



Week 1

Leaders Guide



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**Outline of Class**

* Welcome
* Opening Prayer
* Introductions
* Establish class norms and agreements
* Teaching
* Discussion and dialogue
* Closing prayer

**Leader’s Guide -- Week 1**

[Slide 1] This program has been reprinted with minor modifications by the Diocesan Migration Refugee Resources committee of the Episcopal Church in Central Pennsylvania from material concerning refugees prepared by Episcopal Migration Ministries. It was updated in November 2023.

[Slide 2] Opening Prayer

A Collect for Refugees Holy One of Bethlehem,

From your earliest days you knew the threat of death, the terror of flight, and the pain of exile. Today we know that so many - millions upon millions -

Flee for their own lives and for their children. The numbers seem so vast, the problem so great.

It is easy to feel helpless. It is easy to forget. It is easy to ignore. Shake us from our complacency and from resignation.

Fill our hearts and minds with understanding and compassion for your children Who are forced by persecution and fear to flee their homes.

Remind us that each number is a name, each statistic a person – Your child, your beloved.

Strengthen our resolve; stir in us a spirit of agency and action.

For you have blessed each of us with gifts to be shared in love for all you have created, Gifts that may be used to welcome, to comfort, to befriend.

Grant that we would listen for your call. In Your Holy Name we pray. Amen

We humans are, at our core, a migratory species. Before recorded time, we were a species on the move – following the movements of animal herds, moving to warmer climes during the cold months. In the Abrahamic faith traditions, we have inherited the stories of our spiritual forebears, ancestors whom we know were often driven to migration, and rarely by benign circumstances.

[Slide3] Bondage, famine, persecution and violence drove our forbears to leave their homes and everything they knew to set out into the unknown.

From Moses leading the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt to the flight of the Holy Family from Palestine to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod,

[Slide 4] the foundational narratives of the Abrahamic traditions are stories of migration – people on the move and those who welcome or deny them.

[Slide 5] Indeed, these stories are not relics from some distant past; they are being lived, today, and we are characters. More than 20 million have no choice in which role they play: they’ve been forced to flee for their lives. The rest of us… we have questions to answer. Do we welcome? Are we bystanders? Or are we culpable and complicit? How do we write the story?

The Episcopal Church has long answered these questions by choosing to welcome through resettlement.

[Slide 6] Our formal work began in the 1930’s, against a backdrop of immigration restrictionism at home and the rise of the Nazi party in Europe.

(Note to class leader – click slowly from slide 6 to 7 to allow participants to read/view the slides.) [Slide 7] Horrifying news of the refugee crisis in Europe began hitting American newspapers.

At that time, Bishop Henry Hobson, then bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, said:

[Slide 8] *“As Christians, we can only take one stand… We can act as sponsors for individuals or families [fleeing Germany]; we can sign the necessary affidavits so that these refugees can be admitted under the quota; we can give generously for their maintenance and relief; we can stand firmly in opposition to the voice of the devil heard in anti-Semitic propaganda which is such an insidious evil in our midst; we can show a willingness to make a real sacrifice, without whimpering, as we show forth Christ’s love for these great sufferers of our day.”*

- The Rt. Rev. Henry W. Hobson, II, Diocese of Southern Ohio (Bishop of Southern Ohio from 1930 to 1959)

[Slide 9] In 1939, the same year that the MS St.Louis ocean liner, carrying over 900 Jewich refugees, was turned away from Miami, the Diocese of Southern Ohio published this iconic poster -

[Slide 10] “In the name of these refugees, aid all refugees,” depicting the Holy Family -

Jesus and his parents - fleeing to Egypt to escape the persecution of King Herod, which is found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 2. It became a rallying cry across the church. Parishes and dioceses all across the country joined the effort, speaking out on behalf of Jewish refugees and others displaced by the Nazis.

[Click mouse or space bar again and let the slide play through multiple images] Decades later, out of these efforts Episcopal Migration Ministries, the Church’s ministry for refugee resettlement and welcome was born. Today, Episcopal Migration Ministries is both one of nine national refugee resettlement agencies that works in public-private partnership with the government to resettle refugees, and a growing ministry of The Episcopal Church focused on the refugee welcoming movement.

