

“The Lord looks on the Heart”

(1 Samuel 16:7d)

Refugee Sunday 2012 Worship Resources



A Malian refugee finds refuge in Niger UNHCR/H Caux

One of the themes running through the Scriptures is the sense of journey. Beginning with Abraham and Sarah the Bible records stories of people on the move. Providing hospitality to strangers was critical to survival in a dry desert land. The need to make room for the stranger and to share the love that God shows to us is at the heart of the Christian faith. For centuries churches have provided sanctuary for refugees and those made homeless. Refugee Sunday is a time to focus on this aspect of our faith.

These resources have been prepared using the lectionary readings for Sunday, 17 June 2012, and can be adapted to suit your situation.

World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day marks the founding of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on 20 June. In the 61 years since the Refugee Convention was first signed, refugees have made huge contributions in many countries. They are a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. In New Zealand churches have played a role in refugee resettlement through Refugee Services (formerly Refugee and Migrant Services).

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

26 million people are internally displaced and 1 million seeking asylum. 10.4 million refugees are under the care of [UNHCR](#) and 5 million Palestinians of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees ([UNRWA](#)). The [UNHCR](#) found that 80% of refugees found refuge in developing countries. New Zealand accepts 750 refugees each year plus or minus 10%. In the 2010/11 year 527 arrived and by the end of May with one month to go 407 refugees have been resettled, the majority from Myanmar or Burma.

Call to Worship

Welcoming God, we
come together,
We come knowing that
you are with us,
We come rejoicing in the
comfort of this
community.

**We come in worship
and praise, mindful of
the needs of those
who have lost homes
and loved ones, clear
in our concern for
each other and
confident of the love
that unites us with
your creation. Amen**

Lectionary Readings

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13

Once Yahweh decides Saul can no longer be king (15:28), he sends Samuel to anoint his successor. In what would undoubtedly be seen by Saul as a treasonable action, Samuel travels nine kilometres south to Bethlehem with a sacrificial heifer as cover (v2). The town's elders also wary of Saul who is still king are worried that he may cause trouble (v4) but he assures them that he is coming to perform the sacrifice. Under the cover of performing the ritual act of consecration of Jesse and his sons, Samuel anoints David on behalf of Yahweh as the next king (v13). The mark of the new king is not his outward appearance but the attitude of his heart (v7), Saul was a strong and powerful king but he did not keep the required religious rituals. He 'rejected the word of God' (15:26) and therefore could no longer rule. David on the other hand was marked with a divine charisma. He continued to meet with success, gaining influence while shrewdly transforming a loose tribal confederacy into a small empire. David could make mistakes but it was always his heartfelt commitment to the covenant with Yahweh that was his mark of success.

Psalms 20

The psalms united the Hebrew people in the expression of the faith they found in their covenant with Yahweh. This royal psalm may have been said on behalf of the king as he prepared his army for battle, seeking Yahweh's help and victory (v9). God in Zion (v2) is the source of any victory. Invoking God's name (v1b,5b,7b) will help. The king acted as God's agent rather than in his own right to bring blessings and victory to the Hebrew people. The king's rule is dependent on God. Note the need for 'your hearts desire' and plans to be in tune with Yahweh's plans.



*Malian refugees in Niger
UNHCR/H Caux*

2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul notes that walking by faith is not based on appearances or sight (v7). The reference point for Jesus people is to please the Lord (v10) and 'to be at home with the Lord' (v7). Paul argues that we must all appear before the judgement seat where the reward will be based on whether we have done good or evil (v10). Therefore the Corinthians ought to live for the new community that they have formed. Paul is not speaking about living as individuals but for all (v14,15). To live as 'a new creation' (v17) is to live with our eyes open to what is happening for poor people, and for what is new and creative. May we have the sense of urgency of Paul, 'the love of Christ urges me on' (v14), as we work for justice.

Mark 4:26-34

In the parables of the growing seed (found only in Mark) and the mustard seed, Jesus described the Kingdom of God to those who listened and then later demystified them for the disciples (v34). The first parable can almost be seen as anti-work—the seed is scattered, the grain grows and the harvest collected, seemingly with minimum effort. The soil is the bed of life, the seed transforms into grain and God the gracious grower.

