

Worship Materials on Refugee and Immigration Issues

Permission is granted for congregations to use the following worship materials in their worship services; the source of materials should be given if it is printed here. The material where no source is given was prepared by Jennifer Riggs, Director of Refugee and Immigration Ministries, and does not need to be credited.

Call to Worship

Leader: Let us come to worship the God who brought our people out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of bondage.

People: We are no longer strangers and sojourners, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Leader: If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

People: By showing hospitality to strangers, we entertain angels and welcome Jesus.

Call to Worship

Leader: Hear the word of the prophet Amos: "Let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream!" *Amos 5:24*

People: Our God is a God of justice!

Leader: Hear the word of the prophet Micah: "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." *Micah 6:8*

People: God's people are a people of mercy!

Leader: Hear the word of God from the Torah: "God defends the cause of the orphan and widow, and loves the foreigner, giving to each food and clothes. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt." *Deuteronomy 24:19-22*

People: Our God is a God who loves the stranger!

Leader: Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Come you who are blessed by God; take your inheritance.... For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these sisters and brothers of mine, you did for me." *Matthew 25:34-36,40*

People: Our God is a God who is encountered in the poor, the needy and the foreigner! Let us worship the God who calls us into fellowship with each other and with the weak, vulnerable and marginalized of the world. Amen.

Source: *Canadian Inter-Church Committee for Refugees, Refugee Rights Day, March 2000*

Call to Worship

How do we know when God is with us? There are times when we are led where we do not plan to go. Let us come to this time of worship, open ourselves to God, and begin our journey.

Call to Worship

Dear friends in Christ, today we gather to stand with those who have been torn from their homes and communities by violence, poverty, and the ruin of God's good earth. "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of

my people be and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” (Isaiah 65:21-22) Come let us worship.

Source: *World Council of Churches, “In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples,” November 1997*

Invocation

Leader: In the presence of a God whose word has called the earth and the stars into being,

People: We stand in awe.

Leader: In the presence of a God whose arms have held children,

People: We stand in trust.

Leader: In the presence of a God whose breath has stirred within us and caused our hearts to thirst for justice,

People: We stand in need.

Leader: Before you, Giver of Life, we come in faith, in search of love and justice and wholeness.

People: Be with us; hear us, we pray. Amen

Source: *Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program, September 1993*

Prayer

Open my eyes that they may see the deepest needs of men and women;

Move my hands that they may feed the hungry.

Touch my heart that it may bring warmth to the despairing;

Teach me the generosity that welcomes strangers;

Let me share my possessions to clothe the naked;

Give me the care that strengthens the sick;

Make me share in the quest to set the prisoners free;

In sharing our anxiety and our love,

our poverty and our prosperity,

we partake of your divine presence. Amen.

Source: *Canaan Banana, former President of Zimbabwe*

Prayer

Leader: Lord Jesus, who fled the wrath of Herod,

People: Be with those who have to flee the injustice of others.

Leader: Lord Jesus, who had nowhere to lay your head,

People: Be with those who have no land to call their home.

Leader: For the refugees in Palestine,

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For the refugees in Vietnam, [to update, use Iran]

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For refugees in Ethiopia, [to update, use the Sudan]

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: For refugees who have fled oppression in their own countries and who are seeking new lives in new lands;

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

All: Help us, Lord, who are the privileged inn-keepers of our day, to find room for those who have been driven from their homelands because of political, racial, or religious reasons. Amen.

Source: *Australian Prayer Fellowship Handbook 1981*

Prayer

God of refuge, you have saved us from all that has threatened us since the beginning of our days. We are refugees who have found our home in you. Help us to open ourselves to those who are homeless today. Save them, through us, as we strive to be their refuge in the days ahead. In the name of Jesus, who was himself a refugee, we pray. Amen.

Prayer

God of the widow and the stranger,
 you are made known in our Savior Jesus Christ.
 Born as a migrant,
 exiled as a refugee,
 he knew the pain of homelessness
 but taught his friends the meaning and challenge of love.
 Lead us as we build communities
 rooted in hospitality and justice. Amen

Source: World Council of Churches "In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples," November 1997

Prayer

Oh God, as we look upon the world, we cry out in lamentation, weeping for those who suffer. We weep for those whose security is threatened and for those whose hearts are broken. We weep for those who are separated from their families and for those who do not have enough to eat. Like Rachel, weeping for her children, we cry out at the slaughter of the innocents. We cry out at the atrocity of ethnic cleansing. We cry out at the indifference we find, even in ourselves. Oh God, remind us once again that nothing can separate us from your love. Turn the lamentations of the world into joyful praise for your abiding grace. In the name of Jesus the Christ, Amen.

Prayer

Today, Gracious God,
 we worship you who are the one born among us:
 born, like many refugees, in makeshift conditions,
 surviving amidst bloodshed and terror,
 forced to leave your place of birth and go to a foreign land.
 Born as one of us, we worship you, Refugee God.

Today, Gracious God,
 we worship you as one forced to flee from danger,
 avoiding those with murderous intent,
 finding a home far away from the center of worship and action.
 Born as one of us, we worship you, Refugee God.

Today, Gracious God,
 we worship you as one who lived with those forced to the edges,
 as one who taught and demonstrated the great depth of love
 you have for each person, whether homeless or stateless.
 Born as one of us, we worship you, loving God.

We thank you for the wisdom of strangers from the east
 who found and worshiped you in a stable,

and we thank you for the faith of the Syrophonician woman
who extended your mission.

We confess we are not always open to the wisdom strangers bring.

We do not seek to live amongst those whose lives are disrupted.

We give importance to status and grandeur.

Forgive us.

We thank you for your graciousness.

You continually come to us speaking words of love and forgiveness.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Source: *Refugee and Migrant Service, Aotearoa, New Zealand*

Prayer

God our Creator;

As we join the large spectrum of Christians in different churches
who are praying for refugees, we realize that we are,
in fact, asking for changes in our own society.

We pray for politicians,
that they may be willing to share the prosperity
of our country with all people –
not only with their own citizens.

Send them someone who will give a name
and a human face to the refugee problem,
and thus show them the inhumanity of the legislation.

We pray for journalists and others who work in the media,
and thus influence public opinion.

Send into their experience events
which will safeguard them from cynicism
and invite them to use their capacities
to generate a friendlier atmosphere toward refugees.

We pray for the police and immigration officers at our airports,
who exercise power over the lives of people –
often without a real knowledge of their situation.

Send into their lives people who are able to help them
understand the reality of the asylum seekers.

We pray for ordinary citizens in our country,
that we may not be naive or indifferent,
but join those who are working
to alleviate the lot of refugees.

God, our Creator,
have mercy on us;
we, who are acting as if freedom, peace
and the well-being of our country
were meant for our benefit alone.

