

PEACEFUL BORDERS

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



Seeking peace in the spaces in between.
Accompanying and equipping people
responding to forced migration.

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ABOUT US

In response to the largest movement of displaced people across Europe since World War II and the increase in unregulated spaces at our borders, we began in 2015 as a grass-roots collaboration of peacemakers accompanying those who seek peace at the borders of our lives and the borders of our nations. Focused initially on the unofficial 'jungle' refugee camp in Calais, 2018 saw significant expansion as we scaled up our support of those caught up in the ongoing refugee crisis and found peaceful responses at the borders.

In a time when borders and boundaries are causing increased division and polarisation there is a vital task of finding healthy ways of integrating new arrivals to the UK and learning from each other to build healthy communities.

Following a year of growth in breadth, 2019 saw Peaceful Borders grow in depth by grounding our initiatives which are caring for and developing displaced people. Being able to collaborate with those who continue to diligently respond to the largest movement of people across Europe is an honour, even though the situation remains a profound challenge.

We are grateful to The Mennonite Trust, Schowalter Trust, Lush, Grimwade Trust and Mennonite Mission Network for their support during 2019.

Juliet Kilpin, Coordinator, Peaceful Borders

The objectives of Peaceful Borders are to accompany and equip people responding to forced migration through:

- + Accompanying Peacemakers
- + Building Capacity
- + Campaigning for Peace
- + Developing People and Practice

*"If you have come to help me, go home.
But if you have come because your freedom is bound up in mine,
let's walk together"*

MEET THE TEAM

JULIET COORDINATOR

Emerging out of weekly visits to the Calais 'jungle' in 2015-16, Juliet co-founded Peaceful Borders to accompany refugee and volunteer peacemakers responding to this unregulated humanitarian crisis. She continues to coordinate the initiative and actively campaigns for the rights of unaccompanied child refugees.



COORDINATOR (VOLUNTARY) **SIMON**

Simon co-founded Peaceful Borders in response to his weekly visits to Calais in 2015-16. He offers strategic support to our developments and continues to be on the management committee of Maria Skobstova House in Calais.



SAMER REFUGEE SUPPORT WORKER

Samer founded Hopetowns, which is now well into its 3rd year, to support the well-being and successful integration of refugees into British society. As a former community leader in the Calais 'jungle' who fled Sudan, he knows the importance of providing hope and friendship for vulnerable people.



REFUGEE SUPPORT WORKER **ALI**

Ali supports people who have recently arrived in Britain as they navigate the confusing systems of immigration, housing and work. As a former community leader in the Calais 'jungle' who fled Syria, he understands the challenges first hand. He has recently started a second branch of HopeTowns in Peckham.



GRACE REFUGEE SUPPORT WORKER

Grace worked for Peaceful Borders for one year, supporting unaccompanied minors, both individually and through projects such as Injera Club. She concluded her role as a RSW in June 2019 but continues to support us as part of our Steering Group.



ACCOMPANYING

Helping new arrivals to interpret their new surroundings and navigate life in the UK.



- Samer and Ali, our Refugee Support Workers, support asylum seekers who are navigating the confusing British immigration system, many of whom have no recourse to public funds.
- They support people through informal telephone advice giving appropriate reassurance regarding the asylum process. Between Ali and Samer, 100 hours of telephone advice has been given, providing essential reassurance and friendship.
- Samer and Ali have accompanied people to 65 appointments this year.
- They have met 40 minors at their point of arrival to ensure they are safe and claim asylum at the earliest opportunity
- They spent 125 hours visiting those who had recently arrived in their homes, combating feelings of isolation and have taken 100 people on day trips to learn about their new country and how to use public transport
- We helped a new online English tuition scheme provide 140 hours of 1-2-1 online teaching to those we support.
- Samer organised a Calais reunion in Hyde Park for refugees and volunteers
- We undertook emergency fundraising for a vulnerable family in who moved into an empty house in Manchester.



40 unaccompanied minors met at their point of arrival by Refugee Support Workers

65

appointments attended by RSWs accompanying individuals in need of support

140

hours of 1-2-1 English lessons provided through a new pilot scheme, supported by PB

115

hours spent supporting Injera Club in their first year

40

asylum seekers attending HopeTowns in West London every week

100

people taken on day trips to explore their new surroundings and learn about life in the UK

BUILDING

In 2019 we continued to identify people with good ideas and helped them build capacity for peaceful responses to forced displacement. This Asset Based Community Development approach seeks to help people with creative solutions flourish.

