



Together

NEWS FROM JRS UK SPRING 2022

accompany • serve • advocate

“I tell people ... the truth from my experience. That you need to trust people. I’m proof that if you believe that people will help you that you can win.”

— JC, refugee friend of JRS UK —

Celebrating good news

It is always a joy to celebrate alongside refugee friends. Since October 2021, 15 refugee friends have received leave to remain. One of our caseworkers, Jasmine, chatted with Rahman about what he's looking forward to most.



Jasmine offering casework support to Rahman from the JRS UK centre in Wapping.

Rahman arrived in the UK in 2013 and for over eight years did not have any kind of status - meaning he was unable to work, rent or claim any kind of benefits. Thankfully, charities like JRS UK, the Red Cross, the Refugee Council and Helen Bamber Foundation were there to help him throughout this difficult period.

Rahman is particularly grateful for the wide range of support provided by JRS over the years. During that time, he describes how the JRS team helped with everything from immigration advice, food and mobile top ups as well as support with applying for a freedom pass. During the height of the pandemic, he fondly remembers how JRS staff and volunteers made regular contact with him, "I have no family here but at least once a month JRS called me".

Rahman is now planning to go to university where he would like to pursue a course in accounting/finance and then look for employment. We wish him all the best!

Rahman is a pseudonym chosen by our refugee friend.

Praying with refugees this Lent



Journey with refugees this Lent

The JRS Way of the Cross is a resource inviting you to follow Jesus on his journey to the cross through to the resurrection. Through fifteen Stations, you'll begin with a piece of scripture, then reflecting with refugees around the world today, culminating in a prayer.

The beautiful images depicting the Stations are banana leaf artwork made in Kenya by refugees supported by JRS Eastern Africa. We are incredibly grateful to the refugees who created these pieces of art, which inspired this Way of the Cross resource.

We hope these meditations will aid your prayer during Lent and Holy Week: be it as a resource for personal prayer, as a Parish or school, or as an individual.

Ways to pray the JRS Stations of the Cross

1. **Download** the PDF or PowerPoint slides to aid your personal prayer, or to host your own Stations
2. **Listen** to the Way of the Cross resource, where the reflections have been voiced by two refugee friends supported by JRS UK, Omolola and Gabriel
3. **Join** the JRS UK Way of the Cross Online Service on Tuesday 12th April at 7pm

Visit www.jrsuk.net/praying-with-refugees/ for where to find the resource, and how to register for the event.

Message from the Editor



It's Ash Wednesday as I sit and write this message and we send this latest edition of Together off to print.

Pope Francis has invited us as a global Christian community to hold people affected by the conflict in Ukraine in prayer today, and indeed throughout Lent. People who have fled for safety, people who have been conscripted to fight, people working for peaceful resolutions, and people perpetrating the violence.

We stand in solidarity with those who are forced to make the hard, and immediate, choice – whether to flee or whether to stay; unsure if you will be welcomed and offered sanctuary, or face hostility and uncertainty.

The scale of the movement of refugees fleeing war in Ukraine in the past few weeks – alongside forgotten conflicts of Yemen, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Gaza to name a few – has shown the woeful inadequacy of the current government's approach to refugee protection in the UK. As the Nationality and Borders Bill continues to weave its way through parliament, we've been advocating for a more humane approach to people needing international protection; fighting to ensure we don't create a two-tiered asylum process. Sophie shares a brief update on our work opposing the Bill, and how your continued support is invaluable.

Life at JRS UK is gradually opening back up. The impact of COVID-19 and public health precautions will remain for some time to come yet, but we're gradually re-starting refugee-led activities and re-building community.

One of the first refugee-led activities to restart was Signing Blankets – I hope you'll get a sense of the joy erupting in the sessions from the piece on page 5.

There's so much more to read inside: Rhiannon gives an update from the day-to-day of the Hurtado Centre, and shares a delicious recipe for saffron chicken; you'll meet Will, Mark and JC, as they share their different experiences of immigration detention; and we remember and celebrate Sr Angela – who some of you may have known.

I hope this edition of Together brings the joy and light of Spring, and a reminder that even in those most tragic of situations, hope can be found.

We're forever grateful to our supporters for your generosity and prayers, who make all of our work possible. Thank you.

Be assured of our prayers this Lenten season.
All the best,

Megan Knowles, Communications and Development Manager

p.s. I hope you'll be able to join our online Stations of the Cross service on 12th April: more details on page 2.

Thanks for supporting JRS in 2021!

