

God With Us

**Worship resources
on the theme of
refugees, migration
and sanctuary**



Foreword

In the early spring of 2019 I shared in a pilgrimage following in the steps of the Holy Family as they escaped from Bethlehem into Egypt. Jesus, Mary and Joseph escaped persecution and certain death by leaders who sought to maintain power, and whose purpose was to deflect difficult political issues at home, away from themselves. My own journey across Egypt meant visiting places where the Holy Family hid, deep underground. It meant going into the desert, and travelling through inhospitable places just as the Holy Family did. A journey no one makes except when life is threatened.

In 2015 CTBI took a group of Church leaders to the Eidomeni crossing in northern Greece at the border with Macedonia. We saw the human tide of men, women and children passing through, all with stories and nightmares to leave behind. It was a journey in which many would suffer, either at the hands of border guards or human traffickers. As Europe has thrown up its walls we realised the need to welcome the stranger in our midst, to feed the hungry and to offer hospitality and welcome. The last five years have not been kind to those seeking that shelter, that place of sanctuary. And so it is good to come back and read the now repeated stories from our own scripture about the Holy Family and those who were escaping persecution. It is good to sing and pray and gather strength.

We must now redouble our efforts, as political turmoil swirls around the reality of a climate crisis, forcing those who have scratched a meagre living in their own place, onto the refugee road. The impact of the Coronavirus outbreak and what this means for the future only adds to global uncertainty. This is a crisis that will not be solved easily or quickly and we will be required to stand with those who have no-one to stand for them. It is part of our own journey, our own pilgrimage towards justice and inclusion.

Bob Fyffe
General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

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The Exiles: an introduction to the topic

The image (opposite) titled, *The Exiles*, by Edinburgh-based artist Lou Davis was chosen for the cover of this resource for a number of reasons. It is simple, yet eye-catching and with a clearly religious theme that evokes the Holy Family's flight to Egypt.

With the title *God With Us*, in this resource we hope to also express something of the migration made by God in the incarnation, where he became fully human in Jesus Christ.

The picture of the person attempting to cross water to reach safety has become imprinted on the general consciousness in Europe over the past five years. The safety colour of life jackets is often the only brightness in otherwise bleak and forbidding stories. Yet there is a risk with this image, which is that it confirms a stereotype that all refugees crossed water, all are always in danger, all are victims. Of course, people forced to flee their homes deserve sympathy and support – but the experience of the Church throughout the world is that migration enriches our common life, both secular and sacred. Refugees must never be defined by victimhood, but should be recognised as human beings, created in God's image and with as much chance to flourish and thrive as anybody.

And so we ask you, if you belong to a receiving community or if you are an asylum seeker, refugee or migrant yourself, not just to pray *for* others but to pray *with* others. We have worked ecumenically to create this resource and we hope it will be used by people from many different Christian traditions.



What we mean by...

Christians uphold and respect the assertion that every human person is special, that life is precious, and that there is a common duty to uphold and promote human dignity.

And so it is always with caution that we should apply labels or attempt to define people, especially when it is increasingly that often the term 'asylum seeker' or 'migrant' carries a negative or pejorative connotation. The media, politicians and many people will use terms like 'migrant', 'immigrant' or 'refugee' fairly interchangeably, which can also make it confusing. As Christians we are first of all asked to see God's image in the people we meet and not to label them. Yet it is important to set out some of the UK legal definitions involved in working with migrants at the start, as understanding these is necessary to understand the particular circumstances and potential needs of people you might meet or pray with.

Migrant

- lives or intends to settle somewhere other than their place of origin
- could have many reasons for moving

Asylum seeker

- flees their homeland
- arrives in another country, whichever way they can
- makes themselves known to the authorities
- submits an application for asylum or another form of international protection
- in the UK, has a legal right to stay in the country while awaiting a decision

Refugee

- has had their claim for asylum or another form of international protection accepted by the government of another country or has been resettled by the government of another country for humanitarian reasons
- can now stay either long-term or indefinitely

Internally displaced person

- has been forced to leave their home
- remains within their own country (has not crossed an international border)
- can have the same humanitarian needs as refugees, asylum seekers or others crossing an international border

Refused asylum seeker

- has been unable to prove (or the authorities have not accepted) that that they would face persecution back home
- has been denied protection by the authorities
- must now leave the country, unless they wish to appeal the decision or there are legitimate reasons why they cannot yet return home
- In the UK, has no right to accommodation, welfare or employment; destitution can often mean homelessness and relying on charities for support.

Economic migrant

- has moved to another country to work
- could be legally or illegally resident
- may or may not have a legal work permit



Bible Studies

In the following studies we have used the Contemporary English Version of the Bible unless otherwise specified. Information about contributors and links to external sources can be found on page 71.

Migration within the Hebrew Scriptures

Ann-Kathrin Knittel

Migration was a common phenomenon in the first millennium BCE and is therefore reflected in its various aspects in the Hebrew Scriptures. One of the earliest and most well-known examples is the story of Abraham. His journey from Ur to Canaan was triggered solely by God's command. Most of the other stories are examples of forced migration; many illustrate how people had to leave their homes for economic reasons, e.g. famines: Abraham and Sarai (Gen 12:20), Isaac and Rebecca (Gen 26), Jacob and his family (Gen 37–50), the widow from the story about Elisha (2 Kgs 8), Naomi and her family (Ru 1). Many others were forced to leave their home for political reasons. Many had to move compulsorily and resettle on the command of foreign rulers (2 Kgs 17), others had to flee from oppression (Ex 6–15). The Israelites consider their own identity as foreign to the land they live in. This helps us to understand better the struggle over identity and relations to foreigners. By saying what they are not, they say something about what is important for Israel.

Related to this subject is the declaration of individuals or groups as "other". The Hebrew Scriptures differentiate between temporary visiting foreigners (hebr. *nokri*) and those who are permanent foreign residents within Israel (hebr. *ger(im)*). Who actually was a foreigner was not easy to define, since socially, politically, ethnically and geographically it was a highly fragmented territory. Social status was inherited and passed down within families and therefore strangers evoked a sense of potential destabilisation and threat. When people settled permanently within Israelite territory, they gained certain rights and duties and the status as "*ger*". They were able to purchase houses, receive social support together with widows and orphans if they became poor (Lev 19:10; Dt 24:19–21) and were expected to observe the Sabbath rest. The Israelites were reminded to keep this regulation in remembrance of their own history: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. (Dt

5:15)" Similar arguments appear several times within the legislative texts of the Hebrew Scriptures (Ex 22:20; 23:9; Lev 19,33f; Dt 10:19). Furthermore: the commandment of loving your neighbour is explicitly bound to the foreigner. Interestingly enough, nowhere are *gerim* discerned by their reasons or their motives for migrating.

To ponder

- **When we define what we are not, we want to say something about what we are. Can you think of any examples of this within your country's history, the church's message or your own life?**
- **Looking on your own "history": what have you learned that you would like to pass on? How does your experience shape how you treat others?**



Genesis 4:1-15

Adam and Eve had two sons

David Bradwell

What do we know about Cain and Abel? Cain farmed the land; he stayed in one place, fixed and rooted. Abel farmed sheep and so would have been a nomadic wanderer, leading the flock to water and pasture. Could it be that in this story God is more pleased with the migrant than the person fixed to the land?

Following the murder of Abel by Cain, what is God's punishment? It is exile, forcing Cain to become a wanderer himself. But with God's mark Cain's life is protected. And so this is not just punishment, but redemption – a chance for Cain to be like his brother. A chance for him to give up his territory and instead tread lightly on the earth.



To ponder

- In the balance between nationality and faith, which holds more importance to you?
- How can our lives better reflect God's concern for humanity and the world?

Genesis 12:1-5

Leave your country, your family, and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you

Laurent Vernet

God asked Abram to leave his homeland with his whole family. He obeyed, and took Sarai with him. He was seventy-five years old; Sarai may have been younger but she was too old to bear children. Leaving everything behind at their age when you may have expected to be well-established must have been difficult and heart-breaking.

We are not given reasons as to why Lot (his nephew) comes with them, though as Abram and Sarai did not have children, he was the legal heir and we know that Abram and Sarai took all their possessions with them. Had Lot come with them to keep an eye on his inheritance or as a loyal and helpful nephew? We don't know but later in the Bible we may prefer one option over the other.

We don't know why God asked Abram to leave Haran. Political, social or economic hardship? Abram and Sarai were wealthy and able to leave with the means to live. They were not destitute. At this stage, they had no idea where they would end up. They were facing the desert, the unknown, and an uncertain future. It is only later that they knew where they were going but even then it was not the end of their journey.



To ponder

- What would make you leave the place you thought you would live your whole life?
- If you had to leave your home, where would you go? Another country where you have family and friends? Or speak the language? Or share the same religion?

Genesis 17:1, 5, 9-16

I now change your name from Abram to Abraham

Laurent Vernet

Within the Abram/Abraham saga, it is not clear when Abram and Sarai finally arrived at their destination. In chapter 17 we can assume they have arrived. There, God asks Abram and Sarai to change their identity; changing their names and making a painful commitment (at least for Abram) to be more acceptable. The painful commitment is circumcision.

Moving to another country can involve many personal and social changes. Sometimes when people arrive in a new country with a different language they give up or adapt their name to the new context. It may be to hide the fact that they are not a “local” (it was the case during WW2, when migrants arrived in Britain or the US, that they anglicized their names). It may also be because people are not familiar with that specific name or can’t pronounce it. In all cases, whilst changing your name can be a relief as a new start it can also be a very painful experience not to hear your name again.