[Slide 11] Since the 1950s, the number of forcibly displaced persons recognized by the United Nations has increased drastically; from around 2.1 million international refugees in 1951 to some 110 million displaced persons in total in 2023.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was founded in 1950 to deal with the large number of displaced persons in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. Since then, the scale and geographical scope of its operations has broadened significantly, as it works to provide humanitarian aid, logistical support, and long-term solutions to crises across the globe. Alongside the UNHCR, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was established in 1949 to provide similar assistance programs for Palestinian refugees and their descendants, and it is currently operational in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine.

The world today is facing the largest forced displacement crisis since World War II. Of the roughly 110

million people who are displaced, about a third of them are refugees, and half are children.

[Slide 12] The word refugee has a particular and important definition in international law, coming out of the 1951 Geneva Convention and Protocols relating to the Status of Refugees, instruments that arose during the refugee crisis caused by World War II.

I’ll read the Convention definition, and then we’ll break it down. A “refugee” is an individual who:

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

[Slide 13] Refugees are those who are forced to flee across an international border to seek protection in another country, because their governments are unwilling or unable to protect them. Before these individuals receive official refugee status, they are known as asylum-seekers. They have left their country of origin and are seeking safety – asylum – in another country.

War, conflict, and persecution displaces many millions more than those who are able to cross a border. The United Nations estimates that among the 110 million people displaced worldwide today, about a third are refugees, and about 5% are asylum seekers. The remainder are those who are displaced within their own country. They are known, in international law, as internally displaced person (IDP’s), and are often in far more vulnerable and dangerous situations than refugees.

[NEW Slide 14] In addition to refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs), the UNHCR recognizes and tries to assist other categories of forcibly displaced people, such as the over 5 million who have fled from Venezuela to Colombia and other countries, due to political strife, human rights abuses and extreme poverty. The figure of 110 million forcibly displaced people in the world in mid-2023 reflects what is known about all four of these categories. These figures do not include the millions of people displaced from their homes in Gaza in the on-going war between Israel and Hamas. For various reasons, Palestinian refugees are counted and served separately, under the mandate of the U.N.R.W.A. (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East). Suffice it to say that the number of people forcibly displaced from their homes due to conflict, persecution, climate change, and/or other factors continues to grow.

[NEW Slide 15] Here is another way to look at the increases in the numbers of forcibly displaced people, from 2009 until June 2023. There have been increases in all categories of displaced persons over the past dozen or so years, including IDPs, asylum seekers, refugees, and other people in need of international protection.

[Slide 16] Thinking about this global displacement crisis, we need to look closer to understand which countries produce refugees and other forcibly displaced people, which countries host displaced people (often on a temporary basis), and which countries allow refugees to resettle permanently. You may be surprised to learn which countries play some of these roles.

[Slide 17] Here we see the countries with the largest *internally-displaced populations* recognized by the UN. Can you identify the countries under any of the largest circles? Among those with the largest population of IDPs in 2023 are Colombia (which has taken in millions from Venezuela), Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine, Yemen, Somalia and Afghanistan.

[Slide 18] Here we see the countries that have produced the most refugees in 2023. Can you identify the countries under any of the largest circles? Among those who have produced the largest numbers of people recognized as refugees in 2023 are Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

[Slide 19] Here’s another way to look at the figures about where the largest numbers of refugees and other people in need of international protection have come from, in 2022 and 2023.

[Slide 20] More than half of the world’s refugees in 2023 have fled from just three countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.

[Slide 21]This map shows the countries that are hosting the world’s refugees. Hosting means

admitting displaced people while they apply for asylum and wait for a durable solution. The countries hosting the largest populations of refugees or others in need of international protection in 2023 include Iran and Turkiye, Germany, Colombia and Pakistan.

[Slide 22] When forcibly displaced people flee across an international border seeking safety, they are at the mercy of the country to which they’ve fled – for protection, and for adjudication of their asylum claim. While the number of people forced to flee due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and other causes has continued to rise, three facts have remained relatively consistent over time:

[CONTINUED on NEXT SLIDE]

[Slide 23]

1. A majority of displaced people are hosted in low- and middle-income countries.

1. Most displaced people seek protection in countries close to their country of origin.
2. Many displaced people remain in exile for protracted periods of time.

