

# REFUGEE WEEK

## Carla's story



My relationship with a Syrian family began in 2019 when I was asked by my minister if I could take a mother and daughter to a hospital appointment during Ramadan. I am so glad that I was available! This arrangement quickly became a monthly routine, driving the family to Ninewells Hospital from Arbroath for appointments, followed by a trip to the Arabic supermarket on the way home, and lunch at their house, with an incredible variety of delicious Middle Eastern dishes! My mum and I now regularly visit the family and are always greeted with tea, cake and lots of food to take home.

Our friendship is incredibly valuable and brings us a lot of joy. We are delighted to have New Scots as part of our local community and I wouldn't miss it for the world!

### REFLECTION:

How are you making yourself available for unexpected connections?

### ACTION:

Find out what opportunities to connect with New Scots are available in your local area.

### PRAYER:

Thank you God, for the chance to nurture and grow friendships. Grant us more opportunities to make unexpected connections.

You are invited to use the comments section on Facebook to post short prayers in response to the story.

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## Aaron's story



While mother picks up food, a child enjoys the café in the church

In 2015, as we were walking to the railway station to help those arriving from Syria, my friend and interpreter (also a refugee) advised, "The first thing we ask is if they've eaten anything."

Everyone's got to eat.

In 2022, after nearly two weeks of providing emergency shelter for Ukrainian refugees, we started a foodbank, providing essentials such as flour, oil, milk, fruits and vegetables.

We have also arranged with a local African restaurant to provide a hot meal five times a week for African students from Ukraine in a nearby dormitory with no cooking facilities.

A Ukrainian family let us know they were grateful for the first home-cooked meal in a month.

Most people share.

### REFLECTION:

Gathering around the table is integral to our faith – how is this reflected in the welcome we offer to refugees?

### ACTION:

Host a meal with New Scots in your community.

### PRAYER:

Our Father, Give them this day their daily bread.

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## Philomena's story

Life as an asylum seeker is never an easy one. My experience of living in an asylum hotel was a horrible one – being fed leftovers, and the same food every day: pizza, chips, lentil soup. We had no money to get ourselves something different outside the hotel, causing me to develop a stomach ulcer.

I never expected that my black skin colour would be seen as offensive, disgusting and annoying. But when I discovered my local church, St Aloysius RC Church in Glasgow, some things changed. I was welcomed with open arms and made to feel at home, to have a sense of belonging irrespective of the colour of my skin. They gave me reasons to be happy, hopeful and strong, alongside the financial and emotional support I needed to pull through, keeping my faith alive.

I am now studying to become a nurse/midwife and I truly appreciate my local church for its support, and for helping me believe my future will be greater.

### REFLECTION:

In what way does your church support and empower refugees and asylum seekers?

### ACTION:

Explore existing refugee programmes in your area and get involved.

### PRAYER:

God of all people, we pray for all who suffer indignity at the hands of others. Help us remember we are all journeying towards You, as one human family.

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## Precious' story



Precious was lured to Italy from Nigeria by a woman who promised her a good job. On arrival she learned that the “job” required her to work the streets, and any resistance was dealt with at knifepoint. Precious escaped her traffickers but was destitute. Women like her find themselves without documents, without a job and forced to beg for food.

Today, thanks to Pellegrino della Terra, a charity in Palermo supporting trafficked women and their children, Precious has a permanent job, a home, and can cover her costs. She talks openly about how PdT has changed her life, helping her to access healthcare, learn Italian, learn to use a computer and find a placement leading to full-time employment. Transformation from despair to hope is PdT's business.

### **REFLECTION:**

Would you be able to recognise the signs of human trafficking?

### **ACTION:**

Find out more about human trafficking and its prevalence in Scotland.

### **PRAYER:**

Loving God, for those who are on a journey not of their choosing, go behind and before, with Your peace and protection.

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# REFUGEE WEEK

## Rania's story



Rania and her parents didn't know anyone when they arrived in Glasgow from Kurdistan, but before they left, someone told them that if they ever ended up in Glasgow, they should find St Rollox Church and the people there would help them. So that's what they did.

I still remember the day we first met. Rania was really keen to show me something she had brought from home. Carefully taking a small package from her bag and unwrapping it, she showed me a Bible in her own language. Faced with leaving so much of her life and possessions behind, this young woman chose to make room in her bag for her Bible, which she valued so highly.

### REFLECTION:

If you had to leave your home, what would you take with you?

### ACTION:

Look for ways to include prayers with and for refugees and asylum seekers in your daily and weekly worship.

### PRAYER:

Welcoming God, we pray for those who have to leave all they've known, that they would find a place where they can feel at home again.

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