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Table of Contents

ASKing for Europe: A New Reformation? . 1

ASK Network News . 2

ASKing for the Nations . 3
Europe and the Global Refugee Crisis

ASKing for Europe: A New Reformation?

2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which changed Europe and the world forever. Please pray with us ASKing God for a New Reformation in Europe.

Now as then Europe is in turmoil. It is a time of shaking. In the course of this year we have witnessed a number of sudden and terrifying events of great magnitude: a major earthquake in central Italy which left 300 people dead and 4000 people homeless; hundreds of lives lost crossing the Mediterranean; huge refugee camps at the point of entry; violence in Calais, the 'Jungle' refugee camp where the migration route of many unaccompanied children ends; and brutal acts of terror in France, Belgium and Germany. It has been said that you no longer need guns or bombs to commit a massacre—you just need to know how to drive....

Another sudden and shocking event for Britain and the European Union is Brexit. The referendum result was completely unexpected and frightening in a different way, and its consequences continue to create conflict and fear.

2016 has brought other things, which are continuous rather than sudden. The relentless flow of migrants and refugees pouring across the continent has fed the deep and residual fear of ISIS, already instilled by acts of terror. Some nations, such as Germany, have welcomed the migrating populations while others, such as Hungary, have closed their borders. Thousands of men, women and children have travelled hundreds of miles while hungry, cold and sick, while millions of others have helplessly watched their distress from afar. Religious conflict and racism are never far from the surface of international politics.

We can feel as if we are poised on a hinge of history that is turning. Many are full of apprehension and anxiety about the future of Europe. When the foundations are shaking, what can we do?

At this time, the words of the prophet Haggai can help us. He spoke into a similar time of shaking. He knew about a migrant crisis. He knew about changes in government. He may have been one of the captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar who later returned. He began speaking about sixteen years after the return of the Jews to Judah (c. 520 BC). The work of rebuilding the temple had been put to a stop. He exhorted the people, which roused them from their lethargy, saying:

*'Yet once more I will shake the nations'.
Then the desired of all nations will come...
He will fill His house with glory and in this place I will give peace.
— Haggai 2:6-10*

We pray that this would be a prophetic, new reformation time when we would not just wring our hands and worry, but to be stirred to seek and desire God.

ASKing Point

is a bi-monthly communication on behalf of ASK Network International. It is an invitation to join the network of prayer throughout the nations, ASKing and agreeing regarding key issues on God's heart. It is a tool for prayer, a place for testimony to God's faithfulness in answering, and a gift of worship to the Living God.

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DESIRED AND DESIRING

It may be that the shaking of the nations comes because God deeply desires his people. Will we be a people of deep desires in return?

WE THANK GOD...

- For hopeful signs in Europe
- Calls for Prayer from Church leaders particularly the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope.
- For old churches being renewed and new churches being planted — Please pray for what are sometimes fragile new plants.

Out of our desiring, WE ASK GOD:

- That desperation would release Christian leaders across all 51 nations and states to acknowledge the historic fractures caused by judgment and prejudice, and move in repentance.
Joel 1:13,14; Joel 2:13; 1 John 1:8-10
- That the tribes of Christianity would recognize and express their need of one another—Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox. That a new Reformation of Unity would dawn for the Church.
John 17:20-23; Acts 4:32a; Ephesians 4:3-6
- That the church across Europe would arise with renewed boldness to cry out to God for revival, for righteous government, for the works of the kingdom and the revelation of Jesus.
Acts 4:33; Acts 4:24-30; Habakkuk 3:2
- That a new and different reformation for Europe might emerge as a result—one that would fill the church and the nations with God's glory, and bring peace; and that godly leaders would emerge with courage and compassion, whose motive is that they desire the desired of the nations.
Haggai 2:6-9; Habakkuk 1:5; 2:14; 1 Timothy 2:1,2

Please join with us in ASKing God for these things at this critical time.

Charlie & Anita Cleverly, Directors – ASK Europe 




ASK Network News

ASK Gathering in West Africa

About one hundred saints gathered in Dapaong in Northern Togo from October 22-24 to ASK. Many of these were pastors carrying deep longings of the heart for their flocks and nation. Others came from Benin, Ghana and Nigeria. Much prayer was offered for West Africa and its key needs. A large team of Togolese leaders were set in place for ASK in all five regions of Togo. There was a wonderful sense of God's blessing and favour on this gathering. Brand new pieces of ASK literature in French ASK were presented. Please keep Evarist and Rose Byll (ASK Directors for Togo) in your prayers. ASK Team Nigeria is now preparing for their launch in Nigeria in March. Benin is not far behind. We thank God and give Him the glory!

ASK Gathering in Israel — 2017

We need to alert you that all registration for the ASK International Gathering in the Negev, January 2017, is now CLOSED. We are happy to announce we are oversubscribed so are requesting extra accommodation. Please keep this all important event in your prayers. We are trusting the Lord for everyone's provision, especially those traveling from more remote parts of the world. We will be inviting you to join us for a 21 day prayer initiative from January 1-21. It will be a wonderful opportunity for ASK Network to join together in united prayer at the beginning of the year. 



ASKing for the Nations



EUROPE and the Global Refugee Crisis

Unreached People Group:

SYRIAN ARAB REFUGEES IN EUROPE

Population: 1,000,000+

Primary Religion: Islam

Language: Arabic

Background

Syrian Arabs belong to the Levant Arab family, a broad category of mostly Muslim Arabs that also includes Jordanians, Palestinians, Iraqis and Chaldeans. They are the majority ethnic group of Syria, an ethnically and religiously diverse nation situated along the Mediterranean Sea just south of Turkey. Over the last five years, a devastating civil war in Syria has forced many to flee their homes. It is estimated that more than one million Syrian Arabs have requested asylum in Europe.

