



Refugee Sunday Resources 2017

“Whoever Welcomes You Welcomes Me” Matt: 10:40a

World Refugee Day marks the founding of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on 20 June. Refugee Sunday is on 2 July in the Anglican tradition or 25 June for Methodist and Presbyterian churches (See [“And She Departed”](#) for lectionary based resources). 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: Syria mothers discuss schooling for their children in Jordan . Credit: DSPR

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 other groups of people make other decisions. Often far from conflict zones, they focus on everyday life—with their own worries and risks. The groups seem a world a part—but they are not. We share the same world. On Refugee Sunday we want to help people connect with refugees in our own community and on the other side of the world. There are many stories of courage and compassion to inspire such reflection.

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 are more urgent than at any time in history. Millions of people have opened their homes and their hearts to help but the dislocation continues. The underlying challenge is to create new ways to build peace and security at home so people are no longer forced to flee.

As we read the story of Abraham preparing to sacrifice Isaac let us hear the voices of children, asking when violence will end and they can go home. Let us be always ready to welcome the stranger.





Marc Chagall: "Abraham Slaying Isaac"

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

You will need pictures of children from many cultures and places.

For older children at your discretion: Today I am going to tell you a very old and dangerous story from the Bible. There is nothing nice about it. The story is told from an ancient time when people made sacrifices to gods. Believing God has told him to offer his only son Isaac to God, Abraham sets off to the land of Moriah with a donkey, firewood, Isaac and two men. At a certain point, Abraham leaves the two men, taking Isaac with him. Isaac begins to worry as they prepare the fire and asks where is the lamb for the sacrifice. Eventually Abraham ties up Isaac and prepares to take his life. An angel intervenes, saving Isaac and points to a ram caught in the thicket which he then kills. Some Christians have said this as a story about Abraham's faith but others find it very disturbing.

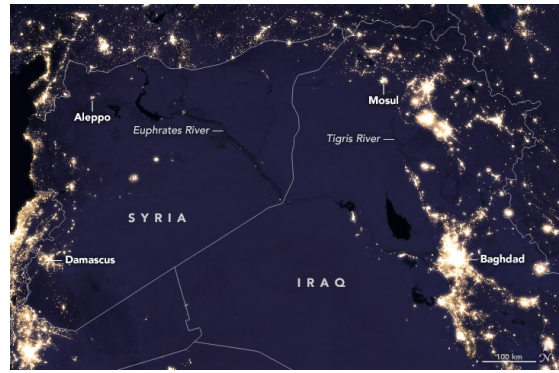
The story is violent and makes us feel unsafe—how would Isaac have felt? The story can help us think about what it might be like to live in a war zone where people are being killed. *Can you think of any places where there is war? What do you think it might be like to live in a war zone?*

For all children: Sometimes children have to leave their homes because it is not safe. Life is too dangerous so they leave home with only a few clothes and their things.

If you had to leave home in a hurry, what one thing would you take?

Choose one of these pictures of children. Could you tell me one thing you could do to make them feel welcome? Let's make a "Welcome" banner for our church wall and give money so CWS can help refugee children find the help they need.

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 22:1-16

This is a very tribal story, traditionally read as a story showing Abraham's great faith. Reading it from the perspective of Isaac, it is hard to miss the dangers in the story. Isaac would have looked forward to the journey with his father. Abraham may have been apprehensive or determined, we can only guess. The Bible does not say how long it took them to reach Moriah, but undoubtedly the feelings had changed by v.9. Scholars suggest Isaac would have been around 17 so tying up his son was likely to have been difficult. Isaac must have been traumatised by this terrible confrontation with his father. From Isaac's perspective this is a story of violence and the betrayal of his father. Interestingly, Abraham does not go home, but to Beersheba (v.19). Reading this text on Refugee Sunday puts us in touch with the violence in families and between communities or nations. It is an opportunity to examine these undercurrents that cause long lasting harm and animosity.

Psalm 13

This could easily be the prayer of a refugee or someone anxious about the future. The beginning words of desperation, move to a point of hope found in God.

Romans 6:12-23

Paul addresses this passage to members of the 'Jesus-community' no longer bound by sin but by grace (v.15). He uses analogy of a slave (familiar to his first audience) to show the community how the change of allegiance must transform their lives. This new way of living comes with the responsibilities of sanctification(v.22). Being enslaved by God (v.22) means we take our bearings from that which gives life.

Matthew 10:40-42

If ever we needed inspiration to welcome refugees, this text is it. Radical hospitality is one of the hallmarks of the Christian faith. From the very ordinary person to the prophet and righteous person, Matthew assures us of a reward for those who show hospitality. In Matthew's time as in our own, the challenge is to reach across our fears and uncertainty to people who are unfamiliar. In every conflict zone there are people of faith trying hard to broker peace and understanding.



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.

