

Baptising (EVEN MORE) Refugees In North West Waters



Steve Hough is the minister at Stockport Baptist Church, located near the Britannia Hotel in Stockport, where large numbers of refugees have been staying before being moved out to different areas around the region. Here, Steve shares the story of all that God is doing in the life of the church through the people arriving in the hotel...

As you may be aware, we have been supporting large numbers of asylum seekers who are being sent to the Hotel Britannia in Stockport, before being shipped out to various other points around the North West. This has resulted in around 20 to 30, mainly Iranians, regularly attending our Sunday services which is having a huge impact on the church. Nearly all of them are either already Christians or want to become Christians, so we have been running a midweek Bible study and separate bible discussion groups on Sunday mornings. We have baptised 19 refugees since Christmas, 9 of these in a service just a couple of weeks ago. Many of them have been moved to other parts of Manchester but travel to Stockport every week because they want to come to church. We even have a couple of guys who have been sent to London who get the bus up from London to see us!

We have had our first asylum seeker gain approval to stay recently and he wanted to move to Stockport so we have been able to find a flat for him and support him with his application for housing benefit and to open a bank account and find work. Mona, one of our woman asylum seekers who was housed in Salford was attacked on her way home from our mid week prayer meeting. She was too scared to go out alone in Salford has now moved in with one of our lady deacons who has a spare room and has graciously made it available to Mona.

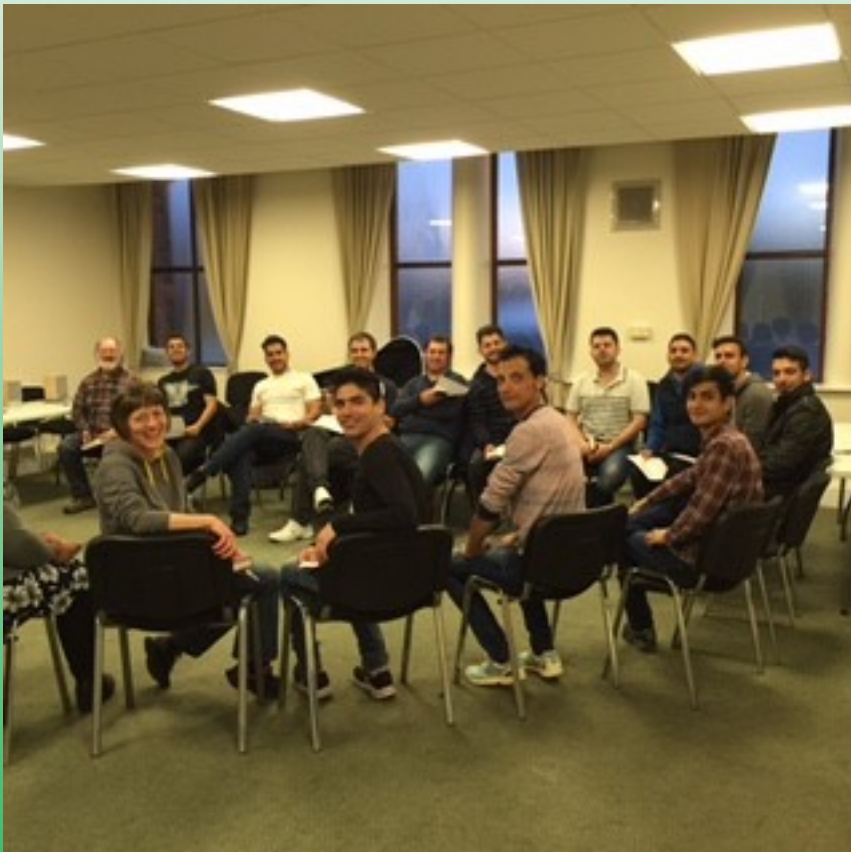
I cannot emphasise what a blessing these people have been to the church. They are so fired up about Jesus and so committed to studying the word and prayer and generally being part of church life. But, it has put quite a lot of strain on the leadership as we try and accommodate them in the life of the church. Our services now are partly translated into farsi and we have started using some farsi worship songs too. What would really help us would be a Farsi-speaking administrator / evangelist to help take some of the workload from me and Ken Evans, (minister-in-training).



For your thoughts and prayers:

- How will you and your church respond to those of different ethnicity in your community?
- How could your church share the good news of the Kingdom of God with asylum seekers? What does 'loving your neighbour' look like in this?

If you see any of these people around Stockport, or the North West, or at Regional events, please embrace them as brothers and sisters in Christ, recently baptized at Stockport Baptist Church. Welcome them with the love of Jesus!



Recent baptismal candidates

It was a real privilege to be at Stockport Baptist Church for the baptisms of M Ali, Ebrahim, Mona, Majid, Shahin, Maysam, Rasool, Toni and Mohammad (pictured above on the day of their baptisms)

Each person shared their testimony in their first language, but the testimonies appeared on the screen in English; stories of people who have left their homes and families because of their faith in Jesus and the persecution of the church where they had been living.

The service was very moving, with the congregation uniting to worship God in both English and Farsi, and it was wonderful to see the deep and genuine love the people of Stockport have for their newest members.

Jonathan Boyers, NWBA Team