Often, like a circumcision, someone moving country must give up part or parts of their past identity. It may feel like losing a part of self. That change could be giving up a career, a social function, a dream or a passion (music, arts, sport...). Moving country often involves a change of identity and maybe social personality.

To ponder

- If you had to move place and change your name, how would you feel?
- If you were forced to move to a new country, what would you find the most difficult to give up? Your job? Hobby? Friends or social circle?

Ruth 1:1, 4:13-17

Before Israel was ruled by kings

David Bradwell

The first verse reminds us that it was a time 'when judges rule'. That is, before the days of kings. This is very important. The first verse also points out that when there was a famine, Elimelech took his family to live in Moab. We could have a debate about whether they were economic migrants looking for a handout, or refugees forced to flee otherwise disaster would overtake them. Perhaps when you see refugees on the news you might think that the world today is not so different from ancient times, where many people have to live precariously.

Compare then this first verse with the last verses of the book. Here we read about Ruth's descendants: son Obed, grandson Jesse and great-grandson David. Remember how the book started – in a time before kings. And here as it ends it is looking to the future, to David, to the greatest of all the ancient kings. And that at the heart of his ancestry is this woman Ruth, a Moabite. Someone with very little social standing. And yet without her story, the history of God's people would have been very different.



To ponder

- When we meet migrants and refugees in our society, what do we imagine their contribution could be? Do we ever think about what impact their children or grand-children might have in years to come?
- Instead of thinking 'what can we do for refugees', how can churches reframe the question to be 'what are the gifts and potential of the stranger in our midst'?

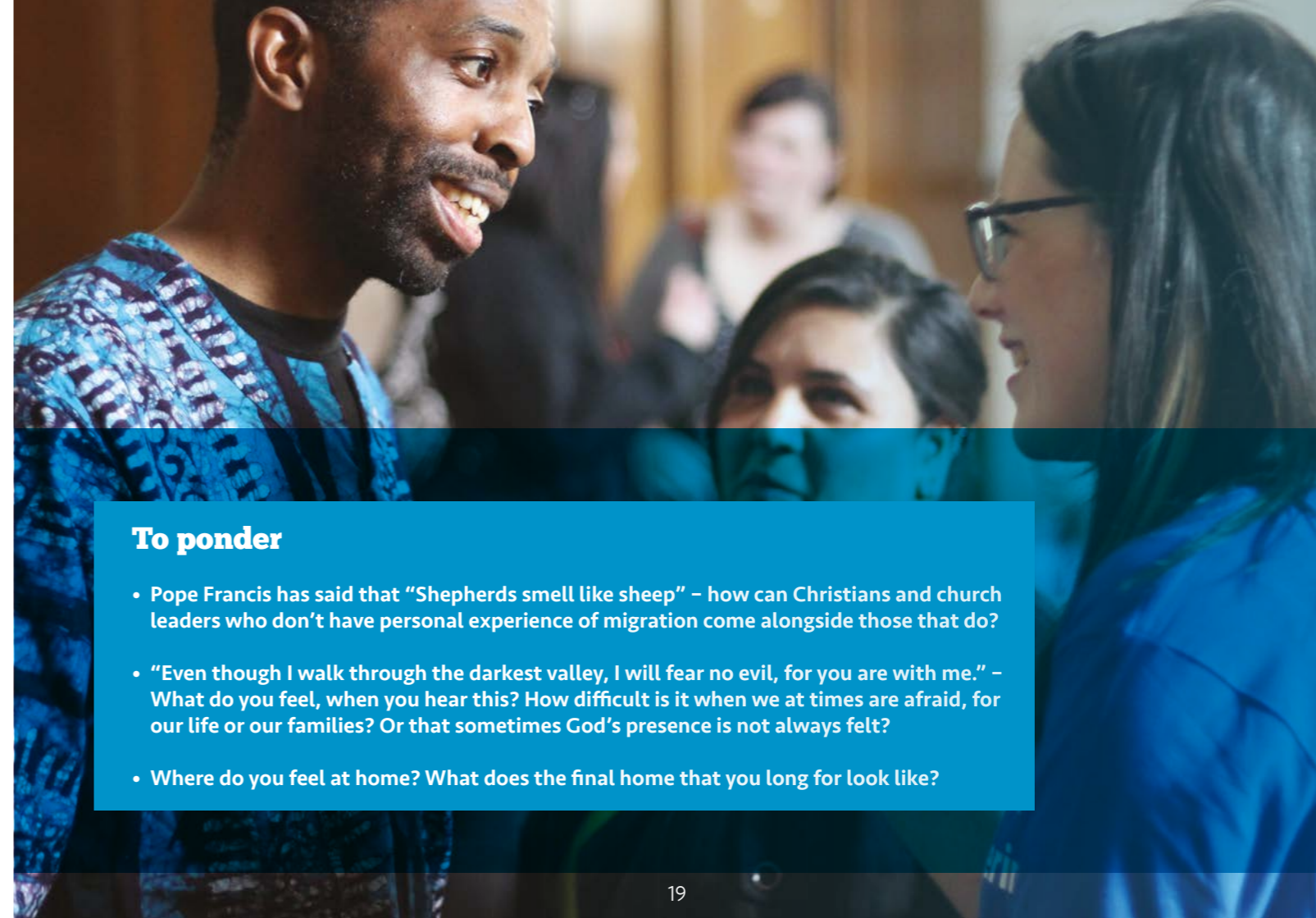
Psalm 23

You, Lord, are my shepherd

Anne Ross

At first glance, Psalm 23 might seem like an idyllic description of a romantic scene of a flute-playing shepherd with a woolly flock of sheep. But this image, often seen on devotional postcards, is far from what it is really like to be a shepherd. Fresh grass and water are sometimes hard to find and there are wild animals, hostile bandits and predators that must be parried in order for the flock to recover. The shepherd has to secure the basic needs of survival. In the old orient the shepherd was an image for the ruler who took care of the people. So in the Psalm it is an image for God, the good ruler, who does not leave people alone but walks with them and offers them places to find rest on their way. The prayer confesses: “He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters.” This sounds a bit like home. But not a home where you have always been; rather, the one you came to, are coming to and will come to. A home is not something you make, but something you find. It is a gift. A gift from God.

In the second part of the Psalm (verses 4-6) the image changes into God, the generous host. As the shepherd cares for and secures life, the host does the same but in an increased form. The cup overflows. While the shepherd can only offer temporary rest, there will be a final home in the house of the Lord. A home is a fragile gift that can easily get lost. Being a Christian means to stretch out our hands for this gift. Knowing that there will be a final home in the house of the Lord can encourage us to engage here on earth, in green pastures and in dark valleys.



To ponder

- Pope Francis has said that “Shepherds smell like sheep” – how can Christians and church leaders who don’t have personal experience of migration come alongside those that do?
- “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” – What do you feel, when you hear this? How difficult is it when we at times are afraid, for our life or our families? Or that sometimes God’s presence is not always felt?
- Where do you feel at home? What does the final home that you long for look like?

Psalm 72:12-14

Don't let them do to me what they want

Carol M Bechtel

Putting flowers on a loved one's grave is one way to say, "I love you.
I miss you. I remember you."

Francesco Piobbichi's drawing (right) gives us a brief glimpse into a young boy's grief. The boy stands at the edge of the Mediterranean Sea, which has become a mass grave for over 35,000 refugees in the last decade. The statistic is staggering, yet this glimpse into one young boy's grief has the power to move us in ways that statistics do not. It makes us wonder who he lost—who he misses—who he remembers. And it may even make us wonder, "What can I do to help?"

Francesco Piobbichi is a relief worker with Mediterranean Hope—an organisation that seeks to save and welcome refugees trying to make their way across the Mediterranean. One of the ways Piobbichi has answered the question, "What can I do to help?" is by reminding us that each statistic has a story. He describes it this way: "My drawings tell a story that otherwise would be consigned to the oblivion of the sea".

Psalm 72 is a prayer. In fact, it may be a prayer written by King David for his son and successor, Solomon. Yet, the author of the prayer is not as remarkable as its values. Verses 12-14 cut straight to the heart of what makes a good ruler. They may not be what we expect.

For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.

He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life;

And precious is their blood in his sight.

Mahatma Ghandi once observed that, "A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members." Psalm 72 seems to have a similar score card for political leaders.

In the caption for his drawing of the young boy with the flowers, Francesco Piobbichi suggests that we place a flower "for all the victims of this barbed sea made murderous by the selfishness of [human beings], from the hunger [for] profit that upsets the world...a flower for every innocent victim of this war of the rich against the poor".



To ponder

- How would you grade your leaders against the rubric of Psalm 72? Why?
- Why is it so hard to respond to a statistic like the one cited in the story above? Was the 35,000 number a surprise to you?
- How do you respond to Piobbichi's words about selfishness, profit, and "this war of the rich against the poor"?

Psalm 137: 1-4

Beside the rivers of Babylon

Anne Ross

Beside the rivers of Babylon we thought about Jerusalem, and we sat down and cried.

Crying because so many loved ones died. Crying because houses and possessions are destroyed. Crying because the future does not look the way it was hoped to look . Crying out of exhaustion. Crying out of homesickness.

We hung our small harps on the willow trees. Our enemies had brought us here as their prisoners, and now they wanted us to sing and entertain them.

The harps are there but they remain silent. There is no song inside. All songs have faded. There is a thick lump in the throat. Singing is not possible. Only crying.