Low-income countries host a disproportionately large share of the global refugee population, both in terms of their population size and the resources available to them. High-income countries, which account for nearly two-thirds of the global wealth, hosted only 25 per cent of refugees at mid-2023.

[Slide 24] The tenuous situations in which refugees find themselves in host countries often drive many to make the desperate decision to attempt a sea crossing to Europe or to Australia. I’m sure many of you have seen the devastating photo of Aylan Kurdi, the Syrian toddler whose body washed up on a beach in Turkey in the fall of 2015.

As the British-Somali Poet Warsan Shire writes in the poem, *Home*, “you have to understand, that no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land.”

[Slide 25] There are three “durable solutions” which the United Nations Refugee Agency is charged with securing for refugees. These are:

* Voluntary repatriation to his/her home country:
* Local integration into the country of first asylum:
* Resettlement to a third country.

Resettlement is the option of last resort for refugees, after it is clear that voluntary repatriation and local integration are not possible. Resettlement is only possible for refugees who fall into the following eligibility categories:

* Legal and/or physical protection needs
* Survivors of torture and/or violence
* Medical needs
* Women and girls at risk
* Family reunification
* Children and adolescents at risk
* Lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions

[Slide 26] In 2016, only 37 countries participated in the UN resettlement program and accepted quotas of refugees on an annual basis through resettlement or humanitarian admission. The number of countries of resettlement fluctuates slightly from year to year.

[Slide 27] Since 2019, these (31) countries have resettled refugees through the UNHCR.

There is much more need of resettlement than there are resettlement spots available; the United Nations estimates that roughly 2 million refugees are eligible for resettlement per the eligibility categories above. However, less than 1% of the world’s refugees will ever be resettled because there are too few spots available.

After the UN Refugee Agency refers those eligible for resettlement to one of the participating countries, processing of each case continues according to the system set up within that country.

[Slide 28] Refugees who are referred to the United States for admission and approved for resettlement arrive through what is called United States Refugee Admissions Program, or USRAP. The USRAP was created in 1980 by a piece of legislation called the Refugee Act, signed into law by President Jimmy Carter. The program had longstanding bipartisan support until 2016. Under the Trump administration, annual refugee admissions were severely restricted. However, admissions and support for the program in the U.S. have rebounded since 2021.

[Slide 29] The USRAP is both an international and domestic interagency effort and public-private partnership, involving a number of governmental and nongovernmental partners both overseas and in the United States. The Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has responsibility for adjudicating applications for refugee status and reviewing case decisions; the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) screens arriving refugees for admission at the port of entry. DHS, the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI and the Department of Defense are responsible for the lengthy security screening process, which generally takes between 18 to 24 months to complete, if there are no interruptions in the process.

[Slide 30] Video

Finally, refugees are matched with a national resettlement agency like EMM, which in turn matches them with an appropriate local affiliate for resettlement. Seven of the ten resettlement agencies are faith-based \* , many tracing their history back to the World War II era and the activism and advocacy of faith communities for refugees fleeing Nazi Europe.

[Slide 31] There are now ten national agencies that contract with the federal government and have local partner offices in communities across the United States. This map shows those local partners in Fiscal Year 2023.

[Slide 32] Episcopal Migration Ministries currently has 13 local affiliates engaged in comprehensive refugee resettlement plus three community partners who provide one or more specific programs. In the weeks to come, we’ll learn more about their work, the ways we can help and support them, and other opportunities to be involved in Episcopal Migration Ministries’ work of welcome.

[Slide 33] For discussion:

* What did you learn that you didn’t already know?
* What surprised you?

\* The seven faith-based national resettlement agencies are: Episcopal Migration Ministries, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration & Refugee Services, Global Refugee (formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service), Church World Service (Protestant and Orthodox denominations), World Relief (Evangelical), HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), the Jewish community’s resettlement agency, and Bethany Christian Services, the newest of the ten national agencies.