9,280

hardship grants



123



supported by befriending projects



83

friends vaccinated

39



full legal representations

585



refugees supported



2,495

food parcels

The Nationality and Borders Bill

As the Nationality and Borders Bill continues its passage through parliament, our Policy Officer Sophie gives us an update on the Bill, her reflections of the past few months, and why your support is more important than ever.

The Nationality and Borders Bill has nearly completed its passage through parliament. Having received scrutiny in the House of Lords, it will shortly return to the House of Commons. I have written here before about how troubling this Bill is. It sits at the heart of a vision for asylum and immigration that will make protection in the UK simply inaccessible to most refugees, and against the background of an already hostile environment, it goes to great lengths to manufacture even greater cruelty.

JRS Advocacy work

JRS has long advocated for a just and humane asylum system in the face of systemic injustice and cruelty. This is vital to ensuring that refugees receive welcome and protection, and it can make a real difference, but it can be deeply frustrating when injustice appears to be winning. The last year has been a particularly difficult one for advocacy. Against the backdrop of the recently opened Napier barracks, the government released the New Plan for Immigration, and then the Nationality and Borders Bill. The government has actively evaded scrutiny in pursuing this agenda; Napier barracks was extended as asylum accommodation without consulting anyone; phones were illegally seized from asylum seekers at the border. This

approach is mirrored in the Bill itself, where many proposals, particularly those penalising refugees for being undocumented, contravene the Refugee Convention; even more seek to enact procedures that would mean life-altering decisions were made with virtually no safeguards.

Oppose the Bill with us

As this has occurred, we at JRS and many others have come together to oppose the Bill, to try to change the Bill, and to offer an alternative, person-centred vision. We have challenged the Government's actions that sought to place themselves above challenge. At moments, as the growth of injustice seemed intractable I have wanted to despair. It may feel tempting to do so now. But there are reasons for hope, and there is much to fight for.

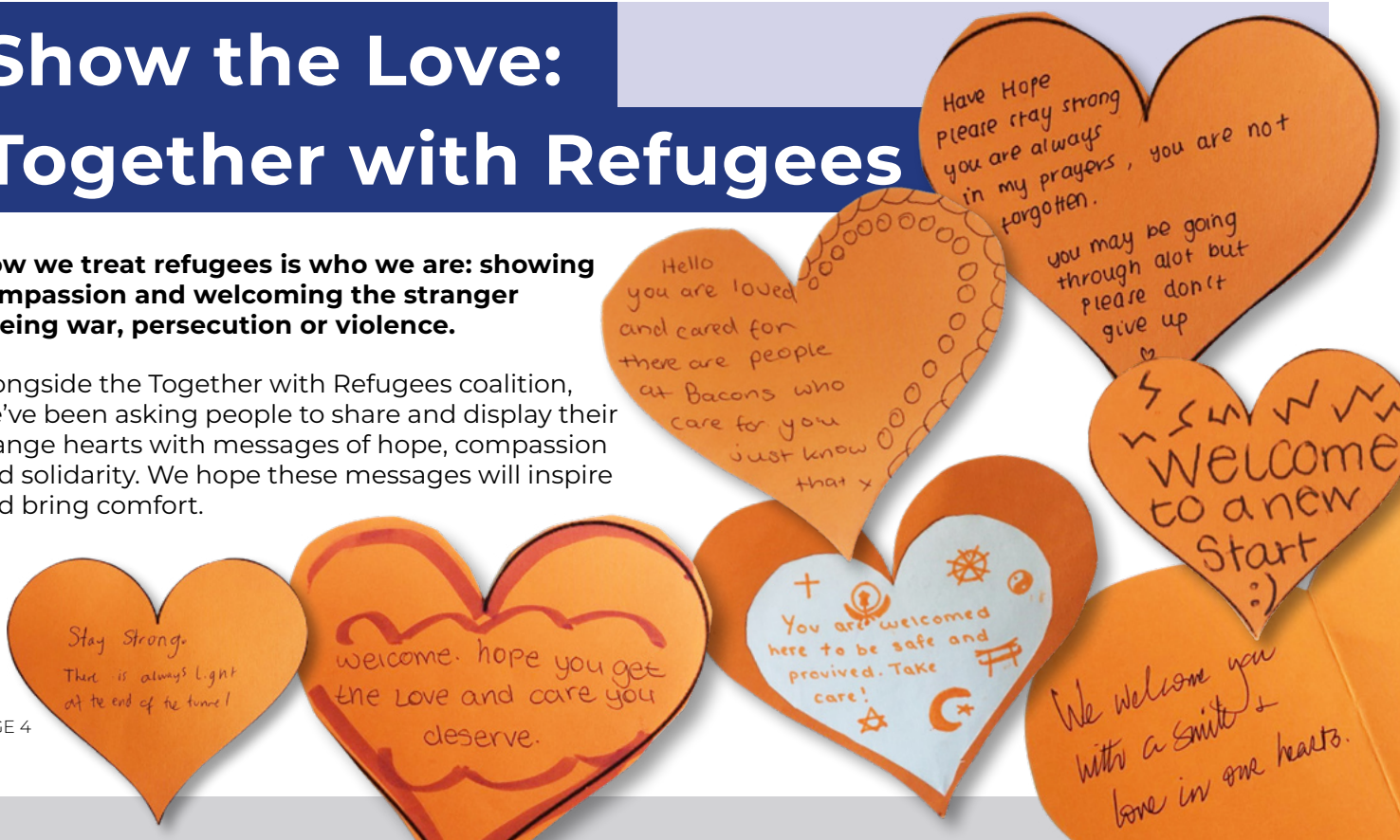
As the Bill returns to the Commons, significant changes have been made, making the Bill less bad, and the Commons has a chance to accept or reject them. Furthermore, it has yet to make the Bill law. We will keep fighting, in solidarity with our refugee friends, and we ask you to join us.

