



# Churches Together in the Merseyside Region

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## SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS S.A.S

Dear Friends,

### Report – June 2016

It's human nature that we tend to hang a label on strangers, or people we know little about, or we do not know their name. Even the word "stranger" is suggestive of someone we should watch, be cautious about. We say he or she is something abstract – asylum seeker, migrant, Methodist, Quaker, Catholic, Everton supporter, Brexit, Remain..... etc. It seems to give us more control and understanding if we can place people in compartments, or layer them with different labels.

Of course that is fine until we start getting to know more about this "stranger". The more details we learn the more layers and labels are torn away and we see the PERSON.

So we realise that people who seek asylum and refuge are PEOPLE, like us, with a name, and whose circumstances have become untenable in their own country and are now before us asking for help. These are the people SAS and ALM are trying to help. They have a name, a history, a culture, an identity but suddenly all that has been taken from them. We try to give them support and some hope for the future.

I came across this piece of writing recently which seems rather apt:

### **REFUGEE**

**So I have a new name – REFUGEE**

**Strange what that name should take away from me...**

**My past, my personality, and hope**

**Strange refuge this.**

**So many seem to share this name - REFUGEE**

**Yet we share so many differences**

**I find no comfort in my new name**

**I long to share my past, restore my pride, to show, I too, in time**

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#### Presidents

The Most Rev'd Malcolm McMahon, The Archbishop of Liverpool

The Right Rev'd Paul Bayes, The Bishop of Liverpool

The Rev'd Dr Sheryl M Anderson, Chair of the Liverpool Methodist District

The Rev'd Jacky Embrey, Moderator of the Mersey Synod of the United Reformed Church

The Rev'd Phil Jump, Regional Minister, North West Baptist Association

Major Drew McCombe, North-Western Divisional Commander, Salvation Army

*(Churches Together in the Merseyside Region is a registered charity, No.519061)*

**Will offer more than I have borrowed.**

**For now the comfort that I seek**

**Resides in the old yet new name**

**I would choose - FRIEND**

**by Ruvimbo Bungwe , Age 14**

### **Financial Statements**

Attached is a summary statement of financial activities for the 5 months period to May 2016 with comparative figures for the full year to December 2015, grouped under relevant headings of income and expenditure. This shows a welcome net surplus for January to May of £17,042. We are now in a position to increase the basic monthly cap on grants to ALM from £1,800 to £1,900. This cap will be reviewed over the coming months.

In the last 6 months we have received the first of three annual tranches of £10k from the John Moores Foundation; £1,000 from the Liverpool Free Church Council and £2,647 from 28 individual donors and other Faith groups.

In May 2016 the Archdiocese of Liverpool passed over the 2015 Lenten Alms totalling £18,286. This substantial amount is crucial to the continuation of the destitution project over the next year.

SAS contributed to the ALM Destitution Project over £12k in the first 5 months of 2016. This covered support grants for individuals, food, toiletries and £4.7k for accommodation.

We are receiving more referrals for support grants from other agencies, e.g. SAS made grants totalling £1,250 via the Merseyside Probation Service.

### **Properties**

Until recently we leased 4 properties for emergency accommodation purposes – one for 7 women, and three properties for 14 men. One property proved difficult for safeguarding reasons so we had to vacate that recently. We are currently vetting two other potential properties. Location is a key issue for emergency accommodation as support has to be local and accessible on foot or by bicycle. Money provided for bus passes is invariably but not surprisingly used for food instead!

### **SAS Support Grants to ALM**

ALM continues to deliver individual emergency grants to the destitute as well as daily breakfast [usually porridge], a hot lunch, toiletries, donated clothes and furniture where possible.

In addition to the people we house, there are routinely between 50 and 60 destitute people receiving food and toiletries each Friday. Emergency rations are also provided throughout the week as necessary.

From the equivalent of a family size kitchen at St Anne's Centre, hot lunches are now routinely being provided for up to 250 people. One day in January 2016 we had 306 visitors for lunch, the highest recorded daily total at ALM.

Other miscellaneous emergency grants paid out include the usual basic items:

- train/bus fares for asylum registration, court appearances etc

- weekly bus passes
- council tax, utility meter top-ups

In addition to support provided to ALM for destitution, SAS are looking at how best to support and target personal wellbeing e.g. via the existing Women's group and other well being and outreach activities taking place at ALM. I hope to report on progress in the next newsletter.

### **Statistics extracts**

The monthly footfall figures for visits to ALM ominously continue to break records. November 2015 had 3,643 visits which is the highest ever recorded monthly total. This is a 36% increase on November 2014.

Every month since November 2015 has shown month on month visitor increases:

- December 2015 – 24%
- January 2016 – 28%
- February 2016 – 47%
- March 2016 – 5%
- April 2016 – 16%

The cumulative Annual Caseload has increased steadily in 10 of the last 12 months. In May 2016 this went above 1,000 cases for the first time. Of the 1,000 cases, some 287 related to destitution.

