

WELCOMING REFUGEES:

# Preparing to Welcome

hope peace

love joy



Edited by Jennifer Lockard

PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE AND OFFICE OF IMMIGRATION ISSUES

## Introduction

Scripture has many calls to welcome the stranger, so it is no surprise that the modern-day practice of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers to the United States has its roots in churches, synagogues, and ecumenical and interfaith task forces. National organizations such as Church World Service, HIAS and Episcopal Migration Ministries were birthed by faith communities working together to receive and serve refugees. Hundreds of local and regional organizations have sprouted up across the country, led by people of all faiths called to both provide and advocate for welcome in their own area.

And yet welcome has recently come under attack. What was once understood as a source of national pride—to embrace those who yearn to breathe free—has become a topic of considerable debate. What was commonly accepted as core to our Christian teaching (to welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, visit the imprisoned, care for the vulnerable) has been widely rejected. In today's world, we cannot expect welcome to just happen. It takes intention and it takes preparation.

At the same time, churches interested in organizing a Welcome Team (or task force to accompany refugees) often struggle with how to engage their members long term. How do they spark the group's imagination to move beyond meeting immediate physical needs—which most often can't be ascertained until the last minute? How do they inspire and maintain the group's interest in an event with such uncertain timing?

It is in the spirit of assisting congregations as they navigate this period that we created this guide. Because we developed it in the lead up to Advent, it also occurred to us that the four signposts of Advent—Hope, Peace, Joy and Love—provide a helpful framework for outlining concrete actions which can be used toward building welcome. In each of these four sections, you will find a reflection on different aspects of the refugee experience as well as various actions that your congregation can take in preparation for their arrival. We share it so that congregations and Welcome Teams may live into the same sense of Advent expectancy no matter what time of year they carry these actions out.

Unlike the season of Advent, however, preparing welcome can take months or even longer. We hope this guide encourages recommitment to welcome as both a spiritual practice and as a form of public witness, and we invite you to turn a time of idle waiting into a time of active preparation in your congregation, in your community, and in yourself.

There are more than 90 scriptural references to welcoming the stranger and the Bible is also filled with stories of exile, migration and homecomings. How can the following faith stories help you and your congregation become part of that welcome tradition?

Isaiah 64:1-9\*

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:24-37

*\*New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is used throughout.*

## Hope: Finding Meaning in Inward & Outward Signs

*But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. Mark 13:32–33*

These words written by Mark about Jesus' return describe the promise of a future deliverance with an unknown timing. Mark admonishes the people to be alert, to stay awake. In other words, to live our lives in expectation that the reign of Christ will come. In these words, there is a sense of expectation and hope: *Don't give up*. Such words of encouragement are good advice about how to live while waiting for any type of deliverance.

Refugees know what it means to wait. For refugees waiting to be approved for resettlement to the US, the wait has been getting longer and longer. Even before the resettlement numbers were slashed to 15,000 individuals this year, refugees were typically waiting years for their approval to travel to America.

For refugees traveling across their region and around the world, there are periods of waiting all along their journey—at borders, at embassies, at airports. All for the chance to take another step toward a better future.

Refugees frequently wait to be reunited with their family members, having made difficult decisions about how to keep everyone safe. Knowing how treacherous the journey can be, some may go while others stay behind. Families may decide to separate and follow different routes out of their country. In addition, governments separate families—at their borders, through detention and deportation.

There are refugees waiting in immigration detention centers across the US for months, even years. Waiting due to court backlogs, arbitrary rules on detention or release, and to raise the necessary bond or find a sponsor. Waiting in anticipation, with hope beyond hope.

*From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. Mark 13:28*

In the middle of this passage about being alert, the image of a fig tree sprouting acts as an outward sign of the inward hope. *How do we make this time of waiting and preparation visible? What are the outward signs of your congregation's internal conversations? What steps can your congregation take to express your hope about welcoming refugees to the United States?*

---

### Engagement Tools

#### GROUP

One way to involve the congregation is to participate in conversations or interactive online surveys and polls, which you can create using platforms such as <https://www.mentimeter.com/>.

- 1) Suggested questions for polls, surveys, or open-ended questions:
  - a) Why is it important to prepare?
  - b) What does the congregation need to work on to fully prepare to receive a refugee or asylee family?
  - c) How might the congregation engage in the larger community during this time of waiting?
- 2) Suggested questions for the word cloud:
  - a) Why is it important for our faith to welcome the refugee(s)?
  - b) How does/might the ministry of welcome transform our congregation?

