



Methodist Church House
25 Marylebone Road
London NW1 5JR

The Rt. Hon Theresa May MP
The Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

29 March, 2016

Dear Home Secretary,

Churches in the United Kingdom have sought to work together to offer practical and humanitarian responses to the refugee crisis. We welcome the generosity of the UK Government in its financial contribution to aid and relief efforts in the region around Syria, and now ask that this kindness is matched by offering sanctuary to more people in need.

On 30 March, 2016, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees pledging conference for pathways of admission for Syrian refugees takes place in Geneva.

In the first ten weeks of this year, 456 deaths of refugees have been reported with a majority of casualties in the Aegean Sea, according to the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe.

Resettlement offers an entirely safe alternative to risky passages across the Mediterranean or other borders of Europe. Refugees will enter Europe in an orderly and protected fashion with regular means of transport. Their lives will be protected and they will have certainty of their status before they depart.

Resettlement is not only an effort preventing deaths, but it also has the effect of countering the business of smugglers. If persons in need of international protection are able to travel legally across the borders of Europe, there is no longer any need to resort to these illegal, expensive, unreliable and often dangerous networks.

One important model of facilitating safe channels is being delivered by the Federation of Protestant Churches, in the framework of the project Mediterranean Hope, and by the Catholic St. Egidio Community in Italy. They have agreed with the Italian government a quota for persons who are referred to the Italian authorities, the consulate grants humanitarian visa for the persons to travel to Italy, the Italian churches provide for transfer and reception to and in Italy.

Through this programme, 100 people who had to flee Syria have already arrived safely in Italy in recent weeks. The total amount of people who are expected to enter in this test programme is 1,000.

We urge national governments, and especially our own UK Government, to support an innovative and compassionate response. We cannot let 2016 be a repeat of 2015 in terms of the chaos, misery and death on Europe's borders.

Our plea is to respect the equal dignity of every human being, reflect on the past generosity of the Syrian people who have welcomed refugees from Armenia, Palestine, Kuwait, Lebanon and Iraq over the past century. Syria never closed its borders to those who fled their homes seeking safety and refuge.

We also hope and pray for continued efforts at securing a just and lasting peace of Syria and to bring stability to the region. A permanent solution to the crisis in Syria is what everyone wishes to see, most especially those forced to abandon homes and families and make a perilous journey.

Yours sincerely,

**The Revd
Phil Jump**

Baptist Representative
to National Refugee
Resettlement Council

**The Rt. Revd Dr
Angus Morrison**

Moderator of the
General Assembly of
the Church of Scotland

**The Revd
Gareth J Powell**

General Secretary of
the Methodist
Conference

**The Revd
John Proctor**

General Secretary of
the United Reformed
Church

cc Richard Harrington MP, minister for Syrian resettlement