

December 2016

Dear Sisters and Associates,

In today's mailing you'll find a copy of the 2017 Peace Gathering prayer. We invite you to gather together (or gather some friends or co-workers) to celebrate our peacemaking efforts. We've traditionally held the prayer in early January, but please feel free to schedule it whenever it works best for you. We will offer the service at Queen of Peace Chapel for those in the Toledo/Sylvania area; we will notify you later of the date and time.

This prayer service is on the theme of Refugees, to support our Chapter Initiative.

For the prayer, you will need

- a leader
- 7 readers
- Copies of the readings for the readers
- Copies of the prayer for the attendees

You will also need 4 candles to light during the service, as a sign of welcome and hospitality; they can be placed on a central table or in different places in the room. If your group is large enough, you can choose 4 people to light the candles (or assign one person as candle lighter or have the reader light the candle after they read their part).

For the ambiance, we suggest:

A table with photo of Earth (or globe or Earth ball)

You may also want to add a table cloth made in another country, artwork of people of diverse cultures, images or photos of "home," or images or photos of people of diverse cultures.

For the music, we suggest:

For the opening song:

In Christ There is No East or West, John Oxenham, Ritual Song # 836,
2017 Music Issue # 576

All Are Welcome, Marty Haugen, Ritual Song # 846, 2017 Music Issue #
413

We are Many Parts, Marty Haugen, Ritual Song #840, 2017 Music Issue
580

Any other appropriate song

For the closing song:

Service, Buddy Ceaser

Let There Be Peace on Earth, Sy Miller and Jill Jackson, Ritual Song #
831, 2017 Music Issue #525

Any other appropriate song

Blessings on your event! Our gatherings may be simple, but they offer a powerful witness to our desire for peace in our lives and in our world.

Peace!

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Network members



2017 Peace Gathering Prayer Service

Recognizing the Plight of the Refugee

Call to Prayer

Leader: As we gather in our Sylvania Franciscan tradition, near the January 1 Day of Peace, we bring to mind the images of fleeing refugees, adrift in boats, drowning in the Mediterranean, crowded in refugee camps – that filled our TV screens this past year and prompted us to take action when we gathered in Chapter. Holding them in our hearts, we pray for all those who are displaced –

We remember the journey of the Holy Family who became refugees in Egypt before returning home.

We recognize the similar journeys that are taken by millions of families in the world today.

May refugees rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

Wherever possible, may they return to the homes and communities they were forced to abandon.

When they cannot return home because of war, poverty or persecution, may they be welcomed and allowed new lives in new lands. End their homelessness and bring them to safe harbor. Amen.

Opening Song:

Reflection: Jesus as a Syrian Refugee

Leader: I wonder if we have forgotten Jesus the man

All: who knew the fear of flight,
plucked by his parents in a sudden need to
abandon his homeland for a foreign one.

Leader: I wonder if we have forgotten Jesus the man

All: who knew loneliness, hunger and helplessness,
that heavy weakness
that taunted the mind and tempted the spirit.

Leader: I wonder if we have forgotten Jesus the man
All: who freely offered a message to the unwanted,
 who healed those others accused
 of bringing suffering on themselves.

Leader: I wonder if we have forgotten Jesus the man
All: who would escape to a boat for respite,
 who passed through the waters
 with fearful friends in a storm-tossed sea.

Leader: I wonder if we have forgotten Jesus the man
All: who knew what it meant to be despised and shamed.
 Many have no interest in this desperate,
 hungry, thirsty, sick stranger in need of clothing.

Leader: I wonder if we have forgotten Jesus the man
All: who said whatever you do for the least of *these*,
 you do for me, in the guise of
 the least of our day, a Syrian refugee.

Leader: I wonder if we have forgotten Jesus.
 Pause for Reflection



Voices from Exile

Reader 1: Mary, Mother and Companion of Refugees,
 We weep beside the rivers and we long for an end to our exile.
 We weep and our tears mingle in the waters that flow by us but do
 not take us home.
 Our Children have no roots to nourish them.
 Our elders have been lost to us.
 The land we cherished is gone.
 How long will we wander?
 How long will we yearn to return? How long will we weep beside the
 rivers of exile?

Reader 2: Luke 24: 30 - 31
 Pause

Reader 3: A story from Britain
 Light Candle of Welcome
 (as the Candle of Welcome is lit, you may want to silently read
 Reading 1 above)

Reader 4: A story from Hong Kong

Light Candle of Welcome

(as the Candle of Welcome is lit, you may want to silently read Reading 1 above)

Reader 5: A Story from Ghana

Light Candle of Welcome

(as the Candle of Welcome is lit, you may want to silently read Reading 1 above)

Reader 6: A story from Kosovo

Light Candle of Welcome

(as the Candle of Welcome is lit, you may want to silently read Reading 1 above)

Litany of Hope

Reader 7: I will make a highway across the mountains and prepare a road for my people to travel...Sing, heavens! Shout for joy, Earth! Our God will comfort his people...Look around you and see what is happening! Your people are assembling; they are coming home." (Is 49:11-13, 18)

Reader 1: For Now Tev Soen, who has come home to Cambodia after years as a refugee,

All: we rejoice and give thanks to God.

Reader 2: For Simon Akatari, who is beginning to rebuild his life in Mozambique after living in a refugee camp in Zimbabwe,

All: we rejoice and give thanks to God.

Reader 3: For Jasenko Selimovic, who has found a new home in Sweden after fleeing Bosnia during the war,

All: we rejoice and give thanks to God.

Reader 4: For Alfredo Chivunda, who was born in a refugee camp in Zambia and has returned 14 years later to Angola,

All: we rejoice and give thanks to God.

