

## Worship Resources in Response to the Refugee Crisis

Situations such as the current refugee crisis can bring up lots of questions that can make it difficult to pray and teach with sensitivity. As we are faced with issues of suffering and human tragedy, we can often struggle to find God in the midst of it all. What follows are some prayers, reflections and creative ways of responding to some of these issues written by the Church of Scotland and other organisations.

The early church gathered to worship, pray and learn together. They opened their homes, shared their food and sold their possessions to provide for each other.  
Let us learn from them, this radical hospitality, and be the people of hope  
that we are called to be.

‘...Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And,  
‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’  
Luke 10v27

Psalm 77 English Standard Version (ESV)

I cry aloud to God,  
aloud to God, and he will hear me.  
<sup>2</sup>In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;  
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;  
my soul refuses to be comforted.  
<sup>3</sup>When I remember God, I moan;  
when I meditate, my spirit faints.  
*Selah*

<sup>4</sup>You hold my eyelids open;  
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.  
<sup>5</sup>I consider the days of old,  
the years long ago.  
<sup>6</sup>I said, "Let me remember my song in the night;  
let me meditate in my heart."  
Then my spirit made a diligent search:  
<sup>7</sup>"Will the Lord spurn forever,  
and never again be favourable?  
<sup>8</sup>Has his steadfast love forever ceased?  
Are his promises at an end for all time?  
<sup>9</sup>Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?"  
*Selah*

<sup>10</sup>Then I said, "I will appeal to this,  
to the years of the right hand of the Most High."  
<sup>11</sup>I will remember the deeds of the LORD;  
yes, I will remember your wonders of old.  
<sup>12</sup>I will ponder all your work,  
and meditate on your mighty deeds.  
<sup>13</sup>Your way, O God, is holy.  
What god is great like our God?  
<sup>14</sup>You are the God who works wonders;  
you have made known your might among the peoples.  
<sup>15</sup>You with your arm redeemed your people,  
the children of Jacob and Joseph.  
*Selah*

<sup>16</sup>When the waters saw you, O God,  
when the waters saw you, they were afraid;  
indeed, the deep trembled.  
<sup>17</sup>The clouds poured out water;  
the skies gave forth thunder;  
your arrows flashed on every side.  
<sup>18</sup>The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;  
your lightning lit up the world;  
the earth trembled and shook.  
<sup>19</sup>Your way was through the sea,  
your path through the great waters;  
yet your footprints were unseen.  
<sup>20</sup>You led your people like a flock  
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

## *Praying*

These excerpts can be used or adapted to form prayers for worship gatherings, private and personal prayer reflections and prayer activities.

### Psalm 61: 1-4

Please listen, God,  
and answer my prayer!  
<sup>2</sup> I feel hopeless,  
and I cry out to you  
from a faraway land.  
Lead me to the mighty rock  
high above me.  
<sup>3</sup> You are a strong tower,  
where I am safe  
from my enemies.  
<sup>4</sup> Let me live with you forever  
and find protection  
under your wings, my God.

Gracious and merciful God  
We look to you for guidance  
As we pray and act

Suffering Christ  
We pray that you would comfort  
Those who are in distress

For those caught in the midst of war – we pray for peace

For those held captive – we pray for freedom

For those facing hatred and intolerance – we pray for love

For those fleeing for their lives – we pray for protection

For those who are desperate – we pray for hope

For strangers in a strange land – we pray for friends

We pray for those involved in administering aid  
For their protection  
and that their work would be effective in bringing relief

We pray for all of those caught up  
in circumstances out with their control  
Holy Spirit, would be ever present in their time of need.

AMEN

We invite you to use this as a prayer and response. When the leader says 'We cry out' the gathered can respond with 'Lord have mercy'. Other responses could be some of the short songs mentioned later in this resource, along with many of the 'Kyrie Eleison' found in CH4 and elsewhere.

Lord have mercy  
For those caught in conflict  
Who's lives hang in the balance  
We cry out...

