

Refugees

A collection of prayers and worship resources responding to the situation of refugees – updated October 2017



A Prayer of Intercession for those who have died at the borders of the European Union

Lord,
we bring to you the weeping and wailing of the mothers of this world,
waiting for their children who have disappeared in the sea,
in the desert, in uncertainty:

Refugees,
men, women and children,
from the war zones of this world,
who are fleeing hunger and poverty,
in the hope of a better, more secure life.

We bring to you our lament for those who have died stranded at our borders,
those who have died fleeing through deserts, mountains and seas.
We call upon you and we join in the cry of those who have died seeking justice and a better world.

Lord, we bring to you our shame
for turning away and remaining silent.
We have enough to eat in Europe - and do not see that we also create the causes of hunger.
We are insatiable - and do not see that this is the cause of many wars.
We are silent, where we need to take action.

Lord, we bring before you political leaders,
who are not making decisions about mere numbers,
but about the fate of many individual human beings.
Sharpen their awareness of how things are interrelated.
Keep their consciences alert.
Let them develop rules that are guided by humanity and vision.

Lord, give us the strength to bear witness
to the suffering of your children on the run,
on their way to us,
at our borders,
in refugee camps and among us,
in detention, waiting to be deported,
in fear of the dangers that lie ahead,
in mourning for those who have died.
Help us, Lord.

Prayer taken from material published by CCME. You can download the full material at http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/70_DOWNLOADS/20_Publications/2014-06-11-Remembrance_2014_Resource_Guide_EN_FIN.pdf

A Prayer from the North East

Christians in the North East have issued a statement and prayer in response to the refugee crisis. The Revd John Claydon and the Revd Paul Revill, Regional Ministers in the Northern Baptist Association, were both signatories to the statement. The full statement is on the Baptists Together website.

God of the nations
you have compassion on all your creatures.

Have compassion on the people of Syria
and all those nations of the world
oppressed by violence and conflict.
Stay the hand of the violent,
strengthen the arm of those who seek peace with justice
and give courage and wisdom to the leaders of the nations
as they seek both to resolve and mitigate the effects of national conflict.

Generous God,
we thank you for the generous hearts of your people
and all those of goodwill across our continent, nation
and region.

We pray for ourselves –
that you would so form in us the character of Christ
that we will stand ready to offer His generous welcome
to our communities, homes and lives.

So may your will be done
and your kingdom come
on earth as it is in heaven.

Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen

Lament for Aylan

So small, so still

So beautiful in life
So unbearable in death
Carried by the sea
Carried by our tears
Carried gently in strong arms.

O God
Open the eyes of those with power
To see your children in their desperate need;
Open the arms of those in government
To welcome those who come to our shores;
Open the hearts of each one of us –

Move us to sorrow, anger and action
That the salt sea of sorrow
May be turned to soothing waters
And that tears of desperation
May become tears of joy.

O God, help your people.

Aylan Kurdi, aged 3, from Kobani was washed up on a Turkish beach near Bodrum in September 2015. He was just one of thousands fleeing for safety from Syria and other parts of the world. The local fisherman who discovered his body among others on the beach said, "I came to the sea and I was scared. My heart is broken."

Written by the Revd Ruth Gee, former President of the Methodist Conference.

A prayer for the situation in Calais

God of all humanity
When your people were enslaved and displaced,
You led them to a land that they could call home;
When your people were in exile;
Your promise was that one day,
They would live in streets of play and laughter.
When your disciples were afraid and uncertain,
You spoke of a Fathers House
With mansions and places prepared.

We pray today for all those who have no place to call home,
Hearing the heart-cry of your word
For those who are without refuge.
Where shelter is ours to offer
Grant us the will and resolve to reflect the generosity of our Creator.
Where others stand in the way of those who need safe haven
May our cry for justice never falter.
May the idols of self-interest and economic gain
Never deflect us from the ways of your Kingdom.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen

Taken from a Joint Public Issues Team Prayer Update. See www.jointpublicissues.org for more information.