God, our Creator,
help us to become changed people,
and to change our attitudes,
as well as our legislation. Amen

Source: *A Prayer from Finland in "With All God's People: The New Ecumenical Prayer Circle,"*
p. 74, 1989 WCC Publications, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland.

Prayer

Lord God, as you called your Son back home from his early childhood exile in Egypt, gather from the four corners of the world all refugees who long for a home. Grant peace to those who can return to the homes they left behind, that they might rebuild their lives. Grant courage to those who must move on to new homes, that they might re-root their lives. And grant hope to those who continue to wait without a home, that they might revive their lives. We pray this in the name of your son, our Hiding Place and our Deliverer. Amen

Source: *World Refugee Day, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, 2007.*

Prayer

Gracious God, I most often come to my table blissfully ignoring the efforts that brought this bounty. I give thanks for the food and the hands that prepared it. But I do not as often give thanks for the hands that harvested it.

I am blessed by hands that work so hard. Those hands call me to gratitude...to a mindfulness that the food I enjoy comes to me cheaply but comes from someone else at a greater price.

Forgive me for overlooking this reality. Help me rise from my table, grateful and determined to work for justice for farm workers. Amen.

Source: *The Harvest of Justice Table Prayers, National Farm Worker Ministry*

Prayer

We pray for all those who are uprooted, who are hunted, who are fleeing for their lives, and who so often find only closed borders, closed doors, and closed faces. We pray for the women and men, the children and the elderly who seek to find safety and solace and who yearn to begin new lives. We pray for those who pass by, who would rather not hear the pleading or see the fear or recognize the human being in need of help. Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord, hear our prayer, awaken in us all the potentials which may become your means of answering the prayers of others.

All: In us, through us, and, if need be, despite us, may your will be done. Amen.

Source: *The Worship Book of the Global Ecumenical Consultation on Forced Displacement of People, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1995.*

Prayer

The symbols described below each prayer should be brought forward during the prayer and placed on a small table.

We remember before God all those who have been uprooted from their homes and communities – people who are compelled to flee for their lives, to leave their land and culture, and live apart from their families. With them, we mourn their loss of dignity, community, resources, and employment.

Symbol of uprooted persons – a globe, map, or small bag with a few items of clothing

We especially pray for the women who are the majority of those displaced. We remember the work that women do to keep families together, to nurture community and end violence and injustice.

Symbol of women – a shawl or scarf

We remember the millions of children whose lives are marked by danger and exploitation.

Symbol of children – a worn child's shoe or a small toy

We remember those who are persecuted because of their gender, race, or creed. We pray for the women, the men, the children, and the elderly, who seek safety and solace, who yearn to begin new lives.

For all the uprooted, sheltering God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We remember before God those countries where people must leave their homes because of war, injustice, and violence.

Symbol of peace – a figure of a dove, a paper crane, or a flower

We remember those places which have been made unsafe by land mines, and all those who have been killed or maimed by land mines. We remember those in our own homeland who live with violence and its brutal threat.

For all people terrified by violence, Gentle God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who leave their homes for economic survival; we remember that the gap between rich and poor gets wider, and the earth's resources are shared by fewer people.

Symbol of economic survival – pennies, recycling sign, or a food bank bag

We pray for those who pay the cost of international debt with their lives. We remember the homeless and poorly housed and the unemployed in our own communities.

For all people displaced by economic disparity, God of justice, in your mercy hear our prayer.

We remember before God those who leave their homes because of earthquakes, storms floods, and other disasters. We acknowledge the effects of deforestation, degradation of farm land, nuclear and weapons testing, and the exploitation of resources for the sake of consumers in other countries.

Symbol of the environment – a pot of earth or an unpotted plant

We remember those in our own communities who have been hurt by poor stewardship of creation.

For all people displaced by devastation of your world, Creator God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We give thanks to you, God, for the world's diversity of peoples and cultures.

Symbol of diversity – a multicolored braid of wool, kaleidoscope, or rainbow

We pray that hostility and indifference may give way to hospitality and justice. Help us to be vigilant stewards and faithful partners, and strengthen us to live as people of your creation, committed and bold in deeds of justice.

God of all, you taught us through your Son to seek the signs of your reign in the tiny mustard seed. Plant your word deep in the soil of our hearts, sow in us the seeds of compassion; let your hospitality take root within us, and your compassion grow in us, so righteousness may spring forth in all the world, and your holy will be done. We ask this in His name. Amen.

Members of the congregation are invited to come forward and plant a seed as a sign of hope and to name the hope aloud, concluding with the words: "Come Holy Spirit."

Renew the face of the earth and the hearts of your people.

Source: World Council of Churches "In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples," 1997.

Prayer

God of the universe, maker of all persons, we come before you seeking freedom for asylum seekers imprisoned in this land. In fear, they fled persecution in their homelands. They came here seeking sanctuary. We have placed them in prison. Behind bars their tears fall. Oh, God who hears all tears, along with you, we have heard the cries of your people who are in bondage and we ask you this day, set them free, O Lord, set them free. In your name we pray. Amen.

Source: Forgotten Refugees Campaign, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

Prayer

The following is a list of concerns related to refugees and immigrants for which prayers of intercession can be offered followed by “we pray to the Lord” with the community responding “Lord hear our prayer.”

- An end to the persecution and oppression that causes refugees to flee their home;
- Fair distribution of wealth so that people are not forced to leave their homes to find employment;
- Our leaders, that they might implement just policies allowing safe migration, just conditions for migrant workers, and an end to the detention of those seeking asylum from persecution;
- That we might be grateful for the benefit we receive from the hard work of migrants who are forced to work without legal safeguards;
- For unaccompanied migrant children that they might be reunited with their families;
- For those persons who are trafficked across borders that they may be protected; and
- For our church that we may come to a greater understanding and acceptance of differences.

Confession

Forgiving God, we have sinned against you.
 When we saw refugees in the news, we said:
 "We'll send some money to Week of Compassion."
 And we thought we had done all we could do.
 When we saw immigrants in our community, we said:
 "Just keep them away from our jobs."
 And we thought we were just being realistic.
 Then we heard your voice saying:
 "I was a stranger and you welcomed me."
 Forgive us, God, for turning our backs on you.

Confession

Relief for every desperate cry, Refuge from life's storms, Shade from the heat, and Safe Haven in times of crisis (*Isaiah 25:4*): We gather, not to satisfy a religious obligation, but in order that we may be empowered to imitate Your compassion in this broken, hurting world.