**Lord have mercy**

For those who cannot escape  
Trapped by war raging around them  
Paralysed by fear  
Or faced with an impassable ocean  
We cry out

**Lord have mercy**

For those who flee  
Leaving behind all that they have known  
Venturing into new and strange places  
We cry out

**Lord have mercy**

For those who are here  
At the end of a perilous journey  
Now faced with a new uncertain path  
We cry out

**Lord have mercy**

Merciful God  
Help us to act with compassion,  
To welcome with love,  
To put the needs of our neighbours before our own

Inspire us to pray  
to act  
to be the people of hope that you call us to be  
Hear us as we cry out  
For the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**AMEN**

## Excerpt from Pray Now 2010 Day 8 – Hospitality

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

~ Hebrews 13.2 ~

Hospitality

A pause on the journey

A place of welcome

Encounter, exchange

Hospitality

A watering hole for the Spirit

A place of nourishment

Renewed, refreshed

Hospitality

An oasis for those in the wilderness

A place of shelter to

Ponder, wonder

Lord Jesus

Host of the table

Host to the pilgrim

Journeying with us to those breathing spaces of welcome

That feed us enough to set us out again.

Following your example

May we too play host and hospitaller

Opening the doors of our hearts and homes to

Family

Friends

Strangers

And maybe, without knowing it,

the occasional Angel.

### **Readings**

Genesis 18: 1-16          Abraham and Sarah welcoming strangers in the desert

Deuteronomy 10:18-19      Ancient rule of hospitality and community

Psalms 84                  How lovely is your dwelling place

Psalms 113

John 13:1-20                Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus

Luke 10:1-12                Parable of the wedding feast

**Prayer Activity**

Where are the places you would call home? What makes a place feel safe and secure? Who or what makes a place a hospitable place to be or stay? Think through the hospitable people and places of your life and journey and give thanks for them.

**Blessing**

We saw a stranger yesterday.  
We put food in the eating place,  
Drink in the drinking place,  
Music in the listening place  
And in the sacred name of the triune God  
He blessed us and our house,  
Our cattle and our dear ones.  
As the lark says in her song:  
Often, often, often goes Christ in the stranger's guise.  
~Celtic rune of hospitality~

**Excerpt from Pray Now 2010 Day 14 - Asylum**

'Then the fugitive shall be taken into the city, and given a place, and shall remain with them.'

~Joshua 20:4b~

Thy will be done.  
Fugitives from injustice  
deserve sanctuary,  
inviolable refuge  
From persecution or oppression.  
Each asylum seeker given  
welcome and fair hearing.

And as those bloodied feet in ancient times  
fled along safety-seeking roads,  
so the flights continue  
in the desperation-driven refugee  
suffering the suffocating darkness of the ship's hold  
or bearing the battering in the hidden depths of the lorry's load.

And then arrival!  
Bent figures –  
hungry, thirsty, bewildered, frightened  
and with  
nothing  
but a hope, a dream  
that things might be better here!

No room at the inn of the city –  
Christ, those words after such journeying –  
but we have a place round the back.  
You may call it a stable  
but we call it a detention centre.

Surely new life can begin anywhere?  
Isn't that what the Gospel's about?

O God, help us to make our city  
one of Your cities of refuge and justice.  
It's the least we can do in Jesus' name.  
His cruciform arms embrace  
every asylum seeker  
and there is room for everyone.



## Readings

Genesis 16:1-11	Hagar flees from Sarai but finds refuge in the Lord's angel
Exodus 12:33-42	The Israelites flee from Egypt without any provisions
Joshua 20:1-8	The Lord appoints cities of refuge
Ruth 1:1-5	Famine at home causes Elimelech's family to flee to Moab
Matthew 2:13-18	Joseph, Mary and Jesus flee from Herod to Egypt
Matthew 11:28-30	Jesus invites us to find refuge in Him

## Prayer Activity

Think! What are your ten most precious possessions? Imagine having to leave your home and country and you cannot take any of them with you. When you arrived in the new place, what would you most need? Now give thanks for what you have and pray for those who arrive here with nothing.

## Blessing

Bless  
finders and keepers,  
losers and weepers,  
hidiers and seekers  
that all may be found  
in the Kingdom of God;  
a place of asylum  
called love of the Lord.

## **A Collection of Prayers from Christian Aid:**

Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25, 37-41)

God of all, where are your children?  
Let us see God's children, who are far from home,  
adrift in an open, overcrowded boat,  
with no compass, no crew, no safety.

