

Welcoming and Walking with Refugees

Quarterly

# NEWSLETTER

September 2024

Dear Friends,

In this newsletter, we're excited to share information and photos from our field visit to Belgium at the end of September. During this trip, we had the opportunity to meet some of our program partners working on projects at Saint-Esprit in Mons and Holy Trinity in Brussels. It was an inspiring experience to witness firsthand the incredible work these partners are doing with dedication to assist a large number of refugees in need.

We also had the honor of meeting Bishop Antonio Ablon and his pastoral team at Quinoa in Brussels, who are interested in partnering with us in the coming months.

In this edition, we'll also provide updates on three projects that are currently ongoing in Budapest, Frankfurt, and Freiburg.

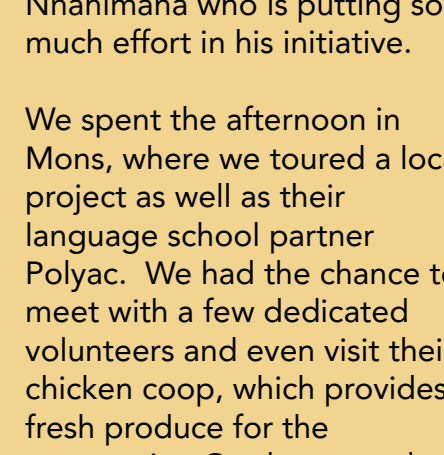


'Refugees' by painter Vasu Tolia

## The Convocation Refugee Grant Program

### FIELD VISIT TO BELGIUM September 2024

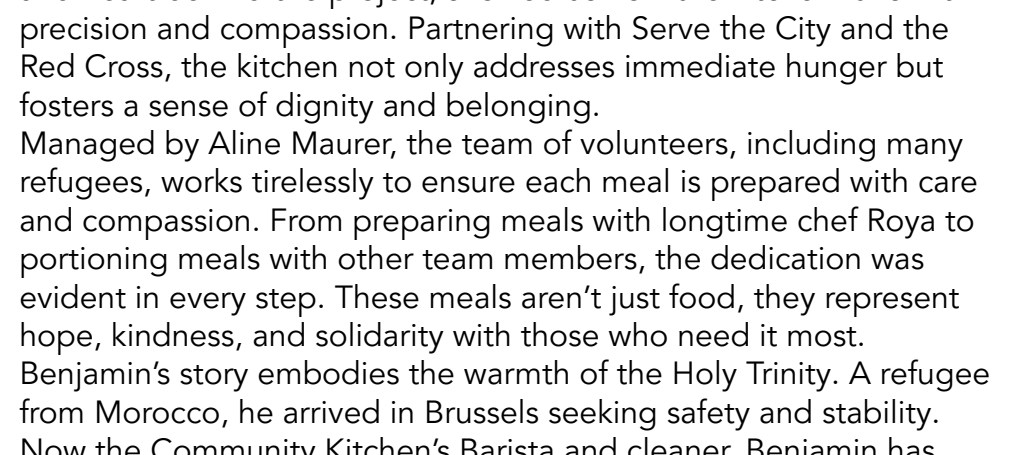
Our Belgium field visit began at All Saints' Church Waterloo where we were graciously hosted for lunch and guided by Mike Breton and Fr. Jo Jan, who guided us on our visit to Mons later that afternoon.



Polyac language school

All Saints' Church in Waterloo is a valuable supporter of Saint-Esprit in Mons. Thanks to the ongoing administrative support offered to the project coordinator, Balthazar Nnahimana who is putting so much effort in his initiative.

We spent the afternoon in Mons, where we toured a local project as well as their language school partner Polyac. We had the chance to meet with a few dedicated volunteers and even visit their chicken coop, which provides fresh produce for the community. On the second day, we joined Holy Trinity's Community Kitchen in Brussels, witnessing the heartwarming work they do daily.