Comforter of the afflicted and Disturber of the self-confident: We acknowledge before You in the presence of our brothers and sisters that we have “passed by on the other side” (*Luke 10:25-37*) of need, hoping to avoid its intrusive claim upon our daily routine. We have tried to use material wealth as spiritual anesthesia and find ourselves becoming “rich in things and poor in soul.” Forgive us, too, when the enormity of it all leaves us “weary in well-doing” (*Galatians 6:9; II Thessalonians 3:13*) and vulnerable to an un-Christ-like flight from suffering.

We thank You for the gift of Christ who was delivered in squalor and stench (*Luke 2:7*), who knew what it meant to be a displaced person (*Matthew 8:20*), and who embraced the darkness of poverty in order to illuminate the path of salvation (*II Corinthians 8:9*).

Grant us identification with, rather than perpetuation of misery and suffering, awakening the poor to dignity and the well-to-do from the spell of self-satisfaction. “Widen our hearts” (*II Corinthians 6:13*), unstop our ears to the cries of our brothers and sisters, cultivate within us the

seed of compassion, consecrate our wallets and our date books in order that we may “prove our love” (*II Corinthians 8:8*). All this we pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

Source: *Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program, September 1993*

Confession

Leader: For our failure to feel the sufferings of others, and our tendency to live comfortably with injustice,

People: God forgive us.

Leader: For the self-righteousness which denies guilt, and the self-interest which strangles compassion,

People: God forgive us.

Leader: For those who live their lives in careless unconcern, who cry "Peace, peace" when there is no peace,

People: We ask your mercy.

Leader: For our failings in community, our lack of understanding,

People: We ask your mercy.

Leader: For times when we are too eager to be better than others, when we are too rushed to care, when we are too tired to bother, when we don't really listen, when we are too quick to act from motives other than love,

People: God forgive us.

Source: *Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness, South Africa*

Affirmation of Faith

This we believe.

That it is central to the mission of Christ
to participate, by word and action,
in the struggles of the poor for justice,
to share justly the earth's land and resources,
to rejoice in the diversity of human culture,
to preserve human life in all its beauty and frailty,
to accompany the uprooted and to welcome the stranger,
and to witness — every day — to the love of God for all people of the earth.

This we believe.

That we are called to become the Church of the Stranger,
to open ourselves to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit
which may come to us through the foreigner,
to take the risk of speaking out on behalf of those who are different from us,
and to see that when we minister to the stranger, the uprooted,
we are serving our Lord and Savior.

This we believe.

That Christ, fully aware of our differences,
prays that we might be one, so that the world may believe.

This we believe,

and to this we are committed

for the love of God

in the way of Christ,

by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Source: *Adapted from the Worship Book of the Global Ecumenical Consultation on Forced Displacement of People, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1995.*

The Lord's Prayer

Our father which art in heaven - may we become a new earth of sisters and brothers, instead of strangers and foreigners.

Hallowed be thy name - that in your name there may be no more killing and ethnic cleansing.

Thy kingdom come - not the kingdoms of this world that divide themselves over borders.

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven - in all places where people experience violence.

Give us this day our daily bread - so we may share with those forced to leave their homes.

And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us - helping us to replace our self-interest with genuine concern for others.

Lead us not into temptation - especially the temptation of indifference towards the suffering.

But deliver us from evil - and help us to deliver those affected by evil into the safety of our communities.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever - in you the world finds hope.
Amen!

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Our Father who art in heaven,

People: You will that we, your children, build a new earth of sisterhood and brotherhood, not a hell of violence and death.

Leader: Holy be your name,

People: That in your name, Lord, there be no abuse, oppression, or manipulation of your children.

Leader: Your kingdom come.

People: Not the kingdom of fear, of power, of money, of seeking peace by means of war.

Leader: Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,

People: Over this land of ours and other sister lands that changed their songs of joy because of oppression and the whine of shrapnel.

Leader: Give us this day our daily bread,

People: The bread of peace, Lord, so that we can plant maize and beans, watch them grow, and share them as a family.

Leader: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

People: May our personal and national interests be not the coin of our exchanges. May our laments be changed into songs of life, clenched fists into open hands, cries of orphans into smiles.

Leader: Lead us not into temptation,

People: The temptation of conformism, of doing nothing, the temptation to refuse to work for you in the search for justice and peace.

Leader: Deliver us from evil,

People: From being Cain to our brother, from being arrogant, from believing ourselves to be lords of life and death. Amen.

Source: Prayer of Salvadoran refugees

Litany

Leader: As we come together in prayer, let us remember the word of God, who instructs us to "love the stranger who dwells among you for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt."

People: God, help us welcome those who have come to dwell among us.

Leader: For all those who have come fleeing oppression and persecution –

People: God, help us welcome those who have come to dwell among us.

Leader: For those who have come fleeing hardship and hunger –

People: God, help us welcome those who have come to dwell among us.

Leader: For those who have come to join loved ones already here –

People: God, help us welcome those who have come to dwell among us.

Leader: For those who have come seeking freedom and opportunity –

People: God, help us welcome those who have come to dwell among us.

Leader: Let us remember the words of Christ, who said “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

People: When, Lord, were you a stranger that we welcomed among us?

Leader: “Truly, as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me.”

People: When we welcomed the stranger, we welcomed you, Christ Jesus, in our midst!

Unison: Loving God, you call us to create hospitable communities. Help us to overcome any fear and anxiety we may have of those who come from other lands to live among us.

Give us the courage and wisdom to create compassionate and just immigration polities.

Grant that we may all live together in peace and love. Amen.

Source: Interfaith Worker Justice

Litany

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through many centuries from native peoples whose history in this land has no recorded beginning.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through many centuries from Spanish, French, and English sailors who came to conquer a new world.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through a couple of centuries from Africans who were forced to come.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through a couple of centuries from Asians desperate for a way to earn a living.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through this century from Latin Americans fleeing oppression.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through this century from Mexicans seeking a way to feed their children.

Leader: We are the children of God.

Unison: God, we are your children. Unite us into a loving family. Amen.

Litany

Right side: By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows,
there we hung up our harps.
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

Left side: By the waters, we also weep –
by the Caspian Sea, by the wells of the Sudan,
by the dripping taps of Macedonia, by the Ivory Coast,
by the Straits of Florida.
By the waters, we also weep.

Right side: By the waters, we remember –
we remember Haiti, Cuba, and Guatemala;

we remember Cambodia and Burma;
 we remember Iraq, Armenia, and the Ukraine;
 we remember Bosnia and Croatia;
 we remember Somalia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone;
 By the waters, we remember.

Left side: On the willows, we hung up our harps –
 we hung up our security, our homes, our land;
 we hung up our persecution, our fear, our terror;
 we hung up our starvation, our thirst, our poverty;
 we hung up our traditions, our friends, our culture;
 we hung up our family ties.