*They insulted us and shouted, "Sing about Zion!"
Here in a foreign land, how can we sing about the Lord?*

How to sing of God in a foreign land? How to sing of God when the former sanctuary is destroyed? How to praise God when circumstances are miserable? Can you sing a song of praise when your captors only want to be entertained?

Asking these questions a new song arises. It is a sad song, but it is a song. The harps are still there. Awaiting brighter days.



To ponder

- When you remember your past, what makes you cry?
- Music is a universal language. But it is also something very emotional and personal. Have you sung songs in a foreign land? What was difficult about it? What did you enjoy?

Matthew 2: 13-23

Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt!

Wendy Lloyd

The account of Joseph, Mary and Jesus fleeing to Egypt at night, detailed in Matthew 2: 13-15, is followed by an account of the tragic slaughter of the innocent, demonstrating how necessary their fearful journey to safety was. The response of Rachel weeping for her children gives voice to the need for lament for all those whose lives have been tragically lost, often without notice. The flight to Egypt is the story of a father and mother who live in fear of what might happen to their young family. A parent who will do all they can to get their child to a place of safety. It is interesting to note how fear not only prompts the initial flight to Egypt but also prevents them returning to where they were sent. Despite the initial directions to return to Israel, given by the angel in a dream to Joseph, his fear holds him back from going there.

It is by another dream that Joseph is guided to Nazareth in Galilee, and so fulfils the prophecy of God. It is also the compassion of God that does not force Joseph to go beyond his fear. Fear inflicted by the trauma of forced migration and violence. We are invited into the fear of forced migration, fear for a young fledgling family vulnerable to the violence of the world. A story echoed throughout the ages and experienced by too many people throughout the world today. May the God of mercy fill us all with the compassion to respond with grace and understanding. Amen.



To ponder

- Which words or phrases jump off the page of the passage?
- Select two or three of these characters and consider how they might have been feeling in this account of events.
- How does this passage make you feel and how may it help us to respond to your experience of migration or the movement of people today?

Matthew 25:35 and Ephesians 2:19

Citizens with everyone else who belongs to the family of God

George Al-Kopti

When my wife Mary and I moved to serve St. Paul's Anglican church in East Amman, Jordan in 2013, the greatest need was to look after the Syrian Christian refugees who arrived in large numbers in the area since war started in their country in 2011. There were millions of Syrian refugees in Jordan, but Ashrafieh was attractive to Christian refugees in particular because it is full of churches for 11 different denominations. Eastern Christians love to live close to churches because they feel blessed and protected, and at the same time they find it their duty to serve and protect the church. That was clear when Iraqi Christians who suffered ISIS persecution that forced them to leave their land and homes in 2014. They also came to Ashrafieh, and the need to serve refugees grew.

From the beginning we thought as pastor and church that we do not need to deal with these people like strangers or intruders. We, as church that follows Jesus' example, need to treat these people as part of the family of God. Here we could meditate on the Matthew 25:35 "I was a stranger and you welcomed me". The translation in Arabic indicates that "you welcomed me IN"; that means Jesus and his followers must be welcomed in the church, not in the basement, or in a tent in the courtyard or on the side. They need to be part of

the family of the church. Though the passage from Ephesians 2:19 talks about the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles in the family of God, we found it also talking to us as God is uniting us as Jordanians and refugees from Syria and Iraq in one household where God, our father, is the head. "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God." Therefore they were welcomed as part of the church, their children are ours, their pains are ours and our resources are shared.

No doubt that those refugees brought with them blessings and challenges to our church and to the whole Christian community in Jordan. They have chosen to lose all their property and land in order to keep their faith in Christ. The question was "will myself and my people be of the same courage and faithfulness if we face the same threat one day?"



To ponder

- When did you feel a stranger and someone welcomed you? How did it feel?
- The family of God is diverse and colourful. What do you like about it? When do you find it difficult to share God's household with your brothers and sisters in faith?

Luke 16: 19-31

There was once a rich man

Vatican Kit for the World Day of Refugees and Migrants

The image of the rich man and the poor man at his gate named Lazarus relates to the images of the many migrants who are waiting at borders between the rich and poor countries, like the borders between the United States and Mexico, or the borders between Europe and Africa. Borders that protect differences in wealth, opportunities and culture, and remain closed for those who try to enter.

The image of Lazarus lying at the gate, who is being fed of the crumbs wasted from the table of the rich man, is also the image of migrants left only with crumbs when the gates do not open. The enormous imbalances in the appropriation and consumption of the earth's resources between rich and poor countries leave those born on the poor side of the borders with only the crumbs. The parable is commonly read as a condemnation of the rich man, not because he is rich, but because he is bad. However, the gospel does not say that the rich man is bad. It does not say that he is corrupt or morally debased, nor does it say that he is not charitable. If Lazarus continued to stay at the gate, it was because Lazarus is,

in a way, benefitting from the breadcrumbs. Likewise, migrants and refugees are often prevented from crossing the border. Considered as others, and outsiders, rich countries who want to provide aid would rather do so when they are still on the other side of the fence. It is an ideological position that simply perpetuates differences and divisions.

Finally, the parable's core message is that the differences in the possession and the use of the earth's goods have created an abyss between the rich and poor people. It is not possible to close such abyss with only crumbs to provide, with charity. It is time to close the abyss that creates division. Welcoming migrants and refugees is one way to do it, to be inclusive, not exclusive. To consider them as part of our journey with equal opportunities.

Often we only know the names of the rich people. But in the parable, the rich man has no name; the name of the poor is Lazarus, which means: God helps. Through the parable Jesus is telling us that God has taken the side of the poor.



To ponder

- When you listen to this parable, do you identify with the rich man or with Lazarus? Do you know both sides of the gate or only one?
- If God has taken the side of the poor, what does this mean for us as Christians?

Acts: 2:1-13

We all hear them using our own languages to tell the wonderful things God has done

Tapas Ghosh

Encountering a biblical text with an ecumenical frame of mind is an intense challenge. Let us today try to recognise the ecumenical endeavour as a prospect to address the compartmentalised social setting in our time. Acts 2:1-13 may improvise a theoretical framework to transform our diversity into a 'Salad Bowl' in which our individual uniqueness will be secured and the richness will be infused to consolidate us.

And so we may pray: O Holy Spirit, we invite you to witness the impossible when we encounter you. Open up our minds and place a desire in our hearts to be ecumenical, practically and spiritually. Amen.

Recognising ecumenism among us depends on the process of identification of our contemporary need. *To be together* we must clarify 'why?' Disciples were together in unison as obedience to the instruction of Lord. What about us?

God will use us as a catalyst group when our ecumenical unity actualises the command of our Lord. Such impossible ecumenism unified nearly fifteen nationalities / cities / communities (9-11) to communicate the message of God through St. Peter.

The knowledge-based scientific life often pushes us to think for possible ecumenism as a mark of our own capacity alone. It is a modern challenge that needs to be acknowledged. Doctrinal differences, cultural diversities and personal conviction may hinder our ecumenical hope. We have to delegitimise the old normative objective resolution, and be open to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

"Drunk" was what people said, but Peter stood and said (15) "No, we are not". Here comes introspection and internalisation of the inner meaning of the text. Confronting our differences through confirming God together, could be a new starting point.

Migration makes societies cosmopolitan in nature. So, attempts to be ecumenical are a necessity to combat contemporary tension and crisis. We must be a participatory ecumenical group to bring positive changes to our churches and larger society. Make our world better; being a touch-stone like Peter.

May our good God bless us and keep us ecumenically relevant.



To ponder

- What role does faith play when you travel to a foreign country? How does your faith make you look at other countries differently?
- Faith and the Bible have migrated through mission in many countries and cultures. Today, Christians from many countries mix and mingle. They celebrate services in congregations of different languages and origins. Are we still sisters and brothers in faith?
- Is it true for you to be a "spiritual migrant"? What exactly does this mean to you? What would it mean for our Church as an institution?



Galatians 3:28

Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal

Fiona Kendall

This passage follows Paul's explanation to the Galatians of the purpose and relevance of the law in the context of faith and the covenant made by God. Paul has been at pains to show that the law serves a purpose but that the purpose is limited. Far more significant are the promise made by God to his people and the fulfilment of that promise in the grace which comes from Christ, which frees God's children from sin. So who are the "children of God"? Verse 28 could not be clearer: no one group has a greater claim on God than another. "Children of God" cuts across cultural, social and gender divisions. The outcasts and non-entitled - Greeks, slaves and female - are on an equal footing with those occupying a privileged place within society. Our position before God has nothing to do with our social standing, nationality, gender or tradition. Our acceptance as children of God derives from our baptism in Christ: a free choice open to all.

To ponder

- In today's society it is often suggested to us that certain groups lie at the root of our difficulties, be they strangers, migrants, travelling folk, young people or the unemployed. What can we do to counter the temptation to generalize? How can we remind others - and ourselves - that we all stand equally before God? How should we react when someone in such a group behaves as predicted?
- Does the passage encourage us to celebrate diversity, uniformity, or something else?

Hebrews 13: 2

Be sure to welcome strangers into your home

David Bradwell

The instruction to show hospitality to strangers is a recurrent theme. It was an expectation in the ancient world that is fairly uncommon in Western societies today. You might catch glimpses of it in stories of the pilgrimage Camino de Santiago de Compostela, or in places such as Taizé or Iona; or closer to home, in the night shelters or refugee hosting programmes that offer emergency accommodation to desperate people.

The original audience of this letter would of course have been familiar with the Hebrew scriptures. The line about 'entertaining angels without knowing it' would be an obvious reference to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre (Genesis 18:1-16). Here the moral is very clear – Abraham's generosity and observance of the rules of hospitality were repaid with the promise of a son, despite his and Sarah's advanced age.

