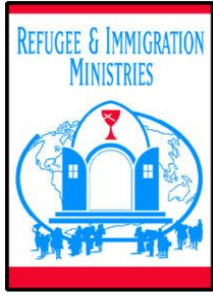




**Disciples Refugee & Immigrant
WELCOME SUNDAY
June 17, 2018
Planning & Worship Resources**



Go here for Disciples information and resources to help you prepare to participate in Disciples Refugee and Immigrant Welcome Sunday on June 17th, or for an event to honor refugees and immigrants on any day near that time!:

<https://www.disciplesmissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/refugee-immigrant-welcome-sunday/>.

See our resources in the pages below and [here](#) at <https://www.disciplesmissions.org/planning-resources-for-welcome-sunday> as you plan for your special celebrations and actions, and go [here](#) or click “subscribe” on our Refugee & Immigration Ministries website at <https://www.disciplesmissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/> to receive our “RIM WRAP” with consistent updates, education, and calls to action in support of vulnerable immigrants and refugees!

Also, be sure your church notes our General Assembly resolutions in support of immigrants; GA-1723 “On Becoming Immigrant Welcoming Congregations,” [here](#): https://www.disciplesmissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GA-IMMIGRANT-WELCOMING-CONGS-SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY_FINAL_02_03_2017.pdf and in support of welcoming refugees, GA-1739, [here](#): <http://ga.disciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Emergency-Resolution-GA-1739-Concerning-Executive-Order-13780.pdf>.

We choose to lift up the voices of refugees and immigrants above all because of God’s commandment that “*the foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born*” (Leviticus 19:34.) We choose especially to highlight refugees and immigrants now because of particular challenges families face in this moment; when there are more refugees than at any point since World War II, and as immigrants are reporting increasing fears of family separation amidst vocal rhetoric and policies against immigrant communities. We invite you to JOIN US in gathering STORIES of inspiring immigrants and refugees connected to our Disciples faith family by adding stories you know [here](#): <https://goo.gl/forms/rmx4bGukNWFlyEnz2>.

We also celebrate the strengths and courage of refugees and immigrants as a part of our commitment in joining the “[Ecumenical Declaration: Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope](#).” Disciples signed the Declaration in March 2017 together with Church World Service global communions and National Council of Churches partners. The statement can be found at: <https://greateras1.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ecumenical-Declaration-Protecting-Welcome-Restoring-Hope.pdf>. One promise made in our declaration is to honor refugees throughout our congregations through a Welcome Sunday or other special event of solidarity during June. Church World Service has provided abundant resources for congregations to use in planning services and special welcome events, as well as social media graphics, advocacy resources, banner designs, refugee stories, and music to honor refugees and immigrants at this site: <https://greateras1.org/act/congregations/>.

We honor refugees and immigrants on June 17th or a nearby day also because World Refugee Day is celebrated each year on June 20th. World Refugee Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001, to mark the 50th anniversary of the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. World Refugee Day provides an opportunity to support increased welcome and understanding of refugees, to encourage advocacy in support of refugee resettlement, to build awareness of immigrant and refugee challenges and contributions, and to strengthen justice for all who have come seeking new life and hope after tragedy and loss. Find a full toolkit of background information, refugee stories, and refugee advocacy resources for World Refugee Day at: <https://www.rcusa.org/world-refugee-day/>.

Contact a Refugee Resettlement Office nearest you to invite a local refugee or immigrant speaker to your event. See a list of offices and addresses/numbers [here](#):

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/580e4274e58c624696efadc6/t/590cfd44bebfabc604ab3acd/1494023605419/Public+Affiliate+Directory+5-5-17.pdf>, and

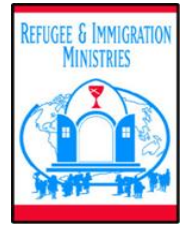
find a map [here](#): <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/580e4274e58c624696efadc6/t/583c76e7440243877aff59ef/1480357955543/PRM-RPP+Affilaite+Sites+2016+-+LG>. As Disciples, our primary partner for refugee resettlement is Church World Service agency. But

if one is not within 50 miles, we encourage you to link with another resettlement partner nearby!

*Questions? Contact Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries (RIM) Director,
5 Thomas Circle NW, Washington, DC 20005, stanley@dhm.disciples.org or 202-957-7826, @StanleyRea*



Resources for Planning Your Refugee & Immigrant Welcome Sunday or World Refugee Day Event



MUSICAL VIDEO WELCOME

“Look in My Eyes”—Refugees at Home in Lancaster, PA.
 (depicting the diversity and gifts of refugee populations entering the United States)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFLQ5YJXNN4>

ADDITIONAL IMAGES FOR PROGRAM & WORSHIP



CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Creator of all, we gather today thankful that you have welcomed us, and remembering your call for Abraham and Sarah to travel to a new land so all families of the earth may be blessed.

People: We give thanks that through our hardest times, God has heard our cry and responded with hospitality. Help us look deeply in the eyes of those who have sacrificed and braved dangers to seek safety among us.

Leader: Just as God has never forgotten our needs, we are called to walk alongside those who have been mistreated, persecuted and outcast.

People: God, strengthen us to be family for those neighbors we already know, and to find ways to be family for newcomers and the vulnerable that we have yet to meet. Help us welcome all with hope into our community, even as your life has shown us what welcome means and what love best looks like.

Leader: Let us work together with refugees and immigrants from many different lands to welcome them in, and let us pray that each crisis which results in pushing communities from their homelands may soon end.

People: God, encourage us to know that whenever we share hospitality with others, we find in those relationships opportunities to more deeply see your face and do your will.

All: As we wait for You to answer these prayers, we re-commit ourselves to be a welcoming congregation lifting up immigrants and refugees in our midst and preparing ourselves to advocate with them by our side. Amen.

DISCIPLES REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT STORIES

A Disciples Immigrant Family Struggles:



Cynthia (far R), her husband (3rd from L), & children at a family celebration.

Cynthia Pena never anticipated her family would face such challenges. She and her husband Juan Luis have served as Youth Pastors for over 7 years in the Alpha and Omega Disciples congregation in Phoenix, Arizona, and she and her husband have been part of the first Hispanic class of study with Lexington Theological Seminary. Cynthia is a U.S. citizen, with U.S. citizen children. Her husband has been the primary breadwinner, working as a painting contractor for over 14 years. Although he was born in Mexico City, he has not returned to the country for over 14 years. In April, committed to paying off a simple traffic ticket, he went to the courthouse to pay his fine. The courts took his money. But then, because they'd noticed in his records a trespassing charge from a decade ago (a charge he'd long ago taken care of), the judge sent ICE officials to his house to follow him as he went to work in the early morning four days later. Detaining him, he was sent first to Florence Detention Center, and then to Eloy. For two days, Cynthia was unable to find out what had happened to her husband. When she did, she was devastated.

