



Refugee Sunday Resources 2017

“And She Departed” Gen 21:14b

World Refugee Day marks the founding of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on 20 June. Refugee Sunday is on 25 June or in the Anglican tradition on 2 July— see the alternative version. These resources can be adapted for your congregation or for private reflection.

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.’

United Nations 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

Photo: Four years ago, a displaced Syrian woman received food and non-food items at the Al-Khuder Orthodox church in Ezraa, Syria. Credit: ACT Alliance

Being #WithRefugees?

Every day people are leaving home and sometimes their country—embarking on a risky journey to an unknown future. Some won’t make it.

Every day another group of people make other decisions. Often far from conflict zones, they focus on their everyday life—with their own worries and risks. The groups seem a world apart—but they are not. We share the same world. On Refugee Sunday we want to help people connect.

In 2015, 65.3 million people were registered as refugees or displaced. On World Refugee Day, the UNHCR Agency will release the figures for 2016, likely to be higher. With record numbers of refugees, the demands of providing shelter and sustenance is more urgent than at any time in history. Millions of people have opened their homes and their hearts to help. The real challenge is to find new ways to enable people to find peace and security at home.

As we read the story of Hagar, may we find new meaning in the ancient tradition to welcome the stranger.





Rembrandt: "The Angel Appears to Hagar"

Children's Talk (or watch a video –see resources)

You will need a water container and some bread.

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 (around 15 years). Sarah was not happy and demanded that Hagar and Ishmael leave their home. Ishmael's father Abraham had no choice. He gave them 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.

How do you think Ishmael felt? What do you think he said to his father?

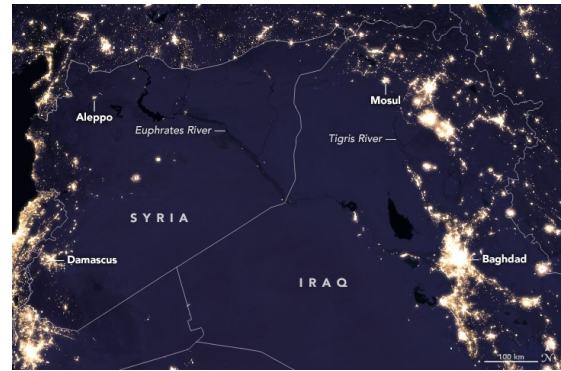
The Bible said they wandered about—looking for water and shelter from the desert sand and sun. In the heat it did not take long before they ran out of water. They become weaker.

You may like to wander around the church with the children before stopping to share the last drop of water and piece of bread with the group.

Ishmael tells his mother he cannot continue. She cannot bear to watch him die of thirst so she sits so she cannot see him. Hagar calls out to God for help. God comes in the form of an angel offering help to this family under great stress. The angel points to a well from which Hagar collects water. The family survived. When Ishmael is old enough, Hagar finds him a wife from her home in Egypt.

Hagar and Ishmael were refugees. Today there are many people like them who need help. Let's make a "Welcome" banner for our church wall and give money so CWS can help them.

Loving God, We pray for children and their families from Syria. Keep them safe and give them the food they need. May the fighting stop and peace begin. Amen.



http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/iddt-sh/syria_from_space_english

Operation Refugee

I walked by your place today.
Stars still out.
Pleasant.
I'm content to be free.

Breakfast.
Cereal? Eggs? Toast?
Replete.
Glad I'm not a refugee.

Work.
Wages by Friday.
Sufficient.
Glad I'm not a refugee.

Evening.
Transport, dinner, TV.
Comfort.
Glad I'm not a refugee.

Weekend.
Exercise. Social. Relax.
Rejuvenated.
Please give for the refugees.

Refugee walks through his camp today.
Stars still out.
Cool.
Will today be better?

Breakfast.
Lentils? Flat bread?
Insufficient.
Thank you for helping.

Work.
Doing a course.
Hopeful.
Thank you for helping.

Evening.
Walking, fried rice.
Scrimping.
Thank you for helping.