For Those in Peril on the Sea

God of every tribe and nation;
Source of our humanity, in whose likeness each of us is made,

We lament any needless loss of human life;
But especially our hearts cry out
For those who have perished
In their quest for hope and sanctuary
Within the continent of Europe.
We confess the failings of those economic and political structures,
From which we often benefit,
Yet leave traffickers and exploitation unchecked;
Rescue Services inadequate;
And fellow human beings so desperate,
That they will risk life itself
In search of what has been denied them
By the self-interest and indifference of others.
Make us restless in our pursuit of justice, hope and security
For everyone with whom we share your world. Amen

Taken from a Joint Public Issues Team Prayer Update. See www.jointpublicissues.org for more information.

Prayers for the Refugee Crisis

Merciful God,
We pray for all whose desperation leads them to the sea,
to undertake perilous voyages,
often following dangerous journeys over land:
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.

Prayer taken from the Christian Aid website. For more information see www.christianaid.org.uk

Tearfund Prayer Powerpoint

Tearfund have produced a prayer powerpoint to help churches and small groups pray for the crisis. It is available at www.tearfund.org

Lord have Mercy

Gracious God,
For every tear streaked child
For every voiceless mother
For every desperate father
For every homeless and stateless family
We cry out to you

Lord have mercy

For those slumped in despair
For those on their knees unable to take another step
For those who look and feel hunted and hopeless
For those who live in the desperate captivity of fear

Lord have mercy

Soften our hearts
Move us to action
Fill us with compassion
Let us be channels of your love

Lord have mercy

Lord whose family had to flee a country
Lord who had nowhere to lay your head
Lord who weeps over the city
Lord have mercy

Move us to make a difference
To act with love and understanding
To offer hope and strengthen the weak
To put the needs of the broken above our own

Lord have mercy

*Prayer written by Fred Drummond, Director of prayer
and Scotland, Evangelical Alliance*

Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician Woman

Lord Jesus,
When a foreigner from an outside place
came to you
seeking life for her daughter,
at first you refused.
Yet, seeing her faith, her trust and her determination
You welcomed her into the scope of your love
Offering hope and a new beginning.

Teach us we pray
To broaden the boundaries of our care.
Give us compassion
And ears so to listen to cries for help
That we may see humanity behind every stereotype,

And your father's image reflected in every face.

Give to the nations and their governments
As you give to us all,
hearts ready to welcome,
love stronger than fear
And the courage to change both our minds and our
policies
In response to those seeking refuge
from war and destitution.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

(Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman: Mark 7:24-31).

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Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The French Roman Catholic priest Paul Couturier was instrumental in the establishment of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. A turning point in his life came in the 1920's when he joined the relief effort to help the thousands of Russian refugees who were arriving in Lyon. Through his encounter with them he discovered the treasures of their orthodox faith, and this opened up for him the way to a lifetime's ministry working for Christian Unity.

Loving God,
We remember with gratitude
that the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was born
Because one Christian
In responding to a crisis
Discovered in the hearts and lives of refugees
The treasures of another Christian tradition.
Teach us that you are always at work
in the welcome of the stranger.
Make us partners in your kingdom;
And give us faith to believe
That from this current crisis
You will bring fresh insights to light,
New understandings to birth
And the wisdom to know
that by and through love
you change us into the likeness of Christ. Amen.

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Prayers of Intercession based on the Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven

Your presence embraces a broken world.
In that world there are broken people, with many
fleeing a world that they know and love, believing they

have no choice but to leave their home because of persecution, discrimination and poverty.

Our Father in Heaven

We pray for your presence to envelope the many vulnerable people who have fled their homelands and embarked upon treacherous journeys to find solace, security in friendships and safety in foreign lands.

Our Father in Heaven

Today and tomorrow, hold their hands firmly, and the hands of their families firmly, in their pursuit for dignity and hope.

Hallowed be your name

And so we pray for the many refugees who have left Syria, Afghanistan, Northern Nigeria, Pakistan, India, Sudan, Egypt, Somalia, Iraq and Iran - forced to live lives of poverty, challenged by relentless indignity, lamenting loss.

Jehovah Jirah,

when refugees beg you for mercy, please respond by calling them by their names too. Reveal to them the characteristics in your name of love, mercy and justice.

Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on Earth as in Heaven

And so Father in Heaven, in whose name we pray, we pray for the many unaccompanied children, desperately trying to eke out an existence in foreign lands. As Baptist people, we pray that your Kingdom will come and your will be done for them.

We pray for the many women refugees struggling to survive in refugee camps. As Baptist people, we pray that your Kingdom will come and your will be done for them.

We pray for the many refugees who feel degraded and discriminated against. As Baptist people, we pray that your kingdom will come and your will be done for them.

We pray for the many asylum seekers seeking indefinite leave to remain in various European Countries. As Baptist people, we pray that your kingdom will come and your will be done for them.

Give us today our daily bread

God of provision, so many refugees are not just stranded in foreign countries, but hungry. Many have sojourned for days and nights without bread and

water. Aware of your ability to provide, we pray that you will provide bread for the many famished refugees. For the refugees beset by injustice, lead them to justice...

And forgive us our sins

Forgive those sins that have violated the humanity of others,
those sins that have rejected the outsider,
those sins that have prevented us from fully embracing the other,
those sins that have stopped us from recognising our own power and privilege,
those sins that have obscured the image of God reflected in his children.

... As we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not in temptation but deliver us from evil

The evil of doing nothing. Watching with the callousness of indifference. Refusing, often because of our own prejudices, to make the necessary sacrifices to help the 'other.'
Deliver us we pray from such collusion and lead us not into temptation.

Instead, help our Associations to be supportive environments where vulnerable refugees experience unconditional embrace.

Help our churches to challenge the national policies that undermine and dehumanise refugees.
Help our colleges to be places that continue to equip students with a total commitment to the Christ who lived and breathed justice.

And so, our Father in Heaven, continue to teach us how to listen to you and respond in fervent prayer for the vulnerable and abandoned in our midst.

So together let's pray...

Together we say the Lord's Prayer

Prayer written by Wale Hudson-Roberts, first used at the Baptist Assembly 2015

The Refugees' Story - a Reflection

This thought-provoking and topical reflection, written by Baptist minister Phil Jump, is particularly suitable for use in churches in early January.

For two days now we had hardly slept or eaten, we just kept on walking; following the refugee trail; seeking to put as much distance as we could between ourselves and those who wished us certain harm. Even now I feared every noise, every stranger; the images of their heartless slaughter still etched into my mind. The screams of mothers clinging to their lifeless children haunted me, along with the sound of the brutal mocking blows that bore down on those men who desperately tried to stand between the soldiers and their loved-ones.

Our new life, our new child - we just had to run to preserve what we had; people said that I was lucky to have the good sense to get out before the death squads got around to our house. For some reason they seem to have targeted the richer neighbourhoods first; for once I was glad that we'd been reduced to living in borrowed rooms and makeshift shelters. But sitting here now, a lost stranger in someone else's land, I wondered if our lot was any better than that of those we had left behind.

Just a few months earlier our whole future had seemed so happy and secure – we had plans and dreams of settling down, taking on my father's business and giving them grandchildren to be proud of. But look at us now, another helpless refugee family running to stay ahead of the latest tide of hate and bloodshed.

We needed to rest – the border was just a few miles away now, with a whole new round of dangers and threats. I'd heard stories about some of the army patrols and the demands they made of refugee women if they wanted safe passage. And even if we got through, what would be waiting for us on the other side? What kind of life could I provide for my wife and our infant child in a place I had never even been to before? I had skills; I was a trained craftsman, but I'd heard that migrant workers were not welcome in some parts – we seemed to be seen as more of a threat than useful citizens.

But there was no time for such thoughts. Right now we just needed rest, so we wandered over to where another group of migrant refugees had made camp. I still had some money left that my brother had given me before he smuggled us out of the city; perhaps it could buy us some food. I noticed a few women with young children themselves, maybe they would find my wife some shelter and safe space where she could feed our restless child.

"Come on," I said, pointing across to the makeshift camp, "let's see if we can spend the night with them". But though I tried to hide it, she could sense the uncertainty and fear that I was harbouring. "Joseph" she whispered, "it will be alright – remember what the angels told us, this is God's child – he will be with us."

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The Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) is changing its legal status from a charitable unincorporated association to a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). From 1 January 2020, BUGB will operate as a CIO with registered charity number 1181392

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