Right side: On the willows, we hung up our harps.
 How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?
 We sing only the songs of the homeless,
 the laments of death and destruction,
 the tunes of the homeland invaded,
 the song of the songless.

Left side: We sing until somebody, hearing, remembers –
 Jesus was one of the homeless.
 He had nowhere to lay his head.
 He said: "Welcome the stranger."
 Make room for them in your hearts.

Unison: We are the followers of the one
 who had nowhere to lay his head.
 By the waters of Babylon, we reach out.
 To this foreign land, we welcome the strangers.
 Come, you who weep.
 Come, sing the Lord's song with us.

Litany

Leader: It is written in God's Word: Through people of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to you.

People: Lord, we hear them speaking, but we do not understand. How can we hear a word from you through them?

Leader: Seek out interpreters and enter into dialogue that you may discern what God is saying to you through the stranger who speaks another language.

People: Lord, we want to hear and understand what message you may have for us through the foreigner, the refugee, and the immigrant.

Leader: Then listen intently, for in doing so you will receive a word from God.

People: May we not be like your people of old who would not listen. Lord, we would listen, understand and respond.

Leader: You will do well to respond to the needs of the stranger.

People: We have heard that by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

Source: 50th Anniversary Celebration of American Baptist Church's refugee program.

Litany

Leader: Mighty Lord, as you guided the Israelites, through the wilderness,

People: be a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day for refugees in search of new hope and new life.

Leader: As you brought the Israelites out of bondage to freedom,

People: bring refugees out of persecution to safety.

Leader: As you protected the Israelites through 40 years in refugee camps.

People: protect those who languish for years in refugee camps.

Leader: Wipe away their tears of sorrow

People: that their mourning may give way to hope.

Leader: Put an end to warfare and tyranny

People: that some may return home without fear of violence.

Leader: Open the doors of safer nations

People: that some may find new homes in new lands.

Leader: Rebuild their lives

People: that they might enjoy the fruit of their labors in peace.

Leader: Restore their material goods

People: that they might sustain their families in prosperity.

Leader: Revive their hope

People: That they might face a future with promise.

Leader: Surround all refugees with your heavenly host,

People: that they might know your protecting power.

Leader: Sustain them with your love

People: that they might feel the warm embrace of welcome.

Leader: Strengthen their bonds of friendship and family,

People: that they might serve one another with encouraging love.

Leader: And inspire your churches to welcome the stranger,

All: that together we might build communities of hope where strangers become neighbors and friends, and brothers and sisters. Amen.

Source: World Refugee Day, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, 2007

Litany

Leader: The Bible shows us that we are a pilgrim people forced to go where we did not choose to go.

People: Adam and Eve were forced from the garden of Eden and the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24)

Leader: The Bible shows us that we are a pilgrim people called out of our old lives into new ones.

People: God called Abram to leave his father's house and go to a land where he would make of him a great nation. (Genesis 12:1)

Leader: The Bible shows us that we are a pilgrim people who once were strangers in a foreign land.

People: For 430 years, the people of God lived as captives in Egypt. (Exodus 12:40)

Leader: The Bible shows us that God comes to us in the form of a pilgrim person who had no place to lay his head.

People: Mary "laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7)

Leader: The Bible shows us that God comes to us in the form of a pilgrim person who flees for his life.

People: "Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod." (Matthew 2:14)

Leader: The Bible shows us that we are to treat other pilgrim people fairly.

People: Moses said: "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 22:21)

Leader: The Bible shows us that when we welcome other pilgrim people, we open ourselves to blessings.

People: Showing hospitality to strangers, we thereby entertain angels unawares.
(*Hebrews 13:2*)

Leader: The Bible shows us that when we welcome other pilgrim people, we give and receive life.

People: When the widow of Zarephath offered food and shelter to the foreigner, Elijah raised her son from death. (*1 Kings 17:9-24*)

Leader: The Bible shows us that when we welcome other pilgrim people, we meet the Lord.

People: Jesus was made known to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as he took bread and blessed it. (*Luke 24:13-35*)

Leader: We continue our pilgrim journey —

People: Welcoming other pilgrims to join us.

Litany

Outer Circle: God, bless our feet
which have journeyed for so many miles.
Will they take us down the right path to safety,
to a new place to call home?

Inner Circle: Lord, give our feet strength
to accompany our brothers and sisters
who have been uprooted from their homelands.

Outer Circle: God, bless our legs.
We have been told to wait, told to stand,
Told to move as we are in the wrong line.
Come back tomorrow, they say, to wait.

Inner Circle: Lord, give our legs strength
to stand in solidarity,
to stand alongside those people
who are waiting to find a safe place to rest.

Outer Circle: God, bless our stomachs,
knotted in anger and fear, hunger and illness.

Inner Circle: Lord, give us strength
to stomach the injustices we must see
in order to recognize them
and not to turn away to ease our own discomfort.

Outer Circle: God, bless our arms
as they bear the weight of our few possessions
and the small children that we must carry.

Inner Circle: Lord, give our arms strength
to reach out to the newcomer,
making each one welcome.

Outer Circle: God, bless our hands,
which are cracked and bleeding
from the endless search to find work, to find food,
to hold onto those few strands of our former lives.

Inner Circle: Lord, give our hands strength
to work for justice and righteousness.

Outer Circle: God, bless our mouths
as we continue to ask endless questions.

Where can we go to find peace?
 Where can we find our mothers, fathers, spouses,
 our children?
 Who can tell us where to go next?

Inner Circle: Lord, open our mouths
 to speak words of kindness to the newcomer,
 to demand justice for all people,
 to defend those most in need.

Outer Circle: God, bless our ears
 so they will be ready to hear the many instructions
 in foreign languages.

Inner Circle: Lord, open our ears
 to hear your words
 as spoken by the lonely and oppressed.

Outer Circle: God, bless our heads,
 so tired from thinking what to do next,
 where to go next,
 how to learn yet another language,
 to learn the rules of another country's bureaucracy.

Inner Circle: Lord, help us to recognize the Christ in each one of us.

Source: *"Litany of Uprooted People: from **On Frequent Journeys**, edited by Rebekah Chevalier, The United Church of Canada, 1997, pp.59-61. Reprinted with permission. (The preceding wording must appear when you use this litany.)*

Litany

Leader: We pray for those walking through the desert,

People: Who choke on the dust

Leader: And look desperately for landmarks

People: And gulp down the rest of their water.

Leader: Give them strong legs

People: And blister-free feet

Leader: And guides who lead them straight to safety. We pray for those who come to the end of their strength,

People: Who fall

Leader: And can't get up again

People: And are left behind.

Leader: Give them someone with the courage not to let them die alone

People: And who finds them before their bones melt into the dust

Leader: And who remembers their names. We pray for those left back home.

People: Who wave goodbye

Leader: And wait anxiously for a call.

