

# Get Involved: Pray

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## EMBRACE Prayer Group October 2011

*"I assisted the poor in their need and the orphans who required help. ... I served as eyes for the blind and feet for the lame. I was a father to the poor and assisted strangers who needed help." Job 29:12,15-16*

I have just returned from spending a month in Bradford on a ministerial placement. I was delighted to be able to observe a number of Christian initiatives that provide support and aid to people seeking asylum in the area. These groups include BIASAN (Bradford Immigration & Asylum Support and Advice Network) who run a weekly women's group, English class and drop-in centre. It was wonderful to see the women come together in a safe place and to have fun and fellowship with others. Conversations I had with a number of the women highlighted the slow process of seeking asylum in Britain. For several it has been nine years or longer with still no end in sight.

BEACON (Bradford Ecumenical Asylum CONCern) is another organisation that offers practical assistance. For example, their 'McKenzie Friends' project assists people seeking asylum to complete legal forms and accompanies them to court. BEACON also runs a group called CHAT (Care and Hospitality at Thornbury) who go to the Regional Tribunals Hearing Centre, offering tea, coffee, biscuits and a listening ear. Since I was there during Ramadan, things were much quieter than usual, but even then several conversations were had, helping calm people's nerves.

My experience in Bradford has made me more aware of some of the issues people seeking asylum face and the many organisations that are set up to support and encourage those seeking asylum. It's also made me more conscience of the people and organisations in Northern Ireland that provide similar services and support.

*Contributed by Ruth Watt, Committee Member*

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### We give thanks for ...

- The many volunteers who give their time and energy to help those whom others have forgotten.
- People, churches and organisations that have recognised a need and have responded practically.
- Experiences away from 'home' that provide an opportunity to learn more about others and ourselves.
- Warm welcomes we have received when we were the 'stranger'.

### We pray for ...

- Those who continue to work to bring justice to those who seek asylum.
- Groups like BIASAN and BEACON in Bradford, NICRAS, Bryson One Stop Service and the Refugee Action Group in Belfast, and the many other organisations seeking to assist those who come seeking asylum.
- Individuals and families who are waiting unduly long for their asylum claim to be processed.