The Biblical instructions to 'love the stranger', respect the rights of foreigners, ensure the fair treatment of those at risk of oppression, and the reminder 'that you were once strangers in Egypt' makes migrant protection the most-repeated

commandment in the Bible. The reason for this is possibly two-fold. The first is that it is important. The second is that human beings are very bad at keeping it and we need to be reminded again and again.

The blessing given to those who offer hospitality is well-known. And in the Gospels we have read that Christ himself is there, in the place of the stranger (Matthew 25: 35-40). And so by welcoming the stranger, we welcome Christ.



To ponder

- How would you react if a complete stranger arrived at your door asking for food and shelter for the night?
- What are the small changes we can make in our daily lives to show more hospitality?
- How have you been a blessing to those who have given you hospitality in the past?

Prayers and Liturgies

Opening Prayer

Gracious and merciful God, we gather in one heart and mind to pray for all families and individuals who have left or fled their country, their land, their homes, seeking safer and better lives. We lift up to you their hopes and dreams, their fears and anxieties, and all their needs and necessities, and that they may be protected on their journeys, their dignity and rights may be fostered, honoured and upheld, and they may be welcomed with open arms into generous and compassionate communities.

All these we ask, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

Amen

Vatican Kit for the 105th World Migrant and Refugee Day

Prayer

May God walk with refugees as God walked with Abraham.

May Christ protect those who were forced out of their homeland as Christ experienced displacement since his birth.

May the Holy Spirit lead and comfort those who are willing to lose everything, but keep the faith. Amen

GA-K*

*initials of contributors, a full list can be found on page 71. Where items are not initialed they have been sourced or created by members of the working group.

A prayer for receiving communities

Courage.

In your name, Lord, we pray,

To truly accept your calling, we free our hearts from fears and anxieties. May your Grace strengthen our faith in opening our lives, our churches and our homes to migrants, whatever the cost may be.

We shall welcome them on the beaches. We shall welcome them on the landing grounds. We shall welcome them in the fields and in the streets. We shall welcome them in the hills. In your name, Lord, we shall never surrender to populism and fear of the stranger. We shall surrender all to your Spirit.

Amen

LV, based on a prayer published in the Methodist Prayer Book 2018/19 and inspired by a famous speech by Winston Churchill on 4 June 1940.

A prayer of intercession

God of family, we bring before you the parents who are weeping and lamenting, who are waiting for their children, whose trace is lost in the sea, in the desert, on railway tracks, in shipping containers and uncertainty: men, women and children who had escaped from the war zones, the famine and poverty of this world , with the hope for a better, safer life.

God of life, we bring before you our lament for the dead, stranded at the borders of safety, who died fleeing through deserts, over mountains and seas. We call to you and join in the cry of all those who sought justice and a better life for themselves and their children and perished in the process.

God of justice, we bring before you political leaders, advisers and decision-makers who hold the fate of others in their hands. Make them aware of the causes of migration and flight. Keep their consciences alive so that refugees are offered protection and dignity. Let them agree rules of residence that are based on human rights and guided by solidarity compassion.

God of peace, give us the strength to be witnesses of the suffering of the world and fill us with the fire of your spirit to renew our efforts to serve those in need and give us the grace to welcome, learn and share our lives with people who come to live in our communities. Amen.

Translated AR, from Türen Auf! Gottes Volk kennt keine Fremden

A Celtic 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 in the sacred name of the triune God
The stranger blessed us and our house,
Our cattle and our dear ones.

As the lark says in her song:
Often, often, often goes Christ in the stranger's guise.



A prayer for migrants and refugees

We pray for the migrant, the refugee, the prisoner of war, the victim of hunger, disease, disaster and injustice throughout the world.

No farmer leaves her land through choice. No mother wants to pack a bag and pick up her children to leave all she knows. No father wants to risk the lives of his family. No grandmother wants to walk hundreds of miles to spend the remains of her life in a camp or a country where she understands nothing and is made to feel worthless.

Lord, in destroying the homes of innocent people – through war or through causing climate chaos – we destroy the common home you gifted us.

Give us wisdom to repair the damage, and the generosity of spirit to welcome and care for our sisters and brothers driven in desperation to step into a lorry, board a boat, set out on foot. May the Holy Spirit journey with them.
Amen
MP

A prayer for guidance

In our quest for peace, we seek your guidance, Lord, to strive for justice.

Our common home is divided by fear and misunderstanding, by greed and lack of compassion. Send your Holy Spirit to comfort the dispossessed, and to give us the wisdom to share their load. May we offer the migrant and the refugee dignity and fairness, love and the peace of Christ.

Amen
MP



Litany of Justice

Reader: Jesus said, "I was hungry and you gave me food."
Made in the Image of God,

All: We see the face of Christ in all.

Reader: Jesus said, "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink." Made in the Image of God,

All: We see the face of Christ in all.

Reader: Jesus said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Made in the Image of God,

All: We see the face of Christ in all.

Reader: Jesus said, "I was naked and you gave me clothing." Made in the Image of God,

All: We see the face of Christ in all.

Reader: Jesus said, "I was sick and you took care of me." Made in the Image of God,

All: We see the face of Christ in all.

Reader: Jesus said, "I was in prison and you visited me." Made in the Image of God,

All: We see the face of Christ in all.

Reader: Jesus said, "In as much as you did to one of those considered to the least important, you did it to me."

Made in the Image of God,

All: We see the face of Christ in all. We go from here to see and serve Christ in all.

Amen.

IB

A benediction

May God bless us,
our God, who called the world into being,
who breathed us into life,
who provides us with new strength.
May God bless us,
our God, whose love does not know borders nor walls,
whose justice will come.
Our God, who casts down the mighty from their thrones
and lifts up the lowly.
May God bless us,
Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
Amen.
Translated AR, from Türen Auf! Gottes Volk kennt keine Fremden

Prayers for those who mourn

May you be held by the God of compassion
as you remember your loved ones today.
May God be with you in your sorrow,
and comfort you in your loss.
May your God, your family and your friends,
give you strength and confidence.
May your spirit be lifted, may your heart be filled with peace,
and may the light of God's promise fill you with joy and hope.
Amen.
CAFOD

Hold me to your heart
God of compassion,
when I feel helpless in my grief,
hold me to your heart.
God of gentleness,
in those moments when life is dark,
keep me close to you.
God of comfort,
when I am overcome with sadness,
shelter me under your wings.
Ever-faithful God,
help me to find reassurance and hope
in these words of hope to all your people -
"Because you are precious to me,
because I love you,
there is no need to be afraid,
for I am with you." (Isaiah 43)
ML

Advent: Come Lord, come again

Come Lord, come again
Come Lord, your wounded world is yearning
for you to come again.
Come Lord, your weary world is crying out
for you to lift us up
out of our despair, our hunger,
our thirst for something better,
our need for the food that will last.
Come Lord, come again,
we need to begin again.
SA



Advent: Expectant God

Expectant God
The heavens can no longer hold your abundant love,
So you pour out the gift of your embodied self
Relinquishing the beauty of your majesty,
To adorn the pale colours of our humanity.
Choosing to enter into this world in a place of scarcity
and need.
Reveal to us this hidden world
of poverty,
of refugees,
of suffering.
As you choose this as the place of your birth
Let us choose this to be the place of our rebirth.
Rebuild us,
Transform us,
Make us anew.
We ask this through Christ our Lord,
Amen.
KiO'B

More Advent prayers:

CAFOD have provided these and more Advent prayers
available for free on their website:
www.cafod.org.uk

Pentecost: Hearts Ablaze

Hearts ablaze
Beautiful Lord,
may we say "yes" to you
so that the Spirit in our hearts
will once again be set ablaze.

Spirit of Wisdom,
guide our actions so they tell of God's love.

Spirit of Truth,
open our eyes to see the world as it really is.

Spirit of Power,
enthuse us to work for justice throughout the world.

Spirit of Love,
inspire us to respect the dignity of each person.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
Come, Holy Spirit, fill our hearts.
Come, Holy Spirit, fill us.
Come, Holy Spirit.
Come.
SD

Pentecost: Listen to the blowing of the wind

Please stop, please!
Silence!
Listen to the beating of your heart.
Listen to the blowing of the wind,
the movement of the Spirit.
Be silent – said the Lord
and know that I am God.

And listen to the cry of the voiceless.
Listen to the groaning of the hungry.
Listen to the pain of the landless.
Listen to the sigh of the oppressed
and to the laughter of the children.

For that is authentic communication;
listening to the people,
living with people
dying for people.
Indonesia

Pentecost: Whirlwind Spirit

Whirlwind Spirit of God,
Roar through our timidities and fears,
Shake the foundations of our ill-placed securities,
Sweep away the cobwebs of our apathy,
Blow down the walls that separate us, one from another.

Then into all our empty spaces, breathe
re-strengthened courage to challenge injustice,
renewed belief in the urgency of our vocation,
revitalised passion to change our lifestyles,
re-dedication to speak only words that build and unite.