Keep up the pressure on your MP. You can find updated resources & template letters on the JRS website: www.jrsuk.net/contact-your-mp

Show the Love: Together with Refugees

How we treat refugees is who we are: showing compassion and welcoming the stranger fleeing war, persecution or violence.

Alongside the Together with Refugees coalition, we've been asking people to share and display their orange hearts with messages of hope, compassion and solidarity. We hope these messages will inspire and bring comfort.



Singing Blankets



In November 2021, 12 friends joined multi-media artists Amanda Camenisch and Therese Westin in the Singing Blankets project. Amanda and Therese have combined their respective healing, artistic and musical skills and experiences working with refugees, into a powerful series of workshops that serve to heal and cultivate creativity and teamwork.

Over 4 weeks refugee friends practiced yoga and meditation; sang and played instruments and most excitingly, learned to design and sew their own individual "Singing Blanket"; a precious piece of textile art that reflected their life experiences.



"The project was especially joyous thanks to it being one of the first in-person, communal activities refugee friends had experienced in two years!"

Dallya Alhori, Activities Coordinator



The project culminated in a moving private musical and dance performance. There are plans to perform Singing Blankets for family, friends and the wider JRS community as soon as it is safe to so.

"It was amazing ... we loved the singing and the sewing!"

Refugee friends Sisika and Gabriel



Phil Juma's Chicken in Saffron Sauce



Phil, who specialises in Iraqi cuisine, currently offers his delicious food in Borough Market at KUBBA, which was shortlisted in the Best Street Food category of the BBC Food & Farming Awards 2021.

Thanks to Phil for feeding our refugee friends and for this sumptuous Iraqi recipe.

Chicken with a rich saffron sauce

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 4 Boneless chicken thighs
- 1 kg Desiree potato
- 1 pint of good quality chicken stock
- 2 onion
- 3 gloves of garlic
- 1 cinnamon stick
- Olive oil
- 1 tbs ground fennel
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 2 generous pinches of saffron
- Generous squeeze of honey (optional)
- Handful of golden sultanas
- 1 litre Sunflower oil (for deep frying)
- Red amarynth micro herb
- Salt and pepper



Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C
2. Begin by peeling the potatoes and rinsing them under cold water. Cube the potato and cook in salted boiling water until al dente. Drain and place into cold water once cooked (to stop the cooking process).
3. For the saffron sauce, finely dice $\frac{1}{2}$ an onion. Add a glug of olive oil to a saucepan and sweat the onions and the cinnamon stick. After 5 minutes, grate two cloves of garlic and add to the pan, increasing the heat slightly. Fry for 2 minutes, add the spices and saffron, and fry for another 2 minutes. Then add 1 pint of chicken stock.

NOTE: When adding the saffron, make sure you bruise the saffron with a splash of water in a pestle and mortar. This allows the saffron to 'bleed' giving a more intense flavour.