God of all, why is there crying?  
Let us hear the cries of refugees and respond with love  
to those whose escape from danger  
leads only to a journey into danger.

God of all, who is praying?  
Let us pray for the young lives being lost,  
for the families who are broken apart,  
asking for comfort and for justice.

God of all, who is answering?  
Let us see that You are in the boat,  
alongside the members of your family.  
May we, who bear your name,  
answer with compassion for you.

**Amen.**

Merciful God,  
We pray for all whose desperation leads them to the sea,  
to undertake perilous voyages,  
often following dangerous land journeys  
-those escaping brutal wars  
-those fleeing religious persecution  
-those escaping climate disasters and economic ruin  
-those looking for hope in a hopeless situation.

May we look beyond our own fears and concerns  
to the needs of those who have nothing,  
risk everything  
and depend on the kindness of strangers.  
May our hearts be opened,  
our leaders be challenged  
and our self-interest be called out,  
in Jesus' name.

**Amen**

‘Deal with each other justly, do not oppress the refugee, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood. Journey in all the ways I command you, that all may go well with you.’  
Jeremiah 7 vs 6-7

Lord of the journey,  
We ask for your protection on all who have fled their homes.  
Give them strength on their journeys and grant that they may  
find places of compassion at which to rest.  
Ease their fear as they throw in their lot with strangers  
And keep alive their vision of finding a secure and welcoming home.  
Amen.

#### **Church of England – Prayer for the Refugees**

Heavenly Father,  
you are the source of all goodness, generosity and love.  
We thank you for opening the hearts of many  
to those who are fleeing for their lives.  
Help us now to open our arms in welcome,  
and reach out our hands in support.  
That the desperate may find new hope,  
and lives torn apart be restored.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ Your Son, Our Lord,  
who fled persecution at His birth  
and at His last triumphed over death.  
**Amen**

### *Teaching*

Situations such as the current refugee crisis can bring up lots of questions that can make it difficult to teach with sensitivity. As we look at issues of suffering and human tragedy, we can often struggle to find God in the midst of it all. What follows are some thoughts and reflections on some of these issues.



The Rublev icon is well known. Created in the 15th century by the Russian iconographer, Andrei Rublev, it depicts the three visitors who came to Abraham when he was camped under the tree at Mamre. (Gen. 18) Abraham greets the strangers with generosity and warm hospitality. The writer to the Hebrews makes reference to this story when encouraging faithfulness in the community to which he was writing: *Let mutual love continue. Do not hesitate to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.* (Heb 13:1-2)

Because of this, the icon has been interpreted as a representation of the Holy Trinity and has spoken to people in many church traditions over the centuries. The three figures are gathered round a table. There is a chalice on it with a roasted lamb in it, reminding the Christian viewer of Holy Communion and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The way in which the three figures are arranged round the table leaves open the side closest to us, the viewer, the worshipper. We are invited in, to complete the circle, to be part of that community of love offered by the God whom we worship as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of life. (Google 'Rublev icon' for more detailed interpretation of the icon.)

From the ecumenical movement we are reminded that our faith is concerned with the welfare of 'the whole inhabited earth' (the *oikoumene*). The Church is called into being to be a community of people through which the loving purposes of God are made visible for the entire world to see. We are invited to share the mission of God in the world, to be joined with God in God's movement of love, not least among those who are most marginalised in our world and to challenge everything in our world that is dehumanising, everything that cheapens life and makes it expendable.

We talk of God's grace, of reconciliation, of justice and peace. The Orthodox Church also talks of *oiconomia*, the word from which we get our word 'economy'. In its theological context that word is used to describe the overwhelming generosity of God that spills over in forgiveness and mercy. It is the love that reconciles, the spirit that inspires and empowers us both as individuals and as a

worshipping community, the goodness that works through our flawed personalities so that we become part of the divine activity. This dynamic flow of undeserved goodness is presented to us and we are invited to receive it, to allow it to infuse us, and having received it, to share.

