

RESOURCES FOR IMMIGRATION-FOCUSED WORSHIP

Note: These resources are designed for you to use in your congregation's Sunday morning services, small group meetings, or Sunday school classes throughout the year. They are a simple way to incorporate into the life of your congregation scripture's themes of hospitality and God's call to welcome the stranger.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Loving the Least of These

Leader: We are a community of faith that has been created by the love of God.

People: We are the people who have been set free by forgiveness in Jesus Christ, and are, therefore, a people called to reach out to the sojourners in our midst and in other lands, people whose lives cry out for the warm embrace of fellowship.

Leader: We have come not to exalt our own goodness, but to praise the holiness of God.

People: We have come not to boast of what we have done, but to proclaim the redeeming work of Jesus Christ by extending our hands to refugees, displaced persons, and asylum seekers.

All: With all our being, we will praise God and tell of God's goodness in our acts of kindness and love toward the "least" among us in our times.

Adapted from the United Methodist Committee on Relief website (gbgm-umc.org/umcor/refugees/rworship.stm)

Coming Out of the Land of Bondage

Leader: Let us come to worship the God who brought our people out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of bondage.

People: We are no longer strangers and sojourners but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Leader: If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

People: By showing hospitality to strangers, we entertain angels and welcome Jesus.

Taken from the World Council of Churches website (www.oikoumene.org/).

PRAYERS

A Prayer for Traveling Mercies

Loving and merciful Jesus, we pray for our migrant brothers and sisters who are traveling today. Have mercy on them and protect them from harm and humiliation in their journey. They are identified by many as dangerous simply because they are strangers. By the grace of God, let us value them instead. Touch our hearts with your goodness, Lord, when we see them enter into our communities seeking work and wellbeing. May their hearts not be broken; may their hopes for a better life be fulfilled.

Protect their families. As we remember the families who are divided or who mourn the deaths of their loved ones, let us promise to seek justice, peace, and an end to the building of walls that divide us. May

we honor those who have died in our deserts with the commitment to seek dignity for all humans.
Amen.

*Adapted from the Peace and Justice Support Network of the Mennonite Church USA website
(peace.mennolink.org/articles/immigprayer.html).*

God of the Migrant

God of the widow and the stranger,
you are made known in our Savior Jesus Christ.
Born as a migrant,
exiled as a refugee,
he knew the pain of homelessness
but taught his friends the meaning and challenge of love.
Lead us as we seek to build a church rooted in Christ's hospitality and justice. Amen.

*Adapted from the World Council of Churches, "In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples," November 1997
(washingtonmemo.org/newsletter/spring09/worship-resources/).*

A Prayer for Refugees

Our Gracious Lord,

There are many in Your world today who have been forced from their homes by persecution and violence. Keep them in your constant care, and bring them to a place of safety.

Be the Good Shepherd to refugees who are in flight. Guide them to the green pastures of safety. Be the Everlasting Father to refugees who have lost home and loved ones. Lead, protect, and provide for them.

Be the Great Physician to refugees who are suffering. Grant them healing and hope. Be the Hiding Place to refugees who are languishing in camps. Shelter their souls as well as their bodies.

Be the Deliverer to refugees who have been able to return home. Restore their lives so that those who have sown in tears may reap in joy. Be the Wonderful Counselor to refugees who have been resettled. Help them find their way in a new land.

Be the Giver of all good gifts to those who serve refugees. Empower them to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with You. Be the Lord of lords to all the earth, that those who rule would do so in justice and righteousness, and no one would have to become a refugee anymore.

We ask these things in the precious and powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

*Taken from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
(www.lirs.org/site/c.nhLPJ0PMKuG/b.6063153/k.B383/World_Refugee_Day.htm).*

For the Courage to Do Justice

O Lord, open our eyes that we may see the needs of refugees;
open our ears that we may hear people's cries for justice;
open our hearts that we may assist sojourners near and far.

Show us where love, hope, and faith are needed.
Use us as ministers of your healing.
Let us not be afraid to protect the weak because of the anger of the strong,
or to defend the poor because of the power of the rich.
Sustain us so that in these coming days we may be able to do some work of peace for you.
We ask these things in your blessed name. Amen.

Taken from the United Methodist Committee on Relief website (qbgm-umc.org/umcor/refugees/rworship.stm)

For Forgiveness and Courage from Our Refugee God

Today, Gracious God,
we worship you who are the one born among us:
born, like many refugees, in makeshift conditions,
surviving amidst bloodshed and terror,
forced to leave your place of birth and go to a foreign land.
Born as one of us, we worship you, Refugee God.

