

'God's Heart for Migrants' - a special event and its Dalkey background

"Everybody comes from Somewhere Else", an anthology of poems, stories and reflections by migrants from direct provision centres, is to be launched at the Quaker Meeting House on Pakenham Road in Monkstown on December 6th between 5pm and 6.30pm. Everyone interested will be very welcome. Edited by Rosy Wilson of the Dalkey Interchurch Migrant Support Group, with contributors from Mosney, Dun Laoghaire and further afield, some of whom will read aloud their contributions at the launch, the book will be on sale for €10. It will also be available through Dalkey News from then on. We are grateful to the Arts Council for a grant towards the cost of production and to Boland Press for publishing the volume.

This is the latest initiative of our local Migrant Support Group, which took off back in 2017 as a result of that year's Interchurch Lent Group on the theme "God's Heart for Migrants". It was there that parishioners of both Dalkey churches and a few Quaker friends from Monkstown met Mosney resident Christiana Obaro, who was introduced to us by Irish Times journalist Andy Pollak. Her story of displacement from Nigeria on account of her Christian faith, and her difficulties finding a welcome in Ireland along with her husband and children, moved us all; so we established a link through her with the migrant direct provision centre in Mosney, aiming to do all we could to support and nurture them as a group.

Since then, we have hosted busloads of Mosney residents for social and church events and walkabouts in Dalkey, as well as trips to beauty spots and the zoo and occasional social evenings at Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. We have also helped them with letters to the authorities to help them resist deportation and secure permission to stay indefinitely in Ireland.

Since Covid hit in 2020, there has inevitably been less social activity, so we have concentrated instead on providing for their everyday needs. This has been chiefly by providing laptops and second-hand bikes, which we deliver personally to them in Mosney, and by helping with access to education. Individual members of our group have also "adopted" migrant families living locally, helping them to find and maintain accommodation and manage such details as school transport and homework.

The cost of all this has been considerable, so we are grateful to many friends and supporters who have responded so generously to our occasional fund-raising drives, the most recent of which was the Cake Sale and Raffle organised by Jackie Nelson with help from Valerie Hand in Our Lady's Hall last December. There will be something similar happening early in the New Year, as funds are running low once again. All of us, our chairman Peter Woods, hon. secretary Margie Waters, and our friends in Mosney will continue to rely on your generous support. We usually meet in Dalkey once a month on a Tuesday morning, and would greatly welcome more volunteers. Please let Peter Woods know if you would like to join us.

Ginnie Kennerley