Expressing your congregation’s intentions is an important first step. Here are a few examples of possible actions:

- 1) A congregational interest session to explore the possibility of establishing a welcome team to accompany a refugee or asylum seeker.
- 2) A letter from the Session to the congregation stating a commitment to welcome.
- 3) Letters to your elected officials (mayor, county, state or federal) expressing your congregation’s commitment to welcome and urging them to promote legislation or resolutions that welcome refugees and asylum seekers.
- 4) Letters to refugees or refugee serving organizations of encouragement, to be allies and partners. It could include a pledge of support—financial, in-kind, education, or advocacy.

---

## Closing Prayer

God of mercy,

We can no longer pretend to be distant from the heartbreak afflicting your children  
stopped at the borders of countries too overwhelmed to welcome,  
awaiting a word of hope,  
huddled in camps and overcrowded shelters  
with nowhere to turn and no way to turn back.

We know the truth: all of these children are our sons and daughters; and their parents  
are our brothers and sisters, and we owe them a room in the inn, a place of safety, a chance to live and thrive.

We ask your forgiveness for our short attention spans and our limited imagination.

We pray that you will help us to do better.

We pray for those who are living in places of great risk still,  
for those trying to hold life together, always watching and waiting  
wondering, is it safe to remain? Shall I send my family away?

We pray for those of us in the West—in Europe, the United States and Canada  
whose time for generosity is upon us.

May we reach deeply, give generously, and welcome extravagantly.

May we lift our voices in a strong and unified advocacy so that governments will  
act now to save these precious lives.

Help us find courage, compassion and hope, for we need your grace. Amen.

(Adapted from Prayer for Syrian Refugees, September 2015)

## Additional Resources

- Throughout this resource we will refer to sections of the new Church World Service *Community Sponsorship Manual* (hereafter referred to as “CWS Manual”), which can be found in the Resettlement section of the PDA refugee page. Read the description of integration goals for resettled refugees on p.6–7.  
[https://pda.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/cws\\_community\\_sponsorship\\_manual\\_sept\\_2020.pdf](https://pda.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/cws_community_sponsorship_manual_sept_2020.pdf)
- PDA Blog <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/pda-blog/2020/10/08/we-pray-that-our-unity-will-one-day-be-restored/>
- We Choose Welcome postcards for refugee resettlement  
[https://oga.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/mid\\_council\\_ministries/immigration-postcard-refugees-ga223.pdf](https://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/mid_council_ministries/immigration-postcard-refugees-ga223.pdf)
- *We Choose Welcome Action Guide* and signs <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/we-choose-welcome/>

## Peace: Wholeness and Reconciliation

Shalom (Hebrew/Old Testament) and Eirene (Greek/New Testament) both appear in the Bible, but what do they mean? Both words mean something more than the absence of war or conflict, and both explain a sense of wholeness and completeness. As we approach the waiting of the Advent season—preparing for the birth of Christ and the good news that accompanies his life—we are invited to reconsider how we are called to exist in the world. It is a time to ponder our own brokenness, because the invitation to shalom (Hebrew) or salaam (Arabic) that comes through Christ's death is the reconciling love that recreates a peace-filled relationship with God and each other.

Before going further, to better understand what this sense of wholeness means, BibleProject's *Shalom—Peace* video uses simple language and situations to turn this “rich, biblical concept of peace” into something easily related to everyday life: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLYORLZOaZE&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLYORLZOaZE&feature=emb_logo)

### Pondering our personal brokenness

*Comfort, O Comfort my people; says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid.* Isaiah 40:1–2b

*God will feed the flock like a shepherd; God will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in her bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.* Isaiah 40:11

*He [John the Baptist] proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’* Mark 1:7–8

In Isaiah, the prophet is speaking to an exiled people who had been pushed out of their land and who now lived under another king's control. The prophet announces that God is calling others to comfort Jerusalem, this people living in a foreign land. The prophet reassures them that God will take care of them again and that they have not been forsaken and forgotten.

In Mark, John the Baptist announces the coming of someone more powerful than himself: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus will not only cleanse believers with water, he will offer them something invaluable. Jesus will be the one who finally reconciles God's people with God by paying the ultimate price so that our sins are forgiven. God's love and grace abound because of Jesus' death. It is the gift that helps us heal our brokenness and allows us to seek peace.