Let gentle breeze and still small voice
become in us today
mighty wind and loud proclamation.
Make of us a Pentecost people!
Amen
KaO'B

Eucharist

Holy God
As we break and hold this bread
We hold and offer to you
- The brokenness of those who live and struggle with hunger and disease
- The brokenness of those who are excluded or rejected from community
- The brokenness of communities and neighbourhoods
- The brokenness in relationships between nations
- The brokenness in household and personal relationships
- The brokenness in relationships between different faiths
- The brokenness in relationships between different Christian denominations
- The brokenness within congregations
- The brokenness we carry within our own bodies
- The brokenness we know when death tears away our loved ones
As we hold and offer you this broken bread,
And as we eat it,
Help us to keep trusting you are there in the midst of all our brokenness,
Working to heal hurts, keep hope alive, and make all things new.
Strengthen us that we may give and commit ourselves to share in your work.
Make us people of resurrection.
Feed us now and evermore.
And feed the world so that none may be hungry
And all may know welcome and hospitality.
In the name of Christ.
Amen.
IB



A prayer before eating

Brigit, the 5th Century Irish Saint was known for her hospitality. The words following are attributed to her:

I should like a great lake of finest ale, for the King of Kings;
I should like a table of the choicest food, for the family of heaven. Let the table be made from the fruits of faith, and the food be forgiving love. I should welcome the poor to my feast, for they are God's children. I should welcome the sick to my feast, for they are God's joy. Let the poor sit with Jesus at the highest place, and the sick dance with the angels. God bless the poor, God bless the sick, and God bless our human race. God bless our food, God bless our drink, all homes, O God, embrace.

Prayers for safe arrival

A safe arrival can fill you with great gratitude. Gratitude to people who helped you on your way, but also gratitude towards God. Maybe an opportunity to pray one of the following Psalms.

Psalm 30 "I will praise you, Lord! You have saved me from the grave ... you have turned my sorrow into joyful dancing"

Psalm 34 "I will always praise the Lord ... I asked the Lord for help and he helped me"

Psalm 40 "I patiently waited, Lord, for you to hear my prayer. You listened and pulled me from a lonely pit."

A prayer for a baptism

Creator God

Out of the darkness, you bring light;
out of the void, you bring life.

We thank you for this new life,
For the promise it represents,
For the hope it offers.

We pray for this child of Christ to be enfolded in welcome:
Open arms, hearts and minds.
We pray for this child of Christ to know community:
Give, receive and grow in strength

May life's challenges serve only to encourage tenacity
May moments of despair serve only to encourage faith
May God's love suffuse this soul with joy
And may it shine there throughout the years to come.

Amen

A prayer for a funeral

Tender God

Our hearts ache for the loss of our loved one
Lost days
Lost laughter
Lost potential

Despite this pain, we know
In death there is homecoming.

We, the left behind, must start again
New territory
New relationships
New lives

Despite this pain, we know
In death there is homecoming.

Help us to be at peace
Now that our loved one rests at last

Despite this pain, we know
In death there is homecoming.

Amen



Hymns, songs, music

Recommendations for singing and psalmody that could be used in a service connected to the theme of refugees, hospitality, sanctuary and welcome. Many of these could also be used for services of a multi-cultural or multi-national Christian congregation worshipping together.

Psalms

Psalm 46	God is our mighty fortress, always ready to help in times of trouble
Psalm 57	God Most High, have pity on me! Have mercy. I run to you for safety.
Psalm 61	Please listen, God, ... I cry out to you from a faraway land.
Psalm 77	pray to you, Lord God, and I beg you to listen.
Psalm 84	Lord God All-Powerful, your temple is so lovely!
Psalm 91	Live under the protection of God Most High
Psalm 113	Shout praises to the Lord!
Psalm 117	All of you nations, come praise the Lord!
Psalm 121	I look to the hills! Where will I find help?
Psalm 139	You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me.



Hymns

- Amen Siakudumisa** - South African Traditional
- Be Thou my vision** - Irish, 8th century, *translated Mary Elizabeth Byrne, revised Eleanor Henrietta Hull*
- Beauty for brokenness** - Graham Kendrick
- Brother, Sister let me serve you** - Richard A. M. Gillard
- For the healing of the nations** - Fred Kaan
(alternative tunes: Westminster Abbey, Cwm Rhondda)
- God weeps** - Shirley Erena Murray
- Heaven shall not wait** - John L. Bell and Graham Maule
- Here to the house of God we come** - Shirley Erena Murray
(alt. tunes: Abingdon, Melita)
- I the Lord of Sea and Sky** - Daniel L. Schutte
- In Christ there is no East nor West** - John Oxenham, pseud.
William Arthur Dunkerley
- Inspired by love and anger** - John L. Bell and Graham Maule
- Jesus Christ is waiting** - John L. Bell and Graham Maule
- Let us build a house where love can dwell** - Marty Haugen
- Longing for light, we wait in darkness** - Bernadette Farrell
- Lord of all hopefulness** - Jan Struther
- Pray for a world where every child** - Ruth C. Duck
- Sent by the Lord am I** - Jorge Maldonado
- The Church is like a table** - Fred Kaan
- The love of God is broad like beach and meadow** - Fred Kaan
- There are no strangers to God's love** - Andrew Pratt

- Travelling the road to freedom** - John L. Bell and Graham Maule
- We've no abiding city here** - Thomas Kelly
- When Christ was lifted from the earth** - Brian Wren
- When I needed a neighbour were you there** - Sydney Bertram Carter
- When I receive the peace of Christ** - Michael Mair
- When out of poverty is born (Christmas Carol)** - Kathy Galloway
- When the hungry who have nothing share with strangers** - Jose Antonio Olivar and Miguel Manzano translated Mary Louise Bringle

Songs

- God of Justice** - Tim Hughes
- Red Sea Road (Exodus 14:13-14).** - Ellie Holcomb
- Give us Your Heart** - The Worship Collective
- Our God was a Refugee** - ResoundWorship
- You are a Refuge** - ResoundWorship
- King of the Broken** - CompassionArt
- Move** - Jesus Culture
- How Long** - Al Gordon

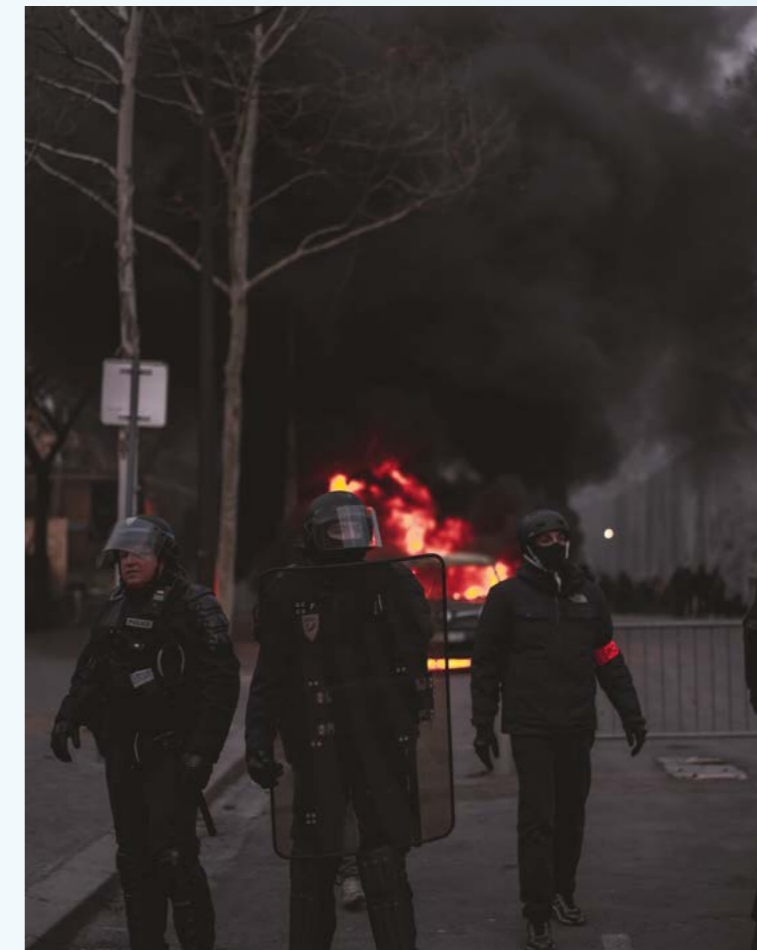
“Diversity in worshipping together magnifies the glory of God”

songs2serve offers a database of intercultural worship songs in different languages with translated lyrics: songs2serve.nl

Taizé chants

Aber du weisst den Weg für mich
Da pacem cordium
Da pacem ... in diebus (Grant us peace, o Lord)
Dans nos obscurités
De noche
Dona la pace, Signore
Eat this bread / Jesus Christ, Bread of Life
El alma que anda en amor
El Senyor (In the Lord / Meine Hoffnung / Pan jest mocą)
Fiez-vous en Lui
I am sure I shall see
Il Signore ti ristora
L'ajuda em vindrà
Laudate omnes gentes
Let all who are thirsty come
Mon âme se repose
Nothing can ever
See, I am near
Ubi caritas
Wait for the Lord

Lyrics and music can be found here: www.taize.fr/en



School assembly, youth group and Discussion topic suggestions

School Assemblies

Invite responses from pupils to encourage empathy and self-awareness. You could use one, more or all of these sets of questions to suit to your group, depending on the time available.

What would you do to welcome someone? (All schools)

This activity might be particularly useful if the school is likely to receive refugees in the near future and wants to think about becoming a welcoming community.

Explain that refugees are people who have been forced to leave their homes and are trying to rebuild their lives in a new country.

If a refugee family moved into your street / school / church / community, what do you think they will be feeling? If it were you, how would you like to be welcomed?

Ideas could include conversations around:

- Making friends
- Not bullying them because of their experiences, language skills or accent; what if it was you?
- Challenging racism
- Inviting them round for a meal
- Offering extra help
- Being patient as they try to learn a new language
- How to help them fit in to life (where to catch a bus, what time the shop is open)
- Being sensitive that they have had a difficult experience and might not want to tell people about it.