The Kingdom or reign of God is a gift. Growth is God's initiative. The same goes for the mustard seed—like dandelions. They start small and spread. God's kingdom or reign is proclaimed in the marginal province of Galilee by Jesus who is seen as a threat to the powerful. His message like the mustard seed has continued to spread. Our daily commitment to the Kingdom can be seen in the small actions that God can transform for justice.



Malian refugees in Niger are dependent on the help of the UN and aid agencies. UNHCR/H Caux

Children’s Talk: Finding Home

Preparation: For younger children, collect a set of pictures that might evoke home for them—mostly real things like beds and pets. Say something like: I was wondering if you could help me this morning. I was trying to imagine what it would be like to look for a new home. What do you think I would need? How would I know it was my home? What would I put in it (if using pictures assemble them on a display board as you go)? Older children might like to tell about when they moved house and the struggles to make friends. You may use the page 2 image (also [downloadable](#)) to talk about refugees who have to leave their homes because of fighting and the lack of food. End with a short prayer: *Loving God, we pray for those people who have to leave their homes and country because of fighting. May we find ways to help them and new people in our neighbourhood. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

Prayer for Refugee Sunday

Loving God

We pray for all those who have been forced to leave their homes and their countries, who are trying to fit into a new country where everything is strange, who are anxious for family and friends living in fear for their lives, and who long for human rights to be respected.

Loving God, grant them justice.

We pray for the peoples of the Sahel region of Africa who are desperately short of food, especially for the people of Mali living in conflict and the neighbours making room for more hungry people.

Loving God, grant them food and peace.

We pray for those responsible for making and administering immigration rules. May they treat people fairly and make wise decisions, respecting the dignity and rights of all people with whom they come in contact.

Loving God, help them be just.

And we pray for all people that they will be moved to open their hearts to those made homeless. We pray for Christian World Service and the ACT Alliance helping small farmers to feed their families and stay home as well as providing assistance to refugees and those displaced by circumstances not of their making. We pray for Refugee Services helping refugees to resettle in New Zealand, and for all of us that we will welcome new migrants with open hearts and minds.

Loving God, grant us your grace. Amen

Prayer of Departure

Go with the blessing that comes from this community and from God whose love embraces all of us. We go in the hope that seeds will grow and new life will begin, We go to meet the challenges of the coming week, We go with our eyes open for things that are new,
In Jesus’ Name Amen



Refugee Services

Support the people of Sahel

In west Africa an emergency has been unfolding which has received little attention. According to the most recent reports 18.5 million people are hungry, up from 10 million a few months ago. The lack of rain, widespread drought and crop failure have caused a failure of cereal production. In the worst affected regions of Burkina Faso it is down by almost 50%. Compounding the situation are high food prices and intensifying conflict and insecurity in Mali. Confusion after a coup in March, led to Tuareg tribesmen and Islamist fighters seizing large areas of the north. By early June, according to the UN, 170,489 people had sought refuge in neighbouring countries plus 30,000 in Algeria. Another 167,257 are internally displaced. ACT Alliance members are providing food assistance throughout the region and running some of the refugee camps.

Please consider holding a special collection or fundraiser for Christian World Service's Sahel Food Crisis Appeal or for Refugee Services in their work in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Refugee Services (formerly the Inter-church Commission on Immigration and Refugee Resettlement) leads refugee resettlement for the government of New Zealand. Since 1976, the agency, with support from the wider community, has supported over 45,000 refugees to build new lives in New Zealand. We empower refugees toward independence by supporting them to build on their existing strengths and become fully contributing members of their new country.

Our work would not be possible without our partners, including many churches and other organisations around the country, who do so much to help newly arrived refugees. From becoming volunteer support workers to donating furniture and goods for homes to providing financial support, our supporters enable those who have lost everything to start again.



Refugee Services

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Resources

Thanks to UNHCR for permission to use the images of Malian Refugees.

Local people in your community may be prepared to share their stories.

CWS has prepared an accompanying reflective [PowerPoint](#) on the situation in the Sahel. It is downloadable from the website along with an appeal leaflet.

Caritas has prepared parallel [material](#) for the Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants using Catholic teachings. Information on a letter writing [campaign](#) in response to the Immigration Amendment Bill currently before parliament which proposes the mandatory detention of asylum seekers.

The United Nations Refugee Agency - UNHCR (for pictures, video clips, games, quizzes. Statistics, stories and links to other resources).

<http://www.unhcr.org/do1thing/index.php>

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

Relief Web (information on humanitarian situations) : <http://reliefweb.int/home>



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