

Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit

Sunday Worship Sheet 16th June 2024 – Refugee Sunday

Our worship for this week was written by Howard Jackson,
a Local Preacher and Member at St. John's Bangor.

You may wish to have your Bible to hand. Please note the hymns are now at the back of the sheet for ease of printing. CCLI licence 556292

Introduction: Today is Refugee Sunday. World Refugee Sunday was launched more than 15 years ago by the Refugee Highway Partnership in cooperation with the World Evangelical Alliance, to raise awareness and pray for refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. At the end of 2023 there were 110 million displaced people world-wide. Around two thirds are displaced from their homes in their own country, one third have fled their own country and about one sixth of these are actively seeking asylum. Note that the refugees crossing the channel on inflatable rafts represent less than 1/10 percent of the world-wide total.

Opening Prayer: (Deuteronomy 27:19) Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow. Amen.

Hymn 1: 693 StF Beauty for brokenness

Prayer of Approach: Gracious and merciful God, we gather in one heart and mind to pray for all families and individuals who have left or fled their country, their land, their homes, seeking safer and better lives. We lift up to you their hopes and dreams, their fears and anxieties, and all their needs and necessities, and that they may be protected on their journeys, their dignity and rights may be fostered, honoured and upheld, and they may be welcomed with open arms into generous and compassionate communities. Amen.

From CTBI resources for Refugee Sunday

Prayer of Adoration: Lord, you do not consider, as we might, the outward appearance of anyone in the granting of your blessing and grace. You look beyond outward show to the heart, seeing potential that lies deep within, that can be transformed by your Spirit into gifts that will bring glory to your name. Lord, you have welcomed us as your own. May we show the same generosity of spirit towards refugees and help support them towards a stable and more fulfilling life as opportunity arises. Amen.

Based on The Act of Prayer

The Lord's Prayer:

Prayer of Confession: O gracious God who looks with love and compassion on the poor, the needy, the lonely, the immigrants, the marginalised, and the refugee, forgive us our forgetfulness and fear to embrace all those who suffer believing that among us they will find a refuge... You are the omnipotent shadow, you are the shelter, the hope, the refuge and the peace of the suffering. Forgive us and let us rekindle the flame announcing that among us there is room for the stranger, for the despised, for the foreigner and for all who are discriminated against... Fill us with the goodness of your Spirit of love that embraces and comforts the suffering and as a community we reflect compassion and brotherhood. Amen.

From the Iglesia Metodista de México A.R. Liturgy "UNA CASA DE REFUGIO DE AMOR Y SANIDAD."

OT Reading: Genesis 27:2-41

Psalm: 139:1-12

Hymn 2: 716 StF There are no strangers to God's love

Gospel Reading: Luke 6:27-36

Reflection: It is a sobering thought that the refugees worldwide number twice the population of Great Britain. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was founded by the UN in 1950. To quote its Web site "UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. We lead international action to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. Our vision is a world where every person forced to flee can build a better future."

UNHCR has been collecting statistics on refugees since 1951. These are accessible from an online database. Obviously, this is a world-wide problem needing action and funding organised on a global scale.

There are many causes of people leaving homes and livelihood behind to seek safety and stability elsewhere. Warfare, principally civil war and occasionally conflict between countries, is one of the commonest causes. Today, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria and Ukraine appear in news broadcasts fairly regularly. Together, they account for around half of all refugees. Religious persecution is another major cause. Myanmar's army has actively driven over a million Muslims into Bangladesh.

What of the people seeking refuge in Great Britain? Government policy changed, as we left the EU, from welcoming refugees to open hostility towards them. By making it almost impossible for refugees to enter Britain legally, the government has made it difficult for genuine refugees to claim asylum here. Unless they are from Ukraine, where special provision was made to welcome them. However, the government's policy breaks international law in a number of ways. There seems no rational need for this. The numbers involved are a very small percentage of the world-wide totals and the majority would be self-supporting if given residence permission.

Don't imagine this is a new problem. The bible has examples of refugees. One of the best known is a woman called Naomi. She and her husband and two sons sought refuge in a nearby country, Edom, because there was famine in Israel. Historically this happened in the middle of what we call the Bronze Age. Her two sons married women from Edom. One of them was Ruth, King David's great grandmother. They prepared to settle down in Edom. But their plans were upset not many years later by Naomi's husband and both her sons dying. Naomi and Ruth, both now widows, returned to Israel to seek financial help from one of Naomi's relatives there. Naomi was a refugee twice over the course of a very few years. Once as a refugee from famine, the second time as an economic refugee.

