



Refugees from Ukraine  
waiting to register for  
assistance in Poland.

# WELCOME!

## Refugee Sunday Resources

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**Christian  
World Service**  
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# INTRODUCTION

Each year the United Nations marks World Refugee Day on June 20. In the Methodist and Presbyterian calendar, churches will remember refugees on June 26 this year. Anglican churches have designated July 3 for Refugee Sunday. **Welcome!** includes stories, reflections, notes on the Bible readings for both Sundays, prayers and actions to assist your church or group to focus on the needs of people seeking safety and shelter in our world today.

*"I was a stranger and you welcomed me..."*

*Matthew 25:35*

## Welcome!

Beginning with Adam and Eve, the Bible recounts many stories of people needing safety and a new home. Through these stories we can explore what it means to go into exile or flee from danger, perhaps into a harsh life in the desert. Jesus understood this experience and in Matthew reaffirms this ancient imperative. We can encounter Christ in the face of a stranger, someone who is different from us.

On Refugee Sunday, take time to explore what it means to welcome Christ as the stranger - and the ways we can assist people who have fled fear and persecution wherever they may live. World Refugee Day focuses on every person's right to seek safety . Whoever. Wherever. Whenever.





# FOR CHILDREN



*Begin with a warm welcome and  
a simple snack*

Lynette Heine used Michael Bond's story of Paddington Bear at the Uniting Church in Moana, Greymouth on the West Coast. The service, earlier this year, focused on refugees and included reports from a local family with connections to Ukraine. The children made and decorated sunflowers. Wolfy (pictured above) received a new hat. His owner reported that he shook his head like crazy but then calmed down for the photo shoot.

Maryanna (pictured right) left Ukraine in March. She was delighted to find a playroom at the Budapest airport in Hungary where she could write to her friends. Read her [story](#).

Colour and cut out lots of feet. You could write prayers on them. Tape them to the floor or on the wall as a **Pathway to Peace** for all refugees.



*Photo credits: ACT Alliance, Community World Service Asia, DSPR Lebanon, EAPPI, FCA/Antti Yrjönen, HIA, LWF, Lynette Heine, Paul Jeffrey, and St Francis Church.*

# FOR CHURCHES

## WELCOME!

Think for a moment of a time when you were made welcome in an unfamiliar space. What made the difference was likely to be one person who spoke to you and invited you inside. A person who is genuinely interested in you makes the transition so much easier.

Jesus was one of those people that made most people feel at ease. In the Gospels we read the stories of his encounters with strangers. Each one has an intensity that makes it easy to imagine enjoying a wedding banquet or a massed picnic of bread and fish beside the lake with him. Such gatherings build community and a sense of togetherness. They can deepen our relationship with God and God's world.

When we read the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, this is what he means by welcoming the stranger. Refugees, asylum seekers or displaced, all people are loved by God. Welcoming strangers give us the opportunity to show that love, and to encounter the Christ in others. We live together in the world that God loves. **On Refugee Sunday we commit ourselves to the task of remaking the world into a place where all are welcome.**



## IN SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE

*In March the St Francis Church of Tairua held a three day vigil for Ukraine.*

Ken Francis reports, "Jackie, one of our members, set up an art installation (pictured above) in our church. We advertised locally that our church was open to anyone who wished to come and spend time pondering the Ukraine situation in a peaceful setting .

To be honest, we didn't get much of a response from the community, but we parishioners felt it was a worthwhile thing to do, and a tiny activity that we could operate in solidarity with what's happening in the Ukraine."

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# READINGS FOR JUNE 26

## 2 KINGS 2:1-2, 6-14

Elijah sits alongside Moses as one of the great leaders of the Israelites. As a prophet, he maintained an important counterbalance to the northern kingdom's rulers. King Ahab actively supported the worship of Baal, the religion of his wife Jezebel (1 King 16:31). These stories give some light into the tensions of small populations vying for resources and influence in a small area of land.

Elijah was a powerful figure who openly challenged Ahab and his court about their lack of respect to Yahweh. One of the people Elijah impressed greatly was, Elisha, a farmer (1 Kings 19:19). Elisha learned all he could from Elijah and became his leading follower. However, such closeness does not always mean that succession is assured.

In this reading the writer of Kings tells the story of Elijah's death. Elisha asked for and received Elijah's final blessing before he ascended to heaven. He picked up Elijah's mantle before parting the river Jordan in order to walk across (v 13 – 14), showing he could work miracles. After years of following Elijah, Elisha was ready to take over the prophetic leadership of Israel.