“My daughter’s grades in school dropped immediately when he went into detention, and my son feels angry and confused. For all of us, this is extremely difficult for our family, as my name was not on our bank accounts, and my husband has always provided for our family. I was in school, but now I have dropped out and am applying to find a job.” Recently, Cynthia received news that the court denied her husband’s ability to get a bond. Another court date looms soon. She is fearful, and has visited seven lawyers to try to find out what she might do. “I am grateful for everyone in the Disciples churches who has reached out. We need our churches to help families like mine learn what to do to protect our families, and we must all rise up and make a priority to prepare in this time. It’s not only the husband or wife affected in situations like this—it’s the children. As Christians, we must pray, but we must also ACT. Faith without works is dead.”



Cynthia & her husband with youth and young adults at an '80's night' event at church recently.

An Asylum Seeker Helps Disciples and Ecumenical Partners Understand Immigrant Realities:

Stephanie* (name changed for protection) and her family experienced traumatic threats by drug cartels in her home country of Guatemala, as they repeatedly tried to force her mother-in-law—who worked for a bank—to funnel money illegally through her workplace. Refusing them, Stephanie’s family moved to try life anew in another nearby town, but were again followed and threatened. Finally, they escaped and fled through Mexico to seek asylum protections in the U.S.

Upon arrival at the U.S. border last Christmas Eve, Stephanie’s family* approached border authorities. She recalls, “I’ll never forget my Christmas meal, as all I had to eat was craisins.” After presenting herself, Stephanie* was placed on an ankle monitor, and she and her 3- year-old son were released to join an uncle in the Washington, D.C. area, where she remains and will deliver a baby boy next month. Meanwhile, her mother-in-law was detained in Southern California, and her husband was sent for detention in Georgia. As her family is preparing their asylum case, an opportunity guaranteed for through both international and U.S. law, Stephanie* grieves the distance from her family. Disciples and other congregations are offering support for immediate needs and are seeking legal assistance; even as Stephanie’s* plight undergirds root causes that force families into migration, unjust separations faced by immigrants, complexities of lengthy legal processes, and daily challenges to meet human needs and remain hopeful.



A Refugee Shares New Life with a Disciples Congregation:



(Photos above: Peter, in center of left photo, with Rev. Linda Jones (L) and Kentucky Refugee Ministry's (KRM) Co-Sponsorship Developer Maha Kolko (R) at the Disciples Women Spring Gathering in Frankfurt, KY. in April, 2018. Peter shares his story for the first time publicly at the event in center picture, and at right points to a water pitcher, to show that amount was 1/5th of what he would receive per day for all uses while in a refugee camp.)

Peter is one of the “lost boys of the Sudan.” As an 11-year-old, Peter was separated from his family by war, and fled violence with other young boys in 1997. Recently, he shared about his journey with Disciples Women of the Kentucky Region, saying, “What was my food? It was a tree. It was a leaf. It was mud.” The boys first stayed for six years with other refugees in Ethiopia, surviving day by day, and sometimes seeking safety in the river. As violence continued to encroach there, Peter tragically was one day shot in the face by soldiers, and was then given assistance by the Red Cross in Africa. He and other boys next found their way into a U.N. refugee camp in Kenya, where they lived for about 10 years. “There” he said, “we were given 5 gallons of water two times a day—to be used for cooking, showering, and drinking.”

When his injuries prioritized him for resettlement through Kentucky Refugee Ministries, he eventually found his way into the welcoming arms of Jeffersontown Christian Church near Louisville, which has worked with eight refugee families over the years. Church members have helped Peter get the multiple surgeries needed to repair the damage to his face and teeth from being shot. “In Africa” he testified, “Red Cross was my family. But here, Jeffersontown Christian Church is my family.” And indeed, the love of church members for Peter is apparent. Rev. Linda Jones, KY Regional Minister and Jeffersontown Christian Church member beams as she says, “Peter, his new wife, and three children have brought so much love into the church. He says he has ‘found new life.’ But through him, the church did too.”

Disciples Model Extreme Hospitality:



(Michael Puckett, layleader with Beargrass Christian Church and KRM Board Chair on far left in left photo, together with restaurant owner Sal Rubino in blue plaid shirt. 4th from L. in left photo is the John Koehlinger, Ex. Dir. of KRM in Louisville. Second from R. in left photo is Rev. Derek Penwell, at R. is Jane Parker of Middletown Christian Church, KRM Co-Sponsorship Developer Maha Kolko is in red, and RIM Director Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea is in green. Other photos courtesy of KRM.)

Michael Puckett, Elder of Beargrass Christian Church in Louisville and Board Chair for Kentucky Refugee Ministries (KRM) for the last six years says, “For the past decade and a half I’ve been inspired by the courage and resilience of refugees arriving in Louisville, and by the efforts of the staff of KRM to assist them in resettling here.” The Beargrass Church has welcomed eleven refugee families over the years, which Puckett says has “enriched the lives of all in the Beargrass Christian family, as the hope, dignity, and self-worth of the refugees have been restored, and the resilience of the human spirit has been on full and vivid display.” KRM also helps to inspire other community leaders such as restaurant owner Sal Rubino of “The Café” in the city to employ new refugees to help sustain and grow their businesses. “Refugees learn quickly here how to cook even Kentucky classics like a Hot Brown!” says Rubino. “They are some of our most hard working employees!”

Beargrass Christian Church further puts wheels to their welcoming through their creative “Pedal Power Project” in collaboration with KRM—which has provided over 3,000 bicycles to refugees in the area since 2013! As project

coordinator Bob Callander says, “Rusty frames? No problem, we’ll clean them. Flat tires and tubes? No problem, we’ll replace them. Broken spokes, brakes, pedals? No problem, we’ll repair them.” Year by year, bicycles are also presented to refugees as a part of Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer’s Give-A-Day Week of Compassion each Spring. See here and above for photos, as the Mayor attended the giveaway for the fourth time:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/KentuckyRefugeeMinistries/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10160221545940468, and see local news coverage about the project here: https://voice-tribune.com/_/news/cover-story/pedal-power-local-organization-gives-refugees-set-wheels/.