But we know being in a relationship takes work. It is not only about waiting for one party to do all of the heavy lifting. For us to fully embrace God's grace, we need to be willing to open ourselves up to our own brokenness.

### Our collective brokenness

Racism is an example of our brokenness that is also a barrier to welcome. The United States has a long and complicated history with race. Despite our best efforts to overcome our destructive tendencies, our institutions, structures, and systems are bound up in the injustice and disparity, the violence and exclusion that are framed by a racist culture. Many of our immigration laws are based on racial exclusion. Refugees from Africa and other people of color are often unprepared for the racism and xenophobia that they must confront after arrival. As people of faith, we understand that breaking down these structures is the work of daily intention and communal commitment. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”. In other words, shalom is a communal matter. Our wholeness is only possible when we address the injustices that

keep us from being whole as a community. This is part of our work both as peacemakers and in building a welcoming community.

Opening a discussion about racism can be challenging and requires ongoing contemplation. To help you enter into a dialogue with your congregation, *The Companion Guide to the Commitment for Peacemaking* (hereafter referred to as *The Companion Guide*) includes a section on racism (p. 29–35) curated by Rev. Denise Andersen, Coordinator of Racial and Intercultural Justice, which can be used to help the congregation work through issues of race and racism as you prepare to welcome refugees.

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/companion-guide-to-the-commitment-to-peacemaking/>

We also offer some suggestions for discussion in the group engagement tools provided below.

---

## Engagement Tools

### PERSONAL

Reflection and journaling questions

- 1) Where did I feel God working in my life this week?
  - a. Was I aware of God's hand working?
  - b. How should I extend my gratitude to God?
- 2) Where did I feel alone in my life this week?
  - a. Did I invite God into that loneliness?
  - b. What did I do to overcome loneliness?
  - c. How did I reconnect with others?
- 3) Where did I witness human brokenness this week?
  - a. Why is the label brokenness applicable?
  - b. How would I seek repair and wholeness in that situation?
- 4) Where did I witness human wholeness and/or completeness?
  - a. Why would I say it was wholeness?
  - b. Did I recognize it initially and celebrate its beauty?
  - c. How could I extend gratitude to God for the moment?

### GROUP

Reflection questions

- 1) What does it mean for a congregation to receive individuals from other parts of the world where racism does not exist in the same way? What is our responsibility to understand our own tie to racism to aid in how we welcome others?
- 2) How does our commitment to working on injustices caused by racism in the United States better prepare us to be partners in God's peaceable kingdom? How does this work help us repair our own brokenness?
- 3) How does a refugee's combination of human resiliency and agency help us witness God's shalom?
- 4) How does the ministry of welcome reflect God's shalom/salaam in our church and in our hearts?
- 5) How do we continue to be part of God's shalom in the larger community or in our nation as we extend welcome? How does this work bear witness to God's grace and goodness?
- 6) How does our search for peace, wholeness and completeness help us be better prepared to face the world's brokenness? And how does this preparation to recognize brokenness and wholeness help us in our ministry of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers?

## Activities

- 1) Dr. Gregory Cuéller, who serves as Associate Professor of Old Testament at Austin Theological Seminary, shares his reflection on migration and the Bible during Advent.  
<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2018/12/20/austin-seminary-professor-offers-reflection-advent/?fbclid=IwAR0t4Z-WQkW75pHruaofz6uQ5YiRVkTYMX2JgrltWjx2LreZkMmEkjkGbTY>
    - a) After watching the video, discuss how the migrant’s journey becomes an example of seeking peace and wholeness.
  - 2) Watch the film *To Breathe Free* by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance about refugee resettlement.  
<https://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resource/to-breathe-free/>.
    - a) After watching the video, discuss how the refugee family’s resilience and re-establishing of “home” builds greater understanding for the whole community.
  - 3) Celebrate Service for Justice and Peace or use prayers from that service found in the *Book of Common Worship* 2018, p. 599–601.
- 

## Closing Prayer

Beloved people of God—

whatever is true, whatever is honorable,

whatever is just, whatever is pure,

whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable,

anything that is excellent and worthy of praise—

keep on doing these things,

and the God of peace will be with you. Alleluia!

