

# Minutes For Mission

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## Minute for Mission A

Our Bible is filled with stories of journeys. From the chronicle of how God's spirit moved across creation in search of a caretaker in Genesis, to Jesus' call in the Great Commission - to go and make Disciples in all nations - the People of God have been on the move.

Unfortunately, sometimes that movement reflects the last possible choice for families in crisis. War, disaster, a changing climate or devastated economy have forced millions over the years to seek safety as refugees.

Since 1946, Church World Service, the relief, development and refugee assistance ministry of 37 member communions such as ours, has been called to resettle refugees, allowing them to escape warfare, civil strife, oppression and statelessness. Since the end of World War II, your mission partner, CWS, has offered life-giving resettlement to more than 800,000 persons. At every step of the way, there have been congregations like ours who have stepped forward to serve as co-sponsors, mentors and friends to newly arrived refugees on behalf of the Church.

Today we celebrate that effort and recognize that the world is facing a refugee crisis we have not seen in generations. At this moment, there are more refugees in the world than at any time since World War II. Fighting rages in Syria, with families fleeing for safety. Sectarian violence has forced men, women and children from their homes in the Central African Republic on a scale that has not been seen in decades. Persecution of minority groups like Rohingya endures in Asia.

The threat of violence forces parents to send their children away, unaccompanied, in Central and Latin America because for them, sending their children away, alone or in the care of strangers is an even safer option than staying put. Week of Compassion helps us to be there for them.

The offering we make today is steeped in more than just decades of tradition. It is rooted in responding to Christ's call to welcome the stranger. The Week of Compassion offering connects our church's resources to others to provide help beyond just emergency food, water and shelter. Our offering will help people in need begin a new life free from violence, persecution, shifting climate -- a new life with hope for the future.

From the journey of his Disciples in following Jesus in his ministry to John's writing of the Book of Revelation, in exile, on the Isle of Patmos, the people of God have been on the move. We have the chance today to answer God's call. Let us respond generously to help as one Church. As we offer our gifts, let us be mindful not only of the assistance for those forced to flee their homes. May we also recognize that in giving, we, too are moved in our journey to live ever more in Christ's image.

## Minute for Mission B

Our faith calls us to respond to people in crisis. Sometimes crises occur from forces of nature and sometimes they are the result of violent acts of persecution: what we - human beings - do to each other. The gospel has much to say about this. It empowers us to respond in our own time, as we reflect upon the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

The current conflict in Syria is the world's single largest refugee crisis in nearly a quarter of a century. The four-year conflict has forced more than 9 million people from their homes. That's more than 40 percent of the country's pre-war population. Over 4 million Syrian refugees who have fled to neighboring countries, and an additional 7 million remain displaced inside Syria - in cities, towns and rural areas.

Life for Syrians in exile is increasingly difficult. Most live below the poverty line and in sub-standard shelters. Hope of returning home diminishes each year the civil war continues. As the rate of poverty increases among refugees, practices such as child labor and child marriage are on the rise amongst families in the deepest crisis. In the already vulnerable surrounding countries, communities are straining to sustain support for refugees as competition for employment, land, housing, water and energy grows.

We can respond to the crisis in Syria and to other tragedies across the globe. Donations to *Week of Compassion* not only sustain a response to issues of global refugee displacement and war, they go to support our efforts to welcome refugees as they arrive in the U.S. and adjust to a new life.

Matthew 25 states: *"Come, you that are blessed. . .inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. . ."*

This passage marks some of Jesus' final words to his disciples before ascending to heaven. The text is more than a call to help - it is a final judgment on whether Christ's people have acted with compassion towards those in need. Here we learn that the 'good news' comes first to the ones in crisis. Christ comes to us as the "least" - the hungry, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner.

*Week of Compassion* provides an opportunity to act *together*. In Syria. In Africa. In Asia, and Latin America - wherever there are needs for care, to live out Christ's call.

As we heed the call of our faith - across denominations, working together in unity, as one ecumenical body - we are invited to make more of an impact than any one of us could alone. Together we can make a difference. Not only can we address the immediate needs of those displaced by war and persecution, we can also address the long-term issues of poverty and social injustice. This is the gospel mandate, and the gospel hope.

## The Committee for Week of Compassion

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### **2013-2016**

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### **2014-2017**

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Richie Sanchez, Indiana Region

### **2015-2018**

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