Rev. Dr. Derek Penwell, Senior Pastor of Douglass Blvd. Christian Church in Louisville, has also recognized for years that another essential gift communities of faith must offer refugees is our public voice of welcome. As he wrote in Huffington Post, insights from the parable of the Good Samaritan “seem especially appropriate to remember as we decide how to treat Syrian refugees running for their lives: No matter your religious credentials, the test of your faith is not your doctrinal purity, but how you treat others—especially those who are most vulnerable. Regardless of the nature of your fear, the primary responsibility of those who follow Jesus (especially leaders) is to care for the powerless. Christians don’t get to assume as a result of their faith commitments that they possess some kind of superiority to foreigners of ‘dubious’ religious pedigree. In short, when in doubt, embrace your fears and help anyway.” Dr. Penwell further demonstrated his commitment to advocacy when he helped gather and lead area interfaith partners to support a sign on statement (<https://derekpenwell.net/the-company-of-the-eudaimon/2015/12/8/position-statement-a-call-by-communities-of-faith-to-welcome-syrian-refugees>) and hold a Press Conference underlining the moral imperative of welcoming Syrian and refugees. See video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jav5n6JIH0>.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Oh God, our creator and liberator, we pray for all those who face the trials and tribulations of exclusion. We lift up all those who have been made outcast in our world; for those impoverished by inequality, for those who find themselves in the cold from homelessness, for those who are treated differently because of their skin color or religious background. Today on this welcome weekend, we say a special prayer for all the refugees in the world who have faced violence and persecution. Now many of them face discrimination upon arriving to the safety of this land. Strengthen our faith to be accepting to all and fortify our witness to advocate for just and humane policies that expand the path of welcome for refugees to join our communities. In the same way, we pray for all those who face sickness and disease, in our congregation and throughout our community. May Your blessing comfort them and may Your healing power touch them. In the Spirit of love and compassion we pray. Amen.

LITANY (in English & Spanish), for Immigrants and Refugees Experiencing Separation:

Note: This litany was adapted from one provided through the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, following the largest workplace raid by Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) in decades. The raid, which took place in April, arrested 97 workers at a meatpacking factory in rural northeastern Tennessee. The Welcome Sunday logo image at right shows one son and wife grieving separation from their father/husband following the raid.

Leader: God, for those who are suffering and in despair, in Your mercy, **All: Hear our prayer**

Leader: For the families torn apart, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Leader: For the communities disrupted and thrown into chaos, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

For every child, missing a father, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

For every brother, missing a sister, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

For every friend, missing a friend, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

For those who feel abandoned or oppressed, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

For those whose apathy or fear has blinded them from seeing the possibility of Your love, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer

For those who see the world as small, may they realize that there is room everyone, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer

God, we give thanks for the churches who have graciously opened their doors, **We give thanks**

For the neighbors who have given of their time, their efforts, their voices and their resources, **We give thanks**

For those who speak truth to power, **We give thanks**

For the future, that it might be filled with justice, hope, and opportunity for all, **We give thanks**

Guide us in your loving grace, that we might know and feel your presence and peace in this time of sorrow and fear.
Amen.

Lider: Dios, Oramos por aquellos que están sufriendo y desesperados. En tu misericordia, **Todos: Escucha nuestra oración**

Por las familias que han sido separadas. En tu Misericordia. **Escucha nuestra oración**

Por las comunidades quebrantadas y empujadas al caos. En tu misericordia, **Escucha nuestra oración**

Por cada criatura, y padres perdidos. En tu misericordia, **Escucha nuestra oración**

Por cada amigo, y amigos perdidos. En tu misericordia, **Escucha nuestra oración**

Por aquellos que se sienten abandonados y oprimidos. En tu misericordia, **Escucha nuestra oración**

Por aquellos que su apatía o miedo los ha segado de ver las posibilidades en tu amor. En tu misericordia, **Escucha nuestra oración**

Por aquellos que ven el mundo pequeño, para que puedan reconocer que hay lugar para todos. En tu misericordia, **Escucha nuestra oración**

Dios, te damos gracias por las iglesias que en su misericordia han abierto sus puertas, **Te damos gracias**

Por los vecinos que han dado su tiempo, esfuerzo, voces, y sus recursos, **Te damos gracias**

Por aquellos que hablan con verdad al poder, **Te damos gracias**

Por el futuro, para que sea lleno de justicia, esperanza, y oportunidades para todos, **Te damos gracias**

Guianos en tu gracia amorosa. Que podamos conocer y sentir tu presencia y paz en este momento de dolor y miedo.
Amen.

SERMON BACKGROUND NOTES from Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea

Sermon #1 Notes:

Based on Mark 4:26-34

(See also accompanying "Prayer Card" below sermon.)

[Mark 4:26-34](#)—

"The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ...and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how." (26-27) & "The kingdom of God...is like a mustard seed, which...is the smallest...yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest...so that the birds...can make nests in its shade." (30-34)

Intro. to Scripture: Building on the parable of the sower that opened this whole parable chapter in Mark, today's passage offers two more agricultural parables about fruit-bearing and sowing on the Kingdom of God. They are not the most well-known of the sowing parables. But they do pack a punch! Eugene Peterson described parables as "narrative time-bombs"; "You hear them-tick-wonder about them-tick-think maybe you've got it-tick-and then as you walk away-tick-or over the course of the next days-tick-all of a sudden the truth Jesus meant to convey strikes-Ka-boom!—almost overwhelming you with its implications! Let us listen for God's voice in MARK 4:26-34 (*Read Scripture.*)

"SEEK-RET SEEDS", Mark 4:26-34

Sermon: What is it, I wonder, that makes our blood run faster in your veins and brings an adrenaline push to our heart when we burrow into a hiding place? It seems we start practicing our hiding skills as young children, in the game of "Hide and Seek"; aware that someone is counting out loud before announcing "Ready or not, here I come!," to track us down like my beagle does a possum across the fence--to expose and sniff us out from our safe spots? Are there any of us here who do NOT remember what it felt like playing "Hide & Seek"? Researchers say it is played in Australia, India, around the world--and perhaps going as far back as the 2nd century Greek writer Julius Pollex--who named the game "*apodidraskinda*".

To me, maybe to you, it seemed so fun then, learning such skills, when nothing *really* was at stake. In my life with privilege, I never imagined the ways that well-honed abilities of hiding and seeking could be needed to help so many with literal *skin in the game* to SAVE THEIR LIVES; those for whom the game has turned into *a way of life*; for the more

than 65 million displaced persons in the world; the over 22 million—who were pushed to escape out of their country as refugees; ones like my friend Kia, who described how “the littlest would walk backwards as we went in a line at night through the jungle, turned around with a palm branch swirling it on the ground to remove footprints so we wouldn’t be found and shot.”

In my life of safety, I’d not thought when I played Hide & Seek of those **who in their lot** are hearing threats of “Ready or not, HERE I COME” **a whole lot** from people and systems that have failed to offer them protections; like immigrants with **ICE knocking** at the door at 5:30 a.m., like **Mirian’s** 18 month old son, who’d fled violence amid tear gas in Honduras when he—like hundreds of others--was pulled apart from his mom at the border recently; and like **Yeslin from Guatemala**—who is now our neighbor in DC, with her asylum case pending after evading gangs that extorted her family, and now separated with her husband in detention in GA and her Mom held in California. Our DMV Sanctuary Congregations Network will hold a baby shower for her this Tuesday night!

