

“Why have you forgotten me...?” (Ps 42:9b)

Refugee Sunday 2010 Worship Resources



Introduction

When home is a refugee camp or a flimsy shelter of blankets and salvaged plastic, the future may not look promising. But for many caught up in conflict or disaster, the future is their only hope. Those uprooted by such events keep alive the memory and traditions from the homes they have had to flee.

These resources have been prepared using the lectionary readings for Sunday, 20 June 2010, and can be adapted to suit your situation.

World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day has been commemorated each year on June 20 to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). It is a day to remember the millions of people who have been uprooted from their homes by war, persecution and violence. Some have found new lives abroad. Churches have worked closely with Refugee Services (formerly the Refugee and Migrant Service) in this process. Others have been left to fend for themselves or find shelter in refugee camps. CWS is a member of the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) which through local members helps tens of thousands of people survive in difficult conditions, including refugee camps.

Who is a refugee?

“A refugee is a person who, ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.’”

United Nations Convention on Refugees, 1951

Who is an internally displaced person?

“Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border”

UNHCR

Refugee Facts

In 2009 more than 27 million people were uprooted by violence.

In 2009 6.8million were newly displaced.

At the end of 2007 there were 16 million refugees, of which 4.6 million were Palestinians. (UN sources)



Makeshift shelter in Haiti, the home of displaced people, months after the earthquake of January, 2010. ACT/Jeffrey

Gathering Prayer

Come merciful God

Come to us in our joy and our sorrow

Come to us in our loneliness and in those we meet

Come to us in the ordinariness of our lives

Come to us in our dreams for something more

Come to us with your love that knows no end

Come to us as we call out to you this and every day.

Amen

Lectionary Readings

1 Kings 19: 1-4 (5-7) 8-15a

Elijah flees for his life after the dramatic showdown (almost Hollywood style) ending when he killed the prophets of Jezebel. Angry at his total victory, Jezebel wants him dead. Leaving his servant in Beer-sheba (part of Judah), Elijah goes into the Sinai wilderness towards Mount Horeb. With danger in every direction, Elijah gives up in despair asking God to 'take away my life' (v4). However, this was not to be. An angel touched him twice telling him to 'Get up and eat' (v 5, 7). Finally he obeyed and ate enough to last the 40 days and nights he was in the wilderness.

Even after all that has happened, Elijah does not lose the sense of who he is and for whom he works. He shelters in the cave (v 9) perhaps the same one as Moses, and the word of God came to him (v 9b). The sounds of God passing by provide a memorable atmosphere to the story where Elijah confronts his destiny (v 14). God has plans for Elijah: anointing Hazael king of neighbouring Aram (Syria), and Jehu as the new king of Israel (v 16) while at the same time wiping out the worship of Baal. Once a refugee facing imminent death, Elijah has more work to do.

Psalms 42 and 43

The psalmist struggles with distress and a sense of abandonment.

Galatians 3:23-29

Paul once again contrasts the Jewish law that many of the early Christians grew up with and the new faith found in Christ. In the Greco-Roman world the *pedagogue* (in Greek, 'child-guide') would have been the person responsible for the education of the male child. This person may have been slave or free and was responsible for preparing them for adulthood.

Paul portrays the new Christian community as one of inclusion (v 28). Social distinctions have no meaning and all have a place in this "grown up" faith community. Helping those in need has always been part of the mission of the church as it seeks to live up to this ideal community.

Luke 8:26-39

Like a refugee or displaced person (IDP), the man with demons had no home. He lived among the tombs and was too dangerous to be approached. The demons would have been his only companions at a time when those with mental illness were pushed out from the places where people lived.

The region of Gerasenes in northern Palestine was home to ten military outposts and a centre of Roman control. Jesus named the demons as 'legion', presumably alluding to the many occupying troops in their midst. Legion refers to a unit of 3000 - 6000 men in the Roman military. No wonder then that the locals were afraid when they saw the healed man sitting quietly at Jesus' feet (v 35). His power to free the legions from the man might only be the beginning of something bigger and more dangerous. In response they all asked Jesus to leave (v 37). The healed man wanted to follow his healer, but Jesus sent him home to 'declare how much God has done for you' (v 39). The man goes home to reconnect with his community.

Children's Talk

Bring some materials (sheeting, poles, blankets). Talk about being a refugee and ask them to help build a temporary home. End with a simple prayer for refugees.



Shelter in a Darfur camp

ACT/ P. Jeffrey

An Old Jewish story

An ancient Rabbi once asked his pupils how they could tell when the night was ended and the day was on its way back.

'Could it be,' asked one student, 'when you can see an animal in the distance and can tell whether it is a sheep or a dog?' 'No,' answered the Rabbi.

'Could it be,' asked another, 'when you can look at a tree in the distance and can tell whether it is a fig tree or a peach tree?' 'No,' said the Rabbi.

'Well then, what is it,' the pupils demanded.

