

Refugee Sunday Resources 2018



“... Little Girl, Get Up.” *Mark 5:41b*

On Refugee Sunday (23 June, or 1 July in the Anglican tradition see alternative resources), we take time to remember the many people who have been displaced by war, conflict and in fear for their lives. It is a moment to reflect on our responsibilities to people on the move and in need.

Setting out on a journey is a familiar motif in the Christian tradition. There are many stories of migration in the Bible —people fleeing conflict, natural disaster, famine and persecution. Others tell of people seeking opportunities in new places or of being taken as captives or slaves into a foreign land (human trafficking). Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden. Noah and his family found safety in the ark they built. Mary and Joseph took the young Jesus into Egypt.

Beside these stories, are those of the people who offer hospitality and *manaakitanga* to strangers, as Abraham and Sarah did by welcoming 3 visitors (Genesis 18) - it was an accepted practice in a region crossed by trade routes. The honour of a person or family was tied up with their capacity to meet their obligations to care for widows, orphans and strangers. This tradition of care and hospitality has continued to be a core part of the Christian faith.

Churches have donated to many CWS appeals that have funded help for millions of people displaced at home or as refugees in neighbouring countries. In Aotearoa New Zealand, thousands of refugees and their families have been assisted to resettle by churches through the work of the former National Council of Churches, later the Refugee and Migrant Service. We acknowledge those offering hospitality to newly settled refugees and advocating on matters of refugee policy with the government.



"Since I came to Jordan, I was in trauma because of the death of my husband, where he was killed in front of my eyes. It forced me to be a regular visitor to the psychiatric clinic for a long period of time," Shireen.

A strong woman, Shireen has found new purpose in her role as group leader with new responsibilities outside her home. She is not sure what the future holds for her homeland. However, her bottom line will always be her own children – she is determined that they will keep up their schooling as she knows this is the best investment for the future.

Best Therapy: Helping Others

For two years, Shireen (*pictured on the right*) has worked as a volunteer with CWS partner the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, DSPR Jordan, part of the Middle East Council of Churches. The support of the staff and other women in the programme have opened up new possibilities for a woman who a few years ago lived comfortably in Syria.

She welcomes the chance to get out of her tiny apartment and meet with other women, something she would not have done back home. She says for her it is better than the 1,000 pills prescribed by the psychiatric clinic she attended when she first arrived in Irbid, a city close to the border with Syria.

One of the programmes DSPR runs in Jordan is a network of support groups for mothers. Leaders like Shireen are trained to work with their members, collect data and report any pressing needs to DSPR for further help. Shireen passes on what she has learnt to her group – lessons about health, how to improve livelihoods or community issues like gender based violence. In Syria, she had spent her days at home caring for her family, so the biggest challenge has been to find the courage to speak in front of a group.

Shireen's story is not an easy one. In 2015 with her four children she fled Dar'a, where Syria's uprising first began seven years ago.

With Children

Prepare Toasted Chickpeas, Rice Cakes, or Flatbread from the recipes in the [Operation Refugee Kete](#) to share as you talk about who is a refugee and how we can help.

Definitions

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 [her] nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him [her] self 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](#)



Lectionary Readings

II Samuel 1:1, 17-27

A young man came to David's camp with the news of the deaths of both Saul and Jonathan, claiming to have delivered the final blow to Saul himself (v. 10) cf I Samuel 31:3-5. After interrogating the man, David commanded one of his men to kill the Amalekite (v. 15). The passage read is considered one of the earliest Biblical poems and is a public expression of David's grief, especially Jonathan. It is interesting to see the acknowledgement of the women—the Philistine women rejoicing in victory (v. 20) and of Israel as chief mourners (v. 24). In the final verses he mourns Jonathan. In the next chapter, he will be anointed King of Judah. Conflict and war cause death and suffering. Men will die in battle and people will be uprooted from their homes. The grief compounds and affects future generations.

Psalms 130

From its opening words, this penitential psalm digs deep into the human soul. "Out of the depths" (v.1) alludes to the realm of darkness and death. From crying out to God in confusion and distress (v.1-2), to the acknowledgement of God's saving power (3-6), the words express deep feelings. The longing for freedom from chaos can be seen in the threefold repetition of waiting/watching in v.6—a feeling more intense than experienced by those watching for daybreak. In the final verses, the psalmist speaks to the whole community—redemption is not a right but a gift of God's grace.