When it comes to the refugee crisis, the Christian Church has no option. The example we are given time again is one set by a generous God who deals graciously with our flawed humanity in such a way that we who belong to the community of the Church are invited to share that same spirit of compassionate reaching out, recognising the stranger in need, offering hope and hospitality as we are able, recognising the humanity we share with them as the same humanity Jesus shared and conscious that in these desperate people we see nothing less than the face of Christ, crucified and risen, the Christ who invites us to join him round the table where death and all that is life-denying and degrading is transformed by new life in the offer of hope, friendship and a home, a community where all are welcome and no-one is denied.

Loving the sojourner.

*“Love the sojourner...for you were sojourners...” Deuteronomy 10:19*

What have we learned from the current refugee crisis, and indeed the other refugee crises that are to be found in the pages of history? What have we learned from the sojourner?

We need to learn what to call them: are they migrants, or refugees? A sojourner in the Bible can be a guest, or a pilgrim. The sojourner can stay for a short or a long time. A sojourner in the Bible might flee from famine, or persecution, or be a victim of war, or economic injustice. A sojourner might be escaping grief, or have been carried off into captivity. What we learn from the sojourner is one size will not fit all.

Deuteronomy challenges us to love the sojourners, for we too were once in their place. In our transient time we have all been on the move, and will continue to be in transit. We too need shelter, comfort, nourishment and love. Today's headline sojourners are, in fact, brothers and sisters in the human family. God calls us to love sojourners because in each one God's image is found. To love the sojourner is to love God and to love ourselves.

### *Creative responses*

The worst thing that we can do in all of this, is to simply do nothing. Included here are some thoughts on how to creatively respond to this crisis. Ranging from preparing a place at your table, sensitive musical suggestions for worship or writing to your MSP, these ideas along with the previous sections on prayer and teaching can help us in some way to be involved.

*Who will help the refugees  
To cease their endless walking,  
While the ones who claim to care  
Continue endless talking?*

Words John L. Bell, © WGRG, c/o Iona Community, Glasgow.



## 'A Place at the Table'

*"The conflict in Syria continues to rage, claiming the lives of thousands of people and leaving millions homeless and without the basic necessities of life. We are asking you to get involved in 'A Place at the Table' to help our partner the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL) as they reach out to the refugees to provide food, shelter and hygiene supplies  
You can help make a difference, it's as easy as setting 'A place at the Table' and giving the money you would have spent on that extra meal to help feed a family in Syria"*

You can still support people affected by this crisis by setting 'A Place at The Table' and using that money to help the plight of refugees. Below are a series of links giving you background information.

[Information and resource sheet](#)

['A Place at the Table' Placemat \(download and set it at your table at home, in a restaurant, at a church meal\)](#)

Dr. Mary Mikhael from our partner the National Evangelical Synod of Syria urges us to continue praying for an end to the war that is crushing Syria and its people (this was published at the time of launch of 'A Place at the Table')

*"We in the NESSL together with all our community in Syria and Lebanon feel crushed with fear by the news of the intention of the USA to strike Syria. What Syria needs now more than ever before is healing. We are crushed with deep sadness by the tragedy enlarging day by day for millions of Syrians. We abhor and strongly condemn all acts of violence by whoever against whoever. And the use of chemical attack tore our hearts.*

*"What the international community must do is surely to help creating peace and reconciliation among the Syrians. We cry to God to prevent any outside power from striking Syria and increasing the pain and suffering, destruction and death. We had enough of all tragic experiences.*

*"We depend on God first and on all nations that love peace and justice to help the Syrians come together and together build a new Syria. We urge all nations to help bring this mad violence to an end. Help Syria have life.*

*"God for sure loves the peace-makers. Help us have peace. We are grateful to The Church of Scotland for being a sister. Thank God for you witness and for your service.*

*"May God continue to bless and guide you all."*

Music can be used in many ways during a worship gathering. It creates a space that few other art forms can, with its ability to affect mood and atmosphere. It is worth considering this as you gather to pray and reflect. There are many different hymns available that deal with issues around this crisis, below are a few suggestions that will help in preparing music for worship.