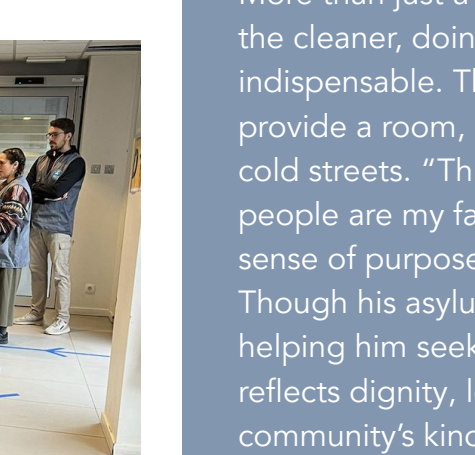


Welcome lunch at All Saints, Waterloo

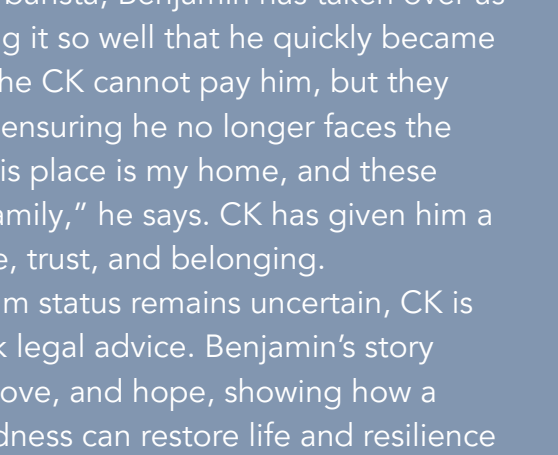
### HOLY TRINITY'S COMMUNITY KITCHEN Nourishing the Body and Soul in Brussels

The *Community Kitchen* at Holy Trinity Brussels is more than just a place to serve food, it's a lifeline for hundreds of vulnerable people. During our visit, we witnessed the impressive daily operation that provides over 1,000 meals per day to the Humanitarian Hub and the Belliard Refugee Centre. Gayle Russell, the director and the power and heart behind the project, showed us how the kitchen runs with precision and compassion. Partnering with Serve the City and the Red Cross, the kitchen not only addresses immediate hunger but fosters a sense of dignity and belonging.

Managed by Aline Maurer, the team of volunteers, including many refugees, works tirelessly to ensure each meal is prepared with care and compassion. From preparing meals with longtime chef Roya to portioning meals with other team members, the dedication was evident in every step. These meals aren't just food, they represent hope, kindness, and solidarity with those who need it most. Benjamin's story embodies the warmth of the Holy Trinity. A refugee from Morocco, he arrived in Brussels seeking safety and stability. Now the Community Kitchen's Barista and cleaner, Benjamin has found more than just a job, he's found a home. Known for his strong, uplifting coffee, Benjamin offers a bit of cheer to those who need a pick-me-up. His role has provided him with stability, shelter, and the support of a community that values him as family.



Community Kitchen project. Left: Volunteers preparing meals. Right: Meals ready for distributions



*"This place is my home, and these people are my family,"*

The project's impact extends beyond its meals. With legal assistance from partners like L'Olivier and support from Holy Trinity's Assistant Chaplain, the Community Kitchen is empowering refugees to rebuild their lives. Volunteers, both from the church and the broader Brussels community, are integral to this mission, making it a true community effort. Holy Trinity's Community Kitchen stands as a testament to resilience, dignity, trust, and love. It's a place where lives are transformed through simple acts of service, where meals nourish not only the body but also the soul, and where everyone is welcomed with open arms and a warm meal.