In a small area of land with finite resources, there are often many tensions and competing interests between people divided by religion and culture. Perhaps in this story, we can see the challenges communities or peoples face when living in proximity. Elijah and Elisha played important roles for their communities during this contested period as prophets of Yahweh, the God of Life. Advocacy at the political level is important for the protection of refugees and displaced people.



# READINGS FOR JUNE 26

## **PSALM 77:1-2, 11-20**

We can hear the refugee's cry for protection in the words of this psalm. For all of us, the psalm offers consolation and perhaps strength in its reminder that God has helped us in the past. At times of great danger hope in God may be the only hope people have. Refugees can be traumatised by their experiences and worried about the future. Helping them keep going is the important life-saving work of psychosocial programmes and welcoming communities. In the difficult present, such hope is important especially for those caregivers responsible for children and older people. By supporting CWS's local partners, you can offer practical help: food, emergency funds, shelter, medical care, education and legal advice.



## **GALATIANS 5:1, 13-25**

The freedom of Christ has its roots in the real experience of slavery –something familiar to many people at the time Paul was writing. As people who do not often know what slavery looks or feel like, we need to remember its context to better understand this text. In this passage Paul contrasts the works of the flesh and the Spirit. The freedom Paul talks about is transformative – leading people of slavery. Love is its agenda – and a liberating gift of God. He underlines our absolute responsibility to 'love our neighbour' (v. 14) while warning of the destructive power of conflict (v. 15).

For those who live by the Spirit, the law is unnecessary (v. 23). Instead we live in relation to our neighbours and God. Paul encourages us all to prioritise love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (v. 22-23).

We tend to equate these fruits of the Spirit with being nice, but at a time when slavery and conflict are common, these qualities are what we need to challenge the power relations that keep people poor. When our neighbour is treated violently or denied shelter and safety, love drives us to speak out and demand protection from harm. The challenge is not to lose patience when we encounter obstacles and to find joy in working alongside others to transform our world.

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# READINGS FOR JUNE 26

## LUKE 9:51-62

We pick up the story of Jesus in the more hostile territory of Samaria. He has left his home in Galilee and is on a mission to Jerusalem (v. 51). The messengers that went ahead of Jesus may have alerted the Samaritans of the possible danger that surrounded his mission (v.52). The residents of one village did not welcome him.

Jesus responded almost harshly to three people he met who were considering following him. There was no gentle sales pitch here. Jesus was on edge. His words as recorded in Luke are a warning to potential followers: he offers no security (v. 58), demands total commitment (v. 60) and the mission is urgent (v.62). Jesus required complete commitment at that moment.

A parallel determination can be glimpsed in the faces of refugees seeking a future for their families. They have no choice but to risk everything in search of safety and many times endure incredible hardship in the hope of refuge.

This reading inspires us to greater commitment — our Christian faith compels us to offer hospitality and a warm welcome, to build relationships and address the causes of poverty and conflict that are the drivers of forced migration.



# RELATED READINGS FOR JULY 3

*"... let us work for the good of all..." Galatians 6:10b (NRSVA)*

## **ISAIAH 66:1-9**

In the final chapter of Isaiah, we find a collection of writings from the period soon after the return from exile in Babylon (520-515 B.C.E.). The experience of people enslaved by the Babylonians may parallel those of people who have returned home from another country or neighbouring community. While they were away, the community kept alive the culture and traditions of their people – something that permeates the work of CWS partner, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees working with Palestinian and Syrian refugees.

After years of longing, the Israelites have returned and are now facing the reality of rebuilding their community in a place that may be known more from story than reality. Many would have grown up in Babylon.

In this passage, the writer emphasises the importance of their (and our) relationship with God above the familiar rituals of faith. At this time of transition Isaiah uses images of God as mother, likening the tasks of rebuilding the community to that of giving birth. Building communities of welcome takes time and care.

## **PSALM 66:1-9**

This is a loud and noisy psalm – good for the middle of winter! In these words of thanksgiving, the psalmist evokes the history of the faith in Yahweh, the God of Israel, which has formed and shaped their people.

## **GALATIANS 6: (1-6), 7-16**

In this final chapter, Paul reminds the reader of our responsibilities to “work for the good of all” (v. 10b). His instructions focus on the well-being of the community and not on cultural practices like circumcision. In these large letters (v.11), we find words of guidance to those of us committed to the freedom of all people and the transformation of our world into a welcoming community. No matter what the obstacles, we must not give up as long as people face injustice (v.9). Our task is to remake the world into a place where everybody is welcome – “a new creation is everything,” (v.15b). Paul ends the epistle with words of peace and grace.



