



"Where you go I will go;  
where you stay I will stay."

Week of  
Compassion  
Special  
Offering

February  
21-28, 2016

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2016 Planning &  
Resource Guide](#)

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# Week of Compassion

## Welcoming Refugees Beyond all Fears

Last December, as our nation grappled to understand that refugees are the most heavily screened of all entrants into the US, fear enveloped some communities. When one Syrian refugee family was denied access into Indiana, this amazing Disciples story from decades ago was shared for inspiration, once again, in this time of unprecedented need:

As repression by the Nazis deepened in late 1938, a middle class Jewish family quickly lost their jobs and were evicted from their apartment, forbidden to attend public school, and saw their synagogue destroyed. Fleeing Germany, the parents and their young daughter (right) came to New York and were later transferred to a refugee hostel in Iowa. It was then that members of the Christian Church in Eureka, Illinois chose to say "no" to fears and move *beyond* only praying. Instead, they drove to the hostel in Scattergood, Iowa, interviewed the daughter, and offered to welcome her family into a furnished apartment in their community that had rarely known Jews, let alone German-born Jews.

From their loving welcome, that young refugee girl learned acceptance, the meaning of community, and how people with differences can live together in peace. Both parents found employment in Eureka- and the girl, Irmgard Wessel, eventually graduated summa cum laude from Eureka College. "She never forgot the fear and desperation of being refugee and a new immigrant...and she became a lifelong advocate for others," wrote her son just months ago, now on staff at the Brookings Institution.



*Irmgard Wessel*

Today, Week of Compassion partners with a diverse array of organizations around the world committed to welcoming refugees, including churches like First Christian Church in Falls Church, VA (photos below), which continue to demonstrate their welcome by building relationships across cultural and religious differences. May God, who calls us to "love one another" continue to be made manifest in our welcome beyond fears for refugees and all who are vulnerable among us, through Week of Compassion in partnership with Refugee & Immigration Ministries, and with your congregation.



*Shared by Eureka Christian Church with Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries, and told in a 2007 issue of Disciples World magazine. Summarized by Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea, RIM Director*

## Featured Video & Resources during Special Offering (weekofcompassion.org/videos)



### Discussion Prompts:

*With Adults-*

Consider these two quotes: the first from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the second from Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz.

- "And in the Incarnation the whole human race recovers the dignity of the image of God. Henceforth, any attack even on the least of men is an attack on Christ, who took the form of man, and in his own Person restored the image of God in all that bears a human form. Through fellowship and communion with the incarnate Lord, we recover our true humanity, and at the same time we are delivered from that individualism which is the consequence of sin, and retrieve our solidarity with the whole human race. By being partakers of Christ incarnate, we are partakers in the whole humanity which he bore." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*
- "In my understanding of solidarity and compassion, it's not in any way about what I do or what I give others. It's the interconnections we create with other, how we support each other. For an article on Christology in my book *La Lucha Continues*, I interviewed Latinas. I learned that they don't see God as the "magic God" who makes things happen. No. They see God as walking with them. God sustains them *en la lucha*, in the everyday struggle. That's who God is for them. That is what Christ means. Jesus is with them, sustains them." Ada Maira Isasi-Diaz, interview with *Sojourners Magazine*
- In light of these quotes and the video, how would you describe solidarity?

- How are solidarity and compassion related? How are they part of Christian identity and ethics?

#### *Intergenerational-*

- "This is Not My Face" Story Exchange (adapted from the Narrative 4 Story Exchange Model: [www.narrative4.com](http://www.narrative4.com)):  
In this activity, people will tell one another's stories as a way of experiencing empathy and building relationships.  
Split the group into pairs, ideally in a way that promotes generational diversity in each pair. Begin with a time of introduction between the partners. Next, give each person ~10 minutes to tell their partner a story about a time they needed help, large or small (be clear that the story may be shared with the group). Then, give ~15 minutes for the partners to discuss the stories, ask each other questions, and become familiar with the stories. Gather the group back together. Ask for volunteer pairs; each person will share their partner's story *in the persona of their partner*. (e.g. Jose and Martha are paired. When Jose shares Martha's story, he speaks as "Martha." And vice versa.)

#### *With Children-*

- The young woman in the video says, "this is not my face, but this is the face of hope for a new future." Talk about what kinds of things the kids hope for and what we as a church hope for. Invite the children to write or draw their hopes for the world on origami paper. Use the paper to make peace cranes like the one featured in the video.  
(Consider displaying the cranes in a visible place in the church, perhaps with materials for other church members to create their own cranes.)

#### **For Worship:**

This video could work well as a call to worship, inviting us into the story of God's hope.

Call to Worship:

*show video*

Leader: This is our story! A story of solidarity.

**People: Ours is the story of God who walks beside us.**

Leader: Ours is the story of Hagar and Ishmael who were cast from their home,

**People: but who encountered God in the desert.**

Leader: Ours is the story of Ruth, who journeyed in grief,

**People: but who established a new life beside Naomi.**

Leader: Ours is the story of Jesus, who had no place to lay his head

**People: but who made his home among us, bringing close the very presence of God.**

Leader: Ours is the story of faithful disciples, who walk alongside their neighbors

**People: and who bring hope for a new future.**

Leader: This is our story! Come, let us share it again.

# Our Global Responses Since February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Where you built relationships with struggling neighbors



Tanzania, Refugee Support



Taiwan, Earthquake Relief