

World Refugee Day Prayer 2020

By Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus, Director, PDA

God of mercy

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

We can no longer pretend that the backpack in the desert, the small tennis shoe washed up on the beach,
the small hands wrapped around the bars that cage them in,
could not belong to one of our own.

We know the truth: all of these children are our children; and their parents are our siblings.
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 whose lives are on the move still,
For those trying to hold life together, always watching and waiting
for the ominous movement of troops on the road into town
the rising of the wind or the water
for the whistle of incoming shells, or a passing train
for a cry from a desperate neighbor or a shout of warning
wondering, *is it safe to remain? Shall I send my family away?*

We pray for generous neighbors throughout the world
who have already welcomed so many,
whose resources are strained under the burden of hospitality
but who are still willing to do more.

We pray for those of us in the West, in Europe, the United States and Canada
who know it is long past time to act in compassion and justice, to do more.

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

May we lift our voices in a strong and unified advocacy so that the right to migrate is a human
right, and the necessity to migrate is diminished, everywhere.

Jesus, who said, *let the children come to me,*

receive our sorrow and the gift of our broken spirits,

for we have so much yet to do to welcome even a few of *the least of these*

to save your weary and wandering children, to strengthen and support their communities

to call the world to accountability, to generosity, and to welcome.

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

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By Susan Krehbiel, Associate for Refugees and Asylum, PDA

O God who moved over the darkness to create the heavens and the earth, we give you thanks for the gift of movement. We thank you for sending Jesus to call us out from the everyday and ordinary into extraordinary journeys of faith.

We give you thanks for all who step out in faith and by their faith are compelled to speak out for justice, to work for peace and reconciliation and by faith set out on journeys not of their own choosing.

We pray for the tens of thousands who are forced to leave their countries every day due to civil wars and other armed conflict, tyranny and human rights abuses, famine and poverty. We remember the 4.5 million Venezuelans dispersed throughout the Americas and almost 7 million Syrian refugees.

We give you thanks for those who extend hospitality to such travelers—strangers, people from places and experiences that are different from their own. Like Abraham and Sarah, may these encounters be a blessing, offering holy moments. For the people of Turkey who host almost 4 million refugees, and Pakistan host to 1.5 million refugees. For the transitional shelters, border and bus station ministries that provide food, clothing, shelter, medicines, a place to shower and rest. The staff and volunteers who offer a place of welcome, respite and encouragement.

For the people who accompany refugees and asylum seekers—offering housing, financial support, transportation, legal and mental health services, guidance and love. For their willingness to open themselves up even as they open their homes and hearts to others. For the congregations, the non-profits and community organizations that support them.

This year we pray for all the additional challenges that refugees and displaced persons face due to the Coronavirus. Those who find themselves stuck in expected places because borders have been closed or flights have been cancelled, without the resources or connections, or even permission to stay there. And we ask that the loving arms of your son Jesus, be a comfort to all those who are trying to find their way. We pray for refugees and asylum seekers in the U.S. who are caught in limbo due to closed immigration courts and offices or held indefinitely in immigration detention centers. For the stress of wondering if or when they will be given permission to make the U.S. their home.

We pray for so many who have lost their jobs, who struggle to feed their families and pay their bills. For our siblings from Asia who face rejection, harassment and abuse because they are wrongly associated with the virus' origin.

O God of the Exodus and of the Promised Land, God of the wandering Aramaean that we claim as Jesus the Christ, we ask that your Holy Spirit continue to guide us, wherever our journeys may lead. And through all the twists and turns, may our paths always lead us closer to you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Lament for South Sudan

By Matthew Alal Jok, student at Nile Theological College, Juba

Lord of lords and King of kings, since I was born I did not experience your goodness in your presence because I always see and hear the bad luck in my side; I wonder when my people were subjected, and the affliction hovering upon us, experiences then the same as now.

The Sun became my enemy because it couldn't find me in the right place; the moon

stopped shining at night because our sins covered all space between heaven and earth. The greater assembly which our elders gathered under, is there no more. Your house became a house where strangers assembled and discussed their own motives, instead of giving rights to owners, but to put fire on them, Lord where are you?

I have been despised by my enemy when I was supposed to do your will, they mocked me and said, *"God is not the God of cowardly people like you."* In Your Presence there is no cowardice tribe, because both of them, righteous and sinners are yours, and you are only known as one Father without segregation. My good history is not there today. Oh Lord, keep my temper in your side. Our children grow up in their neighboring countries, and they are not experiencing the goodness of Your Presence in their blessed land. Assimilation has become rooted in their minds because they no longer express the goodness of their history, they became as [foreigners].

Raping and mass killing have become our daily food, our enemy never fears to kill our elders, they always say, *"Let us kill the elders and abduct their small children so that they could be ours."* Oh Lord, where are you? Are You under this planet? If your kingdom is where we can find our rest, and if your blood means freedom to our lives, when did you come to rescue us in the hands of our enemy? I had hoped your mighty army is with us, but no help. I gave up and said, *"If there was any God who will be on our side we wouldn't suffer in the hands of people like this!"*

Oh! God forgive us, forgive us, only you can do that.

** Some of the language has been slightly adjusted for better readability.*