied, which I have found to be in the DNA of JRS – expressed and lived out in all the ways the team and volunteers and refugee friends are alongside each other.

If you are interested in volunteering your time to support refugees, please visit our website www.jrsuk.net/volunteer and get in touch with us!

Feeling At Home

Davina met JRS UK while living destitute in the UK, waiting for her refugee status. During that time, Davina was hosted twice through JRS UK's hosting scheme, At Home.

Naomi, At Home coordinator, shares excerpts from her conversation with Davina, who eagerly encourages hosts and refugees to take part in the scheme.



Sr Joyti welcomes Cecile to the Day Centre last year, in much the same way Davina and all our refugee friends are welcomed.

Could you tell us a bit about where you lived before you were hosted through JRS UK?

Before I was hosted with the JRS, I was living with a family, with a friend of a friend of mine. I [had been] evicted before this. I became homeless.

So she took me in. But at the end it became so bad because she started treating me like I wasn't a human being.

There was a lot to do at home. You had to do the...like cleaning the house, taking care of kids. And sometimes it was too much on me and I had to attend to other things like appointments, being with friends. So it was so difficult for me to manage the two lives - my own life and the house life. And it became too much and I couldn't take it anymore. And the kids became so naughty towards me, so disrespectful.

This exploitation of 'helping around the house' is a situation we hear often from refugee friends, who have so few options open to them – the choice is often survive on the streets, or survive in a hostile home.

It became too much on me. I couldn't take it anymore. I had to leave. So that's when I left. So, um, yeah, it was really, I just felt like I was on my own and no one was rooting for me. So that's when I left.

It sounds so tough, I remember when we would speak at JRS and it was an awful time. Can I ask, what did you expect from hosting when we spoke about it in the JRS office?

Hosting to me like it was like I was escaping, you know. It was a sort of an escape for me, I didn't really expect too much... I just want to first of all, to escape and then certainly a place where there will be peace and you will be considered as a human being.

When you were hosted in the two placements through JRS, was there anything that surprised you about hosting?

It was like "We were waiting for you, welcome!"

It was more than I was expecting! I wasn't expecting a lot of warmth, but is that English?

“What surprised me most was the way I was welcomed, like I felt like I was being welcomed home.”

Both hosting places, they were so kind, so caring and so honestly, so generous...The Sisters were busy. They had their schedules and stuff but every Sunday they wanted us to have time together and eat together. So that was really good. So it's not like I felt like I'm on my own somewhere in the corner in the house.

With Mary and Gerard, we didn't have like a specific timetable or so, but they were always happy when you come down to talk to them. Personally, I'm a loner, naturally. Yeah, I like my own company too much.

Mary ... Sometimes she would sit in the kitchen, she will find me cooking, we will sit and chat, and we just like a mother and a child.

I wasn't really expecting that. And I wouldn't be unhappy if I didn't receive that. But it was really over and above what I was expecting. So that's that was really good. It was good time. It was time well spent.

They really loved me. They really welcomed me. And when I left, they were really, like, caring. They would call me and ask me, “What's going on? Are you settling down?”

Is there anything you would say to someone who was thinking about being a host, but is perhaps nervous?

I would say give it a try and see for yourself. If you're really feeling that your heart is telling you to host and you really want to do it, but you're still doubting, give it a try. You know, obviously it won't work for everybody but...it's worth giving it a try.

When you give someone a place...that space is like a sanctuary. It is like a place of peace where they have shelter, you know, at least they're not sleeping rough.

That's the beginning for them to start thinking clearly, where do I stand as far as my case is concerned? You know, in three months you can do a lot.

if somebody comes to that place where they want to be in this position of being hosted, it's because they have been in very, very bad situations and they don't have anywhere else to go while they are trying to sort out how their situation. So it is helping them have that moment of peace to figure out what is the next move because it's so harsh out there ... Homelessness is so difficult.

So if you offer someone that shelter, you are really doing a lot, it might be three months, one month, two months, but during that time that person at least has peace and they can think clearly.

We are so pleased that you have your refugee status. Looking back, is there anything you'd like to say about your experience of JRS as a whole?

I would like to say that the JRS has really personally helped me, I have a couple of friends that I met there, a girl she has become a best friend of mine - I found her in JRS!