Peaceful demonstrations protesting Syria's government began in 2011 as part of the Arab Spring. After severe government crackdowns, protests escalated toward violence as armed opposition groups emerged. Conflict between religious sects and the rise of the Islamic State added a further dimension to the civil war. Cities like Aleppo, currently held by the opposition, are being destroyed by bombings from Syrian and Russian forces. Human rights violations are rampant. Roughly half a million people, mostly civilians, have been killed. Nearly half of Syria's pre-war population has been displaced, some 11 million people. Syria's President Bashar al-Assad recently vowed to continue "cleaning" Aleppo of rebels, further dimming the hopes of a peaceful resolution.

Ask God to save the nation of Syria, to turn the hearts of Assad and governmental leaders with compassion toward their people, and to usher in a season of peace (Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Proverbs 21:1-8, 30-31)

Ask God to provide a safe haven, a warm welcome, and a healing presence to Syrian refugees among European Christian hosts and ministries (Matthew 11:28-30; Luke 10:25-37)

Thank God for a growing movement toward Christ among Syrian Arabs. **Ask** God to strengthen their faith and embolden their witness through this time of crisis (Psalm 34; Ephesians 6:10-20; Revelation 12:11).



Since the beginning of time, humans have been on the move. Explorers, entrepreneurs, scholars and others have voluntarily left home in search of adventure, economic and educational opportunities, exposure to other cultures and other great quests. Others, however, are pushed away from home for less desirable reasons, involuntarily migrating in desperate attempts to escape political persecution, civil war, terrorism, famine, and numerous other crises. Last year, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that 65.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, the largest number of displaced persons since World War II.

Refugees at a Glance

According to UNHCR figures, an average of 24 people were displaced every minute in 2015 — roughly 34,000 people per day — joining the millions already displaced. Roughly two-thirds of these 65.3 million people are internally displaced persons (displaced within their home nation). The remaining one-third are refugees seeking safe haven in foreign nations. At the end of 2015, roughly half of the world's refugees were children. Most refugees today are migrating away from conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. Today, Europe is often the first destination to receive and respond to refugees in crisis. In 2015 alone, Europe received over one million refugees by way of the Mediterranean Sea — a four-fold increase over the previous year. Another 317,000 have reached the shores of Greece and Italy to date in 2016.

Escalating Challenges

Forced displacement has dramatically increased in the last five years. The UNHCR identifies three reasons. First, some

ASKing for the Nations



conflicts (like the ones in Somalia and Afghanistan) are lasting longer, delaying a refugee's ability to return home. Second, new or reignited conflicts and destabilizing situations are occurring more frequently. The present conflict in Syria is driving the largest number of refugees from their homes today, but many other wars have emerged in the past five years, displacing residents in places like South Sudan, Yemen, Burundi, Ukraine, and Central African Republic. Third, as refugee counts increase, the rate of finding solutions for them is decreasing, leaving many refugees in a state of limbo.




A Harrowing Journey

By the time refugees reach Europe, they have experienced numerous crises. First is the initial experience that forces people to flee, usually at great cost and under intense pressure. Beyond this initial trauma, numerous other factors endanger refugees along their way to safety. Sometimes, family members are left behind because they are physically unable to travel or because the family does not have the resources to provide for everyone's safe passage. In the mass of migration, family members can become separated from one another. Women and children are at greater risk of abuse and exploitation while on the run. The physical journey away from home to a place of safety can be physically treacherous. In their most vulnerable time, refugees might be met with hostility and looked upon with disdain, sometimes approaching the end of a harrowing journey only to be greeted by a closed border. Filippo Grandi of the UNHCR explains, "At sea, a frightening number of refugees and migrants are dying each year; on land, people fleeing war are finding their way blocked by closed borders...The willingness of nations to work together not just for refugees but for the collective human interest is what's being tested today, and it's this spirit of unity that badly needs to prevail."¹

Threat, Nuisance or Opportunity?

As conflicts continue to emerge, and as people are on the move, each of us is confronted with the issues of our own stability, comfort and way of life. The threat of terrorism is real. What if refugees moving into our safe havens come with ill intent toward us? The overwhelming need of refugees is real but threatens the predictability and relative ease of our lives. Refugees demand attention and resources that we may not be ready, willing or able to sacrifice. For followers of Jesus, Scripture paints a clear picture calling us to love and care for the foreigners in our midst (Deuteronomy 10:18-19, 1 Kings 8:41-43). Could the refugees among us be an opportunity to display and declare the love of God through Christ Jesus to all nations? May God help us to make space for the foreigners in our midst, that His name would be known among all peoples!

ASKing Points:

- Ask God to heal refugees from the wounds and traumas associated with conflict and migration, comforting their grief and establishing them in places of rest and stability. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed and qualified me to preach the Gospel of good tidings to the meek, the poor, and afflicted; He has sent me to bind up and heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the [physical and spiritual] captives and the opening of the prison and of the eyes to those who are bound. Isaiah 61:1*
- Ask God to open the hearts of Christians to receive refugees with the love and care of Christ. Ask that God's perfect love would overcome human fear of the unknown. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." 1 John 4:18, Matthew 25:31-36*
- Ask that refugees would find and encounter Jesus as Savior and Prince of Peace through the numerous Christian individuals, congregations and ministries that are providing relief. *I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I. Isaiah 65:1* 

¹ Edwards, Adrian. "Global forced displacement hits record high." *UNHCR*, June 20, 2016.