(From the *Book of Common Worship* 2018, p. 601 (Blessing and Charge))

## Additional Resources

- Visit the Office of Immigration Issues’ advocacy page for more ideas about how to further engage.  
[www.pcusa.org/immigrationadvocacy](http://www.pcusa.org/immigrationadvocacy)
- PDA congregational resources? <https://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resources/list/?page=2&category=refugee-ministry>

## Joy: Celebration and Community

*When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. Psalm 126:1-3*

Accompanying refugees is serious business. Or is it? Amidst all the urgency of meeting survival needs and the work of organizing volunteers, don't forget that finding joy and making time for fun and laughter are important to moving from merely surviving to fully living.

The Psalms and the Prophets of the Hebrew Scripture have an amazing ability to cover the entire range of emotions and the complexity of living into God's vision for wholeness. In this section, we invite you to consider three aspects of joy: as an instrument of personal healing; as an element of cross-cultural learning; and as a way to build bonds and social ties with the community.

### Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

This passage begins with a text often heard through the lips of Jesus, as he stands in the temple reading this scripture as his own call to ministry:

*The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God.*

From this proclamation, Isaiah goes on to talk about comforting those who mourn:

*...to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.*

Can you see the strength in the image of "oaks of righteousness?" The ability to laugh in the midst of difficulties and grief is part of human resilience. A welcoming congregation might be surprised at the amount of laughter and play that refugees express. However, as refugees find stability in their new home, it is common for them to go through a new phase of mourning for the suffering they have endured. While formal programs for survivors of torture and professional counseling may be appropriate—even necessary—there are many ways to support healing through activities that bring joy and fulfillment. From impromptu moments of fun to planned activities to play together, moments of joy can bring healing. Listening to music, playing the guitar or drums, playing soccer or other sports activities, and even playing silly games and telling jokes are all examples of activities that promote recovery.

Many refugee children have missed out on important phases of their childhood. In their flight and displacement, they are often forced to take on adult responsibilities too soon. They may have gone years without formal education, organized sports, music or other recreation and enrichment activities. For them, organized play can be important to physical and emotional development.

For the church community, social activities with refugees also expand the ways in which members and neighbors can become involved. And it is a fun and relaxed way to learn about each other's culture. *Are there special community or church celebrations during the year? What are the important celebrations in the refugee's culture and religion? And what milestones can you celebrate together: length of time in the US; finding a new job; finishing the school year; or earning a certificate or diploma?*



Another measure of refugees' well-being is their sense of belonging. Studies have shown that a feeling of belonging is related to their connections with others in the community. One of the most important and often understated benefits of involving community volunteers in refugee resettlement is their ability to help refugees form new social ties and networks. These voluntary relationships create "bridges and linkages between refugees and their new communities that become lasting social bonds, support systems and friendships" (*CWS Manual*, p. 7). For the newcomer(s), there may be a very high degree of reliance on the welcome team (as well as case managers, attorneys or other professionals to help them meet a wide variety of immediate needs). Careful thought should be given to how the team structures its work and responds to requests for help that keep the individual refugee/asylum seeker at the center and as the agent of all decisions and actions.

---

## Engagement Tools

### PERSONAL

#### Reflection questions

- 1) What do you do when you are feeling sad or overwhelmed that helps bring you comfort or happiness?
- 2) If you have gone through a period of grief or loss in your own life, what type of support was helpful from others? What wasn't helpful?
- 3) Reflect on a time when you felt successful in accomplishing a personal goal. Take some time to reflect on who was part of helping you get there. List or diagram all the individuals and groups who contributed to your personal achievement.
- 4) Was there a time in your work or personal life where you felt overwhelmed? Where did you find encouragement? What resources (personal, church or community) were helpful to you during that time?

### GROUP

#### Discussion

- 5) What are your insights from these personal reflections? What insights can you share with each other about what are important aspects of accompaniment? Did your reflections uncover any surprising expectations or blind spots?
- 6) Who in your congregation and community could be part of providing individual support?
- 7) Who in your congregation or community would be good at organizing group events and outings?
- 8) How can you incorporate these ideas of social activities and social support into the setting of expectations and boundaries for the role of your welcome team or congregation over the longer term?
- 9) How does the role of the welcome team evolve as refugees regain their sense of self-reliance and move from survival to thriving? *Please see the supporting visual in Additional Resources on the next page.*

#### Activities

Refugees are not the only ones who experience stress during their integration. Welcome teams face their own stress that needs to be addressed proactively. There may be unstated fears about stepping into this type of commitment, worries about the lack of knowledge and direct experience. In the current US environment, there may be fear of rejection and negative reactions from friends and members of the congregation.