# RELATED READINGS FOR JULY 3

## LUKE 10:1-11, 16-20

Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem, the centre of religious and political power. He organised teams of people to go ahead of him, sharing his message with people living on the land and in the surrounding villages. First he sent a group of 12 in chapter 9 followed by a second group of seventy (a symbolic number). In contrast to the people who wanted to follow him in 9:57-61, the people the 70 meet were free to join his mission.

The instructions Jesus gave were very clear and have been used as guidelines for many groups of people. With no possessions (v. 4) and no obligations to family or authorities, the 70 shared local hospitality and peace, and healed the sick (v.5,9). With no possessions or local allegiance, these people could speak without fear of upsetting the powerful in the communities. Where there was no welcome, Jesus told them to wipe the dust from their feet (v.10-11).

**To welcome the stranger or 'the other' is the beginning of the change that our world needs to be a home for us all.**



# PRAYERS



God of all people

We pray for the stranger, for the refugee we will never meet, for the family who has lost father, mother, sister and brother, for the mother who has left food on the table and a garden growing, for the father who has left the security of his community seeking safety in the unknown, for the children who have left the familiarity of school and playground.

God of the Wilderness

We pray for all people, may they find strength, hope and peace that comes from you and our lives together.

We pray for those who light fear and hatred in people's hearts. May their voices be stilled and their clamour for war put aside. We pray for peacemakers—people who can build community rather than armies, who can stop violence that breeds more violence, and broker peace rather than war.

God of the Battlezone

We pray for all people, may they find strength, hope and peace that comes from you, our love for our neighbour and the welcome we give to the stranger.

We pray for the people of Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria and Ukraine, for every place where people have been forced from their homes. When they cry out for food, for shelter and for safety, may someone come to their aid. Help us respond to people with food, shelter, water, healthcare, education, community support and a warm welcome when they need a safe place.

God of the Peace

We pray for all people, may they find strength, hope and peace that comes from you and our lives together.

In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen

# PRAYERS

Loving God, We live in your world where people are hurting because of violence and war. Their lives are filled with pain and suffering – some may not make it through the day.

We pray for the mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children and grandparents who have no food or shelter, who lack medicine and protection, who pray without ceasing. Wrap them in your love and keep them from harm.

Teach us how to welcome the stranger, to stand alongside people who seek refuge and safety, to look for you in their faces.

We pray with them for peace in our world.

In the name of the one who comes as the Prince of Peace. Amen.

## GATHERING WORDS

Here in this place, there are no foreigners, for the love of God welcomes us all. Here in this place, there are no outsiders, for the love of God embraces us all.

Here in this place, there are no strangers, for the love of God unites us all.

Come, let us worship God in unity and love.

## COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

As you have been loved – love.

As you have been welcomed – welcome.

As you have been fed – feed.

As you have received – give.

And may the boundless love of God,  
the grace of Jesus Christ,  
and the presence of the Holy Spirit  
be always with you. Amen.

Welcoming the Stranger – Canadian Foodgrain Bank and PWRDF

## THE GAELIC RUNE OF HOSPITALITY

We saw a stranger yesterday.

We put food in the eating place,

Drink in the drinking place,

Music in the listening place,

And the sacred Name of the triune God,

He blessed us and our house,

Our cattle and our dear ones,

As the lark says in her song,

Often, often goes the Christ,

In the stranger's guise. *From the Carmen Gadelica*





# AN IMMIGRANT'S CREED



I believe in Almighty God,  
who guided the people in exile and in exodus,  
the God of Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon,  
the God of foreigners and immigrants.

I believe in Jesus Christ, a displaced Galilean,  
who was born away from his people and his home,  
who fled his country with his parents when his life was in danger.  
When he returned to his own country he suffered under the oppression of Pontius Pilate, the servant of a foreign power.  
Jesus was persecuted, beaten, tortured and unjustly condemned to death.  
But on the third day Jesus rose from the dead, not as a scorned foreigner but to  
offer us citizenship in God's kingdom.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the eternal immigrant from God's kingdom among us,  
who speaks all languages, lives in all countries,  
and reunites all races.  
I believe that the Church is the secure home  
for foreigners and for all believers.  
I believe that the communion of saints begins  
when we embrace all God's people in all their diversity.

*Written by Rev. José Luis Casal, the former director of Presbyterian World Mission in the USA.*

# MUSIC

Words for Worship in a Time of War – a liturgy for Ukraine prepared by The Wild Resource Group of the Iona Community.