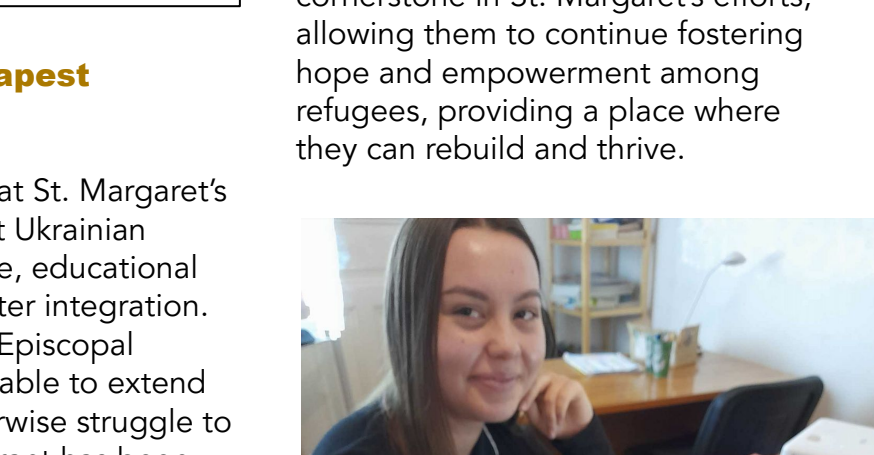
### The story of Benjamin

A Moroccan Refugee Finds Purpose at the Community Kitchen in Brussels

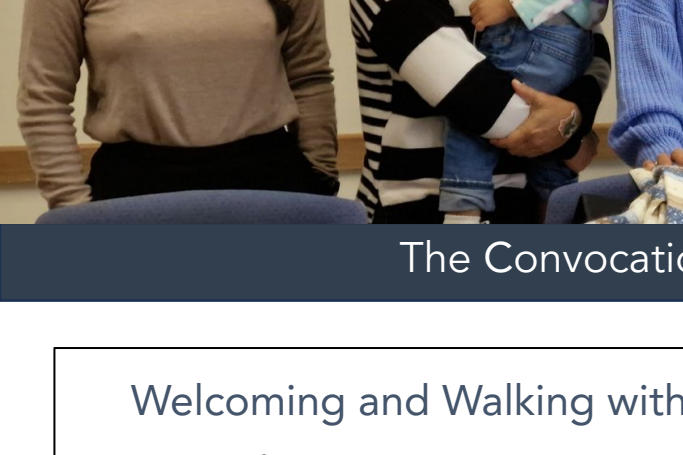
In his early 30s, Benjamin fled Morocco after his advocacy for the Rif region put him in serious danger. Having failed to secure asylum in Sweden and Germany, he arrived in Brussels this year, where he lived on the streets. Then, he heard about the Community Kitchen (CK), a place where he hoped to find warmth and support. Now, as the CK Cafe Barista, Benjamin brews a powerful cup of coffee, providing the pick-me-up many need to start their day.

More than just a barista, Benjamin has taken over as the cleaner, doing it so well that he quickly became indispensable. The CK cannot pay him, but they provide a room, ensuring he no longer faces the cold streets. "This place is my home, and these people are my family," he says. CK has given him a sense of purpose, trust, and belonging.

Though his asylum status remains uncertain, CK is helping him seek legal advice. Benjamin's story reflects dignity, love, and hope, showing how a community's kindness can restore life and resilience to those who need it most.



Community Kitchen volunteers



Humanitarian Hub. Volunteers being trained before meal distributions

We concluded our field visit with a meeting at the Filipino Ecumenical Diaspora in Europe (FEDE) based in Brussels, where we discussed the planning of a project which will be led by a refugee who has been in Belgium since 2020. She sought political asylum after fleeing the Philippines, where her involvement with the Peace and Development group made her a government target.



## The Convocation Refugee Grant Program

### Welcoming and Walking with Refugees

Through its refugee grant program, the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe supports both its own congregations and Anglican partners in Europe for the implementation of refugee-focused ministry initiatives.

Grants to a maximum of 30,000 euros a year are available for the development of projects suited to alleviate the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in Europe.