4. Turn the heat low and just let those ingredients infuse for the next 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally. You should see the saffron strands begin to turn the sauce a rich yellow colour and the smells should be delightful.
5. Meanwhile, season the chicken with salt on both the skin side and flesh side. Add a little oil to a frying pan and on a medium heat, begin searing the chicken, skin side down. You are looking for a crisp skin and golden colour which should take no more than 6-8 minutes. Do not flip the chicken, only fry the skin side. Once golden, transfer to a baking tray, flesh side down. Set aside.
6. In a separate pot, pour in 1 litre of sunflower oil and place on a medium heat. While that heats, cut the remaining onions in half and then slice as thin as possible. You want to cut in the same direction as the onion layers. Once heated, fry the onions until brown. Swiftly remove on kitchen paper and season with salt. Set aside.
7. At this point, place the chicken in the oven for 12 minutes on 200°C
8. Meanwhile, taste the saffron sauce for seasoning and add a handful of golden sultanas, a squeeze of honey. Taste, and add anything more according to your preference of sweet/sour. Add a squeeze of lemon if you feel it needs it.
9. After 12 minutes, check if the juices run clear in the chicken. If yes, let the chicken rest for 5 minutes.
10. To serve, take the saffron sauce and potatoes and place on the plate. (Be generous with that saffron sauce!) Next, take a chicken breast and place on top of the potato. Place the crispy onions on top. Finally, dress the border of the plate with red amarynth herbs. *Enjoy!*

Share pictures of your saffron chicken with us, and don't forget to tag us: **@JRSUK**

An Update from the JRS Shop

It's been a busy winter at the Hurtado Centre. Rhiannon shares the different support we've been able to offer refugee friends and the impact of fruitful partnerships.



Keeping our refugee friends well-fed

We have had a very busy winter period at the JRS shop, with between 35 and 40 friends visiting each week to collect food and toiletries along with other essential items.

Thanks to generous support from First Love Foundation foodbank and the Felix Project we have been able to provide friends with a wider variety of choice when they visit the shop and different types of fresh produce each week, which has been very popular!



Keeping our refugee friends warm

We are very happy to have partnered with Wrap Up London again this year who provided us with 380 coats for the centre as well as 300 to take to refugee friends we are supporting at Napier Barracks. They also gave us warm jumpers and sleeping bags which were very much appreciated as the weather got colder.

The clothes distribution has proved very successful. A lot of friends not only got lovely coats to keep them warm, but also some extra items, be it a scarf, a colourful jumper, or a handbag to cheer them up. *"One of the friends gave me a hug and said – thank you so much, I feel like I have been on a shopping trip and I have a new wardrobe!"* reported JRS Shop volunteer, Luissa Bossi.

Keeping our refugee friends healthy

We ran two vaccination clinics through our partnerships with Barts Health Trust with a total of 47 friends coming to the centre to get their first doses, second doses and boosters, in order to protect people from the new Omicron variant. A special contribution to one of the clinics was a spread of delicious biryanis prepared for us by Chef Phil Juma. Phil came to us through his mum, Mary Westlake, a volunteer with the Braintree Saint Vincent de Paul Society, a great supporter of JRS UK.



Help us continue to respond

Alongside partnerships with organisations like The Felix Project, we keep a running list of items we are in need of on the JRS website - check out our current needs today: www.jrsuk.net/current-needs

The power of social visiting in detention

William Neal explains why JRS offers social visiting into immigration detention, and introduces us to JRS volunteer Mark and his friend JC.

People who experience Immigration Detention are wrenched from their families, friends and communities; and often taken many miles away to a detention centre hidden away from society. It is an incredibly isolating existence. Through regular social visits, the volunteer JRS detention outreach team attempt to form and maintain a connection between our friends in detention and the outside world, to show there are still people who remember them during this time.

The ongoing pandemic has changed the nature of how we organise and support social visits – it can be disheartening for volunteers when visits are cancelled at short notice, as the detention centre responds to positive COVID cases; but the impact on friends in detention is much greater.

Through social visits a relationship, a friendship, is formed over time. We experience the impact detention can have on wellbeing, and we are also witness to the immense resilience our friends show in such hugely challenging circumstances.

JC, a friend supported by JRS in Harmondsworth detention centre (near Heathrow) and Mark, a JRS social visiting volunteer, share their frank and honest experiences of social visits, the relationship they have formed with each other, and the impact of the ongoing pandemic.

JC

JC has been in Harmondsworth, near Heathrow, since June 2021.



“Having a social visit is important to me because it means I can talk. It is very important to talk to different people. Inside [detention] you talk the same subject all the time – Bail, Home Office, Immigration, Prison. It is a different person but always the same subject.

