



“What are you doing here, Elijah?” | Kings 19:9

Refugee Sunday Resources June 23, 2019

Making the World Safe

For more than 70 years New Zealand churches have welcomed refugees into our communities, giving practical help and making friends with newcomers. Refugee resettlement became a core shared ministry of the National Council of Churches which was established in 1945.

Stories of migration, hospitality, and people seeking safety or asylum are constant threads through the Scriptures. As well as helping to welcome people in our communities, we have expressed this tenet of our faith by sharing what we can with displaced people around the globe. In a year where we have seen extreme violence, we encourage everyone to work together to make the world a safer place.

In this year's resources, we take time to think and pray with people who have been uprooted from their homes. We remember them in prayer and where we can, offer practical support. In the Methodist and Presbyterian calendar, Refugee Sunday follows World Refugee Day on June 20 — this year June 23. The Anglican calendar has set July 7 as Refugee Sunday— an adaption of these resources is [available](#).

On Refugee Sunday CWS asks people to give generously to Operation Refugee so our partner DSPR can keep the lifeline going to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. Funding has fallen significantly and they need more funds for education, medicine and other support.

At 75, Qasim Yahia Ali has returned home to the old city of Mosul in Iraq. His house was destroyed in 2017 when Islamic State was defeated. He had lived in the city making money by selling clandestine liquor under Islamic State rule.

Photo: ACT Alliance/Paul Jeffrey

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Christian World Service is a member of the [ACT Alliance](#) (Action by Churches Together)





Education, a Priority

When Bothayana first arrived from Syria, she did not go to school. In Lebanon lessons were in English or French which she could not speak. Bothayana missed years of schooling—something she found very distressing. A few years ago she was excited to find the Sidon Centre run by DSPR Lebanon taught in Arabic and followed the Syrian syllabus. Now 24, she is working hard for her final exams, which she hopes to sit next month. She is talented and keen to make a name for herself as an artist.

For the last six years DSPR Lebanon has taken groups of refugee students back to Damascus for the few weeks it takes to sit the Baccalaureate and Brevet exams. DSPR organises the trip ensuring visas, accommodation, and their safe return. It is the only opportunity Syrian refugees have to get these qualifications, vital for their future.

Photo: CWS/Trish Murray

Call to Worship

Today, we remember refugees and people who have fled their homes, living in fear for their lives.

Loving God,
In our hardest moments, you stand with us.
You protect us and keep us safe.
You give us the hope and courage we need to face challenges

Knowing what you do for us, we welcome everyone to this safe place. Amen

Children's Talk

You might like to tell the story of Elijah running from conflict into the wilderness and how God looked after him. Alternatively you could 'Walk the Talk'. At the front of the church, have a few heavy packs, blankets, awkward food items or whatever. Invite them each to take one item and think about what it would be like to have carry a heavy load. Walk them around the church, perhaps on an imaginary journey where you point out rocks, mountains and danger. As you go explain what a refugee is and why we all need to help.

Loving God, We pray for children and their families from Syria. Keep them safe and give them the food they need. May they find peace and a new life. Amen.

"What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Today's lectionary readings provide many entry points for reflection:

1 Kings 19: 1-4 (5-7) 8– 15a

Elijah fled for his life after the dramatic showdown with Jezebel. Angry at his total victory, Jezebel wanted him dead. Elijah went into the Sinai wilderness towards Mount Horeb. Facing danger from every direction, Elijah despaired asking God to 'take away my life' (v 4). Instead an angel touched him twice telling him to 'Get up and eat' (v 5, 7). Finally, he obeyed, eating enough to last the 40 days and nights he was in the wilderness.

Elijah did not lose the sense of who he was. He sheltered in the cave (v 9) perhaps the same one as Moses, and God came to him (v 9b). The sound of God passing provides powerful drama to the story where Elijah confronted his destiny (v 14). God had plans for Elijah: to anoint Hazael king of neighbouring Aram (Syria), Jehu as the new king of Israel (v 16) and Elisha as his successor (v 16), forging a strong alliance between the three. Once a refugee facing imminent death, Elijah had work to do.

Psalms 42 & 43

These two psalms form one lament, expressing a sense of abandonment but confidence in 'the God of my life' (42:8c). Mt Hermon is on the border of Lebanon and Syria and extends to the Golan Heights. At 2,814 metres it is the highest point in Syria.

