

'Little bags of love and hope' – An appeal for the Festive Season

'Seeking Sanctuary' is repeating a previous initiative to support migrants stuck in North-West France, just 21 miles from the coast of Kent. We want to get small packs of new essential items to them during December and January.

Based upon discussions with partners in France, typical contents should include most or all of the following:

shower gel, shampoo, soap, unisex deodorant, toothbrushes and toothpaste, individual razors, dark-coloured socks, scarves, gloves (fabric or leather- not knitted), hats and small packs of nuts or dried fruit.

(And include a greetings card or message, if you so desire.)

Please don't use plastic bags unless they are biodegradable: instead, pack in boxes, paper bags or wrap as parcels, as is most convenient. Or you can buy small back-packs as containers which will be useful after their contents have gone.

Please don't send unhealthy sweets; and don't use Christmas wrapping paper or mention the Christian festival in greetings – most recipients will be Muslim – just make things generically festive, perhaps expressing hope for better times in 2020. Gifts for Northern France should be mainly for teenage-to-twenties young men, so please don't include teddy bears and ladies' cosmetics! Write clearly and simply, as not many recipients will be accustomed to reading our Western alphabet.

If your parish or community or other group would like to take part, please let us know by emailing migrantsupport@aol.com or calling 07887 651117. We can discuss how best to get goods to organisations such as *L'Auberge des Migrants* or *Secours Catholique*.

It is important that all bags have similar contents. You may prefer to arrange this by getting people to donate items and then getting a group together to pack them. If people prefer to donate money, you can buy goods and use them to compensate for items that are in short supply.

'Seeking Sanctuary' aims to raise awareness about people displaced from their homes and to channel basic humanitarian assistance from Faith Communities and Community Organisations via partnerships with experienced aid workers. Our special concern is for the 1200 or more exiles who are stuck north-western France, mistakenly expecting a welcome in the UK.

They need food, water, good counsel and clothes, which are accepted, sorted and distributed by several organisations, including two Calais warehouses which also supply needs further afield.

Further information from Ben Bano on 07887 651117 or Phil Kerton on 01474 873802. See our latest news at www.seekingsanctuary.weebly.com