



**"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

Your Compassion in the Middle East

By Peter Makari, Executive, Middle East and Europe, Global Ministries

During a visit to the Middle East this January, I had the chance to witness the work of our partners that Week of Compassion is supporting to respond to the humanitarian needs of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Jordan. Due to the 5-year-old Syrian war and the increased instability in northern Iraq, with no end in sight, Syrians and Iraqis have fled to Jordan and elsewhere to find some semblance of peace. More than 12 million Syrians--more than half of the country's population--have been displaced inside Syria or are refugees in neighboring countries. The need for food, medicine, clothing, heating, and shelter are immediate for refugees who have recently been forced from their homes, and for those who have been there longer. On this recent trip, I helped to distribute winter coats, small space heaters, and basic food parcels to about a hundred refugee families. They were grateful to receive the assistance, but still hope to settle somewhere where they would be able to resume a stable life. Week of Compassion continues to support the work of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Middle East Council of Churches, who respond to those needs in Jordan, and several other partners throughout the Middle East, including in Syria and Lebanon.



Early in the morning, boys run amid the tents in the Zaatari Refugee Camp, located near Mafraq, Jordan. Opened in July 2012, the camp holds upwards of 20,000 refugees from the civil war inside Syria, but its numbers are growing. Week of Compassion is active in the camp through our partners, providing essential items and services. Photo: Paul Jeffrey

On the same visit, I also saw the more than 65 years of displacement of Palestinian refugees in Jordan. Their status as refugees clearly is a more permanent reality, as they went from tents to constructed buildings for homes some generations ago. Despite longer experience as refugees, two Palestinians told me they still hope for a resolution of their status, even as they need plumbing repairs and improvements in their sub-standard and basic shelters they call home. The Middle East Council of Churches continues to work with Palestinian refugees in Israel/Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon, implementing programs of community development, vocational training, and education for children and youth. Again, Week of Compassion is there, supporting this Christian witness in response to need.

The global refugee crisis will only grow. As a church, we can and should do what we can to respond to the basic needs of people in crisis, advocate for their rights, and work to improve of the conditions they have fled--all so that they can enjoy life in its fullness, with stability, and in peace.

Facebook Overlay to Raise Awareness



Turn your compassion into action to resettle refugees, respond to disasters, and end the cycles of poverty. Encourage others to do the same by adding this overlay to your Facebook profile picture!

Step 1) Change your overlay here:

<https://app.profileoverlays.com/.../week-of-compassion-overlay> or visit facebook.com/weekofcompassion

Step 2) Share

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



Discussion Prompts:

With Adults-

- Read together Luke 19:37-40.
What strikes you in the story after having watched the video?
Reflection: In the story, the Pharisees try to shut up the people, but Jesus tells them the cry cannot be silenced, for if the people cease, the stones will take up the cry. Similarly, the young woman in the video refuses to be silenced by the threats of terrorists, but insists her story be told.
How can we ensure her story, and others like it, are given voice?
What other stories and cries need to be given voice today?

Intergenerational-

- Use the Youth Activity II: "Where you go, I will go" from the 2016 Planning & Resource Guide. Take note of the line in the video: "Week of Compassion has been there, helping us every step of the way."

With Children-

- Read the book *Amos and Boris* by William Steig (Amos is a mouse who loves the sea. When he is shipwrecked in the middle of the ocean, Boris the whale carries him safely to shore. The two become very good friends, and one day Amos finds a way to help Boris.) OR the book *The Lion and the Bird* by Marianne Dubuc (A lion finds a bird hurt and stranded in his garden. The lion decides to help the bird, and the two become fast friends.)
Some questions:
What acts of help and friendship did you notice in the story? In the video?
What makes someone a friend?
Can we have friends who are very different from us?

For Worship:

- If you are using the theme scripture from Ruth 1 as your primary text on Sunday and working with the theme of solidarity, this video could work well before or during the sermon as an illustration of what it means to walk in solidarity with refugees. Especially salient is the line: "Week of Compassion has been there, helping us every step of the way." Through the relationship of Week of Compassion, her story meets our story, and as Ruth promised Naomi, her people become our people. For further reflection, see the sermon starter in the 2016 Planning & Resource Guide.
- If you are using the lectionary text Luke 13:31-35, consider this video in connection with how we as the church take on the posture of Christ as "the mother hen, gathering her chicks." Barbara Brown Taylor writes in *The Christian Century*, 1995: "this is the most vulnerable posture in the world --wings spread, breast exposed." We, as the church, are called to take this posture, to offer compassion, protection, and hope to those who are suffering and in danger from "foxes" like Herod in the text.

Our Global Responses Since February 9th, 2016

Where you built relationships with struggling neighbors



Nepal, Earthquake Recovery



Indiana, Fire Relief