Galatians 3: 23-29

Paul considers the role of the Jewish law. Once we have discovered the new faith in Christ, we are no longer dependent on the law for guidance but rather on grace (v25-6). Baptism into the emerging Christian community signified a change in allegiance (v 27). The old social distinctions have no meaning and all have a place in this “grown up” faith community.

Luke 8:26-39

Like a refugee or an internally displaced person (IDP), the man with demons had fled from home. He lived among the tombs, too dangerous to be approached. The region of Gerasenes in northern Palestine was home to ten military outposts and a centre of Roman control. Jesus named the demons as ‘legion’, presumably alluding to the many occupying troops in their midst. Legion refers to a unit of 3000 - 6000 men in the Roman military.

No wonder the local people were afraid when they saw the healed man sitting quietly at Jesus’ feet (v 35). His power to free the man signalled something potentially dangerous. Frightened or at least nervous they asked Jesus to leave (v 37). The healed man wanted to follow, but Jesus sent him home to ‘declare how much God has done for you’ (v 39).

Refugee Sunday prayer *Thanks to Kate Boardman, [Decision maker](#)*

Loving God

Today on Refugee Sunday, we pray for all people who through violence, disaster or persecution have to leave their homes.

We pray for people who are persecuted – because of race, religion, gender or political opinion. May they find acceptance.

We pray for people who have to flee due to war, violence and human rights violations. May they find peace.

We pray for people who are travelling, risking everything for the chance of a new future. May they have safe travels.

We pray for people in camps – temporary places that can last for months, years even decades. May they be in a place of safety.

We pray for the people and organisations providing care for those in need – shelter, food, water, health, education, and safety. May they be supported.

We pray for those who are waiting for decisions to be made about their future. May they be treated with kindness

We pray for governments and the people who elect them. May they have policies of compassion and inclusion, not hate and division.

We pray for communities who welcome refugees. May we have open hearts, minds and arms.

Loving God, please ignite in us a passion for helping refugees, wherever they are on their journey. Amen

*A **refugee** is a person who, 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.'*

UN Convention on Refugees, 1951

***"Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border."** UNHCR*

Refugees By Numbers (2017)

Note: [UNHCR](#) will announce 2018 figures on World Refugee Day, June 20.

- 68.5 million displaced people
- 40 million people are internally displaced
- 25.4 million are refugees of whom 6.3 million are from Syria, and 5.4 million are Palestinians
- 3.1 million are asylum seekers
- 85% of the world's displaced people are in developing countries
- 102,800 people were resettled.
- 44,400 are forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.





A New Start for Omar

One of the students was Omar who had been thrown out of school for laziness and bad behaviour. His father brought him to DSPR Lebanon and asked to enrol him in a vocational training programme. The director told them that he would have to change his behaviour before he could join anything. Under the guidance of the teachers in the drop out programme, he started to understand the lessons and learn how to think. His behaviour improved and he asked to return to his old school. The teachers could not believe his transformation. He is now doing well and shared his story with the whole school at graduation. *Photo: CWS/Trish Murray*

Take Action

The world has grown tired of war in Syria and there are other crises. After 7 years, funding is short, but the refugees know it is not safe to return home. CWS is appealing for donations to sustain them until they can. Consider a special offering or a midwinter event to raise funds as part of Operation Refugee. A bulletin insert is [available](#).

The [Operation Refugee](#) challenge is for people who are passionate about helping refugees. Live on refugee rations or walk the talk, raising money as you go. The 2 or 5 day challenge can be done until September.

Resources

Watch a [video](#) featuring refugee students in Lebanon made by Christian Aid.

Read [Becoming Human Together](#), a theological reflection from Christian Aid and Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees.

CWS Responds to Syria Need

CWS has an [appeal](#) open for Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Funds will assist long term partner the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) be the lifeline to refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. As a programme formed and managed by refugees, DSPR responds to their needs from deep experience. For example, they have been able to negotiate safe passage for Syrian students to sit school exams in Syria and their safe return to Lebanon - refugees are not normally allowed to come back once they have left. Funds raised in this appeal will help meet school and medical costs, provide psycho-social support and run training programmes, especially for women.

Making the World Safe

Migration is a tough issue that we should not shy away from as Christians concerned about God's world. CWS supported the successful campaign to increase the numbers being resettled in Aotearoa New Zealand and acknowledges the work of churches and others involved in that work. We are grateful to our generous supporters who have helped all of our partners working to end violence and create peace and a better future in our world.



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