What would you take? (Primary schools)

Bring a selection of personal and essential items, and some luxuries. Ideas might include: first aid kit, water bottle, passport, phone and charger, photographs of family, a map, food, a Bible, a pillow, a teddy bear, a toy, a purse.

Ask the pupils, if you had to leave your home in a hurry *which one thing would you take with you*. You could ask for a volunteer to come up and talk through their choice. *Why did you choose it? Was it difficult to choose?*

Ask them: *How would you feel if you had to leave your home in a hurry? How would you feel if you could never go back?*

With thanks to Christian Aid, more ideas and resources are available at:

www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/refugees-assemblies

Where would you go? (Secondary schools)

Ask the pupils, if they were forced to leave their home, where would they go to?

Facilitate a structured discussion which could cover issues such as:

- To a neighbour's (but what if they had to leave too...)
- To a friend's (but what if they had to leave too...)
- To family (but what if they had to leave too...)
- To another country – does anyone have family they might go and live with?
- Or friends who live overseas?

What if you don't know anyone who lives in another country, where would you go?

To a country close by so it is easier to get home?

To a country where they speak your language?

To a rich country so you can be looked after?

To a country where they have the same religion or culture?

Explain that most people who are forced to leave their home move from one part of their country to another. When they cross a border they are classed as 'refugees' – but most refugees are in countries neighbouring to their country of origin because of connections of family, friends, culture, religion and language. Only around 6% of all the refugees in the world live in Europe – despite it being a very rich place.

You could also ask about how people would travel when they are leaving. Drive? Walk? Bike? What would they do if the roads were closed or patrolled? Walk over rough ground at night? Hitchhike or be a stowaway? Pay a smuggler to get you away?

You could reflect that sometimes people are left in desperate circumstances and have very little choice about what they can do, and will go to extreme and even dangerous lengths to try to get safety.

Youth groups

Poetry writing

In the Eastern world, poetry is considered to be the collective memory of the people to which all contribute, whether rich or poor, born in times of happiness or desperation. The elders tell children stories in verse. Starting in December 2015, a group of boys aged 14-18 who fled to Europe alone from Afghanistan and Iran met regularly with their poetry mentors in Berlin. They composed poems about fear, abandonment and longing. Their stories give rare insight into their experiences living alongside war, why they fled to Germany, and how they see their new neighbours, the Germans.

The results are intensely personal lines that reveal that under the rubble of war, the poetic soul of a centuries-old culture lives on, beautiful and intact, in this young generation. Through poetry they find their voices.

www.thepoetryproject.de

Could your group create a poem collectively, reflecting on the hopes and anxieties?

Everyone needs a safe place

Christian Aid has produced the *Safe Place Ludo Game* (right) as a youth group activity to introduce some of the important issues raised by refugee emergencies. It is designed to be used as a tool to help children and young people engage with the stories of refugees and the difficult journeys that they make.

www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/safe-place-ludo-game

Group discussion questions

- “The Bible is a piece of migration literature”. What do you think about this? What does it mean for you?
- Your faith - has it “become sedentary” or is it still “on the move”? What life events have changed your faith?
- What role does your faith play when you travel to a foreign country in order to settle and feel at home?
- Faith and the Bible have migrated through mission, trade and conquest to many countries and cultures. Today, Christians from other parts of the world and different cultures make a ‘return’ migration to Europe. They celebrate services in congregations of different languages and origins. Are we still sisters and brothers in faith?



Run an exhibition to make migration more visible

AHeart4Refugees ran exhibitions in churches with pictures by Penny Faux. Maybe your church wants to get involved with something similar.

A team arranged the fencing in a diamond pattern around the tents. They attached the paintings to the fencing with wire and put a map of refugee migration on one of the fences. The stories that were shown on the paintings were added next to them.

Visitors received a crocheted heart and were encouraged to tether the loose end to the fencing as they started their walk round the exhibition. The hearts unravelled as they went, and could be hung anywhere along the fencing or completely unravelled, as people chose. The resulting heart strings could help people to engage emotionally.

Accompanying the exhibition, churches are encouraged to make it their own. They could invite speakers, run crochet workshops, invite VIPs to a launch evening, get local artists and children to contribute work, run a ‘how many kids in a dinghy challenge’ or become creative in any other way.



Preparing a service on the theme of migration and refugees

Worship is the heart and pulse of the Christian Church. In worship we celebrate together God's gracious gifts of creation and salvation, and are strengthened to live in response to God's grace. Worship always involves actions, not merely words.

To consider worship is to consider music, art, and architecture, as well as liturgy and preaching.

The reality that Christian worship is always celebrated in a given local cultural setting draws our attention to the dynamics between worship and the world's many local cultures.

Christian worship relates dynamically to culture in at least four ways. First, it is transcultural, the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture. Second, it is contextual, varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture). Third, it is counter-cultural, challenging what is contrary to the Gospel in a given culture. Fourth, it is cross-cultural, making possible sharing between different local cultures. In all four dynamics, there are helpful principles which can be identified.

The introduction to the Lutheran World Federation's Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture (1996).

Refugee Day / Refugee Sunday

Churches around the world choose to hold a special service or prayers for refugees on or around 20 June each year – the **United Nations International Day for Refugees**. This could be a special event on 20 June itself, or the Sunday closest to it, which is designated as Refugee Sunday or Sanctuary Sunday.

In Scotland, the Scottish Refugee Council organises a two-week **Refugee Festival** on either side of 20 June. Community organisations are invited to hold special events to explore refugee issues more deeply. In England and Wales a **Refugee Week** is held at the same time.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland is encouraging churches to consider what the role of sanctuary is in providing practical and spiritual response to refugees arriving in our society. You can read more about their **Church of Sanctuary** initiative at churchofsanctuary.org.

The **Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe** (CCME) encourages people to use 20 June, or the Sunday nearest to it, as a time also to remember the situation facing those on the dangerous journey to Europe and, in particular, to commemorate the lives of people who have died in the attempt to seek safety. CCME has published intercessory prayers and related resources at ccme.eu.

The **Refugee Resource Centre for Churches** (R2C2) is a partnership between two UK charities: Jubilee+ and the Boaz Trust. Their vision is to see churches increasingly play a major role in welcoming, loving and supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, both through practical action and as a voice for justice, so they can integrate, flourish and play a full part in society. Their website has been set up for churches and individual Christians (of all denominations) to work effectively towards that vision.

refugeeresourcecentreforchurches.org.uk

Hospitality and Sanctuary for All

When preparing a service on the theme of migration, it can be helpful to reflect some of the considerations that Inderjit Bhogal makes in his resource "Hospitality and Sanctuary for All":

- Learn – about what it means to be seeking sanctuary, and be actively involved in awareness raising
- Embed – take positive action to make welcome and inclusion part of the values of your congregation or community, to support those seeking sanctuary and refuge, and to include them in your activities
- Share – with pride, your vision and achievements: let others know about the positive contribution refugees make to society and the benefits of a welcoming culture for everyone



Resources

Your worshipping community may already include asylum seekers and refugees in its midst.

- Provide opportunities to enable the members of the community to meet asylum seekers and refugees and to hear their stories.
- Take positive action to embed concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion.
- Create a welcoming and supportive environment.
- Develop a welcoming, hospitable, inclusive environment in which strangers feel genuinely welcome. Befriend homeless people, asylum seekers, refugees, people from the travelling communities and all those seeking sanctuary among us and, when appropriate, assist them in facing difficulties with the authorities.
- Work to build relationships of mutual respect and trust within the congregation in all its diversity

Incorporate appropriate activities into the education and social programme of the worshipping community

- Promote and listen to the stories/voices of those seeking sanctuary by inviting refugees or others seeking safety to come and speak to the congregation, and to share in other events or activities which may meet some of their needs. Work at relating this to the theology and interpretation of the religious texts used in the place of worship.
- Celebrate the contributions of refugees and people seeking sanctuary.
- Offer your premises to be used by asylum-seekers and refugees for meetings or English classes.

- Commit to wider local initiatives which aim to offer welcome, end hatred & hostility, and build cultures and communities in which all are welcome, valued and safe.
- Support organisations and events seeking to offer information and hospitality.

A suggested Order of Service including prayers can be found on page 50-57.

www.indertjithogal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/HOSPITALITY-AND-SANCTUARY-FOR-ALL-2019-Final-Revision.pdf

The Lampedusa Cross – Refugee Solidarity Liturgy

CAFOD have produced a seven stage liturgy that takes people through reflections on being forced to flee (from war, poverty and climate change, and persecution, through the journey, losing family, facing welcome or rejection and to the cross of compassion.

https://cafod.org.uk/content/download/29185/333404/version/7/Prayer_refugees_pilgrimage-on-the-refugee-crisis.pdf

Ideas for creative, symbolic or meditative practices for church services

Walls

Using old cardboard boxes, build a wall across the front of the church (you may need lots of large boxes!) before the start of the service. One each box write or paint in large letters some of the issues and barriers faced by migrants and refugees: war, terrorism, conflict, discrimination, violence, climate crisis, poverty, famine, FGM, torture, trafficking, self-centredness, security – etc. You may add your own.

As a symbolic act in the service, ask people to come up and remove the wall, block by block, while reading prayers, scripture or reflections which speak of love, hope, hospitality, faith, compassion and sanctuary.