People: And then wish it had never come.

Leader: Give them a way to pay off their debts

People: And hold their families together

Leader: And go on without the ones they loved.

All: We pray for ourselves that we will have the strength to keep fighting for justice, that we won't get burned out or disillusioned when we don't see immediate change, and that we might live to see the day when no one need risk their lives crossing the desert. Amen.

Source: *Humane Borders' Memorial and March for Migrants, 2007*

Litany

Leader: We take a walk because we choose to walk.

People: Refugees take a walk because they are forced to flee.

Leader: We drive on roads hoping not to hit pot holes.

People: Refugees drive on roads hoping not to hit land mines.

Leader: We dream of taking a leisurely boat ride.

People: Refugees dream of finding a safe landing.

Leader: We desire ice in our diet drink.

People: Refugees desire clean water to drink.

Leader: We are concerned about what to cook for dinner.

People: Refugees are concerned about where to find a scrap of food.

Leader: We worry about our closets getting too full.

People: Refugees worry about having only the clothes on their back.

Leader: We don't like having our toothpaste squeezed in the middle.

People: Refugees don't like having no way to keep clean.

Leader: We despair that we will someday bury a relative.

People: Refugees despair that they have left a relative unburied.

Leader: We look forward to returning home after a long journey.

People: Refugees look forward to never being forced to return home.

Leader: We want to find protection for our standard of living.

People: Refugees want to find protection to live.

ALL: Lord, we ask for the faith and strength to bring an end to injustice.

Sung Litany

**Sing: Someone's crying, Lord, Kumbaya. Someone's crying, Lord, Kumbaya.
Someone's crying, Lord, Kumbaya. O Lord, Kumbaya.**

Leader: Someone's crying, Lord, somewhere. Someone is really millions, somewhere is many places. They are crying tears of suffering and of empty stomachs, tears of weakness and disappointment, tears of strength and resistance, tears of the rich and of the poor.

People: Someone's crying Lord. Redeem the times, and bring us to a new beginning.

**Sing: Someone's dying, Lord, Kumbaya. Someone's dying, Lord, Kumbaya.
Someone's dying, Lord, Kumbaya. O Lord, Kumbaya.**

Leader: Some are dying of hunger and thirst. Some are dying because others are enjoying too many unnecessary, superfluous things. Some are dying because people go on exploiting one another. Some are dying because structures and systems crush the poor and alienate the rich. Someone's dying, Lord, because we are still not willing to make a choice, to be a witness, to act.

People: Someone's dying Lord. Redeem the times, and bring us to a new beginning.

**Sing: Someone's shouting, Lord, Kumbaya. Someone's shouting, Lord,
Kumbaya. Someone's shouting, Lord, Kumbaya. O Lord, Kumbaya.**

Leader: Someone's shouting loud and clear, some have made a choice. Some are taking a stand, offering their very existence in love, to fight death surrounding us, to wrestle with the evils which we use to crucify each other.

People: Someone's shouting, Lord. Redeem the times, and bring us to a new beginning.

**Sing: Someone's praying, Lord, Kumbaya. Someone's praying, Lord, Kumbaya.
Someone's praying, Lord, Kumbaya. O Lord, Kumbaya.**

Leader: Someone's praying, Lord. We are praying in tears and anguish, in frustration and weakness, in confusion and longing. We are praying in strength and endurance. We are shouting and wrestling. As Jacob wrestled with the angel, he was touched, was marked, became a blessing.

People: We are praying, Lord. Spur our imagination. Sharpen our political will. Through Jesus Christ you have let us know where you want us to be. Help us to be there now. Be with us, touch us, mark us, let us be a blessing. Let your power be present in our weakness. Someone's praying Lord. Redeem the times, and bring us to a new beginning.

Sing: *Someone's singing, Lord, Kumbaya. Someone's singing, Lord, Kumbaya. Someone's singing, Lord, Kumbaya. O Lord, Kumbaya.*

Source: *Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program, September 1993*

Communion Meditation

This unleavened bread calls to mind the Passover celebration, when the angel of death passed over the Jewish people and enabled Moses to lead them out of bondage. It reminds us of refugees who, seeking safety, have had to flee their homes in the middle of the night. It reminds us of immigrants who have fled the economic bondage of their homelands. Lord, give us this day our daily bread and empower us to share it with others!

This cup calls to mind the upper room, where Jesus shared the Passover with his disciples. It reminds us of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. It reminds us that when we give drink to the thirsty, we are giving a drink to Him. When we welcome the stranger, we are welcoming Christ. Lord, fill our cups and empower us to fill the cups of others!

Communion Prayer

God, food of the poor;
 Christ, our bread,
 give us a taste of the tender bread
 from your creation's table;
 bread newly taken
 from your heart's oven,
 food that comforts and nourishes us.
 A loaf of community that makes us human,
 joined hand in hand,
 working and sharing.
 A warm loaf that makes us a family;
 sacrament of your body,
 your wounded people.

Source: *Workers in a community soup kitchen – Lima, Peru*

Offertory Prayer

Lord, we give you thanks for the prosperity of the nation and for the privilege of sharing what we have with others. We commit this offering to you that it may serve to strengthen our resolve to be good stewards of all that you have entrusted to us. Use it to further your reign of love, compassion and justice in our midst.
 Amen.

Source: *Canadian Inter-Church Committee for Refugees, Refugee Rights Day, March 2000*

Offertory Prayer

God, in the midst of our efforts to accumulate more and more of the things we feel we cannot live without, we pause to bring our offering to you for your blessing. Make us more fully aware of those persons around the world who have fled their homes with nothing but the clothes they are wearing. May they be for us an example of what it is that we truly cannot live without – your love and grace, given freely to the entire world. Amen

Hymns

Chalice Hymnal Suggestions

| <u>Name of Hymn</u> | <u>Number in the Chalice Hymnal</u> |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| The God of Us All | # 84 |
| Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather | # 278 |
| O Look and Wonder | # 292 |
| Here I Am, Lord | # 452 |
| Called as Partners in Christ's Service | # 453 |
| Ours the Journey | # 458 |
| Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race | # 485 |
| Bless Now, O God, the Journey | # 489 |
| We're United in Jesus | # 493 |
| Amazing Grace! | # 546 |
| Kum Ba Yah | # 590 |
| Jesu, Jesu | # 600 |
| Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah | # 622 |
| Stand By Me | # 629 |
| Lift Every Voice and Sing | # 631 |
| To Us All, to Every Nation | # 634 |
| In the Beginning | # 652 |
| God of Freedom, God of Justice | # 656 |
| What Does the Lord Require of You? | # 661 |
| Cuando el Pobre | # 662 |
| Go Down, Moses | # 663 |
| Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life | # 665 |
| The Voice of God is Calling | # 666 |
| For the Healing of the Nations | # 668 |
| When Will People Cease Their Fighting? | # 675 |
| O God of Every Nation | # 680 |
| O for a World | # 683 |
| God Made All People of the World | # 685 |
| In Christ There Is No East or West | # 687 |
| This Is My Song | # 722 |