Reader 5: For Nolvía Dominquez, who fled from political persecution in Chile and now has a family, home and welcoming community in Norway,

All: we rejoice and give thanks to God.

Reader 6: For the refugees in our local community, in our state and in our country who have been welcomed as we welcome Christ,

All: we rejoice and give thanks to God.

Pause

Reflection: from the Joint Declaration (On the Refugee Crisis) by Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and All Greece, April 16, 2016

Pause



Closing Prayer

Leader: Displaced God,
Born in flight to parents anxious and weary,
Born anew in those who flee oppression, leaving home and loved ones behind, and staking their lives on the hope of abundant life, we pray:

All: We pray for roofs that safely shelter refugees.
We pray for walls that offer security for refugees.
We pray for rooms in which the dignity of refugees can flourish.
We pray for the beauty of nature to restore the broken hearts of refugees.
We pray for communities that celebrate the presence and gifts of refugees.
Hear out prayers, Joseph, Mary and Jesus.
Help us to see you in all those who have had to flee their lands.
Grant all refugees the grace and support to rebuild their homes and their lives.
May we have open hearts; may we have open arms; may we open our doors in welcome. Amen.

Closing Song:

Leader: Let us offer each other a Sign of Peace
Adapted from:
Prayer Service for Refugees, Chris Koellhoffer, IHM, Education for Justice
"A Place to Call Home," Education for Justice
I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me, Education for Justice
Jesus as a Syrian Refugee, written by a member of Another Voice: A group of Israeli and Palestinian women who write about their pursuit of peace in the midst of conflict.

Faith in Action

You may be wondering: What can I do? How can I welcome or be hospitable to the strangers in my community and church? We need to build bridges to welcome the strangers in our churches, communities, and country. Here are a few suggestions:

Be a Bridge Builder in Your Home and Schools

Interact with refugees and invite them to your home. Your family and neighbors will see your interaction with strangers as a model and may feel more comfortable around strangers as a result. Offer to teach English and life skills to refugees. Consider teaching Adult Basic Education Assist or English as a Second Language to adults, as well as students.

Be a Bridge Builder in Your Church

Get to know the refugees in your community. Attend a church service where members are newer immigrants, and also invite them to your church. Volunteer at a local organization that serves the refugees in your town or city. Listen to and empathize with their stories.

Be a Bridge Builder in Your Community

Educate yourself about the laws and issues that negatively impact refugees in our country. There is a lot of misinformation in the news media. Become aware and search for answers rather than assuming that what you hear in the media is correct.

Be a Bridge Builder in Your Country

Advocate on behalf of the stranger by writing or calling your political representatives to voice your support for refugee programs. There are many laws that affect immigrants and refugees negatively and should be changed.



Readings

Reader 2: Luke 24: 30-31

As the travelers to Emmaus walked, “Jesus himself came up and walked beside them, but they did not recognize him.” The travelers invited Jesus to stay with them, and “while he was with them at the table, he took the bread and blessed it; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were open and they recognized him...”

Voices from Exile

Reader 3 (A Story from Britain)

An uprooted man in Britain says: “I can’t bear this life of hiding any more. They say I am not a refugee, but I know I will be imprisoned, tortured, killed if I return. They ask for proof. I worry about my wife and children back home. Is there anyone who cares?”

(Church World Service, “Accompanying the Uprooted”)

RESPONSE: Light a candle of welcome

Reader 4 (A Story from Hong Kong)

An uprooted one, a domestic worker from Hong Kong, says: “I cry every night in bed . . . no woman should be faced with such a choice . . . Parents don’t know how lucky they are to be able to hug and kiss their children every day . . . My employers don’t even know that I am a mother.”

(Excerpted from *The Prophetic Mission of Churches in Response to Forced Displacement of People*, 1995)

RESPONSE: Light a candle of welcome

Reader 5 (A Story from Ghana)

“My name is Fred, and I come from Ghana. In my country I was a political activist and my life was threatened, so I fled my country. When I arrived in America, I was taken to the Elizabeth Detention Center, where I have been incarcerated. After waiting two years, I learned that my request for asylum was denied. I expect to be deported soon, and I am afraid for my life.”

(Taken from a conversation with a detainee in Elizabeth, NJ)

REPONSE: Light a candle of welcome

“The family traveled for seven days en route to Macedonia. Erol feared for his father, whose paralyzed arm was weakening because of the cold. They spent their nights sleeping on the ground. All valuables and belongings were left behind. All their identification papers were taken from them when they left.”

(Taken from “From the Heart of Kosovo” by Janet Yurkanin, IHM, in Universe Updated.)

RESPONSE: Light a candle of welcome

Reader 7:

Reflection: from the Joint Declaration (On the Refugee Crisis) by Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and All Greece, April 16, 2016

Together we solemnly plead for an end to war and violence in the Middle East, a just and lasting peace and the honorable return of those forced to abandon their homes. We ask religious communities to increase their efforts to receive, assist and protect refugees of all faiths, and that religious and civil relief services work to coordinate their initiatives. For as long as the need exists, we urge all countries to extend temporary asylum, to offer refugee status to those who are eligible, to expand their relief efforts and to work with all men and women of good will for a prompt end to the conflicts in course.

[Today we face one of the] most serious humanitarian crises since the end of the Second World War. To meet this grave challenge, we appeal to all followers of Christ to be mindful of the Lord’s words, on which we will one day be judged: “For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me ... Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:35-36, 40).

... By defending the fundamental human rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants, and the many marginalized people in our societies, we aim to fulfil the Churches’ mission of service to the world.