“I enjoy my time with Mark, I talk about football, I talk about my home country - we can talk about so many different things. The visits help me. It's good for my mental health and it encourages me. Inside [detention], I don't talk with anyone about these things, it is just the same things over and over. With Mark, I am laughing, I am relaxing, I laugh with him. It is important. Not just for me, visits are important for everyone.

“COVID has caused drama. It's drama. You have a problem with being in detention already and then you have the additional problem of COVID. Any time there is COVID, the wing goes into isolation. They stop all contact with everyone and instead everything happens on the wing. It blocks me from going to the gym. It blocks me from going to the library, blocks me from the computer. COVID blocks me from everything.

“Every time Mark tells me he has booked a visit and then it is cancelled at the last minute I feel bad, I feel sad. When it happens, I try and speak with the manager to try and find out what is going on. I'm not happy at all when this happens. People enjoy the visits. It's important to speak to people who come from outside. It's important for the mental health, for the balance. Otherwise, it is a very boring life.

“Now, when visits are not on, I try and keep myself busy all the time. That is better for me. It keeps me busy and then I don't think too much. It can be difficult when you have no news.

“I tell people about the help I get from JRS and other charities. I tell them about all the positive things and help because of everything that you have done for me. I tell them the truth from my experience. That you need to trust the people. I'm proof that if you believe that people will help you that you can win.

“Mark, he is a very, very lovely person. For me he is my friend, I speak to him as my friend.”



Mark



“For me, visiting people in detention takes me beyond my own personal ambitions, comfort zone, desires, grievances and other assorted selfishnesses. The simple journey to Harmondsworth is in itself a sort of pilgrimage, at each step of which the detritus of daily life is stripped away – the important, the not-so-important, and the downright trivial. After the Tube, the bus, the LFTs, and security searches, the tiny, God-given indignities and inconveniences, you find yourself left simply face-to-face with another human being in the raw. Life doesn’t get more real or worthwhile than that.

“Each short, blink-of-an-eye meeting has an impact out of proportion to the minutes spent, the closeness achieved, the humanity exchanged. When the eyes meet, the connection is made, the switch thrown which means you’re really in contact with that other person, it’s as good as it gets. Because there is no physical, material or social infrastructure to the relationship, that limited human contact is self-standing; the essence is all. By the same token, when your friend looks hidden, hooded, frightened or oppressed, you can feel cut to the quick – and that can take time to compute and accept.

“As with so much else, the pandemic has messed our visits up a bit. It could be an outbreak of COVID on one of the wings; it could be the decision to use the visits hall to accommodate those arriving on the beaches of Kent: whatever the reason, visits have been cancelled regularly and, probably - to be fair - for the most part unavoidably. The necessary testing regime, the cancellation of visits at short or, occasionally, no notice: all this is a minor inconvenience to us visitors; although it does break the flow of a relationship developed in already trying circumstances. But to those inside, it must mean so much more.

“COVID has had a big impact on the visits themselves. When visits are on, the atmosphere in the visits hall is so different from before. Instead of a gaggle of partners, children, mates and relations all chatting away – or silently communicating – there’s just you and your friend. Which is actually quite nice and can sometimes make for a more open conversation.

But obviously, in the greater scheme of things, it reflects the isolation of the post-pandemic world and the lives we lead in it. And when worse comes to worst and visits are off, it’s not great. We resort to speaking over the phone but it’s no real replacement for in-person visits - and so I don’t call as often as I should. And this frays whatever closeness has been built up over the months.

“When visits are off, they’re alone in that small, horrid world. And even when visits are on, it’s hard to know how much difference it makes. I could be wrong – but there are very few people that have anyone from their outside lives coming in to see them. Usually, it’s just me and JC. For him, I don’t think the impact has been that immense. I’m still going and, in any case, he isn’t being visited by other friends – it was too far for them to come, as is often the case for people in detention. Additionally JC is wrestling with a serious psychiatric condition that – literally – takes up much of his mind and time; and in his calmer moments, he’s focused keenly on getting out, and getting back to the life he once had.

“One of the highlights for me in visiting JC was strangely when he was evidently having a particularly difficult time in detention. I came into the visits hall one day, not so long ago, and it took a long time for JC to emerge from behind the locked wing door. I could see at once he was in a bad place. Normally, he has the loveliest, most open, alert and intelligent face. This day he was masked with madness, sadness and despair. He was locked in: whispering conspiratorially, looking askance over his shoulder at the guards. He shared with me in a muttered voice the paranoid thoughts going through his mind. He was lost; I was out of my depth, equally lost. But we talked, haltingly – both of us. But we continued talking, albeit awkwardly. About other, small world stuff. And by the end, there was just a flicker of JC emerging from beneath the clouds. A glimmer, no more. That’s all we need.”