So it has helped me to connect with people.

I still have a lot of people from JRS that call me, I call them. It really helped me socially, psychologically as well.

Just being there with people, once a week or every two weeks, every time you go there on this day, I'm going to go to this place, I'm just going to be myself, laugh, talk to people, and all those kinds of things. It's helped me in that aspect.

I joined the choir as well, also I joined the Bike Project. It helped me, I never rode a bicycle before, at least I learned.

I'm really thankful for the JRS, I'm really thankful.

Ready to host?

If Davina's words have inspired you to open your home to a refugee friend, and you live in Greater London contact Naomi for more info on hosting: naomi.turner@jrs.net 020 7488 7310

If you don't live in Greater London, but would like to host, do look at Refugees at Home or the NACCOM Directory for other hosting schemes local to you: naccom.org.uk/projects/



Autumnal thoughts from Detention

Naomi joined JRS UK in September as Detention Outreach Manager, helping to ensure people held in detention are accompanied and connected with others, during a difficult time. Naomi comes with a wealth of experience in immigration law and advocating for the rights of detainees.

Autumn is here. The garden is a mess. This is the optimum time to clear the pond, cut back the vine and plant roses before the arrival of winter and Brexit. With the latter comes a concerted effort from the Home Secretary to increase removals of asylum seekers arriving across the Channel on dinghies, known as Dublin cases, after the Dublin III Regulation, 2013, as come December 31st, we're unlikely to be signatories to the Dublin III Regulation.

As a result of this last-minute pre-Brexit push, we are observing a fast-track system where recent arrivals are transferred around the UK, with many being detained at Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre prior to their removal to EU States. We are noting people arriving in detention without having had access to a lawyer and whose screening interviews are incomplete, presumably as a time-saving measure. For example, the omission of *'Can you tell me if there are any particular reasons why you should not be detained while your claim is being considered?'* is telling.

As with any system driven by a sense of frantic urgency, this supersedes accuracy with demonstrable results; many of the removals are successfully challenged by Legal Aid lawyers, doing their job, day in, day out, challenging unlawful practice, following the rule of law. These legal successes have provoked a series of tweets from the Home Office including, *'removals continue to be frustrated by activist lawyers'; 'do-gooders';*

'lefty lawyers', tweets that were repeated during the Conservative Party Conference. Such comments may well have incited the stochastic far right terrorist attack at a law firm last month.

Judicial scrutiny of the executive is a necessary part of any true democracy and what we might need to focus on right now is not whether the Home Office is going to detain people on a rusty ferry or a mid-Atlantic volcano, but the gentle inexorable democratic backsliding reminiscent of authoritarian regimes. Let's not go that way.

Let's keep going out and talking to our neighbours who do not share our views. Let us write to our MPs and remind them these are real people, with real histories, real feelings and real families. They are not devious. Or illegal. Or criminal. These are families torn apart through no fault of their own. They seek peace and sanctuary. Maybe tell them of the man we met in detention recently, who had crossed the Channel in a dinghy, and survived the crossing,



just as he had survived the 'slave camps' (as he called them) in Libya. He hung his head, tears welling, carrying all the scars of his life on his arms, he told us his life was over. *'There is nothing left. I cannot go home. I have no home. My mother and*

father are refugees here in the UK. I do not want money. I have always worked hard. I would like to live with them and care for them'. Whenever his mother sends us a text, she always uses a rose emoji. Maybe this family will get to plant one together this autumn.

Help Naomi accompany friends in immigration detention by sending them a Christmas card this year. See over page for more details or visit www.jrsuk.net/news/christmas-card-appeal-2020

Christmas Cards for our friends

We'd like to send Christmas cards to as many refugee friends as possible, to remind them they aren't alone at this time of year, and they are a part of our JRS family.

When we delivered our Christmas cards last year, a friend sent a touching reply: "I read the card, you are not forgotten, in that time, I can't control my tears, thanks for that, am feel alone, after read the greeting, am feel better."

Can you help us send Christmas Cards again this year?

Please remember to

1. Address the card to 'Dear Friend'
2. Include a message of support or encouragement that is not overly religious or that would isolate someone of a particular faith or nationality. Please remember, we support people of all faiths and none.
3. Please don't include your full name or contact details in the card, and send your message of solidarity to:

JRS Christmas Cards 2020
Jesuit Refugee Service
2 Chandler Street
London E1W 2QT



Your message will serve as a reminder that our refugee friends have the JRS family to rely on for support.