I’d not thought, as I learned to hide, of ones like the women and men who’ve said “**Me, too**” often after too many years of holding silence about the violence they’d experienced, or about the **LGBTQ** sons and daughters whose natural identity means so many have rejected them. So perhaps in a world where many are living in fear of discovery and retaliation if they admit **WHO** they really are, **WHAT’S** happened to them, the **PAIN** they’re feeling, **HOW** they really believe, **THE THOUGHTS** they’re really having, the **DOCUMENTATION** they really have or **DON’T**, it is especially appropriate that Mark provides us with a style of Jesus that speaks himself *in a hidden way* to lift up those whose lives are often *too hidden*.

In fact, it’s in vs. 34 of today’s passage where Mark unloads that Jesus intends to unfold for his disciples what a kingdom infused with this Good News is like **ONLY through parables**. Theologian **David Lose** has said parables are slow to sink in, confusing, and confounding, **meant to DISRUPT and CONFRONT**—as when Emily Dickinson wrote her poem saying: “Tell all the truth but tell it slant...the Truth’s superb surprise...must dazzle gradually, Or everyone will be **BLIND!**” The word “parable,” Lose reminded, is the combination of **PARA**, meaning “alongside,” and **BOLE**, meaning “to throw.” So, to tell a parable was to throw one story beside another to see what happens. Or, we may say, parables are to help us think about how Jesus is ready to **throw down presence** into our lives in a vision of the Kingdom his first audience (or us!) might not expect!!

And so we find, in the first story, a sort of sloppy seed tosser (not a particularly careful farmer) where the person “**ballo**” (in Greek, ‘throws’, rather randomly, not really aiming) the seed on the ground and then doesn’t even water, but **GOES TO SLEEP**...with the result “the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how”--seeming to indicate results and growth **Do not DEPEND** on us; but rather require trust in God’s intent and power for life. Although it’s not without responsibility (as the person eventually **DOES** go out and harvest), it’s **BEYOND OUR CONTROL** or power, reminding that faith is “more like falling in love than like making a planned decision.”

I am reminded of the story of Henrietta Lacks, the African American woman whose cells were harvested **WITHOUT HER KNOWLEDGE** when she was dying of cancer in 1951, and of whom today a portrait hangs in the National Portrait to remember how her cells—though stolen!--were grown for 67 years and have helped develop the AIDS cocktail, polio vaccine, and treatments for hemophilia, herpes, flu, and leukemia. We “know not how”—but **GOD DOES** and **CAN** do that—and **WILL EQUIP US!!** This parable is given witness to in stories like that of Peter, a lost boy of the Sudan, who I met last month, and who described God coming to him without his control. “We left, boys separated from our families, when I was 11. What was my food? It was a tree. It was a leaf. It was mud. We stayed 6 years in Ethiopia, often **HIDING TO SEEK** safety in the river.” Then as violence encroached, Peter was tragically shot in the face by soldiers...but **THEN** the Red Cross found me, **THEN** his injury prioritized him for resettlement, **THEN** he made his way into a congregation in Kentucky. **NOW I HAVE A FAMILY.**

God **WILL** equip, because as the next story rolls from Jesus’ lips, he continues to share how **GOD’S LOVE IS PERSISTENT**; as a weed. Theologian John Dominic Crossan says about the mustard seed that it is not so much ‘large’ as it is ‘**invasive**’—(we might say, it finds its hiding places!!) and with shoots that can take over the surrounding area! Those who were **NOT** Jesus followers must have gotten the point that God’s love wasn’t sweet and submissive (ready to just take any abuse), but it was/is **AGGRESSIVE** to grow, **SUBVERSIVE** to push out the “carefully planted seeds” of the Romans, so that **God’s love WILL find ways to win** over any powers of the world intent on their own profits or causing

pain! Look at verse 32, it is happening in the PRESENT TIME, there are “s”es on these verbs!—it **growS**, it **becomeS**, it **putS** forth, so birds can make nests and find a safe, comforting, protective hiding place to LIVE.

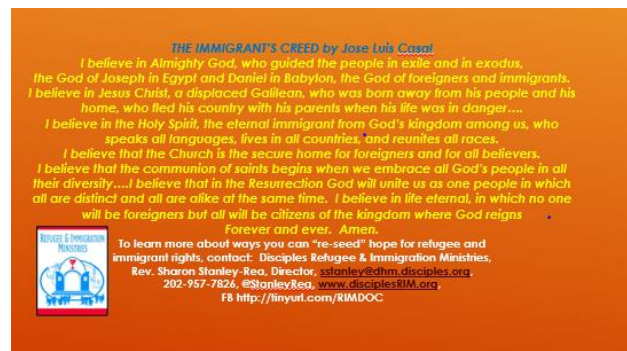
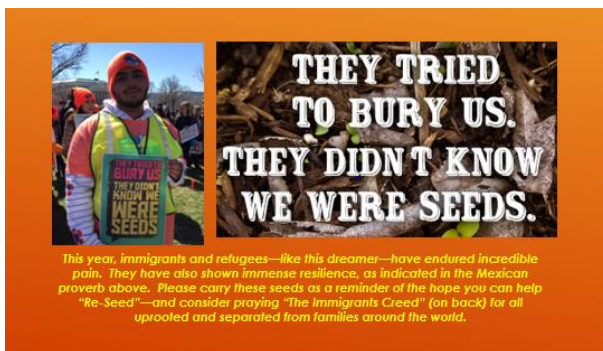
On this morning, I can only imagine what this could mean to PRINCE, a Marylander for many years, married to a US Citizen, who was originally from the Central African Republic. Our DMV Sanctuary Congregations are working with him because he was put into detention weeks ago in Glen Burnie, and last Thursday night (without an ability to call his wife), they tried to deport him. He resisted and refused, they beat him, he was eventually returned to Maryland. And he, and WE who’d like to help him, PRAY TO CONTINUE TO FEEL THE MUSTARD SEED’S INVASIVE, ALWAYS PRESENT, GROWING POWER!

And we pray he is strengthened by how these parables remind us that God’s power is MYSTERIOUS. Above ground, it may not even yet be barely visible, but God’s power reminds **it is from a seed Underground where life is found**, which offers hope of life to the birds, to others as it grows. In its mystery, we may say God’s power is VOLCANIC; perhaps not seen on the surface—but BURSTING WITH LIFE BELOW, it will show in God’s time. Josiah Hinson and Harriet Tubman knew the power, near this very area, of the UNDERGROUND Railroad to offer hope in dark times, and as persons traveled in the dark of night, HIDING TO SEEK safety. And a Dreamer, among the thousands who streamed to the Capitol throughout the Fall till early Spring to give witness to their strengths and need for lasting protection, seemed to know and be seeking that mysterious power of God when—on the “deadline day for a vote,” deeply disappointed with inaction, and standing in front of the Capitol, his shirt silently witnessed through the words of an old Mexican proverb—“They tried to bury us. They didn’t know we were SEEDS.”