Watch the PDA video *Cost of Caring: Compassion Fatigue* <https://vimeo.com/107596602>

After watching the video, discuss what measures and training you can put in place for your Welcome Team to address stress, fatigue, and potential secondary traumatic stress.

---

## Closing Prayer

O God, our Creator, we give you thanks for the unique and diverse gifts you have endowed upon humanity—the many languages, cultures, customs, and ways to glorify You. We give thanks for the sharing of these gifts from those who are new to our churches and communities. We give thanks for the intertwining of our lives, as it is through the sharing of each other’s struggles and the deep desires of our hearts that we might discover what You have declared good and precious.

O God, our Sustainer, we ask that you guide and comfort those who come to our lands due to circumstances beyond their control, forcing them to leave their countries in search of safety and freedom. And may that same Sustaining Spirit lift up all those who offer friendship, accompaniment, and speak out in solidarity for the rights and dignity of all You call blessed. Amen.

(From the *Prayer for Gifts of Immigrants Sunday* <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/a-prayer-celebrating-the-gifts-of-new-immigrants/>)

## Additional Resources:

- *CWS Community Sponsorship Manual*, p. 12–13, Social Activities
- *Ibid*, p. 16, Teaching vs. Doing
- PDA provides workshops and retreats for volunteers and professionals on a wide range of emotional and spiritual care topics and practices. Consider joining or organizing a webinar led by PDA: <https://pda.pcusa.org/page/esc-webinar/>



FAMILY • WELLNESS • CAREER/EDUCATION • FINANCIAL STABILITY • BELONGING • STABILITY

## Love: No Longer Strangers, But Members of God's Household

### What is biblical love?

*Agape* (Greek): to love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

God's love is so pure and boundless that through Jesus Christ God became human to better understand our suffering and pain. Jesus then gave the ultimate gift of reconciliation by dying for our brokenness. His resurrection provides us with unimaginable grace and love. Our own endeavors to love our neighbor is an extension of God's grace and love.

Loving oneself is not always easy, so how do we prepare ourselves to love our neighbor? What does it mean to love well?

### Luke 1:26-38

According to Madeline Hart-Andersen's *Advent and Christmastide Lectionary Resources*, the Gospel of Luke was probably written toward the end of the first century, drawing on Mark and other sources. Luke is often viewed as a gospel which presents Jesus as a savior for all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, poverty, gender, ability, or any other marker which makes people "other." This particular passage is the story of Gabriel's visit to Mary, a young Jewish woman living in Nazareth. Gabriel's announcement parallels other stories of miraculous births, including Ishmael, Isaac, and John the Baptist.

God chooses to break into our world as the Word-made-flesh, born of this particular young woman, in this particular time and place. Mary is an unlikely candidate for the mother of the one who will "reign over the house of Jacob forever," of whose "kingdom there will be no end." She is a young, unmarried woman who is living under an occupying force. Yet, God selects her. Even in her fear and trepidation, Mary accepts the invitation. God expresses *agape* love for her even when society does not. Throughout her life she expresses *agape* love for Jesus—even in moments of great pain and suffering, when love is unexpected. *How do we extend agape love to our neighbors when we know the ones we accompany suffer because of structural or systemic injustice? What if our own systems create the injustice? How does agape love push us into the sphere of active ally or advocate?*

*I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.* Psalm 89:1

The Psalmist reminds us that the love we extend to our neighbors comes from God who has loved us for generations. In love, God sent Jesus Christ into the world to be our companion and our savior, to teach us the way of love. In love, God called to a young boy named David and a young woman named Mary, not because they were perfect but because they were faithful.

To love well is a journey. As your congregation embarks on this journey of welcome and love, there will be stumbling along the way. As people of faith, however, God has given you all that need. Like the refugees who have put their faith in God and in you, may you believe the Angel Gabriel's words to Mary that "nothing will be impossible with God." And may the love that is in Christ Jesus be the cornerstone of all you plan and all you do.

---

## Engagement Tools

### PERSONAL

#### Reflection questions

- 1) As we prepare for the coming of the Christ-child, who might we imagine as his mother today?
- 2) What are the characteristics of a loving parent-child relationship?
- 3) What do those characteristics teach us about *agape* love?
- 4) How might those characteristics inform us about how to love our neighbor?

