

# Message from Bishop Rachel,

## 21 June 2022

Monday was World Refugee Day and it was a privilege to be at the unveiling of a blue plaque in Gloucester marking the house where [10 Jewish boys were given a home in 1939 when they arrived in England on the Kinder Transport escaping Nazi oppression](#). That home was made possible by the Gloucester Association for Aiding Refugees, established for this specific purpose (now succeeded by GARAS).

Some of those boys went on to obtain British citizenship and raised families locally. It was moving to hear what they had all gone on to do in life, and the recognition that their lives had been shaped by the kindness, hospitality and compassion shown them in Gloucester.

Tomorrow is National Windrush Day established in the light of the [Windrush Scandal in 2018](#) which led to the government assigning a day to celebrate and mark the contribution of so many to the economy, culture and daily life of Britain.

22 June was chosen because on this day in 1948 hundreds of people from the Caribbean arrived in Britain following a decision by the British government to recruit Afro-Caribbean migrants in the light of severe labour shortages as a result of the second world war. Sadly, the word 'welcome' was not high on the agenda, and many people experienced severe racism, including being banned from public places, including some churches. During my time in Hackney, I heard numerous shameful stories of people's experiences from that time.

That is in stark contrast to the wave of compassion and kindness, sparked by the awful war in Ukraine, and a deep desire to offer hospitality and welcome to individuals and families seeking a safe haven here.

All of this is poignant as we live amid the controversy of the latest government plans to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, and many of you will be aware of the furore around a letter signed by the Lords Spiritual (including me), expressing indignation at the plans. We have been criticised for using words such as 'immoral', and there will be a range of perspectives among those reading this letter. However, for me, those words are not about being for or against specific political parties and are certainly not a comment on Rwanda. It is primarily an objection to a policy of 'inadmissibility' such that people will be removed without having their stories heard or their needs investigated. They will be unnamed 'others' from the start simply because of the way they have arrived.

The names of those ten boys who arrived in Gloucester in 1939 were prominent in Monday's proceedings as we crowded around a front door, and as named children and grandchildren shared their stories.

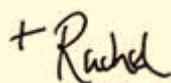
Names and unique stories are important in all this. Every person in our world is different, created in God's image and loved by God. Every person has a story to tell and a story which will shape and be part of who we are in our world in relationship with one another and all creation. And as followers of Christ seeking God's wisdom and justice in our decision-making, we are urged to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness and love (Colossian 3:12-14) whatever our party-political alignments.

On Monday I had the privilege of being invited to open the proceedings with a prayer and it seemed apt to quote from a Psalm in the Jewish scriptures as we celebrated the rescue, hospitality and kindness of those who made it possible for 18 Alexandra Road to become a place of safety and welcome in 1939:

"Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:3-4)

May it be so in our Life Together.

With my thanks and prayers as ever

A handwritten signature in black ink on a yellow rectangular background. The signature consists of a small cross symbol followed by the name 'Rachel' written in a cursive, handwritten style.