With many HIDING, and SEEKING safety and hope, how may we be ready to cooperate with the beyond our control, presently and invasive, often underground but bursting with power, LOVE OF GOD, to become “SEEK-RET SEEDS” of hope?

HANDOUT INFO/PRAYER CARD

(May be used independently, as a handout on Refugee & Immigrant Welcome Sunday, or in partnership with the above “Seek-ret Seeds” sermon):



Sermon #2 Notes:

Based on Genesis 18:1-15

The Visit of God & Angels to Abraham and Sarah’s Tent

Anyone raised in the South learns early on what “a ‘lil sumthin’” really means. You don’t dare come to grandma’s house already full—or even having had a snack before arrival—because her in-the-door greeting of “Welcome, and let me just bring you a ‘lil sumthin’” results most often in a full table presentation of green beans, mashed potatoes with gravy, fried chicken, chocolate pie, and enough sweet tea to float you to the ocean! And to refuse to eat what’s offered is also an affront that can lead to family discussions that may leave you wishing you’d never come to visit.

The Old Testament text in today’s lectionary represents two stories that together form a “circle of hospitality.” Verses 1-8 provide a glimpse of Abraham and Sarah in a tent “fully intent” on welcoming guests—and offer a picture of multiple characteristics of hospitality that provide insights about how we are to treat “strangers among us” today. Verses 9-15 portray the reality of God’s identity as One who seeks to embody hospitality far even beyond the bounds of what is

considered possible in our human understanding; and calls us to trust in the assurance of God's blessings and healing beyond our imaginings. Our trust is commanded, and can renew our strength to continue to welcome others. God's hospitality offered to our lives is no joke...and even more than with a Southern grandma, refusing to accept its power and blessing will leave us stranded in fear that will minimize our capacity to reach out to others.

Abraham's promise of "a morsel" in verse 5 became even more than Grandma's best 'lil sumthin' Southern spread, as we see him model what hospitality can best look like as he greeted his guests warmly, spoke to them with respect, offered water to drink, asked Sarah to fix them bread cakes, offered to wash dust off their feet, offered the shade of his trees, offered a valuable cow for food, prepared butter and milk to drink, and offered his presence under the tree as they ate. And, throughout all these gestures, we see that Abraham moved quickly—further showing the priority he placed upon meeting the needs of his guests—as the text tells us he "ran...to meet them" (vs. 2), "hurried into the tent" (vs. 6), and "ran to the herd" (vs. 7). Sarah and their young employee likewise "hastened" to prepare the bread and calf. And in verse 16 just beyond our passage, we see that Abraham further carried out a departing act of hospitality, as well, when he accompanied his guests on the start of their journey "to send them on the way."

By performing every act, Abraham and Sarah were demonstrating the commitment to care for the vulnerable that was expressed through deeply held cultural practices and values during Biblical times in the Middle East. It is worth noting the magnitude of love and respect for the visitors that was shown even through the amount of grain that Abraham asks Sarah to use in her preparations of bread. His "three measures of fine flour" requested was the equivalent to about thirty quarts of flour!! That extravagance could have fed dozens. The calf that Abraham butchered likewise could likely have fed up to a hundred people—a small village! (See Bill T. Arnold's *Encountering the book of Genesis*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998, p. 100.)

For even more of a background, see the article "Travelers and Strangers: 'Hospitality' in the Biblical World" by Dennis Bratcher, available through Christian Resource Institute at: <http://www.crivoice.org/travelers.html>. At Bratcher points out, in ancient times, both travelers and persons who sought to settle permanently outside their homeland were often called "foreigners, strangers, or sojourners" because they didn't belong to a particular community or group. Hospitality offered protection and acceptance, and built up goodwill to reduce the chance of any hostilities developing between long term residents and newcomers. Hospitality was—and IS—about more than "being kind." Hospitality always helps to hold our communities together!

In verses 9-15, God then attempts to demonstrate an even greater depth of hospitality to Sarah and Abraham by seeking out Sarah in vs. 9 (when it was cultural practice for wives to be in a separate part of the tent during the meal), by acknowledging her in conversation as a woman beginning in verse 10 (which showed great respect, and was beyond the bounds of typical culture), by promising she would bear a child at her very old age (and remember—Abraham himself was more than 99—as we learned in Chapter 17, verse 1!), and by reassuring her once more in verse 14 of his promise to fulfill the deepest desire of her heart to bear a child.

Sarah would have been strongly aware that travelers were supposed to accept whatever a host offered to them, because to not do so was considered extremely offensive. However, her faith struggled in the passage to see herself as a "traveler/journeyer" before God who so desires to offer love and a relationship to her. Her trust of God could give her what she craved the very most...the ability to conceive and have a child that would provide her warmth and joy, as well as stability, respect, and removal from criticism in the ancient world.

In preaching, we can seek to encourage listeners to model the generous hospitality in our faith tradition, shown through Abraham and Sarah's welcome. We likewise can encourage listeners to identify with Sarah's difficulty in believing that "the joy of her heart" could be given her—beyond all human limitations-- by God. We can point out how our lack of faith in God's identity as one hospitable to us in ways "far beyond our human imagining" threatens to diminish our own hospitality, and perhaps feeds our rhetoric of division and exclusion of refugees, immigrants, and others. To more deeply trust God's blessings to us can enlarge our hospitality to and acceptance of others. It likewise enhances our nearness to God, and provides God joy as we demonstrate our trust in God's goodness given to us and intended for all his children.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Based on Genesis 18:1-15

The Visit of God & Angels to Abraham and Sarah's Tent

By William Compton, RIM Intern, Eureka College



Reading of scripture

I'd like to start off the morning with a question: What do you all like best about your home? ***Wait for responses***

I really, really like my home, too. When I'm at my home, I feel relaxed, I have good food, and I'm surrounded by people who love me. Overall, home is pretty cozy, right? Could you imagine having to leave your home for a really long time? Maybe forever? ***Wait for responses***

Abraham and Sarah had to do just that. They were called by God to leave, and so they left and trusted and trusted God along the way—even though it was very scary. Sometimes people have to leave their homes, and it isn't so easy. It's actually really difficult, and it takes a lot of courage. They don't know where they're going, or who's going to be there...and they might not even have their family with them. Families who are forced from their homes because of persecution are often called "refugees."

Our Disciples churches have welcomed people before who were persecuted and had to leave their homes as refugees. A long time ago, Eureka Christian Church in Illinois welcomed the first refugee family from Germany, who had been forced to leave their home and country because they were Jewish. They had a young daughter named Irmgard Wessel. A very mean man named Hitler had discriminated against them, and didn't accept their religion or background. So they had to escape from their homeland and come here to America. It was tough, because Irmgard and her family didn't know anybody here, and they had to leave behind everything they knew.