Jesus Loves the Little Children

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Red, brown, yellow, black and white,
They are precious in his sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Those who fear for their own life,
Those who run from civil strife.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus loves the little children;
All the children of the world.
Refugees who flee their home,
They will never be alone.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Jesus was a refugee,
Into Egypt he did flee.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Leaving culture, leaving friends,
Going to the earth's far ends.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
From Sudan, Afghanistan,
Guatemala and Iran,
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Those who hunger, those who thirst,
Those who suffer from the worst.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world.
Those who run and those who hide,
Jesus runs along beside,
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Tune: *Jesus Loves the Little Children*

Source: *Written by Jennifer Riggs, Director of Refugee and Immigration Ministries. Permission to copy and distribute is hereby granted, but this song is mainly meant as a model to encourage children and youth to create new and/or additional verses.*

The Immigration Hymn

When the saints go marching in,
When the saints go marching in;
Lord, I want to be in that number
When the saints go marching in.

When hands reach out, cross border lines....

When fences fall, and bridges rise....

When we build, a global home...

When humankind, begins to share....

When rights for some, are rights for all....

When people move, as free as cash....

When the North, respects the South....

When open doors, replace closed minds....

Tune: *When the Saints Go Marching In*

Source: *Adapted from the original by Anthony Cosentino and Aurora Camacho de Schmidt (Immigrants Rights Advocates). Permission to copy and distribute is hereby granted.*

God, How can we Comprehend?

God, how can we comprehend – though we've seen them times before –
Lines of people without end fleeing danger, want, and war?
They seek safety anywhere, hoping for a welcome hand!
Can we know the pain they bear? Help us, Lord, to understand!

You put music in their souls; now they struggle to survive.
You gave each one gifts and goals; now they flee to stay alive.
God of outcasts, may we see how you value everyone,
For each homeless refugee is your daughter or your son.

Lord, your loving knows no bounds; you have conquered death for all.
 May we hear beyond our towns to our distant neighbors' call.
 Spirit, may our love increase; may we reach to all your earth,
 Till your whole world lives in peace; till we see each person's worth.

Tune: ABERYSTWYTH 77.7.7 D "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" # 542 in Chalice Hymnal

Source: All rights reserved. Copied from "Gifts of Love: New Hymns for Today's Worship" by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, Geneva Press. 2001. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette gives free one-time use of this hymn to congregations that support Church World Service. She appreciates churches sending a copy of their worship bulletin to her at First Presbyterian Church, 305 S. Broadway, Pitman, NJ 08071.

Jesus was a Refugee

Chorus:

Alleluia, Alleluia,
 Alleluia, Alleluia!
 Alleluia, Alleluia,
 Jesus was a refugee!

A new ruler; Judah's safer.
 Jesus is a returne-e
 To the rural town of Naz'reth
 In the land of Galilee.

Verses:

Let me tell you 'bout the story
 Of a well-known refuge-e,
 Who was born in far off Israel;
 Kings and shepherds came to see.

Could they make it in our era?
 Get a visa; pay a fe-e?
 Would the gov-ern-ment official
 Believe, not doubt, their story?

Then King Herod heard a rumor
 'Bout a rival; who was he-(e)?
 Set about to kill all children
 In the land from sea to sea.

Would their papers be in order
 For the border guard to se-e?
 Must they wait back in the desert;
 Keep arrivals orderly?

Angel's warning to the parents
 Told the fam'ly, time to fle-e
 welcome;
 Out of Judah into Egypt.
 Jesus was a refugee.

Woe to you who ignore God's will;
 Keep away the refuge-e.
 Think of Jesus; make them

Stand in solidarity.

Tune: ALLELUIA 44.44D "Alleluia" #106 in Chalice Hymnal

Source: Adapted from the original by Tom Clark (Coordinator of the former Inter-church Committee for Refugees, Canada.) Permission to copy and distribute is hereby granted.

Abraham Journeyed to a New Country

This hymn by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, co-pastor of Limestone Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware speaks to immigration issues. It is available for free use by congregations. Available at <http://www.nccusa.org/immigration/AbrahamJourneyedHymn.html>.

We Pray for Those with Empty Hands

On the following page is a hymn written by Barbara Hamm, Minister of Music at a UCC congregation in Benicia, California, who says: "Congregations are free to use this hymn in services of worship, provided they include the composer's name and the hymn note about its composition."

We Pray for Those with Empty Hands

$\text{♩} = 90$



1. We pray for those with emp - ty hands, whose hopes have all but died, who
 2. God, help us see our broth - er's need and feel our sis - ter's pain; help
 3. God, help us do your work on earth as a - gents of your grace, till

search for work in trou - bled lands, where walls and wars di - vide. We
 us to reach be - yond our greed and what we stand to gain. God,
 peace and plen - ty come to birth and bless the hu - man race. Then

pray for ref - u - gees whose bread is earned at such great cost, whose
 help us change sys - tem - ic wrongs that make the world un - just. Your
 hun - gry chil - dren shall be fed, the poor be lift - ed up; and

work to keep their fam - ilies fed means cru - el bor - ders crossed.
 king - dom to the meek be - longs— one built on love and trust.
 all shall feast on liv - ing bread and drink the bles - sing cup.

(final only)

WORDS and MUSIC: Barbara Hamm © 2010

REFUGEE
C.M.D.

My text concerns the plight of economic refugees created by walls and wars all over the world. Of seminal importance in its creation were two public presentations I heard in March, 2010, which deeply moved me. The first was by Sue Tarleton, keynoter at a women's retreat, who spoke of visiting with Palestinian women whose male family members are denied access to work on their farmlands. These women are trying to form cooperatives in an effort to sell their handicrafts to earn money for their families. The other was by Dr. Marcus Borg, who stated in a lecture in San Jose, California, that "The Kingdom of God," central to Jesus' message, is "the dream of God" for the earth here and now. It is "an alternative vision of how life in this world should be," a kingdom of justice and peace in which everyone has enough. Isa. 58:6-12; Mt. 5:5; Lk. 1:52-53; Jn. 6:48-51.