'It is when you look on the face of any woman or man and see that she or he is your sister or brother. Because if you cannot do this, then, no matter what time it is, it is still night.'

(in *Celebrating One World*, L. Jones, A, Shilson-Thomas and B Farrell (eds), CAFOD)

Prayer for Refugees

Loving God

We pray for the world in which we live, a world where so many have been forced to leave their homes for an uncertain future. Comfort all who seek refuge and are displaced by conflict and disaster. Strengthen them in their fear and desperation. Help them find the food and water to stay alive; and a dry place to sleep.

R: Give courage and the hope of a new future.

We pray for the world in which we live, a world where so many focus on their own needs and forget about the needs of others. We pray especially for those who have forced people from their homes through violence and greed. Open their hearts and change the systems that allow the few to cause so much suffering.

R: Give courage and the hope of a new future.

We pray for the world in which we live. Help us to listen for the voice of the refugee, the displaced, the ignored and the silenced so that we may pray for their needs and respond in word and in action. Help us to welcome the stranger, speak out against the wrongs that have been done and take action in the name of justice.

R: Give courage and the hope of a new future.

In Jesus' Name we pray.
Amen



Young girl does her chores outside family tent, Northwest Frontier, Pakistan The ACT Alliance reports that 1.3 million people remain displaced. CWS P/A

Prayer of Departure

Go, in the name of the God who accompanies us through earthquake, wind and fire

Go, in the name of God who speaks to us in the sound of sheer silence

Go, in the name of God who gives food sufficient for our needs.

Go in peace and share God's love with all whom you meet.

In Jesus' Name Amen

Suggested Hymns

Let there be light WOV 671

I give my heart to thee WOV 471

Tell My People I Love them AA132

God of Freedom, God of Justice AA50

All will be well AA 2

I heard the voice of Jesus say WOV 500

Here to the house of God we come AA 61

When all your mercies, O my God WOV39

All my hope in God is founded WOV 465



Tent shelter in Haiti
ACT/ P Jeffrey

Climate Change Refugees

"Resettlement is already taking place in the Pacific," said Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) staff member Peter Emberson. As an example he cited the Carteret islanders whose evacuation was decided by the Papua New Guinean government in 2003.

The ongoing 14-step relocation process put in place for them is comprehensive, Emberson said, but could be improved with regard to psycho-social accompaniment for those displaced as well as for the host communities in Bougainville, their new home.

The PCC emphasizes the need to involve those affected in the decision making – an opinion that is shared by Dr Jeanette Schade, a researcher with the Bielefeld Centre on Migration, Citizenship and Development.

She presented a case study on Mozambique, where the government resettled thousands of families from flood-prone areas to higher lying settlements. The move was combined with an ambitious plan to improve people's lives by providing better housing, schools and sanitation.

However, studies conducted in 2008 found that many had returned to live in the more fertile valley. Local knowledge on the needs of the people and the best places for resettlement had not been taken into account, Schade explains.

These and other lessons on how to protect the rights of climate refugees will need to be learned by the international community – and quickly. Judging by the lack of action on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, politicians will need some pushing before they get down to the job."

Excerpt by Annegret Kapp. For full article and links: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/browse/2/article/1634/it-is-time-to-talk-about.html>

Sri Lanka - One year on

May 18 marked the first anniversary of the end of the 30 year civil war in Sri Lanka. Despite assurances from the Sri Lankan government some 76,000 people are still living in temporary camps. They are awaiting resettlement, suitable land and demining. Many of those left in the camps are widows, separated or low income families with no where to go. Agencies have left or are focusing on returnees leaving only the vulnerable, some of whom are receiving food and hygiene kits from ACT Alliance member, Christian Aid.

For those from the Northern Province where the fighting was heaviest, returnees are finding life difficult with few services available. Many live in temporary shelter such as tents or under plastic sheeting with no toilets. Fields are overgrown and the land dotted with landmines making life difficult. Meanwhile 73,000 Sri Lankan refugees are still living in 115 camps in Tamil Nadu, India, hoping to return home and a better future.

Pakistan—One Year On

Conditions remain unsettled in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier. Partner group CWS Pakistan continues to provide assistance to those in need.

Please consider holding a special collection to help refugees and displaced people.



Resources

The Churches Agency on International Issues produced *Hot Topics, Immigration Matters*. It can be downloaded at: <http://www.cws.org.nz/resources/international.asp> or requested from CWS.

The United Nations Refugee Agency - UNHCR (for pictures, statistics and stories)

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

Refugee Services (formerly the Refugee and Migrant Service) <http://www.refugeeservices.org.nz/>

ACT Alliance (stories and information on emergency situations) <http://www.actalliance.org/>

Caritas has produced: *Refugee Myth and Realities Fact Sheet*. Downloadable from:

<http://www.caritas.org.nz/?sid=1103>

A short on-line video from Médecins Sans Frontières showing refugee camps with accompanying music is available: <http://www.refugeecamp.org/movie.cfm>



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