But then, a Disciples church just like ours welcomed them. They gave the people who came to them, called refugees, food and a place to stay. They showed them love and kindness. As Irmgard grew up, she was an excellent student at our Disciples college in Eureka, and she lived her life helping others as a social worker. Even after she died at an old age, her family gave money in her honor to help refugees, because as her grandson said, "My mother never forgot what a difference it made in her life when the church welcomed and loved her family as refugees."

In the Abraham story we read, after Abraham had traveled to a new home and when he was over ninety-nine years old, he was surprised when God and two angels came to visit his tent. What exactly did Abraham and Sarah do for those strangers? ***Wait for answers***

Abraham didn't know they were coming, but he immediately jumped up to welcome his guests. Sarah made cakes for them. Abraham prepared some meat, gave them water, and also washed their feet because they were tired and dusty. They did all these things because they remembered how God had always blessed them in their journeys.

That's right. Abraham and Sarah, as well as the people at the church who met Irmgard's family, were called to serve and help those who came to their community. They gave them abundant food and water, invited them in, washed their feet, and offered smiles and respect. They treated them as love, and like friends. And even better, they **wanted** to do those things.

We are called also to be kind to our neighbors, and to love and welcome anyone who comes to us—even if they are new, or from different backgrounds than ours. How do you think you can show welcome and respect to someone new this week? And help those who need help? ***Wait for responses***

Let's close in prayer:

Dear God,

You show us that you love us every day. Our family loves us. Our friends love us. Please, God, help us return that same love to others. Let us help those who need help, and welcome those who need a friend. Thank you, God, for the chance to love our neighbors. We love you. Amen.

YOUTH GROUP OR ADULT STUDY

Learning About Refugees

The First Disciples Refugee Family and Our Church's Ongoing Response

By William Compton, Eureka College

With Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries

PART ONE: *Begin by telling story of Irmgard Wessel*

Irmgard Wessel was a young Jewish girl who lived in Germany during the time that Hitler rose to power. During that time, she and her family faced prejudice and discrimination. But, it wasn't until a few particularly striking moments, such as an attack on a Jewish orphanage, the burning of a synagogue, and the invasion and destruction of their home by Nazis that her parents decided to help her escape to England to be safe. Her parents went through many tests, examinations, and trials before they also fled Germany to go to New York, in America. Once in the U.S., they got the jobs they could and immediately started to learn English. They hoped to leave New York, but only after reuniting with Irmgard. This finally happened after a year-and-a-half of separation. This experience of being pulled apart as children and parents because of war and persecution is often common among refugees.



Photo of Irmgard Wessel, child in the first refugee family resettled through the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Once they were reunited, they were sent to a hostel run by Quakers in the Midwest, to learn more about how to live in America. In that Center in Scattergood, Iowa, twelve Americans helped train thirty refugees. The refugees did work around the house and in the fields, attended classes and lectures, and took occasional trips to the city. Eventually, a group from the local Christian Church of Eureka, Illinois visited the hostel. Members of the church had been praying for months to find ways to help the refugees they had heard about who faced difficult hardships.

The church felt their prayers were answered as they met the young Irmgard and her family, and they immediately invited them to come to their community in Eureka, Illinois. Once there, they helped to resettle the refugees in a local apartment; complete with beds, food, and other necessities. As the family remembers, "We were welcomed by the church, and came to know the congregation when we were invited to a potluck dinner."

The town itself did its best to be helpful and prepare the family for a good life in America, even though residents were from a different religion and culture than Irmgard's family. The town and the family enjoyed learning from one another! Irmgard attended high school, became an excellent student at Eureka College, and eventually was given American citizenship, accepted a job outside of Eureka, and got married. She worked throughout her life as a social worker to help others until her death at the age of nearly 90.

Irmgard Wessel is survived by four children, eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Her grandchildren now operate a family foundation that helps support other refugees. In November of 2015, when one state refused to resettle Syrian refugees, Irmgard's grandson sent a large contribution to the state who decided to accept and welcome the family. He did that, he said, in honor of his grandmother Irmgard "because she never forgot how the church in Eureka had loved and accepted her family when they were refugees."



For Discussion:

Why do you think Eureka Christian Church went above and beyond to help the refugees at the hostel?

How would you imagine the church members may have responded to any who may not have immediately accepted the family? What might you have said to encourage their acceptance in that time?

PART TWO: Exploring Genesis 18:1-15--The Visit of God & Angels to Abraham and Sarah's Tent

Ask:

Is there a time in your life that someone needed your help and you didn't help them? How about time when you did help them?

The story of the visit of three guests to Abraham and Sarah is a kind of "cycle of hospitality" story! It shows us a great example of hospitality through Abraham and Sarah's care for the visitors in verses 18:1-8. And in 8:9-15, we get a sense of God's desire to be hospitable and identity as one who deeply hopes for those who follow to TRUST in his hospitality for our lives.

Divide into teams and act out the story in 18:1-8, and the action in 9-15. After you do, discuss these questions:

In verses 1-8, what are the different ways that you see Abraham communicating hospitality for his guests? (Some answers can include: greeted them warmly, spoke to them with respect, offered water to drink, asked Sarah to fix them bread cakes, offered to wash dust off their feet, offered the shade of his trees, offered a valuable cow for food, prepared butter and milk to drink, offered his presence under the tree as they ate. And throughout all these gestures, Abraham moved quickly—showing the priority he placed upon meeting the needs of his guests—as he "ran...to meet them" (vs. 2), "hurried into the tent" (vs. 6), and "ran to the herd" (vs. 7). Sarah and their young employee also "hastened" to prepare the bread and calf. Even in verse 16 just beyond our passage, we see that Abraham carried out a departing act of hospitality, as well, as he accompanied them on the start of their journey "to send them on the way.")

By performing every act, Abraham and Sarah were demonstrating the commitment to care for the vulnerable that was expressed through deeply held cultural practices during Biblical times in the Middle East. For even more of a background, see the article "Travelers and Strangers: 'Hospitality' in the Biblical World" by Dennis Bratcher, available through Christian Resource Institute at: <http://www.crivoice.org/travelers.html>. Hospitality was—and IS—about more than "being kind." Hospitality always helps to hold our communities together!

In ancient times, both travelers and persons who sought to settle permanently outside their homeland were often called "foreigners, strangers, or sojourners" because they didn't belong to a particular community or group. Hospitality offered protection and acceptance, and built up goodwill to reduce the chance of any hostilities developing between long term residents and newcomers.