In those days, there were no refugee camps organised by UNHCR. In Israel's West Bank today, there are still "refugee camps" dating from the original civil war in 1948. But don't think of a tent city like we see occasionally on the television news. If you

visit, for example, Aida refugee camp, you will find a small town with light industry, high-rise flats, schools, shops and cafés.

The refugee problem is one with no obvious solution. Millions of people are stuck in limbo. Stateless, penniless, poorly educated and without any real hope of a better future, in spite of UNHCR's aims. Christian organisations are working with refugees in a few areas. For example, Tearfund is working with Venezuelans in Brazil, Syrians in Lebanon, Myanmar Muslims in Bangladesh, Ethiopians and Ugandans in South Sudan, and South Sudanese in Uganda. The Church Mission Society is training church leaders of churches in Ethiopian refugee camps. The Methodist charity All We Can have been working in Jordan, assisting Syrian and Iraqi refugees, and in Bangladesh supporting Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar. What can we do to welcome refugees to this country and give them hope for their future? Inderjit Bhogal, President of Methodists for World Mission, started the movement "Cities of Sanctuary" in the UK in 2017. The vision is to "build cultures of welcome, hospitality and safety" within towns and cities in the UK. The latest figures show over 120 towns and cities have responded. The whole of Wales is registered as an area of sanctuary, with ten areas in Wales already registered. The nearest place to our Circuit registered as a place of sanctuary is Wrexham. There is hope of a better future for refugees coming to Wales. We need to pray that a more positive approach is taken locally.

Pause for thought:

Prayers of Intercession: For people forced from their homes by conflict: Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, Ukraine, South Sudan ...

God of peace, we pray for an end to the violence. We pray for lasting peace. Bring healing, restoration and provision today. Amen.

For people forced from their homes by persecution: Myanmar, Hong Kong ...

God of power, we pray for a world where all are free. We pray for lasting justice. Bring healing, restoration and provision today. Amen.

For people forced from their homes by disaster and disease: Brazil, ...

God of compassion, we pray for a world where people can live free from fear. We pray for lasting safety. Bring healing, restoration and provision today. Amen.

Collect for 3rd Sunday after Trinity: Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn 3: 256 StF When I needed a neighbour

Blessing: May God bless us, our God, who called the world into being, who breathed us into life, who provides us with new strength. May God bless us, our God, whose love does not know borders nor walls, whose justice will come. Our God, who casts down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the lowly. May God bless us, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, Amen. From CTBI resources for Refugee Sunday

Hymn 693

- 1 Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset,
your kingdom increase !
- 2 Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for all people,
trade for their skills ;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak.
*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray :
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain ;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*
- 3 Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
his cross for the pain.
- 4 Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams
plundered and poisoned —
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed ;
make us content with
the things that we need.
Refrain
- 5 Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame
until your justice burns
brightly again ;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation
and bring you their praise.
Refrain

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Hymn 716

- 1 There are no strangers to God's love,
yet we have privatised God's grace.
Bounded by nationhood and lies,
in fear we shrouded love's own face.
Acknowledging our sin and greed
we come confessing common need.
- 2 These are our neighbours and our friends,
the ones who run in fear from war,
who dread abuse by power or state,
or seek the means to be less poor ;
these are the ones we have denied,
as in each one the Christ has cried.
- 3 When people seeking sanctuary
come to this place and need our aid,
then in Christ's name let's offer care ;
through this our debt of love is paid.
God's grace is free, this grace receive,
let actions show what we believe.

Andrew Pratt (b. 1948)

Hymn 256

- 1 When I needed a neighbour, were you
there, were you there ?
When I needed a neighbour, were you
there ?
*And the creed and the colour and the name
won't matter,
were you there ?*
- 2 I was hungry and thirsty, were you there,
were you there ?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there ?
- 3 I was cold, I was naked, were you there,
were you there ?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there ?
- 4 When I needed a shelter, were you there,
were you there ?
When I needed a shelter, were you there ?
- 5 When I needed a healer, were you there,
were you there ?
When I needed a healer, were you there ?
- 6 Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be
there,
wherever you travel I'll be there.
*And the creed and the colour and the name
won't matter,
I'll be there.*

Sydney Carter (1915–2004)