



“What you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops”

Matthew 10:27b

Refugee Sunday Resources June 21, 2020

No Justice. No Peace.

Last month the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police propelled people on to the streets. The long struggle for justice has been rekindled. We choose to listen to the voices of anger and the cries for change. We need to work together to build a kinder and fairer world where every person has what they need to live well—as God intends for us all. Black lives matter everywhere and so we work together for substantive change in the systems that cause harm and force people to flee. The words of Jesus in today’s readings exhort us not to be afraid.

World Refugee Day is marked on June 20 each year. Refugee Sunday falls on June 21 this year in the Methodist and Presbyterian calendar and on July 5 in the Anglican calendar—an adaption of these resources will be available.

In this year’s resources, we focus on people who have fled in fear for their lives and are creating new lives somewhere else. We take time to listen to their stories, pray for them and where we can, offer practical support. Perhaps you could join this year’s [Operation Refugee](#) which runs to November 30.

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.

“What DSPR Lebanon gave us is more than musical instruments. What they really gave us is hope and all that is good in the world.”

Osama Zidan, musician, teacher and refugee from Syria (pictured above)

Photo: DSPR Lebanon

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



Healing with Music

"My groups and I share the same soul. When someone gives you an opportunity like this, you really put your mind to it, because you are afraid to lose the only thing that gives you hope."

Osama (pictured right)

Like many refugees from Syria, Osama left everything behind. The horrific images of the war haunted him, but more than anything he missed his oud (a type of lute), guitar and ney (a type of flute). He ached to play the instruments that meant so much to him. So when he heard that DSPR Lebanon wanted to set up a music programme for troubled children and young people, he immediately went to the Saida Centre, near the Ein El Hilweh camp run by the UN.

DSPR Lebanon said if he formed a group they would find the traditional Palestinian instruments. The young people were keen and the instruments secured. Osama discovered a new passion, teaching. He loves sharing the beautiful world of music with his eager students. Music can alleviate their suffering and help them forget if only for a little while, he says.

"The programme gave me and a lot of young people the opportunity to spread our message that life is worth living."

CWS supports the work of DSPR Lebanon.

Today, we remember people who long for justice. We remember refugees and displaced people and all those working to make the world a safer, fairer place.

Call to Worship

In the dark of the night
We find hope in the stars
In the breath of the wind
We find life in the seagulls
In the ever changing earth
We find strength in the care of one another.



**In this time of uncertainty, we look for you loving God.
Give us the strength to challenge what is not right,
The courage to stand alongside those who are hurting,
The hope to keep believing that justice will come. Amen**

Children's Talk

There are many stories about refugees in the Bible. Today I want to tell you about a mother and child who lived in ancient Israel. A very long time ago a woman called Hagar lived as a slave with Abraham and Sarah. She worked hard but when Sarah's young son Isaac was about three years old, Sarah found him playing with Hagar's son Ishmael. Sarah was not happy and demanded that Hagar and Ishmael leave their home. Ishmael's father Abraham was distressed but God promised they would survive if he let sent them away. So Abraham gave Hagar and Ishmael bread and a skin of water—the ancient Israelites stored water in animal skins—and sent them away into the desert. They no longer had a place in the tribe. They walked a long way before they reached safety, but God took care of them.

Today we think about refugees who may have to walk a long way. Can you trace your feet on to paper and decorate them (older children could write prayers) on the feet)? When you are done we can tape them as a pathway of hope onto the wall to help us to remember all refugees.

Loving God. We pray for families who have fled their homes. Keep them safe and give them shelter and food to survive. May they find peace. Amen.

"What you hear whispered"

Genesis 21: 8-21

This is a very tribal story involving power plays. Sarah as matriarch sends Hagar to sleep with Abraham. Once her own son is weaned, she realises Ishmael's presence may be a threat to Isaac (v.9). Wanting to secure Isaac's rights as first born and wary of Hagar, she demands Abraham cast them out (v.10). Abraham reluctantly sends Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness (v.13). They run out of water and Hagar not wanting to watch her weakened son die (v.16) leaves him in some bushes. God intervenes, directing Hagar to a well (v.19). It is a story of God's care and protection to a displaced single mother and her beloved son with underlying strains of racism.



Off to school in Iraq.

Photo: ACT Alliance/Paul Jeffrey

Psalm 86: 1-10, 16-17

The psalmist uses familiar words of longing. In desperation he humbles himself before God (v.1) and calls for help. Let us read this together as the prayer of a refugee or displaced person.