ALM/SAS are currently able to accommodate less than 10% of those destitute

### **Immigration Act 2016**

The Act received its Royal assent in May. Among other things this has greatly restricted the grounds for appeal to people refused asylum. Also the rules for stopping benefit and eviction from properties will be applied much more strictly, even in cases where there are children amongst the families being refused. This will simply result in more people becoming destitute, including those with children, and sooner than they would have become under the previous rules.

Obviously SAS will do what we can as ever to support all those who continue to present themselves at the door of ALM, but more funds will need to be found to match the growing demands.

### **Publicity**

-SAS will continue to distribute this bi-annual newsletter. SAS and ALM will also deliver occasional joint presentations regarding asylum and refuge and the support being provided via ALM. Over recent months there has been an increase in requests to ALM to see their ALM Roadshow.

-CTMR published recently an excellent booklet "Welcome The Stranger". Written by the Justice and Peace Commission, this is an excellent guide which provides "clear guidance and support to help church communities, and others, offer practical help as they seek to welcome the stranger..."

The innovative guide 'Welcoming the Stranger' is intended for churches and other groups to help them find a way to respond positively to the refugee crisis.

Churches and others can get printed copies of the document from Steve Atherton at LACE (0151 522 1080 [s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk](mailto:s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk)) or download from [www.liverpoolasyluminfo.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolasyluminfo.org.uk)

-“teaching English to asylum seekers and refugees” is specifically identified in “Welcome the Stranger” as something church groups and communities should consider in helping asylum seekers and refugees. This is especially necessary for those recently arrived who need a form of “survival English”. ALM/CTMR are currently working on a draft of a possible addendum to “Welcome the Stranger” for ESOL provision [English for Speakers of Other languages].

### **Miscellaneous**

-SAS is now funding a “fruit” project – the aim is for one piece of fruit to be available at lunchtime per person per day. We began by funding fruit on one day per week, but have now increased that to two days per week. St Agnes RC Primary School in Huyton heard of our project and each child was asked to bring in one banana the following day. Over 200 bananas were then delivered to ALM by FR Anton. Well done and thank you.

-SHARE is a new community support group in Huyton, based in the Old School House, St Johns Road.

“Support in Huyton for Asylum seekers and REfugees”- is a Welcome Drop in Centre. This is a perfect example of communities “Welcoming the Stranger” as more people are dispersed to areas where there is no current support available to people seeking asylum and refuge. It is hoped that SHARE can grow and benefit from advice and support from ALM. Maybe this is a blueprint for the future, ALM assisting small satellite groups around the area!

### **Support for SAS/ALM**

-There are numerous ways individuals or groups can support the work of SAS and ALM e.g. donations, fundraising activities, new and old clothes, donating specific food items, etc. You can obtain a full list of food items wanted and fundraising ideas for SAS from the CTMR office [[office@ctmr.org.uk](mailto:office@ctmr.org.uk) or tel: 0151 709 0125] or directly from myself. Additionally local supporters in the Merseyside region may be able to offer a few hours weekly teaching [English, Maths, art, music, singing etc] or could join a group of volunteers for a day out on the ferries, at the museums/ art galleries etc. Such outings make such a difference to the wellbeing of people seeking asylum seekers and refuge.

We would welcome other ideas or suggestions for raising funds and supporting the work of SAS and ALM.

Thank you once again for the financial support to SAS from individuals, groups, churches, charitable trusts and organisations over the reported period. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Best regards

Neil Cunningham  
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Tel: 0151 475 0443 email: [neilscunningham@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:neilscunningham@yahoo.co.uk)

June 2016

**PS If you prefer not to receive SAS newsletters in future please let me know. Neil**

**Support for Asylum Seekers**  
 CTMR – Churches Together in the Merseyside Region  
 Registered Charity Number 519061

**Statement of Financial Activities**  
**for the 5 months period to 31 May 2016**

	<b>Total to May 2016</b>	<b>Total 2015</b>
<b>Incoming Resources</b>		
Grants from Organisations	28,288	29,543
Individual Donations	2,192	10,083
	<b>30,480</b>	<b>39,626</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>		
Accommodation	4,707	14,687
Destitution Support	7,481	11,034
ALM Management		
Grant	0	3,177
Probation Grants for Asylum seekers	1,250	500
	<b>13,438</b>	<b>29,398</b>
<b>Net Incoming (Outgoing) Resources</b>	<b>17,042</b>	<b>10,228</b>
<b>Fund Balances</b>		
At 1 January 2016	<b>36,843</b>	<b>26,615</b>
At 31 May 2016	<b>53,885</b>	<b>36,843</b>
<b>Represented By :</b>		
Bank Bal @ 31 May 2016	<b>53,885</b>	<b>36,843</b>