#### Welcome Grant Webinar

To find out more, or to apply, click here: <https://episcopaleurope.org/ministry/refugees-and-migrants/welcome-grant/>  
For information, write to: [Welcomegrant@tec-europe.org](mailto:Welcomegrant@tec-europe.org)

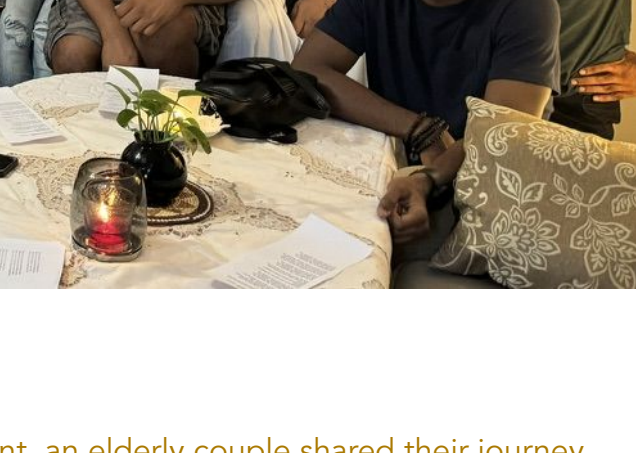
### St. Margaret's Anglican Church, Budapest Ukrainian Space Employment Program

The 'Ukrainian Space Employment Program' at St. Margaret's Anglican Church in Budapest aims to support Ukrainian refugees by providing employment assistance, educational opportunities, and cultural programs that foster integration.

With grant support from the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, St. Margaret's has been able to extend vital resources to individuals who might otherwise struggle to find stability in their new environment. The grant has been instrumental in enabling services such as translation support, job placement, and summer camps for 70 Ukrainian youth. These camps provided a safe, enriching space for young

people to connect with Hungarian culture and their peers. Additionally, the program helped six Ukrainians secure jobs within their professional fields, offering a renewed sense of purpose and dignity.

By collaborating with local partners like the Budapest Mayor's Office and UNHCR, St. Margaret's has successfully amplified its reach, delivering meals, facilitating workshops, and even considering new projects like a Ukrainian bakery. The grant's support has been a cornerstone in St. Margaret's efforts, allowing them to continue fostering hope and empowerment among refugees, providing a place where they can rebuild and thrive.



Nikoletta

### Nikoletta's story Building Bridges for Ukrainian Refugee Children in Hungary

Nikoletta, a teacher from Ukraine's Mukachevo region, arrived in Hungary to escape the war, bringing with her a desire to help others. Dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizenship allowed her to settle and complete her MA studies, but she sought a meaningful way to apply her skills. Eager to create a sense of stability in her new life, Nikoletta began teaching Ukrainian refugee children, helping them transition into Hungarian schools.

Nikoletta's classes provide language support and a gentle entry into a new world, allowing young refugees to feel confident as they integrate. "Seeing them communicate with their peers gives me hope," she says with pride. Through community connections, she secured an unexpected part-time

job at another Ukrainian institution. Her efforts have also inspired other refugees to join similar programs, fostering a supportive network. Nikoletta embodies resilience, trust, hope, and love as she helps young minds build a promising future in their new home.