Volunteer as a social visitor: the detention estate is expansive across the UK. Our friends at AVID have a great map where you view detention centres across the UK, and can connect you with visitors groups too: www.aviddetention.org.uk/immigration-detention/find-local-visitor-groups-or-detention-centres

"She was the first person I met at JRS"

Sr Angela Murphy was a committed JRS volunteer at the Thursday Day Centre in Wapping from the mid-noughties until her passing in November last year. Her humour, compassion, and warmth touched everyone in the JRS community – refugee friends, fellow volunteers, supporters, and staff – in so many different ways.

We asked members of the JRS community to share some of their memories of Sr Angela. She will be missed, but her legacy of warmth and understanding is well rooted in JRS forever.



Angela's shining presence and luminous smile belied a fierce understanding of the value of fellowship and a depth of pastoral wisdom derived from her many years of religious service here and abroad. At times when the JRS Day Centre was in full swing she could be seen embracing refugee friends who gravitated towards her. Her readiness to be present when friends arrived in a distressed state or her measured understanding of when best to intervene if sometimes a heated discussion might get slightly out of hand often caught my eye when I was at the welcome desk.

Her expansive warmth and tenderness of heart was shaped by her religious faith and her dedication to assisting refugees was born of a deep and compassionate kinship with those on the margins. I was privileged to have known her during my time as a volunteer at JRS and will fondly cherish her memory.

Mike G

Many a Thursday I would 'bang' into Angela at the bakery in Wapping, as she stopped to buy lovely freshly baked bread for her community, who especially loved this bread. These encounters at the bakery with Angela showed me without words, what a most loving, caring, and wonderful member she is to her community and congregation.

Marguerite

Sr Angela was often the first person refugee friends met at JRS, and indeed she was the first person I met too. Alongside Sr Rachel and Sr Margaret, she'd welcome refugee friends and lead their registration interview. The word 'interview' conjures up stress and anxiety for many, especially refugee friends – but Angela had this way about her, immediately putting people at ease. Her warmth and compassion was immediately evident. I felt like I'd been enveloped in a huge hug, just by being in her presence.

Megan

Sister Angela was such a dedicated, giving, faith-filled woman with a huge heart for all ... especially for our JRS refugee friends. May she begin to intercede on their behalf from her new location!!

Sr Rosemary

I'm finding it hard to visualize that corner of the JRS hall where Sr Angela used to sit with her sheets of art paper and coloured pencils, now with only an empty chair and desk. I hope we all eventually find a permanent place for her in the corner of our hearts, making us kinder persons by her presence.

Fr Harry

Sir Angela

She was a lovely women,
Caring person, Really going to
miss her her soul rest in
Lord. Thilini

Boostiri Angin

Boostiri Lori

Sister Angele,

I remembered the first day I
stepped into JRS centre, your warm
welcome made me feel home and
belong to a family group.

Your memories and the way you
make everyone welcome, trying to
help in serving others and many more
can not be forgotten.

May your kind and gentle
soul rest in perfect peace and may
God console your family, JRS and
all that is concerned in Jesus' name.
Rest in peace Sister Angela.

Sis Angele, She was a lovely
woman, caring, nice, en jovial.

I remember at first day I entered
JRS; how she welcome me with
warm heart, not ~~caring~~. May
her gentle soul rest in Lord.

"Tears Anjali, with tears"



London Marathon 2022

Support JRS UK (and become really fit!) by running the London Marathon on Sunday 2nd October, 2022.

This year JRS UK is looking to field 5 runners. If you are up for the challenge of raising £2000 in support of our work with destitute refugees and training for the big event, we look forward to hearing from you! For details please contact us at uk@jrs.net.

Kudos to our intrepid 2021 runners!



After a successful fundraising campaign for the marathon- that wasn't in 2020, Andrea Barain finally gets her moment in the sun



Former JRS UK Community Outreach Officer Nick Hanrahan gives it his all

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 7310

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.



UNITED
KINGDOM

Telephone: 020 7488 7310
Fax: 020 7488 7329
E-mail: uk@jrs.net
web: www.jrsuk.net

f /jesuitrefugeeserviceuk
t @JRSUK
i @jrsuk_

Jesuit Refugee Service UK
Hurtado Jesuit Centre
2 Chandler Street
London
EIW 2QT