In verses 9-15, how does God attempt to demonstrate hospitality to Sarah and Abraham? Some responses can include: by seeking out Sarah in vs. 9 (when it was cultural practice for wives to be in a separate part of the tent during the meal), by acknowledging her in conversation as a woman beginning in verse 10 (which showed great respect, and was beyond the bounds of typical culture), by promising she would bear a child at her very old age (and remember—Abraham himself was more than 99—as we learned in Chapter 17, verse 1!), and by reassuring her once more of his promise in verse 14.

Sarah would have been strongly aware that travelers were supposed to accept whatever a host offered to them, because to not do so was considered extremely offensive. However, her faith struggled in the passage to dare trust that God could give her what she craved the very most...the ability to conceive and have a child that would offer her warmth

and joy, as well as stability, respect, and removal from criticism in the ancient world. **Can you identify with Sarah's difficulty in believing that "the joy of her heart" could be given her—beyond all human limitations-- by God?**

Discuss who "strangers" and "newcomers" are in your own community, and in our country. What kinds of attitudes have you seen demonstrated against them? Are there any types of hospitality you might want to "hasten" to offer?

PART THREE: Learning About Refugees Today

View these Resources and read these backgrounders to help you begin to answer these questions:

Can you identify any of today's refugee populations in crises? Who is a refugee? Who is hosting refugees, and why are displaced persons being forced to flee their countries?

Week of Compassion Refugee Related Short Vimeos:

Shares the Context of How a Person in the World Becomes Displaced or a Refugee Every 5 Seconds--
<https://vimeo.com/150431390>

Tells the Story of an Afghani asylee helped by Disciples in Virginia, with protected identity--
<https://vimeo.com/151014135>

Shares definition of a refugees, and locations and numbers where the globe's refugees are located--
<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/03/27/518217052/chart-where-the-worlds-refugees-are>

Angelina Jolie shares the views on the need to work to diminish root causes that produce refugees--
<https://www.peacedirect.org/us/angelina-jolie-urges-world-to-tackle-root-causes-of-refugee-crisis/>

What are some critical statistics about the world's refugees, and U.S. refugee resettlement figures?

UNHCR's short video of faces and flights of global refugees and families forcibly displaced--
<http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

A concise 1 page handout of U.S. and global refugee resettlement statistics from UNHCR-- <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement-in-the-united-states.html>

What is the U.S. Refugee Vetting Process for refugees?

A step-by-step visual guide to the security vetting process for refugees who apply to come to the U.S.--
<http://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/USCRI-Security-Screening-Process-5.16.16.pdf>

Previous U.S. Director of Homeland Security's brief video on the U.S. Refugee Vetting Processes:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQUIxQ6TFZc>

What can you personally and your church do to aid today's refugees? What can the church do?

See this page for ideas: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/refugees/hospitality-kits/>, and see the World Refugee Day Toolkit at: <https://www.rcusa.org/world-refugee-day/> and other Resources for welcome and advocacy on our Refugees Welcome site, found at: www.refugeesarewelcome.org.

Discuss ways your church will continue to discern through prayer and choose to act to stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees.

STATEMENTS AND POETRY

Consider reading excerpts in your worship or other event from one or more of the following, and discussing the messages in each:

[“Ecumenical Declaration: Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope.”](#) Disciples signed this Declaration in March 2017 together with Church World Service global communions and National Council of Churches partners. The statement can be found at: <https://greateras1.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ecumenical-Declaration-Protecting-Welcome-Restoring-Hope.pdf>.

General Assembly resolution GA-1723, “On Becoming Immigrant Welcoming Congregations,” to be presented at this summer’s GA. Find it [here](https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GA-IMMIGRANT-WELCOMING-CONGS-SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY_FINAL_02_03_2017.pdf): https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GA-IMMIGRANT-WELCOMING-CONGS-SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY_FINAL_02_03_2017.pdf

Langston Hughes, 1902 – 1967: Let America be America Again
(a poem of hope beyond exclusion for our nation.)

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed--
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek--
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
I am the worker sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean--
Hungry yet today despite the dream.
Beaten yet today--O, Pioneers!
I am the man who never got ahead,
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream

In the Old World while still a serf of kings,
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home--
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?
The millions shot down when we strike?
The millions who have nothing for our pay?
For all the dreams we've dreamed
And all the songs we've sung
And all the hopes we've held
And all the flags we've hung,
The millions who have nothing for our pay--
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again--
The land that never has been yet--
And yet must be--the land where every man is free.
The land that's mine--the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME--
Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose--
The steel of freedom does not stain.
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,
We must take back our land again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath--
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must redeem
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the endless plain--
All, all the stretch of these great green states--
And make America again!

"Home" by Warsan Shire

(Note: Warsan Shire is a Somali poet, born in Kenya, and working as a writer and educator in London. Her debut book was "Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth," published in 2011 by flipped eye.)

Consider reading selections of Shire's powerful poem below, to build understanding of a refugee as one who, according to Article 1 of the U.N.'s "1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees", is: *"someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion."*

HOME, by Warsan Shire

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well

your neighbors running faster than you
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you
fire under feet
hot blood in your belly
it's not something you ever thought of doing
until the blade burnt threats into
your neck
and even then you carried the anthem under
your breath
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilet
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.

you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.
no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitied

no one chooses refugee camps
or strip searches where your
body is left aching
or prison,
because prison is safer
than a city of fire
and one prison guard
in the night
is better than a truckload
of men who look like your father
no one could take it
no one could stomach it
no one skin would be tough enough

(excerpts removed)

i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you
to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind

crawl through the desert
wade through the oceans
drown
save
be hunger
beg
forget pride
your survival is more important

no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear
saying-
leave.

run away from me now!
i dont know what i've become
but i know that anywhere
is safer than here

GAME

“You Bet We Vet!!”—A Game to Teach About the U.S. Refugee Vetting Process By William Compton, RIM Intern, Eureka College Student, Christmount Staff

Make space at your event for children, youth, adult, or other community members to play the following game to learn about the refugee vetting process in the U.S.

See these resources as helpful backgrounders as you prepare:

A concise 1 page handout of U.S. and global refugee resettlement statistics from UNHCR-- <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement-in-the-united-states.html>

A step-by-step visual guide to the security vetting process for refugees who apply to come to the U.S.-- <http://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/USCRI-Security-Screening-Process-5.16.16.pdf>

Previous U.S. Director of Homeland Security's brief video on the U.S. Refugee Vetting Processes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQUixQ6TFZc>

Our country is the leader in refugee resettlement. In fact, since 1975, the U.S. has welcomed over 3 million refugees into the country. However, each refugee applicant must first be screened and interviewed by a refugee agency. It's only after *that* that the U.S. puts refugees through its own vetting process (a multi-stage process of careful examination). This process is done outside of the country and can take as long as 2 years. This vetting process involves:

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 2 inter-agency security checks | 3 separate in-person interviews | 4 biometric security checks |
| 5 separate background checks | 6 different security databases | 8 U.S. Federal Government agencies |

This game/learning activity is meant to highlight these specific numbers and show youth the rigorous and difficult experience that is the U.S. refugee vetting process.