*"These kids are from my homeland, and I'm here to bridge our two cultures"*

## The Convocation Refugee Grant Program

### The Anglican Church of Freiburg: The Fragrance in Freiburg project

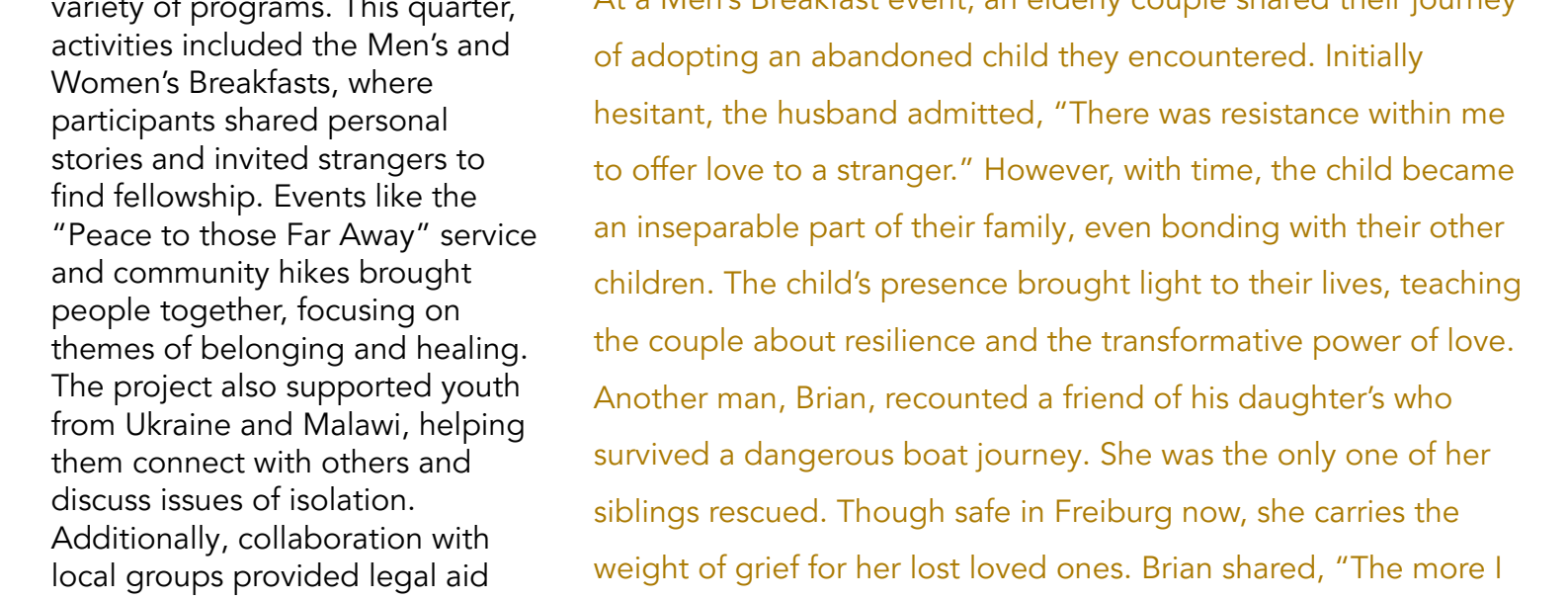


Photo: Young adults group

The *Fragrance in Freiburg* project fosters community through a variety of programs. This quarter, activities included the Men's and Women's Breakfasts, where participants shared personal stories and invited strangers to find fellowship. Events like the "Peace to those Far Away" service and community hikes brought people together, focusing on themes of belonging and healing.

The project also supported youth from Ukraine and Malawi, helping them connect with others and discuss issues of isolation. Additionally, collaboration with local groups provided legal aid and mental health support, addressing the deep challenges faced by refugees and migrants. These efforts have strengthened both the congregation and the regional network, building a welcoming space for vulnerable individuals. The project reflects a commitment to hospitality and solidarity, emphasizing the importance of opening homes and hearts to those in need.

### Stories of change

At a Men's Breakfast event, an elderly couple shared their journey of adopting an abandoned child they encountered. Initially hesitant, the husband recalled, "There was resistance within me to offer love to a stranger." However, with time, the child became an inseparable part of their family, even bonding with their other children. The child's presence brought light to their lives, teaching the couple about resilience and the transformative power of love.

Another man, Brian, recounted a friend of his daughter's who survived a dangerous boat journey. She was the only one of her siblings rescued. Though safe in Freiburg now, she carries the weight of grief for her lost loved ones. Brian shared, "The more I talk to her, the more I realize the deep pain and collective fears faced by those among us."