II Corinthians 8:7-15

Paul notes the Corinthian achievements regarding faith, speech, knowledge, eagerness and love (v.7) but challenges them about economic matters. In v. 13 he encourages Corinthians to find a fair balance between their own needs and those of others. He expects them to give all they can (v.12) and commends Titus to them as the one who will collect these funds (v. 6) for displaced people now living in Jerusalem without adequate support. In the tradition of a tithe for Israel's poor, it is again a reminder of our obligations to people in need.

Mark 5:21-43

The writer weaves two contrasting healing stories in this passage. The more conventional story of the healing of Jairus's daughter and the woman with a haemorrhage who is healed after taking the initiative to touch Jesus herself. Both stories testify to the importance of healing as a



Operation Refugee

Freya (pictured with new friends, a Kurdish family from Syria) did voluntary work with refugees arriving in Greece during the crisis of 2015. She is participating in this year's Operation Refugee from 16-20 June:

"It was heart breaking to see the number of people who have had no choice but to leave their whole lives behind to try and find safety in a country where their lives are not threatened by war. Instead, they find themselves waiting for months, even years, in refugee camps before being granted asylum to be able to begin their lives again. Children don't get to go to school, adults are not able to get jobs, and families are living in tents or derelict buildings with very little food and limited, unhygienic amenities. These people are real, they are good, they are kind, they are generous and they deserve the same chance at life as we have. When visiting the refugee camps their generosity was evident; they have little yet they want to give everything they have to help others. Let's learn from the extravagant love that they show and love them in return, helping them to receive the life of freedom and peace that we all deserve."

core component of Jesus' ministry and of the church. Medical work and the establishment of hospitals and clinics like those run by DSPR are ways we continue this work.

The concern of Jairus for his daughter is noteworthy at a time when violence against women and girls is so prevalent. Falling at the feet of Jesus in front of a crowd was an act of social deference not normally expected of a leader at the synagogue (v.22). Many of the mourners in the crowd must have expected him to fail and therefore lose honour (v.40). In both stories, Jesus takes care to reintegrate the girl and the woman back into their communities.



Prayer for Refugees

Loving God

We pray for all people uprooted from their homes, for those who need food, water and protection, for those who have lost loved ones and experienced unimaginable harm, for those who struggle to deal with injury, loss and their memories.

May they find strength for each day.

We pray for those who can make a difference, for DSPR giving refugees the support and encouragement they need to take the next steps, for people and organisations that can provide safety and even broker the deals that could bring peace, for all of us that we might not forget the plight of people who have lost so much.

May we find strength to open doors that are closed and change policies that are unjust.

In our world, broken by violence and injustice, we ask for the courage to face up to our responsibilities as citizens of the world and followers of Jesus, the master of hospitality.

May we find the strength to make sure no one is left behind.

Loving God, hear our prayer.

Amen

Refugees By Number (2016)

- 20 people displaced every minute
- 65.6 million were forcibly displaced
- 22.5 million refugees
- 40.3 million internally displaced
- 5.3 million Palestinian refugees
- > 2.5 million smuggled migrants

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Take Action

Operation Refugee is for people who are passionate about helping refugees. You can join the challenge or support someone else.

Donate: CWS, part of ACT Alliance, assists people displaced in large scale emergencies, meeting the highest humanitarian standards. Please support refugees and displaced people:

- Syrian Appeal
- South Sudan Appeal
- Rohingya Appeal
- Gaza Appeal

Help: If you live in Auckland, Dunedin, Invercargill, Manawatu/Whanganui, Nelson, or Wellington, you may be able to provide practical help to a family being resettled. Contact your church or the Red Cross.

Read: about the UN Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration under negotiation.

Write: to the Australian High Commissioner, HE Mr Ewan McDonald asking for the release of refugees held on Manus Island and Nauru.

Resources

Ask **local people** in your community to share their experiences as a refugee or migrant.

Watch The Syrian Garden made by ACT Alliance regional partners or a 2017 video featuring refugee students in Lebanon made by our colleagues at Christian Aid.

Read Becoming Human Together, a theological reflection on migration - Christian Aid and Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees.