Multicultural Readings

(Listed by country/language)

| <u>Title</u> | <u>Country</u> | <u>Number in the Chalice Hymnal</u> |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| A Prayer of an African Girl | Africa | #19 |
| God and the Ever-Present Cross | Asia | #657 |
| The Nature of Peace | El Salvador | #678 |
| May God Embrace Us | England | #449 |
| Let the Day Come, Lord | France | #710 |
| Be God's Kindness | India | #473 |
| Serving the Poor | India | #660 |
| A Litany for the World | Scotland | #664 |
| The Wondrous Cross: a Litany | Uganda | #209 |
| God's Love for All People | WCC | #682 |

Candle-Lighting

First Person: I light a light in the name of God who created all people: red, yellow, black, white, and brown and who calls us to set the captives free.

Second Person: I light a light in the name of the refugee Christ whose persecution has given hope and life to all the world.

Third Person: I light a light in the name of the Spirit who guides our path as we work to set the captives free.

Source: *Forgotten Refugees Campaign, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service*

Good Friday Service

“**Stations of the Cross: The Passion of Jesus and the Pain of Asylum Seekers**” is a Good Friday Service that presents the 14 Stations of the Cross from the perspective of persons seeking asylum in the United States. It is available from Church World Service at <http://www.churchworldservice.org/PDFs/refugees/stations.pdf>.

Sermon Ideas

Exodus 1:8-22 – The two Hebrew midwives saved newborn Hebrew boys when Pharaoh called for the killing of Hebrews because they had multiplied to outnumber the Egyptians. The Hebrew people had come to Egypt as immigrants fleeing a dire economic situation, and eventually become slaves of the Egyptian economy, becoming cheap labor for building cities. The Hebrew midwives used their “mother’s wit” to outsmart Pharaoh who had told them to kill any boys they helped be born. When Pharaoh called them to ask why boy babies were still living, the midwives said that the Hebrew women were vigorous and giving birth before the midwives could get there. Survival against unjust state-sponsored laws motivated them. The story goes on to tell of Miriam, the sister of Moses, who told Pharaoh’s daughter that she knew a wet nurse who could care for the baby that had been found in the basket. Pharaoh’s daughter recognized the child to be Hebrew yet she was determined to save the baby. She reached across boundaries of race, class, and national identity. Faith communities then and now are called to take risks. Mission as risk-taking hospitality is a challenge today as displaced people around the world exchange their homes and roots for freedom from hunger and oppression. Mission as risk-taking hospitality is a challenge as government policy and social pressures pit newcomers against existing vulnerable communities for jobs, housing, and education.

Deuteronomy 15:1-11 – As Christians we believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ has freed us from the burden of the law, but the law can still be an important means of learning about the will of God. The law had a deep concern for the welfare of all people - need was the determining factor, not importance or status. Every 7th year was to be proclaimed the year of the Lord's release in honor of God. The land was to be left fallow, and no planting or harvesting was to be done. This was also good for the soil, to prevent depletion and erosion. The financial side of the economy (the trader, the merchant, and the artist) didn't have to stop its labor, but the payment of loans by the poor had to be canceled and the poor lent whatever was needed to live through the year. Deuteronomy even goes as far as to say that if Israel would truly obey the law, then there would be no need of it because there would be no poor. But as things were, the poor would never cease out of the land. This is the scripture that Jesus quotes in John 12: "The poor you always have with you." The poor are with us because we have not yet fully obeyed the will of God. Human need is not a matter just for social service systems or governmental regulations and laws. It is a matter for personal mercy and loving-kindness. Meeting the needs of refugees and immigrants is one of the ways that we fulfill the will of God.

Deuteronomy 26:1-11 – This is a story about a group of former refugees who had been in bondage in Egypt but had been brought to a land of milk and honey. The phrase "a wandering Aramean" is a reference to the wandering life of Jacob who was the patriarch of the family that ended up in bondage in Egypt. In Hebrew, the word for "wandering" means more than just a nomadic lifestyle; it carries the sense of being lost or about to perish. This story points to the fact that the Hebrew people had truly been rescued by God. In appreciation for what God had done, they brought the first fruits of the land and presented them to God in the sanctuary. Then they shared the first fruits with the aliens that resided with them. We, too, live in a land flowing with milk and honey. We aren't forced to think about the uncertainty of life very often, but around the world people live on the edge of life. We need to bring more than our remnants to the sanctuary. We need to realize that God has given us more than we can give away.

Psalms 137:1-6 – This scripture shows the suffering of the people of Israel who experienced the days of conquest and the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. They were taken into Babylonian captivity. The "rivers of Babylon" are streams or canals that interlaced the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and the "willows" were a species of poplars that grew by those streams. Sitting on the ground was the way of mourning in those ancient times. The exiles considered Jerusalem to be God's dwelling place on earth, so as far as they were concerned, there were no songs of their homeland that were not songs about God. The Babylonians probably had no understanding of the sacred significance of Jerusalem when they called on the exiles to sing them a merry song for their entertainment. They were just trying to demonstrate that they were in control. The exiles probably felt that the holiness of God would be affected if the Lord's song was used as a means of entertainment for a heathen audience. A similar idea is found in Matthew 7:6 where Jesus says: "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine." Today people weep by waters also, and they remember their homelands. They have been forced to hang up all that gave them a sense of security. Some of them have found it possible to start over again in a strange land. Others have longed for the past, grown listless, and wandered with growing distress from city to city. We are called to understand that their actions and behavior may be due to the trauma they have gone through, rather than a reaction to us personally. Their silence or their overreaction may be due to the strength of the emotions that still haunt their lives.

Mark 6:30-44 – In Mark, the feeding of the 5000 comes right after Jesus had sent the disciples to preach and heal in his name. When they returned, they must have had a lot of stories they wanted to share with each other. So Jesus asked them to come away with him to a lonely place,

but the crowds found them and Jesus had compassion on them. As the day went on, the disciples probably became upset, and they asked Jesus to send the people away so they could get food. Jesus responded to the disciples by saying: "You give them something to eat. You meet their need." The disciples were amazed – even if they could go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread, the people still wouldn't have enough to eat. Jesus told them to look at what was possible: "How many loaves have you? Go and see." Jesus blessed and broke what they found, and there were 12 baskets left over. The feeding of the 5,000 was a miracle not because Jesus performed a magic trick, but because the disciples looked for the possibilities they had among the people gathered there, and they offered those resources to Jesus for his blessing. Feeding 5000 people seemed overwhelming to the disciples, but it doesn't compare with the needs of millions of refugees in the world today. We too need to look for what is possible; if we offer what little we have to God, and ask God's blessing on it, we too will see it multiplied beyond our expectations.