For these men, the lessons were profound: the deep wounds of refugee families and the importance of embracing brokenness with compassion. The experience has reshaped their community's mission, strengthening their commitment to supporting "the last, the least, and the lost."



Women breakfast



Regional team

## The Convocation Refugee Grant Program

### Christ the King in Frankfurt A Journey of Resilience and Hope in Germany

#### Saman Shabankareh's story

Saman Shabankareh, born in Iran on March 9, 1992, was studying medicine in Ukraine when war forced him to flee. He arrived in Germany in March 2022, but without a Ukrainian passport, his path was filled with challenges. Despite the daunting bureaucracy and initial isolation, he remained committed to his dream of becoming a doctor, continuing his studies online and seeking a way to complete his practicum remotely.

Finding community support, Saman connected with a local church, attending their "Breakfast Before Church" program and worship services. "I felt alone and hopeless before," he reflects. "But now, I see people who understand, and we support each other." With volunteer help, Saman secured his *Aufenthaltstitel*, allowing him to stay in Germany—a monumental achievement after months of uncertainty.



Christ the King - Project team in Frankfurt

### Diocese in Europe

#### Racial Justice Conference

The Chaplaincies of the Diocese in Europe invite you to the Racial Justice Conference from December 4-7, 2024, at the Evangelical Academy in Bad Boll, Germany. This conference builds on the success of last year's Freiburg gathering, aiming to tackle issues of racism and inclusion within our diverse congregations.

Supported by the insights of advocates like Dr. Azza Karam, this year's theme—All of Us or None of Us—reflects the conference's focus on creating a racially just, inclusive, and healthy community. Together, we'll explore practical ways to equip our chaplaincies to be more welcoming, address trauma, and foster spaces of empowerment for marginalized communities, including refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers.

Today, Saman pays it forward, helping other asylum seekers as he was helped. He accompanies friends to legal meetings and brings them to church events, grateful for the love, hope, and dignity he's found. His journey reminds us of the power of community, as he now builds a life rooted in resilience and compassion.

### Partners across Europe

SWITZERLAND  
\*Emmanuel Church, Geneva

ITALY  
\*St. Paul's Within the Walls, Rome

PORTUGAL  
\*Saint John the Evangelist, Gaia  
\*Saint Paul Cathedral, Lisbon

GERMANY  
\*Church of the Ascension, Munich  
\*The Church of St. Augustine of Canterbury, Wiesbaden  
\*Anglican Church of Freiburg  
\*St. Catherine's Stuttgart  
Chaplaincy  
\*The Diocese in Europe  
\*Christ the King, Frankfurt

ROMANIA  
\*Church of the Resurrection, Bucharest

BELGIUM  
\*Holy Trinity, Brussels  
\*Saint-Esprit, Mons

HUNGARY  
\*Saint Margaret's Anglican Episcopal Church, Budapest

POLAND  
\*Anglican Church in Poland, Warsaw

CYPRUS  
\*Anglican Church of Paphos  
\*St. Barnaba's Anglican Church, Bratslava

SLOVAKIA  
\*Old Catholic Parish, Bratislava

NETHERLANDS  
\*Philippine Independent Church

The Convocation Refugee Grant Program (CRGP) Community of Practice (COP) meets online monthly, for 90 minutes, from 18:00 to 19:30 CET, to share learnings, successes and challenges but also to receive training on specific topics.

If you would like to join us, write to [Welcomegrant@tec-europe.org](mailto:Welcomegrant@tec-europe.org). We will send you the dates of the meetings and the Zoom link.

### INSPIRING ACTION Your Congregation's Opportunity for Impact

Join us in our mission to create positive change, apply for a grant and become part of our community. We are here to support you every step of the way, happy to share this incredible opportunity and path together.