Weekend.
Thinking. Social. Worry.
Usual.
But thank you for helping.

Steph Mellors, a participant in CWS Operation Refugee 2017, living on refugee rations to fundraise for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.



Lectionary Readings

Genesis 21: 8 –21

This is a very tribal story and one where Sarah as matriarch exerts her power both in sending Hagar to sleep with Abraham and then in sending her away. 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.

Psalms 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 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 65.3 million people have been displaced from their homes and many more go hungry? One way Christians show their concern for their neighbour in need is the work of *diakonia*, loving service to others.

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, for example hospitality (v.40). In choosing to follow Christ, we are challenged to live out God's radical hospitality in Aotearoa New Zealand and in the wider world.



Syrian women improve literacy skills with DSPR.

Prayer for Refugees

Loving God

We pray for those who have been forced from their home by war, disaster and violence.

Like Hagar, they have fled and found refuge in unfamiliar territory.

Like Ishmael, they are young and have a right to go to school and receive medical care.

Like all of us, they live in a world where the power of violence to destroy can only be overcome by people taking action to end its hold.

We pray for refugees and displaced people. May they find shelter and hope. Strengthen those people and communities offering them hospitality and protection. Let us all work together for peace. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

CWS Responds to Syria Need

CWS is appealing for funds to help long term partner the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) respond to the needs of growing numbers of Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. They rapidly expanded existing services to the new refugees who began to arrive in 2011. This appeal will help them provide free medical care, education (for all ages) and the children's forums (craft, sport, dance and activities), emergency food and run Mother Support Groups, including health and small business training.

Operation Refugee is an innovative fundraising effort for people willing to live on refugee rations from 16-20 June or close to that time.



Young Syrian refugees are eager to learn.

Education is transportable and will help them whatever the future holds.

*Credit: ACT Alliance/
Paul Jeffrey*



Take Action

Donate: Thank you for supporting the [Syria Appeal](#). Your donations have enabled our partner the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees to assist thousands of refugee families in Jordan and Lebanon. They have provided emergency food and cash, run free medical days, organised education and forums for children, taught mothers small business and health skills and provided the support refugees need to live with the uncertainty of daily life. More than six years after the war broke out, they need even more support to keep the lifeline going to refugees.

Write: CWS is supporting the campaign, [Double the Quota](#). Although New Zealand is accepting 600 extra Syrian refugees over three years, the annual quota remains at 750. Churches have always played a leading role in refugee resettlement. Please think about writing supportive letters to the Prime Minister asking that New Zealand do its fair share. Double the Quota needs [help](#) to take this message into this year's elections.



Christian World Service
PO Box 22652,
Christchurch 8140
Tel 0800 74 73 72 or 03 366 9274
cws@cws.org.nz
www.cws.org.nz

Refugees By Number (2015)

- **65.3 million were forcibly displaced.**
- **21.3 million fled their countries.**
- **40.8 million were displaced within their own countries.**
- **5,057,986 Syrian refugees in Middle East**
- **937,718 Syrians have applied for asylum in Europe**

Resources

Local people in your community may be prepared to share their experiences as a migrant or refugee, or from travels in the Middle East.

Watch a [short video](#) made by our colleagues at Christian Aid. It features students attending the school run by DSPR Lebanon (called JCC or Joint Christian Committee for Service in Lebanon in the video). DSPR Lebanon has organised teachers and tutors so children can go to school. Each year they take students back to Damascus for three weeks to sit their final exams. They negotiate their re-entry to Lebanon (normally refugees cannot return if they leave), transport and support. This year more than 300 students sat their brevet and baccalaureate exams.

Watch a [short video](#) comparing life before the war and in present day Syria, produced by Google and UNHCR.

UNHCR has a new [Sign and Pass](#) campaign starring football players Lionel Messi and Neymar Junior to add names to a digital soccer ball and the #With Refugees petition.

Please give generously to the [Syria Appeal](#) to help families survive.