#### Understanding *agape* through art



Artist: Chukwunoso Ofili, a Nigerian-American artist in Texas. Learn more at <https://www.ofiliated.com/about>

Families Belong Together is a coalition of immigrant rights organizations that formed as a response to the Family Separation policy in 2018. They sponsored a mural project (above) with works from 3 different artists. The introductory video to the artists helps us understand how to find love and beauty in immigrant stories. View the video at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owRTel8fEMU&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owRTel8fEMU&feature=emb_logo)

### GROUP

#### Discussion questions:

- 1) What images or words did you identify as an expression of *agape*?
- 2) Why is a diverse representation of experiences important to understand the richness of God's family and how to love each other in that family?
- 3) How might you prepare to receive refugees in a manner that extends *agape* love?
- 4) How are a refugee's own agency and resilience illustrations of God's *agape* love? What do they teach us about how God works through each of us to illuminate *agape* love?

Consider these quotes as you discuss how your church can show its love in word and action:

- 1) Frederick Douglass said, "I received no answer until I prayed with my legs." Prayer is our discipline of invitation and confession. Praying with our legs helps us become part of God's answer and God's love.
- 2) Cornel West said, "Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public."
- 3) From the Belhar Confession

[https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/theologyandworship/pdfs/belhar.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/theologyandworship/pdfs/belhar.pdf)

**"We believe...** that [the] unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another..."

“We believe... that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream...”

Active responses that witness to *agape* love:

- Use *The Companion Guide to Peacemaking* to address issues of injustice in the community. The session on immigration and migration (pp. 44–50) offers numerous ways to engage advocacy efforts for immigrant and refugee rights. <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/companion-guide-to-the-commitment-to-peacemaking/>
- Organize with other faith groups in your community to host a vigil to highlight the struggle and resilience of refugees. Invite local and state elected officials to participate.
- Host a Jericho Walk around the Federal building that handles immigration cases or other landmark building. A Jericho Walk is a time of walking physically in prayer.
- Invite members of the congregation to write letters to Congressional leaders expressing how they are anticipating the welcome of refugees in their community. Be sure to highlight how members of the congregation imagine transforming the community by being open to receive newcomers. Urge Congressional leaders to support refugee resettlement.

---

## Closing Prayer (or daily prayer):

Might and merciful God,  
lover of justice and equity,  
you call us to support the weak,  
to help those who suffer,  
and to honor all people.

By the power of your Holy Spirit,  
make us advocates of your justice  
and instruments of your peace,  
so that all may be reconciled  
in your beloved community.  
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

(Source: *Book of Common Worship, 2018*, pp. 599–600)

## Additional Resources

- *CWS Community Sponsorship Manual*, p. 6–7, Integration Framework
- *Ibid CWS Manual*, p. 22, Speaking Out
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services offers a helpful guide to holding a vigil including a sample outline of the event. <https://www.lirs.org/assets/2474/fact-sheet-prayer-vigil.pdf>

## General Resources

- Scriptural context: Luke 1:26–38 (*Advent and Christmastide Lectionary Resources*, from the Office of Immigration Issues, PCUSA by Madeline Hart-Andersen, p. 6).  
[https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/advent\\_and\\_christmastide\\_lectionary\\_resources.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/advent_and_christmastide_lectionary_resources.pdf)
- PDA Advent Study <https://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resource/advent-series-annunciations/>
- Hymn “God of the Traveler” (can be sung to “Morning has Broken”)  
[https://pda.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/god\\_of\\_the\\_traveler\\_hymn\\_text\\_only.pdf](https://pda.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/god_of_the_traveler_hymn_text_only.pdf)
- Las Posadas worship service from the *Book of Common Worship 2018* on p. 180–183.
- <https://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resources/list/?situation=refugee-ministry>
- <https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/horizons-magazine/horizons-novemberdecember-2017/>

## Scripture References

### First Sunday in Advent

- Isaiah 64:1–9
- Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19
- 1 Corinthians 1:3–9
- Mark 13:24–37

### Second Sunday in Advent

- Isaiah 40:1–11
- Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13
- 2 Peter 3:8–15a
- Mark 1:1–8

### Third Sunday in Advent

- Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11
- Psalm 126
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24
- John 1:6–8, 19–28

### Fourth Sunday in Advent

- 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16
- Luke 1:46b–55
- Psalm 89:1–4, 19–26
- Romans 16:25–27
- Luke 1:26–38