# SORRY: prayer ideas to say sorry to God for the times when we have not welcomed the stranger

*Supplementary PowerPoint template available, with Bible verses, call and response, and additional material.*

## Background

While there is much to be thankful for in the response of churches to the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum, there are still many things that we as fallible humans do that place barriers in the way of fullness of life for these newcomers and ourselves. Whether this is unjust or flawed policies, sharing misinformation or harmful narratives on social media, or failing to make programmes accessible, we so often act (or fail to act) in ways that are harmful to newcomers and ourselves.

**The prayers below, shaped around The Salvation Army’s five mission priorities, could guide a congregation in repenting for ways in which our actions may have not built up God’s Kingdom and hindered mission with newcomers.**

## To Share the Good News

*‘How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?’ (Romans 10:14)*

We are sorry for the times when we have put limits on God’s good news, preventing newcomers to the UK from experiencing it because of our prejudice or lack of compassion. We lament over all those people who have not had the opportunity to hear the good news.

*Leader: Lord, we are sorry for when we fail to offer fullness of life.*

**Response: Lord, we are sorry.**

## To Serve Others Without Discrimination

*‘My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism.’ (James 2:1)*

We are sorry for the times when we have discriminated against people because we have failed to see them as an image-bearer of Christ; when we have allowed our language, race or cultural differences to be a barrier to serve newcomers to the UK and Ireland. We are sorry for our role in perpetuating false narratives, and for times when we have failed to challenge the discriminatory behaviour of others. We lament over those newcomers who have felt excluded from a caring community.

*Leader: Lord, we are sorry for when we fail to offer fullness of life.*

**Response: Lord, we are sorry.**

## To Nurture Disciples of Jesus

*‘There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’ (Galatians 3:28)*

We are sorry for those times when we have neglected the privilege of serving refugees and asylum seekers. We are sorry for when we have failed to make Jesus accessible to newcomers to the UK by excluding them from opportunities to learn more – whether through our failure to invite them to participate or through a failure to make our discipleship activities accessible to them. We lament over those Christian newcomers to the UK and Ireland who have not been welcomed by a local church.

*Leader: Lord, we are sorry for when we fail to offer fullness of life.*

**Response: Lord, we are sorry.**

## To Care for Creation

*‘The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.’ (Psalm 24:1)*

We are sorry for the times when we have allowed convenience to drive our choices. We repent for taking actions which exacerbate climate change and, in so doing, drive the displacement of others. We lament over the families driven from their homes by drought, famine, flood and storm, forced to flee to find safety.

*Leader: Lord, we are sorry for when we fail to offer fullness of life.*

**Response: Lord, we are sorry.**

## To Seek Justice and Reconciliation

*‘Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.’ (Acts 3:19)*

We are sorry for times when we put up barriers between people; for times when by our action or inaction we have allowed relationships between newcomers and the wider community to break down or become hostile. We lament over violence of word and action that has been perpetrated against refugees and asylum seekers.

*Leader: Lord, we are sorry for when we fail to offer fullness of life.*

**Response: Lord, we are sorry.**

## Next Step

Below are some reflection questions inviting the congregation to think about when they haven’t felt welcome themselves. You might like to invite them to spend time quietly reflecting on these questions. They could be shown on a screen, read out, or prepared as ‘stations’ around the church.

* Can you recall a specific instance when you felt unwelcome or excluded? What were the circumstances?
* How did you feel in that moment? What emotions were most prominent?
* What do you think contributed to those feelings of exclusion? Was it something someone said or did, or was it more about the environment or situation?
* How did you respond to feeling unwelcome or excluded? Did you withdraw, confront the situation, or something else?
* How did this experience affect your self-esteem?
* What, if anything, could have been done differently by you or others to prevent the exclusion?
* Have you ever unintentionally made someone else feel unwelcome or excluded? How did you handle that situation?
* What steps can you take in the future to ensure that you and newcomers to the country feel included in similar situations?

Many newcomers to the UK experience exclusion and a lack of welcome. Reflecting on their personal experiences may have given the congregation a small insight into this exclusion. At the end of the reflection questions, you might like to create space for people to repent of times they have made newcomers feel unwelcome. They might like to ask God for the grace to make the most of future opportunities to make everyone feel welcome and valued.