- **Hopetowns** supports the well-being and successful integration of refugees into British society through English lessons, social contact and housing advice in London. Hopetowns was the idea of Samer Mustafa, a former resident and community leader in the Calais 'jungle'. In 2019 Hopetowns grew into two groups. The original Hopetowns in West London and a second in Peckham. Hopetowns currently supports over 40 asylum seekers every week. In June, Hopetowns visited Brighton for the day, a time for recreation and friendship.
- **Maria Skobtsova House** provides a safe haven for the most vulnerable displaced people in Calais. Simon continues on the management group of the house and we have sent a number of volunteers to assist. In April, the house closed temporarily and Simon helped forge closer links with other associations in Calais, enabling the house to reopen and provide a dry, warm place for five Iranian families and an Eritrean single mother. There are now more French-speaking volunteers involved in the running of the house. In June 2019, Brother Johannes left Calais after 3 years' service at the house. Simon was able to provide support to Johannes, and Kirrilee who took over responsibility for the house. Demand for safe accommodation in Calais continues to grow as more families arrive in the city.



- **Solidarity and Support Network (SSUN)** provides psychological support for volunteers working in Calais or Dunkirk who do not receive the training and debriefing support that would be expected from more established agencies who send people to humanitarian crises. This year Juliet has helped SSUN with development and funding.
- **Injera Club** celebrated its first anniversary in October 2019. The youth club in south London provides food, friendship, support and mentoring to young refugees from the Horn of Africa. It was set up after the tragic suicides of several unaccompanied minors who were unable to recover from the ordeals of their displacement. Grace volunteered weekly at Injera Club in its first nine months, providing stability and support for the founder, Benny Hunter, as the group was established. Benny said "Grace was a saviour, we would be nothing without the support she gave the project."

CAMPAIGNING

We are committed to advocating for those who have been displaced and whose rights are being abused, especially unaccompanied children.



- Juliet continued to co-chair the Safe Passage Campaigns Team, helping to organise and deliver the 'Our Turn' campaign at Westminster which called on the government to honour its pledge to take in 1,000 refugee children each year. The campaign saw volunteers green-carding their MPs to discuss the issues with them in Parliament.
- We took some new Safe Passage staff to visit Calais to get first-hand experience of the issues unaccompanied children face.
- We organised a letter from constituents to the Home Secretary regarding the fate of unaccompanied child refugees post-Brexit.
- In December Juliet spoke at the People Not Walls action outside London's French Embassy.

'Peaceful Borders has played an integral role in the coordination of grassroots efforts to protect safe and legal routes for child refugees this year. Juliet's co-chairing of the Safe Passage International Campaigns Team has supported local campaigners to secure pledges of 1400 places from local authorities for child refugees and persuaded the Government not to drop protections for child refugees after Brexit.'

Beth Gardiner Smith
CEO Safe Passage

'As the refugee crisis in and beyond Europe continues and the authorities struggle to engage creatively and compassionately with thousands in desperate need, the quiet and persistent work of Peaceful Borders offers hope to many and resources to those who are on the front line. The Anabaptist Mennonite Network is honoured to support this initiative.'

Stuart Murray-Williams, Trustee

DEVELOPING

We are committed to integrating experience with reflection to enable better practice as we all navigate living in a world on the move.



- Juliet and Ali spoke at the Sparks conference in January 2019, along with other Syrian refugees.
- In February 2019, Juliet delivered peacemaking training at Bristol Baptist College.
- In early 2019 we were involved in exploratory conversations about the Refugee Solidarity Summit. It took place in Feb 2020 with Samer and Juliet speaking.
- In March we helped organise and present a webinar for the European Baptist Federation sharing learning about migration and asylum with a speaker from Safe Passage.
- Simon's paper based on a presentation he gave at a conference of European theologians in 2018, was published in the FEET newsletter in April 2019.
- Juliet co-wrote a Children's Society resource, *Refugee Theology Resource for churches and church groups*, which was launched in June.
- Juliet attended the Christian Peacemaker Teams Convergence in The Netherlands.
- Ali was interviewed for the Migrant Law Project podcast in June 2019. The MLP team visited Calais with Juliet in August to record for the series.

"We first visited the Calais Jungle with Peaceful Borders in 2016. The support from Juliet has been great and sorely needed as I have wrestled with my own reaction to what I have witnessed in Calais."

Sandra Crawford,
Minister of Wigan and Leyland
Baptist Churches

"We really value our links with Peaceful Borders and the way that they can challenge and equip our churches to be peacemakers in our troubled world. The resources and opportunities they offer are inspiring Baptists Together to prayer and action for peace."

Lynn Green,
General Secretary of
Baptists Together

GET INVOLVED

VISIT

You can only really understand the impact of displacement when you meet people who have been displaced. We like to take people to visit Calais when possible, so get in touch if you would like to explore this possibility.

LEARN

It is important to learn from each other, especially in increasingly polarising times. We welcome invitations to speak or write on peacemaking and share and listen to stories of peace.

DONATE

To support the work of Peaceful Borders financially, donate at <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/9620>

Peaceful Borders is a project of The Anabaptist Mennonite Network. You can help increase our capacity to seek peace in the spaces in between by accompanying and equipping people responding to forced migration.

CONTACT US

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