**CH4 - 260 Eternal Father, strong to save**

Often referred to as the “Navy hymn” yet its plea of “Oh, hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea” has a new resonance with the current refugee crisis. The name of the tune (Melita) is a reference to Paul's shipwreck on the island of Malta (Acts 27:39-28:1). This song can therefore also be sung in solidarity with our congregation there and the project which they run with the support of the Guild

[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/the\\_guild/projects/current/out\\_of\\_africa\\_into\\_malta](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/the_guild/projects/current/out_of_africa_into_malta)

**Yarabb as salami (Send peace on our world, God)**

<http://wcc2013.info/en/resources/prayer/hallelujah> (p.196)

**Ososo (Come now O prince of peace)**

If using a musical response to intercessions then it can be particularly powerful to sing songs which come from those parts of the world. There are not many songs from Syria which have made it into Western hymnbooks but this song from Palestine is particularly appropriate. Another short song which could be used is “Ososo” from Korea which prays for reconciliation between people and nations.

**CH4 - 265 Pray for a world**

**CH4 - 168 God weeps**

**There is no child so small** (three different tunes available online, links below)

[http://www.hopepublishing.com/media/pdf/hset/hs\\_3035.pdf](http://www.hopepublishing.com/media/pdf/hset/hs_3035.pdf)

<https://www.musiklus.com/anthology/item/1485/there-is-no-child-so-small-words-by-shirley-erena-murray>

Many of the images and stories which have most affected the public perception of this situation have been about children. These songs are by two of the most prolific contemporary hymn writers and while Shirley Erena Murray's hymn is written to be sung at Christmas it can be used with “at Christmas” changed to “and homeless” in order to fit with the last line of that verse. “God weeps” is published with a different tune in other publications which gives a more reflective feel to the song. It can be seen online here ([http://www.hopepublishing.com/media/pdf/hset/hs\\_300.pdf](http://www.hopepublishing.com/media/pdf/hset/hs_300.pdf)).

**CH4 - 250 Sent by the Lord am I**

**CH4 - 259 Beauty for brokenness**

**CH4 - 362 Heaven shall not wait**

**CH4 - 624 In Christ there is no East nor West**

**CH4 - 706 For the healing of the nations (alternative tunes: Westminster Abbey, Cwm Rhondda)**

**CH4 - 721 We lay our broken world**

More useful links:

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/Refugees,-migrants-and-asylum>

<http://www.ccme.be/who-we-are/>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/topical-prayers/a-prayer-for-the-refugee-crisis.aspx>

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/churches/resources/index.aspx>

[https://donate.christianaid.org.uk/refugees?rmsrc=1&\\_ga=tsid:56895|cid:288468228|agid:10119314268|tid:kwd-13036072|crid:49008983748|nw:g|rnd:4702907645208754684|dvc:c|adp:1t1&gclid=CPvz2vvf\\_ccC FWQTwwod0mMAXw](https://donate.christianaid.org.uk/refugees?rmsrc=1&_ga=tsid:56895|cid:288468228|agid:10119314268|tid:kwd-13036072|crid:49008983748|nw:g|rnd:4702907645208754684|dvc:c|adp:1t1&gclid=CPvz2vvf_ccC FWQTwwod0mMAXw)

<https://ctbi.org.uk/asylum-and-refugees-resources/>

<http://www.eauk.org/church/stories/this-is-not-a-time-for-the-church-to-be-silent.cfm>

[http://ignatiansolidarity.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Unaccompanied\\_Toolkit\\_Prayers.pdf](http://ignatiansolidarity.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Unaccompanied_Toolkit_Prayers.pdf)

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/methodist-special-sundays/refugee-week>

[http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/emergencies/child-refugee-crisis-appeal?utm\\_campaign=refugee&utm\\_medium=ppc&utm\\_source=refugeecrisisappealppc&sisr=1](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/emergencies/child-refugee-crisis-appeal?utm_campaign=refugee&utm_medium=ppc&utm_source=refugeecrisisappealppc&sisr=1)

<http://www.tearfund.org/en/refugeecrisis/>

[http://www.unicef.org.uk/landing-pages/Syria-crisis-donate/?gclid=CK-zvfng\\_ccCFavpwgodIU0lkg&sisr=1](http://www.unicef.org.uk/landing-pages/Syria-crisis-donate/?gclid=CK-zvfng_ccCFavpwgodIU0lkg&sisr=1)

<http://wrc.ch/prayer-requests/a-letter-on-the-refugee-crisis-in-europe>