The Church of Scotland selected songs to use in worship focusing on the war in Ukraine.

A little bit of salt by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette can be freely used in churches helping refugees and immigrants. (A link to music is included).

We pray for Afghanistan's People today by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette can be freely used including in online services.

By the Rivers of Babylon

In Christ there is no East or West

Let there be light O God of Every Nation by William Watkins Reid

Welcome Home – Dave Dobbyn <https://youtu.be/Wlz2uEuxyyk>



# ACTIVITIES

## A REFUGEE JESUS

Small group study to [download](#).



## WELCOME!

Create discussion through drama. Either invite two actors in your group to prepare a short skit ahead of time or divide into small groups to create a simple scenario that brings two people together who are obviously strangers to each other. For example one might be modern – a passionate anti-vaxer and the other a frontline health worker – and another from the Bible – a follower of Jesus and a member of the Samaritan village mentioned in Luke 9:51–62. Instruct the group to produce a short skit two ways: one that ends in conflict and disagreement, the other where the host welcomes the stranger. Each skit could be a few minutes long.

**Discuss:** Ask the audience to identify what changed between the two skits. Interview each actor and ask him or her to talk about what felt different.

**Conclude:** In places of difference, how can we rewrite the story?



## A SPEAKER

Invite a former refugee or someone working with refugees to speak to your group either as part of the service or in a special time after church.

## MAP MY JOURNEY

Display travel items beside a large world map.

Ask people to use sticky dots to mark each country where they have lived or for a smaller congregation, the places they have visited. Play some travelling music while they are placing their dots.

You may like to end with a short prayer.



# MONA AND FOUZIA

## MONA FROM PALESTINE

Mona grew up in the cramped Sabra/Shatila refugee camp with other Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. She lost her mother at a young age. The local staff would not enrol her in school because they thought she had Down syndrome. When she was 12, her desperate father sought help from DSPR. Mona finally received the attention and care she needed in the older women's literacy class. Not only did she learn to read but she thrived on attention from these mothers. Now 19, DSPR is helping Mona find work.



In seven years, Mona's life has been transformed. She is happy and self-confident. Her father cannot speak highly enough of DSPR's care and concern for Mona.

CWS supports DSPR in Jordan and Lebanon. DSPR provides emergency cash grants and food parcels, education and training for long-term refugees of all ages, help with livelihoods and medical treatment.

## FOUZIA FROM AFGHANISTAN

Orphaned as a teenager, Fouzia was adopted by her aunt and uncle. Last year when the Taliban took over Afghanistan, the family fled to Islamabad in Pakistan. Without official legal documents her uncle finds it difficult to find work and she cannot enrol at school.

Now living in a cramped apartment with three other families, Fouzia's family struggles for the basic necessities of life. After Fouzia began to suffer from severe headaches, her aunt took her to see the doctor but they could not afford the treatment.



In February they received the first of three cash transfers from Community World Service Asia which the aunt used to buy food and the medicine Fouzia needed.

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# DEFINITIONS AND NUMBERS



"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."

"**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



## DISPLACED PEOPLE BY NUMBERS 2021

- 89.3 million displaced people.
- 53.2 million people are internally displaced.
- 27.1 million are refugees of whom 6.8 million are Syrian and 5.8 million Palestinian.
- 4.6 million have sought asylum in another country.
- 1 in every 78 people is displaced.
- 72% are hosted in neighbouring countries.
- 41% of the displaced people are children.
- 57,500 people were resettled.

*UNHCR announced the figures for 2021 ahead of World Refugee Day, June 20. By May 2022, more than 100 million people had been displaced.*



# JOIN OPERATION REFUGEE

## Pray Walk Eat

Operation Refugee is a time to pray, walk and eat for refugees and displaced people. **It runs from June 20 to August 20.**

You might like to organise a Gathering, eat rations or walk to raise funds for emergency supplies, food, education and medicine for refugees.

The money you raise will help displaced people from Ukraine, Palestine, Syria and Afghanistan sheltering from conflict, violence and persecution in neighbouring countries.



*Sign up online Today!*  
**cwsoperationrefugee.nz**

**The United Nations reports a staggering 100 million people are displaced – the highest number on record. Through supporting local partners and churches we can share God’s love for each one.**



**Olena and baby Laura, Ukrainian refugees near the Poland/Ukraine border.**

Photo: ACT Alliance/FCA/Antti Yrjönen



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CWS is a member of [ACT Alliance](https://www.actalliance.org/) (Action by Churches Together).

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