Mark 11:15-19 – The outer court of Gentiles (the foreigners and strangers of that day) was a place where those not Jewish could worship. This is the part cleansed. Jesus was angry that the authorities were treating the Gentiles not as true worshipers, but as persons to be exploited for the sake of the temple treasury. The phrase "for all the nations" is very important because the Gentiles were being robbed of a place of worship. Mark tells the story to declare that through this act Jesus was fulfilling Isaiah 56 and declaring himself to be the Messiah. Isaiah felt that the temple service as he knew it was not final or complete and that one day when the Messiah arrived, the Jewish temple would become a house of prayer for all the nations. The early Christians reading Mark saw the cleansing as the major factor leading to Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus sacrificed his life so all people might become equal before God. We forget that we are the Gentiles, the foreigners of Jesus' day. We need to realize that we and all others have been welcomed – the dividing walls have been knocked down. Therefore, we need to welcome foreigners into our communities and churches.

Luke 10:29-37 – This story is found only in Luke. Luke uses the Samaritans as an example that the gospel message was to be given to the Gentiles also. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is a little short of 17 miles and falls almost thirteen hundred feet in that distance. The historian Josephus spoke of the road in the first century as "desolate and rocky." Jerome declared in the late fourth century that it was still infested with Bedouin robbers. Priests and Levites were not compelled to live in Jerusalem when they were off duty, so they were free to travel to other places. Perhaps the Priest and Levite were going to Jericho to visit relatives for a few days. They passed by on the other side, without even the curiosity we all have when we see a traffic accident and go look. They were totally indifferent. The Jews of Jesus' day hated the Samaritans, so for Jesus to say that it was a Samaritan who came to the aid of the wounded man was a strong statement. The Samaritan was moved with a pity that took the form of action; he did something to help the man. We are often moved with pity about situations around the world, but how often does our pity lead us to action? The Samaritan knew that love must know no limits of race, ethnicity, or nationality. The person in need is one's neighbor, no matter how different the person is. The Samaritan not only bandaged his wounds but took him to an inn and paid for his care. He went way beyond superficial aid to help the man become self-sufficient again. He did it not out of obligation but because he wanted to. He loved his neighbor as himself.

Luke 14:7-24 – When we invite people to a party, we usually invite people we know, who share the same interests as we do. In the verses before the story of the wedding feast, Jesus challenges us about whom we include in our fellowship and whom we exclude from it. He is even more radical in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:43-48) where he tells us to love our

enemies. The story of the Wedding Feast shows how the kingdom of God transcends our limits. There is no limit to who can be invited – even the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. Think about what it is that stops you from inviting those who are different into your parties. Think about how God affirms the human dignity of even the marginalized and how you can participate in this affirmation of the identity and human dignity of strangers. Reflect on how this story of the Wedding Feast would be rewritten if those who are invited in are the undocumented persons in the United States.

Luke 16:19-26 – In first century Palestine, food was eaten primarily with the fingers. Wealthy families baked extra bread to be used to wipe their fingers. That bread would be thrown to the household pets for them to eat. Lazarus waited and wanted nothing more than to eat the scraps from the rich man's table - the napkins which were normally thrown to the dogs. The rich man died and went to live in fiery torment in Gehenna – the location of the Jerusalem garbage dump. Why was the rich man in the fiery torment? Probably because of his inattention to Lazarus. He did not see Lazarus. Lazarus was of no more importance to the rich man than were the dogs that ate his bread napkins. He never recognized Lazarus as one of his brothers who was in pain. Like the rich man of scripture, is our sight more focused on wealth and bread napkins? Is our sight more focused on the things we desire to feel rich? What is precious to us - the wealth we have, or all the people of the world? We are the wealthy of this world. We are those who have enough to afford bread napkins. And because of all that we have – because of God's blessings in our lives – we are called to respond to those who are in need.

John 21:1-19 –The disciples labored all night but caught nothing. At Jesus' instructions they cast their nets on the opposite side of the boat and brought in 153 fish. Those fish did not spend the whole night swimming on just the right side of the boat. So why weren't the disciples able to catch the fish until they had heard what Jesus had to say about where to place their nets? Our ordinary labors will also be in vain, no matter how productive we think we are, unless we too hear the voice of Jesus giving us guidance about where to cast our nets. What kind of guidance does Jesus give us today? Jesus models the kind of action that is required. Jesus built a charcoal fire and prepared fish and bread for the disciples' breakfast. Here was the resurrected Christ, the savior of the world, and what was he doing? He wasn't giving a sermon by the sea, or building a place in which he could be worshiped and adored, or calling attention to himself (saying look at me – I've overcome death). He was simply meeting the very human needs of the disciples. And after breakfast, he called upon Peter to also meet human needs - to feed my sheep. Involvement in refugee and immigration ministries allows us to have direct and immediate contact with some of the people in this world who are in need - people facing issues of life and death. They can help us get our priorities straight. They can help us fulfill Christ's call to be servants.

Benediction

God of the stranger, you have been made known to us in Jesus Christ, who was born as a migrant and exiled as a refugee. Lead us as we leave this place of worship to build a community rooted in hospitality to strangers and justice for all. Amen.

Benediction

May the blessing of light be on you,
Light without and light within.
May the blessed sunlight shine upon you
And warm your heart
Till it glows like a great fire,

And strangers may warm themselves
As well as friends.

And may the light shine out of the eyes of you
like a candle set
In the window of a house,
Bidding the wanderer to come in
out of the storm.

May you ever have a kindly greeting for people
as you're going along the roads.

And now may the Lord bless you,
And bless you kindly.
Amen

Source: *Irish Blessing – World Council of Churches “In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples,”*
November 1997

Benediction

Leader: Go into the world in peace!

People: And take peace to a world that desperately needs it.

Leader: Go into the world in faith!

People: Trusting God to lead you, trusting people to receive you.

Leader: Go into the world with hope!

People: With God's presence before you and human dreams to carry you.

Leader: Go into the world with love!

People: Serving with those in whom Christ lives, and laboring for those for whom Christ died.

Leader: Go in peace, faith, hope and love!

People: Thanks be to God!

Benediction

Leader: Go now as sojourners in the land, pilgrims passing through.

People: We go to accept responsibility for the land we are passing through.

Leader: The kingdom of God is neither here nor there.

People: The kingdom is among us. Amen.

Benediction

Renewed by your spirit in this time of worship, O God, we leave to become witnesses to the unity of your people here and around the world. As we have been welcomed into your presence, we leave to become a welcoming presence in a world where fear and hatred separate people from one another. Go with us now into the future, and strengthen our resolve to embrace those we meet with your love. Amen.

Benediction

Go in peace to love and to serve. Let your ears ring long with what you have heard. And may the bread on your tongue leave a trail of crumbs to lead the hungry back to the place that you are from. And take to the world this love, this hope and faith. Take to the world this rare,

relentless grace. And like the Three-in-One, know you must become what you want to save
'cause that's still the way He takes to the world. Amen

Source: *Words from the song, "Take to the World," by Aaron Tate, Director of Refugee
Services for Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston*

(Updated 2010)