Policy Update

As we move into the next phase of the pandemic, we continue to advocate for a just and humane response that builds on the lessons learned from the pandemic so far. Coming together with organisations supporting destitute sanctuary seekers across the UK, we sent a joint letter to the Prime Minister, urging the government not to evict people from asylum accommodation during the pandemic, and to ensure that Local Authorities are funded and obliged to accommodate people who need it, irrespective of immigration status; this comes as evictions have recommenced, having been paused in the spring. Communities are coming together both to offer practical assistance and hospitality to those evicted, and to forge an alternative vision and road ahead.

Additionally, in our recent briefing on requirements for people to report to the Home Office we call for a re-examination of its purpose and scope.

Reporting to the Home Office, similarly, has just recommenced after a pause. We have continued to encourage MPs to support a time limit and judicial oversight on detention, which would limit this practice. Though, sadly, a recent amendment to the Immigration and Social Security (EU Withdrawal) Bill that would have done this did not pass. It gained a lot of support over the months it has been going through parliament, with strong, new voices in support, shining a light on this practice. We have laid important groundwork for future engagement.

Dr Sophie Cartwright, Policy Officer

Find out more by visiting www.jrsuk.net/advocate

Welcoming New Refugee Friends during a Pandemic



Michael, Senior Legal Officer, shares how the Legal Project are registering new refugee friends with JRS UK, so that they can receive the support they need during the current health crisis.

For our refugee friends, the first direct contact with JRS used to be the welcome at the door of the day centre. After a cup of tea, we would sit with them in the Legal Project office and spend time checking that they fit the criteria for support from JRS, explaining what support we could give and that this was what they wanted. We had the chance to look at legal papers and see if there were emergency issues or steps that needed to be taken quickly. We could sign authority to get more information and they could meet the rest of the team and other refugee friends, seeing first hand what we do and enjoy a warm meal.

After lockdown we could no longer meet people face to face. We had a waiting list and more people and organisations contacting us needing support. By June the emergency response was in place and we were able to start registering new friends for support. We worked out the practicalities- getting information, using interpreters, obtaining documents via WhatsApp or email; but the personal contact was harder. Some people were already in emergency accommodation but others were still on the streets months into lockdown.

We were able to organise immediate emergency deliveries to some, so they saw a human face from JRS, with most of the destitution and emergency response teams on the phone quickly making contact.

When people are isolated and desperate, the need for human contact, sound advice and information is vital. It is heartening that we have been able to reopen the lifeline that JRS offers.

Our Legal Project cases have progressed slowly. Home Office decision making has slowed right down and for us, without face to face contact, preparing cases has been much slower. Our refugee friends have been massively patient and supportive through this time.

But this week, one of our refugee friends, who was interviewed by the Home Office shortly before lockdown, received his refugee status papers.

Help more refugee friends access appropriate legal advice by making a donation using the enclosed form and return envelope provided or call 020 7488 7321.

Buy a *JRS Refugee Gift* this Christmas



From November 3 you can purchase a *JRS Refugee Gift* and make a difference to the life of a refugee friend this Christmas.



As Christmas approaches and our thoughts fill with how to show charity and compassion during the season of giving, JRS UK brings you the opportunity to gift loved ones and destitute refugees at the same time.

To buy a *Refugee Gift*

1. Visit our website www.jrsuk.net/refugeegifts
2. Read the gift options and select a card
3. Provide your email or postal address and we will send the card to you
4. Address and post to your loved one in time for Christmas
5. Make a difference to the life of a refugee friend



The Jesuit Refugee Service works in more than 50 countries around the world.

JRS UK is made up of staff and many volunteers who work to accompany, serve and advocate for destitute refugees in the UK, of all faiths and none.

If you can, please consider donating to JRS UK. With your support JRS UK can continue to accompany destitute and detained refugees in a spirit of hospitality, welcome and love.

Donate today

Call 020 7488 7321

Email uk@jrs.net
Visit www.jrsuk.net/donate

Mail your cheque/postal order made payable to Jesuit Refugee Service to the address on the right.



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