Candles

This would work well for an evening service when it is dark outside. Keep the lights of the church on a lower setting if possible. Before the start of the service light 150 tea lights and spread them all around the church. When the service starts, explain that in 2018 4,797 people died while migrating: an average of 92 per week. Get a volunteer with a timer to blow out 92 candles over the course of the service (for an hour's service this would be around every 40 seconds). The effect should be of a bright candle lit church at the start, but with more than half of the lights extinguished by the end.

For updated/more recent statistics please see the Missing Migrants website:

www.missingmigrants.iom.int



Artefacts

Bring into the church objects that you might associate with refugee journeys: a dinghy or ribbed-inflatable boat. Orange life jackets. Scruffy tents with cooking equipment. Metal fences. And maybe bring artefacts that you might not associate with refugees: mobile phones and chargers, keys (of homes left behind), evidence of professions or occupations left behind. Set up prayer stations or reflection points at each artefact and allow your congregation to move around and stay and pray as they wish.

More ideas and further reading

Sanctuary in Scotland

A guide for Scottish faith groups published in spring 2017. Includes facts and figures, definitions, current issues and ideas for practical action by faith communities in Scotland. Available for free download.
www.sfar.org.uk

Becoming Human Together

Christian Aid Scotland and Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees jointly published Becoming Human Together in May 2018. It is a reflection on migration, exploring Christian theology from the Reformed tradition as it relates to faith and forced migration. Available for free download.
www.sfar.org.uk

Singing the Faith Plus

STF+ is a website to support and complement the Methodist hymn book, Singing the Faith, published in 2011. It is a one-stop-shop for other resources and advice for preparing and leading worship. There is a section for themed worship on refugees and migrants.
www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/

Welcome the Stranger

Welcome the Stranger – praying in solidarity with refugees from around the world is a resource of prayers for Lent and Easter from the Jesuit Refugee Service UK.
www.jrsuk.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Lent-Prayers-Pack-JRS-UK-2016.pdf

Jesus was a refugee

Reflections, prayers, stories, poems and a hymn addressing the plight of modern-day refugees, who yearn for community and security, who long to be settled and live in peace. By Tom Gordon and published by Wild Goose Publications / Iona Community.
www.ionabooks.com/e-liturgies-prayers/refugees/jesus-was-a-refugee-pdf-download.html

World Day of Migrants and Refugees

The Vatican's Migrants and Refugees Section has published an official kit of resource for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees held on 29 September 2019. Further resources are also available on the Migrants and Refugees website.
migrants-refugees.va

Welcoming the Stranger Series

A blog series from US writer, teacher and public speaker Carol M. Bechtel.
carolmbechtel.com/welcoming-the-stranger-series

Türen Auf! Gottes Volk kennt keine Fremden (Open up! God's people knows no strangers)

A German worship resource on the theme of migration.
mission-einewelt.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2014_11_Gottesdienstbrosch%C3%BCre-Migration.pdf



Stories and Poems

A long breath is needed to change societies. Welcoming strangers is nothing you do by snapping your finger and pop, it happens: former strangers become friends and do not feel excluded anymore. It needs safe places and continuity. Alena Fendrychova runs one of these places in Prague.

Alena Fendrychova: Welcoming strangers in Prague

Ljudmila from Siberia. Nastja from Ural. Marwa from Syria. Eva from Iraq. Mohamad from Sudan. Hanna from Lebanon. Marja from Ukraine. Iva from China. Ahmed from Iraq. Ljuba from Russia...and the others.

Behind these names there are people, women and men. People from different countries who came to Czech Republic to find their new home. Some are refugees, some economic migrants, some married a Czech partner. Someone arrived recently, others have lived here for a long time. Some are Christians, some are Muslims, some do not have any faith.

We meet every Wednesday afternoon for Kafe Obývácěk (Cosy Coffee). Seemingly nothing big or important is happening here. We sit around a table, eat some cake, drink tea and coffee and talk. We play board games. We hear personal stories. We remember how we went to school and compare how it varies in different countries and at different times. We look at the photos. We recite poems. We speak...

What attracts people to join the group? It could be a steadiness; we organise a meeting every week no matter what. It is about acceptance; everybody is welcomed. It is in the openness and friendly atmosphere. It is an opportunity to come out of the isolation many foreigners face in the Czech Republic.

And some people have their personal reasons to come. Ahmed is an old man, in Iraq he was an important person, a professor at a University. He was used to giving lectures to the whole auditorium, students were hanging on his every word. In the Czech society he is just an old man addicted to social benefits. But here in the group he is important for the others. He has a place to come and to be heard.

Ljudmila has lived in Czech Republic for sixteen years. For twelve years she worked without papers, and she was detained several times. She does precarious work, and after sixteen years she still has no permanent residence. She has no Czech friends, she is just another “labour migrant”, the smallest of the small. But here in the group she is important for the others. She has a place to come and to be heard.

Ljuba is an old lady. She comes nearly every Wednesday. During the meeting she does not speak a lot. The barriers are too high, both those of language and the age. But at the end of each meeting Ljuba says – “you are my family. I will come again.”

I wish our society could be like that. To be open to strangers, respect the difference. We need dialogue, where people hear and respect each other.

St Andrews Refugee Service (StARS) in Cairo, Egypt

Christie Manisto reflects on Matthew 5: 1-11 The Beatitudes: Blessed to action

These words of blessing from Jesus spoken from a mountaintop are not commandments to be meek, they are not a call to be passive, they are statements of fact and words that call for action— a call to get up and go be a part of God’s action. Jesus is proclaiming God’s vision to the world where all are the recipients of God’s blessing. A hope for a world through Jesus turned upside down where “weakness is powerful and peacemakers thrive and persecution is a site for blessed transformation.”¹ Promises for the raw spaces in our world and in our hearts, a poetic invocation that lifts up those who are suffering and are in need of wholeness and God’s grace. That calls people of faith to see suffering in this world and respond with real action and a boldness in spirit. Challenging the powers that create poverty, displacement and despair.

St Andrews Refugee Service (StARS) in Cairo Egypt is such a place that answers Jesus call to blessed action. Walking with people such as Amira and her family who face the reality of displacement in every facet of society. When the Syrian war forced them to move to Cairo, Ameria expected hard times, not malice. But after watching Ahmed, her ten-year-old son, come home from Egyptian public school with dirty clothes a few days in a row, she got suspicious. When he came home with a few scratches and hair disheveled, Amira pried past

Mohamed’s reluctance to speak about his day. It turned out that months of harassment from his peers had culminated in a few of them beating him up after school. Within the week Amira removed Mohamed and his sister from this school and placed them in an educational centre run by Syrian refugees called Watten. Watten means “homeland” in Syrian Arabic, and that’s just how it felt to Amira when she first arrived. In the Egyptian schools her children fell behind as peers teased them and as they struggled to understand their teachers’ Arabic.

At Watten she noticed their confidence growing. As fellow Syrian refugees, students and teachers are almost friends there, partners in a mission to make it through Cairo as best they can. Because Watten does not receive significant external funding, Syrian families must pay tuition fees out of their own pocket – about 1000 Egyptian pounds per semester, per child. After one year of scraping together the fees, Amira was hit by a minibus and broke her leg just before her children’s second year began. Two surgeries failed to improve her knee injury, and unable to work, she lost her job. Because their family could not spare her husband’s income past living expenses, she feared her kids would have to either return to the Egyptian school, or drop out entirely. StARS coordinated a grant with Watten that awarded her 1,000 Egyptian pounds to pay for her children’s education. Today both her children

continue to attend Watten, and she says they keep coming home with more words to share, in English and in Arabic. Although the effects of her injury – a fattening body, the loss of her working identity, the threat of disease – still bring tears some nights, she’s deeply grateful StARS could fill the gap. “My only hope is that my children might live as children,” she says, “not as people suffering.”²

What does it mean to say we are “blessed?”

In what ways have these words of Jesus been interpreted in our society? Are all interpretations helpful? How have they been hurtful?

How through our action can we be a blessing in our communities and in our world?

Lebanon: A story from Embrace the Middle East
www.embrace.org.uk

Our partners at Tahaddi health centre help some of Lebanon’s poorest families to get the healthcare they would otherwise go without. They work in an overcrowded and poor neighbourhood where Lebanese and Syrian people face poverty, insecurity and dangerous living conditions. Tahaddi not only provides 1,000s of medical appointments each year, but also offers financial assistance to those struggling with hospital bills.

A story from our partner:

Sama is a 33-year-old Syrian woman who is married with 4 children, one girl who is 11, and three boys aged 9, 7, and 4. She lives at home with her family, but her youngest son lives with her uncle. They escaped Syria during the war 7 years ago, and came to Hay El Gharbeh 4 years ago.

Sama’s house has two rooms: a kitchen and a bathroom. The house is dark with very little access to direct sunlight. The roof also leaks, letting water in when it rains.

Sama’s family lives in Hay El Gharbeh, a poor and overpopulated neighbourhood in Beirut. Hay El Gharbeh is an underserved area, where residents do not have adequate access to basic necessities like drinking water, electricity and basic infrastructure. Syrian refugee families and Lebanese of Dom live side by side due to the affordability of housing in the area. The majority of residents live in overcrowded structurally unsafe housing. Because many of these dwellings have corrugated metal sheets for roofs they are not protected against extreme weather conditions. Few families have access to a kitchen, with the majority of families instead relying on countertop burners to prepare their food.

Those around Sama say she is very sociable and loving. She is very caring to those around her. She goes out of her way to help others. She loves to care for garden and tend to her plants. She cares about having to have a nice space around her and is always trying to tidy and create a nice ambiance in her

home. Her dream is to learn to read and write, and she shares that her hobby is to learn whatever she can.