Today, Gracious God,
we worship you as one forced to flee from danger,
avoiding those with murderous intent,
finding a home far away from the center of worship and action.
Born as one of us, we worship you, Refugee God.

Today, Gracious God,
we worship you as one who lived with those forced to the edges,
as one who taught and demonstrated the great depth of love
you have for each person, whether homeless or stateless.
Born as one of us, we worship you, loving God.
We thank you for the wisdom of strangers from the east
who found and worshiped you in a stable,
and we thank you for the faith of the Syrophonecian woman
who extended your mission.

We confess we are not always open to the wisdom strangers bring.
We do not seek to live amongst those whose lives are disrupted.
We give importance to status and grandeur.
Forgive us.
We thank you for your graciousness.
You continually come to us speaking words of love and forgiveness.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Taken from Refugee and Migrant Service, Aotearoa, New Zealand, sourced through the World Council of Churches website (www.oikoumene.org/).

A Confession

Forgiving God, we have sinned against you.
When we saw refugees in the news, we said:
"We'll send some money."

And we thought we had done all we could do.
When we saw immigrants in our community, we said:
"Just keep them away from our jobs."
And we thought we were just being realistic.
Then we heard your voice saying:
"I was a stranger and you welcomed me."
Forgive us, God, for turning our backs on you.

Adapted from the World Council of Churches website (www.oikoumene.org/).

LITANIES

Litany for World Refugee Day

Leader: Mighty Lord, as you guided the Israelites, through the wilderness,
People: be a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day for refugees in search of new hope and new life.

Leader: As you brought the Israelites out of bondage to freedom,
People: bring refugees out of persecution to safety.

Leader: As you protected the Israelites through 40 years in the desert,
People: protect those who languish for years in refugee camps.

Leader: Wipe away their tears of sorrow
People: that their mourning may give way to joyous hope.

Leader: Put an end to warfare and tyranny
People: that some may return home without fear of violence.

Leader: Open the doors of safer nations
People: that some may find new homes in new lands.

Leader: Rebuild their lives
People: that they might enjoy the fruit of their labors in peace.

Leader: Restore their material goods
People: that they might sustain their families in prosperity.

Leader: Revive their hope
People: that they might face a future with promise.

Leader: Surround all refugees with your heavenly host,
People: that they might know your protecting power.

Leader: Sustain them with your love
People: that they might feel the warm embrace of welcome.

Leader: Strengthen their bonds of friendship and family,
People: that they might serve one another with encouraging love.

Leader: And inspire your churches to welcome the stranger,
All: that together we might build communities of hope where strangers become neighbors and friends, and brothers and sisters. Amen.

*Taken from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
(www.lirs.org/site/c.nhLPJ0PMKuG/b.6063153/k.B383/World_Refugee_Day.htm).*

Litany for Care and Understanding for Refugees and Immigrants

Leader: For refugees and other displaced persons who have been forced from homes and security, we pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the people and the land from which refugees have fled, we pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the humane and constitutional treatment of refugees in our nation, we pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For perception to see Christ in the strangers we welcome, we pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Creator God, our groans are your groans.

Creator God, we groan with what the world experiences regarding migration and movement of people across national borders. Often times we do not understand what this means.

Creator God, we groan because we often do not know how to best respond to the stranger, the refugee, the immigrant, and the displaced who often walk from one land to another land or who walk daily into our lives. We groan because we do not always know how to participate in your Kingdom-building work here on earth.

Creator God, as we groan may we remember to pray for your children around the world who experience migration troubles. May we remember to pray for your children who experience violence and destruction. May we remember that your arms extend to all.

Creator God, as we shed our tears help us understand what you ask of us as your children arrive in our communities. May we see each other's tears as signs of love and solidarity with those who experience uncertainty and anxiety. May we remember that our tears help us understand that we too are strangers in this land.

Creator God, in our groans I pray that we will remember to trust the Spirit in all of what is happening in the world and in our local communities regarding welcoming your children. May we remember that your Spirit prays for us when we reach the end of words. May we remember that we are never prayerless.

Creator God, may we find in our times of silence your wisdom to know how to best participate in your Kingdom-building work with the oppressed, the stranger, the refugee, the immigrant, the displaced, and the downtrodden.

Creator God, may we remember that our groans are your groans. Amen.

Written by Gilberto Perez Jr., member of Waterford Mennonite Church Goshen, IN and director of Bienvenido, a mental health prevention program for Latino immigrants.

Taken from the Peace and Justice Support Network of the Mennonite Church USA website (peace.mennolink.org/immigration_worship.html).