

Embracing Our New Home

KATE AND SUNNY, CARRICKFERGUS

 Read

Psalm 137

“”

I (Sunny) have seen God's hand in guiding me to this “strange” land and now agree that He has a new life for me here.

Psalm 137 is a song of lament, of the toll that exile from home has on a person.

It's an honest cry of injustice and pain – a bitter dirge of being forced to live in a place that was not the Psalmist's first choice and likely wouldn't even have been their second choice. It's an anthem of purity, not wanting to not defile their worship of God by singing songs of praise for the mere enjoyment of their captors. The Psalmist cannot enjoy themselves, they cannot please their new neighbours, they cannot forget their home, and they cannot forgive those who caused this exile.

Before I (Sunny) had to abandon my country, I was already estranged and exiled. Somewhere that had been safe, familiar, and comfortable – home – became a place of fear, persecution, and a constant threat of death. I had long been singing a song of lament before I arrived in the UK.

In my new town, I was faced with the fear of not knowing how I would be accepted and

treated by the local community. I could choose to withdraw and place myself in exile again. However, I decided that I could not sit and wait for the community to come to me, I had to go out and embrace it. Reminded of the story of Joseph in Genesis, I embraced this strange land by using my time and talents to help it prosper – growing vegetables at the church allotment for the community, receiving and sorting food donations, preparing food parcels at the food bank, learning about and helping with organic farming, supporting activities in the church. Through these activities, I became alive again.

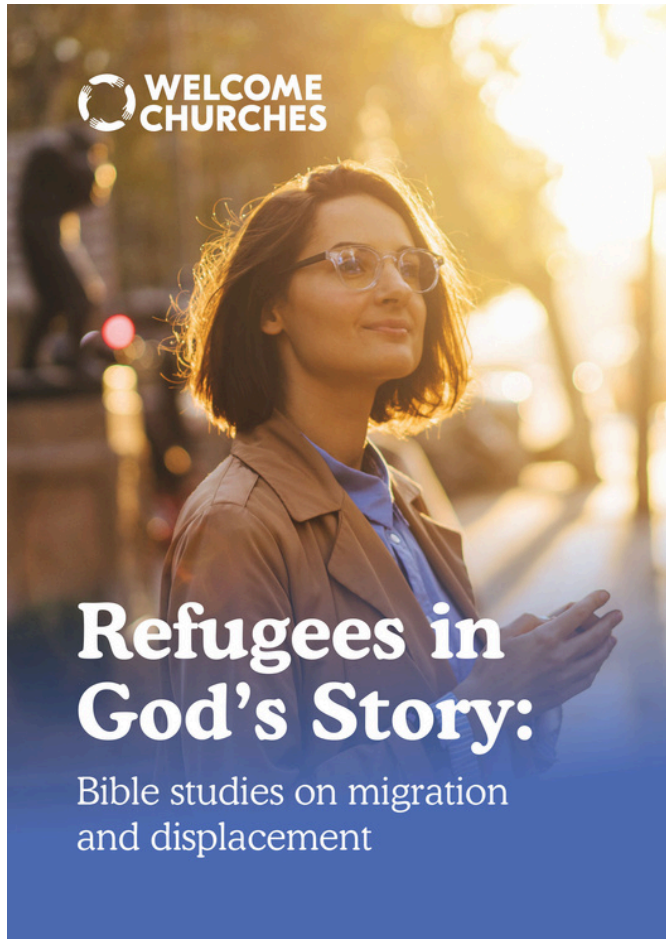
Getting to know Sunny at the allotments and hearing his story, I (Kate) am reminded of God's words to the exiles in Babylon: a call not to lament but to live, to build homes and plan to stay, to plant gardens, and eat the food they produce (Jeremiah 29:5 NLT). The Lord is calling me to embrace this new life, even if it is not my first choice.

I (Sunny) have seen God's hand in guiding me to this “strange” land and now agree that He has a new life for me here. And my response is to worship Him, to sing His praises, to sing His song to this land which is no longer strange, but MY HOME.

Questions

1. Where has felt like a place of estrangement and exile to you?
2. How did you find God in it?
3. How could God be calling you to bring new life in the place you are currently in?

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