Romans 6: 1b– 11

In the section from Romans 5:1-6:11, Paul describes what happens when a Christian joins the 'Jesus-community' and is reconciled to God, signified in baptism. No longer bound by old social distinctions and laws, Paul says 'so we too might walk in the newness of life' (v.4c). Being alive to God (v.10b) is to be a new person. What does this mean in a world where 70.8 million people have been displaced from their homes and many more are deprived of the basic necessities of life—as though their lives don't matter.

Matthew 10:24-39

According to Matthew following Jesus is not easy. He was writing for people whose world was defined by their family. The family provided the only security and support. To leave this protection could put a person in great danger. Jesus turns this support structure on its head, challenging the social and economic order. In a turbulent time a new Christian could not rely on family or their old community for food and protection. Instead they become part of the 'Jesus-community', operating by different rules and in the confidence that they are in God's care. In these tumultuous times we can find strength in our shared faith. "Do not be afraid," says Jesus (v.31).

Refugee Sunday prayer

Merciful God. We pray for all people in danger, those seeking refuge and fleeing for their lives, who face hunger and discrimination, whose voices are not heard.

May they find the help they need to not only survive but to live well. May they find a warm welcome and new opportunities. May they be safe.

Help us to look beyond our own fears and concerns to stand with people displaced and unfairly treated as we challenge treatment that is not right.

May our ears be attuned to voices we have not heard as we work together for justice and peace. In Jesus' Name. 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 [or her] 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 (2018)

Note: [UNHCR](#) will announce 2019 figures on World Refugee Day, June 20.

- 70.8 million displaced people
- 41.3 million people are internally displaced
- 25.9 million are refugees of whom 6.7 million are from Syria, and 5.5 million are Palestinians
- 341,800 million were new asylum seekers
- 85% of the world's displaced people are in developing countries
- 92,400 people were resettled.
- 37,000 are forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.

Closing Prayer

May you draw strength from this time together so you can face the uncertainty of today.

May you find courage to face what is troubling you and to reach out to the people you meet who need justice.

May you find God's peace as you walk with others, making our world a kinder, safer place.

We go in peace and in love.

Blessed are the peacemakers.
Amen.



Over 860,000 Rohingya people have found refuge in Bangladesh. Now Covid-19 has arrived in the camps, ACT Alliance is adding education, handwashing and hygiene support to its work.

Resources

Operation Refugee information including the Kete and PowerPoint.

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

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



Operation Refugee

CWS invites you to join this year's [Operation Refugee](#) which runs from June 1 to November 30. It is an opportunity to stand with refugees, offering them the prayer and practical support they need to keep going, especially in this time of Covid-19.

We have expanded Operation Refugee to give participants new fundraising options and a way to respond directly to the spread of Covid-19 in refugee communities. Funds raised will enable the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees to provide medical care, education for all ages and emergency food rations for refugees from Iraq, Palestine and Syria in Jordan and Lebanon. For example, Osama runs music groups for students in Lebanon and others cover the whole Syrian syllabus for High School students in Arabic (rather than French, the medium of instruction in Lebanon) who are some of the only Syrians able to sit their final exams thanks to DSPR. Much of the work is voluntary but has been life-saving for so many.

There are two streams, one focusing on food and the other on walking:

- Under [Food for Life](#), participants can choose to live on the Food Box (equivalent to an emergency food package that will feed a family for at least two weeks) or \$32 for five days or two days for students. CWS has boxes available to 40 people who have raised \$87, the cost of an emergency food parcel for a family for a fortnight on request.
- Alternatively, Operation Refugee chef Grant Allen suggests organising a Pop-up Banquet for a group big or small. After so much time in our bubbles, this could be a fun way to do something to show our concern for others. You may like to invite former refugees as guest to the party—contact Eric for advice.
- The second option is, [Walk the Talk](#), emphasising the journey people who leave their homes make. Participants can set their own walking goal or organise a sponsored walk or similar event.
- Last year in Christchurch Eastern Churches Together walked the length of their parish to show their support. They plan to do it again later this year when the weather is warmer.

Fundraising is online and organiser Eric Park is offering assistance to those who might need extra encouragement. He is keen to talk to anyone who is interested. Phone: 022 377 6606 or eric.park@cws.org.nz.

Refugee Week runs from June 16-20, finishing on World Refugee Day. Join Operation Refugee any time before November 30.