Summary

Kids will divide into equal teams (ideally 2) in a large, open space. Throughout the large space, objects will be spread around. Certain objects will correspond to the above statistics. For example, each team will have 8 objects of the same kind that correspond to the 8 U.S. federal government agencies. Each team will also have 6 objects of the same kind that correspond to the different security databases. This continues down the numbers so that, finally, each team also has 2 objects of the same kind that correspond to the inter-agency security checks. These objects could be purchased in bulk at a dollar store, or could be objects that are found around the church. So, for example, each team could have:

8 ping-pong balls
6 markers
5 balloons
4 pinwheels

3 Bibles

2 hats

Anything can be used, as long as you have enough of each object to suffice for both teams. Each team will be given a sheet of paper which has the vetting process statistics (at the top of the page), as well as the object that corresponds to each statistic. So, for example:

8 U.S. Federal Government Agencies (ping-pong balls)

6 different security databases (markers)

5 separate background checks (balloons)

4 biometric security checks (pinwheels)

3 separate in-person interviews (Bibles)

2 inter-agency security checks (hats)

Once the game is initially started, an announcer will shout out a certain statistic, but exclude the number. S/he might begin by shouting “Biometric security checks!”, and the kids will have to look at their sheet to see which number that is, and also which object they need to run and find. The statistics can be read out-of-order to make the youth more alert. Kids will take turns running out to find the objects and bringing them back to their group. It will be the job of the announcer to stay on track, calling out the next statistic as each group needs to hear it. The first group to bring back all objects (and the correct objects, as they are called) is the winner!

Extra Challenges

If the youth want to do the game again, or if you think they can handle it immediately, you could pick one of these extra challenges:

- Don't write down the corresponding object next to the statistics the youth are given. Then, when they run out to look for objects, they will know how many of a certain object they have to find; however, they won't know which object to look for at first. They will have to find the object, for example, of which there is only 2, or only 5.
- Remember how the vetting process can take as long as 2 years to complete? See if the teams can complete the game within 2 minutes!
- You could always make the objects a bit more hidden for an extra challenge.

Please take pictures of your children, youth, student, or adult group participating in the “You Bet We Vet!” game, and send it to: sstanley@dhm.disciples.org for sharing through our “RIM WRAP” newsletter. To register to receive the newsletter, go to: <https://www.disciplehomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/>

REFUGEES WELCOME BANNER/POSTER CRAFT

By William Compton, RIM Intern, Eureka College Student, Christmount Staff

This craft involves making a banner! You could use butcherblock paper, vinyl, burlap material, or anything else that works and is easy to use. Each kid will make a “Refugees Welcome” banner. Make fun requirements that correspond to the above statistics, such as:

8 different colors

6 small, decorative pictures (flowers, a church, etc.)

5 flags of countries that refugees come from

4 people holding hands (or celebrating)

3 reasons you love refugees

2 Bible verses that relate to refugees

Again, the different requirements for the banners could be whatever you wish to make them. Somewhere in the center, write in large letters “Refugees Welcome”. Then, after you’re done, display your banners where the whole church (or better yet – the whole town) can see them! And beside each banner, encourage youth to write, describe, or draw the U.S. refugee vetting process.

GATHER AND SHARE STORIES IN SUPPORT OF REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Share stories with your family of faith about your experiences as refugees or immigrants, and about how your lives have been enriched through knowing refugees and immigrants. PLEASE--JOIN US in gathering STORIES of inspiring immigrants and refugees connected to our Disciples faith family by adding stories you know [here](https://goo.gl/forms/rmx4bGukNWFLyEnz2):
<https://goo.gl/forms/rmx4bGukNWFLyEnz2>.

HOLD A RALLY IN SUPPORT OF REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Go to: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/refugee-immigrant-welcome-sunday/> for sample signs that can be printed for your event. Use the posters above, if you have made some! Establish a march route and recruit a cultural musician to assist. See and engage in the action below for messages to raise and share during your rally!

ACTION ALERT: Urge Your Local, State, and National Leaders to Welcome Refugees

Right now, it is more important than ever for all of our elected officials to hear that their communities welcome refugees. Refugee resettlement saves lives, encourages other countries to keep their doors open to people needing protection, and promotes regional stability and global security. We cannot turn our backs on refugees we have pledged to welcome. Nor can we discriminate against individuals based on where they’re from or what religion they practice. Refugee resettlement must continue to be a cornerstone of U.S. global leadership.

More than 65 million people have been persecuted and forced from their homes and are seeking safety. As a nation, we must uphold our values of generosity, hospitality and compassion. We simultaneously face this displacement crisis and current events and proposals that threaten the future of refugee resettlement. Our actions must match the need and live up to our welcoming legacy. Please spread the word and have everyone you know share this alert!

Call your Senators and Representatives: 1-866-940-2439. Tell Them Your Community Welcomes Refugees

Please call the same number three times to be connected with your Representative and both of your Senators.

Here’s a sample of what to say: “I am a constituent from [CITY, STATE], and I urge the you to welcome refugees and support the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Resettlement is a core American legacy that extends hospitality and offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety. My community welcomes refugees and I urge you to reflect the best of our nation by supporting refugee resettlement in the United States.”

You can also tweet your policy makers: “.@SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE, my community stands #WithRefugees! Show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting U.S. refugee resettlement! #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1”

Share This Message with Your State and Local Officials!

Your state and local leaders need to hear the same message. Tell them that your community welcomes refugees. To contact your state and local officials, visit: contactingcongress.org/local and usa.gov/elected-officials. To tweet your state and local officials, click to find the twitter handles for your governor and state legislators.

It is more important than ever for all our nation’s lawmakers to represent the hospitality that communities across the country are demonstrating. Take action today to stand with refugees.

For more tips on how to make your voice heard with Members of Congress, click here:
<https://twitter.com/i/moments/798297193559904258>

Please spread the word and send this alert to your networks. Please tell us if you take action (opens a new webpage)! Follow @RCUSA_DC on Twitter and "like" Refugee Council USA on Facebook for up-to-date alerts.

Stay tuned for further resources, stories, and updates to come as we approach "Refugee and Immigrant Welcome Sunday!" Also, as June 17th is also "Father's Day," look for our new "Don't Deport My Dad!" toolkit coming soon, too!

*For questions and additional information, Contact Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries (RIM) Director
5 Thomas Circle NW, Washington, DC 20005, sstanley@dhm.disciples.org or 202-957-7826.*

RIM is a Ministry of Disciples Home Missions

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