For years, Sama felt very tired and fatigued. She visited the Tahaddi Health Centre on and off but often missed follow-up appointments. Three months ago, Sama came urgently to the THC after fainting. The THC discovered she had severe hypothyroidism and severe anaemia. Sama received intensive follow-up from the social work and medical team who arranged treatment for her. This treatment was subsidised through this project.

Prior to this, due to lack of funds, Sama found difficulty in getting the medical treatment she urgently needed. The family struggled daily to make ends meet. Her husband works as a shoe shiner and cleaner, and summer season is difficult since fewer people wear closed shoes. Before she fell sick, Sama used to go with her husband to the streets of Beirut and sell tissue boxes to passing cars. She would often take her daughter with her. Given the summer season and her not being able to work, they were often very short on money and were late paying their rent.

None of Sama’s children entered school or have any form of education. Sama tried to enrol them multiple times but something would always come up. Three months ago, she registered her children in educational activities, where they participated for 1 week, until she got sick again. Due to her illness, she was no longer able to drop them and pick them up. She also needed her 11-year-old daughter’s help in the home.

Sama is now a regular visitor at the THC. The THC was able to diagnosis her illness. The THC cover her diagnostic and ER expenses, paying for her medicine and all other medical tests, in addition to regular check-ups. She still feels faint from time to time, an issue the THC follows up on and works on improving. However, all-in-all, Sama is feeling much better and stronger. At some points she could barely walk very short distances, now she can finally take care of herself. “I feel much better after being followed up by Tahaddi” she says, “so many different things have changed now because of the help I am receiving”. Sama feels more at ease now with herself after the treatment.

Lebanon: A story from Embrace the Middle East

Our partner JCC (Joint Christian Committee), the Lebanese branch of DSPR (the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees) works in Dbayeh refugee camp, 12 km north of Beirut. The camp was originally built in 1952 to accommodate Palestinian refugees, but the ongoing Syrian crisis has led to an influx of Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees from Syria in the camp. It is overcrowded and jobs are scarce, so resentment and frustration are always close to the surface. JCC’s community centre provides space and peace in this challenging environment. Children and adults can find a library, craft workshops, language classes, job training, life skills courses and even summer carnivals to bring the community together.

A story from our partner:

Many Syrian families who have taken refuge in Lebanon share the same living quarters so as to afford the rent. In the Dbayeh camp many of these Syrian refugee families seek to do the same. And so 5 year old Syrian refugee Ghulam and his 6 year old cousin Adnan find themselves sharing the same house in Dbayeh camp where they have been for the last year. Their parents were unable to get them into school as the government schools were already full and the private schools were too expensive for them. The neighbours did not allow their children to play with these boys and so the boys were left on their own. In the beginning, their parents did not worry as they saw the two boys playing together and thought they were not in need of anybody else. But, as time passed, the parents felt the lack of playmates in their boys' lives and realized that they had to do something. Asking other Syrian neighbours and explaining their situation, they were told about the JCC Library/ Community Centre.

Once they knew about this Centre and its activities, and that the Centre receives all children no matter what the nationality or religion is, they didn't hesitate to come. They came; attended programs, gathered information and enrolled their children in the different activities, and even the women enrolled in some activities.

In the beginning the children were afraid to talk to anybody or socialise with anybody. They stuck together. They gave their mothers much trouble in coming to the Centre. But, as the activity leaders showed them affection and encouraged other children to play with them, the boys began to relax and showed joy as they joined the numerous activities carried out for children of their age. As time passed, and with the love they experienced from the JCC children and leaders, they came to JCC with enthusiasm. At present, JCC is the only place they go to which has made a big change in their lives.

They are now happy children, have gained many friends and are learning a lot. This has also made an impact on the lives of their parents who have become happier and more relaxed.

Home

When they left,
they didn't know their destination.
All they knew was
that they had never felt such longing before.
They had seen this star.
And they decided to follow it.
Crazy, many said.
Now they are here, in this foreign country,
and there is nothing that would be familiar to them:
not the language, not the religion, nor the smells and sounds.
And yet, they still feel they will find their home here.
Redemption.
Even if they cannot explain exactly what they mean.
When they ask for the new-born child, the king, people gave
them the cold shoulder. The people see their strange clothes,
hear their accents, always looking up at the stars.
A king? Outside the city? Impossible!
But there is an uncertainty in the people's hearts.
What, if they are right?
They leave the city behind. Holding their gifts firmly in their
hands, the most precious, the most holy, the dearest they
have.
They trust the star which brought them all the way here.
And who will lead them further on.
To the unknown God.

Heimat by Susanne Niemeyer, according to Mt 2, 1-12, from:
ach! Das kleine Buch vom großen Staunen, Hamburg: Andere
Zeiten e. V., 2013



Birthday

Fiona Kendall

She sat in the scruffy office, mistrusting.
For so long now, her life had been scarred by betrayal.

Her feisty spirit; her rejection of long-held truths; her refusal
to stay silent
Were not welcome in her society nor, indeed, in her own
family.
Hers was not behaviour befitting of a woman;
She learned early that all that she thought, did and said was
“haram”.
Her male relatives told everyone she was shameful
And, when the war came, people could do what they liked.

The marriage was arranged to restore honour to the family
And, since he lived elsewhere, to get her out of the way.
Away, where she could not influence her mother or her
sisters.
Away, where her ideas would cease to challenge the old order.
But she wanted none of it.

She fled to another place where she thought she could be safe
But her new friendships with Westerners,
People not of her kind,
People who might be cast as spies,
Caught the eye of the authorities.

The men would come to her flat unannounced,
Sometimes in civilian clothes, sometimes in military uniform.
She understood that the she had to let them in.
“Aren’t you scared we’ll plant something?” they called,
as they searched her small bedroom for the fortieth time.

She would come home from work to find they had been there.
Despite the locked door, they left signs to tell her:
Cigarette butts, their mess in the toilet;
Reminders that they were in control.

She did her best to endure that,
And the casual violence that came with it,
But when her best friend was picked up,
Imprisoned,
Without trial,
She knew she had to flee again, this time much further.

And now, in a faraway land
She sat in the scruffy office, mistrusting
But hoping.
“When were you born?” they asked her.
“Two weeks ago,” she replied, “ when I made it here.

If Parables Mean Nothing

Lucy Berry

If parables mean nothing
then we could go ahead,
and pass by; offering no room,
no medicine, no bed.
If Bible now means nothing,
tell Joseph to go home
and tell the pregnant Mary
she never should have come.
If all of it all means nothing
then we can close the door
on ancient ways of welcome
that we believed before,
and write to Abram and his wife
and tell them of the danger,
the foolishness, the silliness,
of welcoming the stranger;
and email Jesus right away
and, gently, tell him how
the hungry and the naked
just aren’t our business now.
If what He said means nothing,
just throw away the Book,
for it has no authority
and we are off the hook.
But if the things He told us
still mean good news to you,
then open up your hearts, minds, arms -
for there is loads to do!

Waves

Lucy Berry

No-one’s arriving in waves;
but on waves of terror and hope.
Who will they see if they land
who might throw them a rope?
Old waves, so oil-black, so high,
so bitterly huge in the channel
offering waterlogged death
if you can’t take the tunnel.
Fathom on fathom beneath
of sickening water to harm them,
waves freezing, queasy and deep;
and no saviour to calm them.
Fast flowing water at night
few scared and despaired people brave.
And if they should get to this land,
who will give them a wave?

Foreigner
But he had to go through Samaria. John 4:4

He could have chosen the longer route,
But for some reason, he didn't.
He chose to go through
A strange land.
They told Him there would be bandits,
Robbers, no gooders
Who would strip Him of His clothes,
His possessions,
His pride. (Or was it theirs that troubled them?)
They told Him that
'nothing good comes out of that place'
That it was
'safer to stick with our own folks'.
The woman he met, though,
Was humble, generous and kind.
She gave him water from her sacred well.
And they talked. Of thirst. Of deep wells. Of living water. Of
springs gushing up to eternal life.
And although her people and His usually kept each other at
arm's length,
and although their history, their rituals, their language were
different –
there was a shared need for a new life that drew them
together
as strangers, no longer, but friends.

From *Stories of Encounter*, Saint Andrew Press.

Amude, Syria
Ahmed Tamo (aged 19)

In Amude I was born
I played football there
Every day
But my first home
The first land
In which I lived
Was my mother
In Germany I would like
To marry a German woman
I want the opportunity
To see my own children grow up

Ahmed, a Kurd, came to Berlin from Syria. He lives in a
shipping-container camp on the Tempelhofer Feld. After
school he would like to train as a mechanic.

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Endnotes
1. Workingpreacher.org Eric Barreto
2. StARS educational case study 2019

God with us...

...worship resources on the theme of refugees, migration and sanctuary

We have created this resource for clergy, church leaders and worship leaders.

It is a free resource, though you are encouraged to consider making a donation to an organisation supporting refugees.

It is a collection of material for prayer and worship relating to the theme of refugees.

It has been put together ecumenically and is for Christians of all traditions.

We offer it as inspiration for people looking for ideas. It contains Bible Studies that could be used to aid reflection in public worship or by small groups. There are offerings of prayers for intercession, thanksgiving and for special occasions. We make suggestions for hymns, songs, chants and music that could be appropriate. There are ideas for children's talks, school assemblies or group discussion activities. And throughout we share personal stories and poetry – which we invite you to use for your own personal devotion or as part of a church service.

A free download version of this resource plus additional material is available online at:

ctbi.org.uk