

Journey with Me:

Refugee Stories that Change Lives



Figure 1 Flickr user Kris Krug

-A refugee justice workshop-

Throughout this manual, you'll see examples of the many ways that refugees travel. While you look at these pictures, try to put yourself in their shoes.

Leviticus 19:33-34

³³ *“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. ³⁴ The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”*

New International Version

Endorsement

Our community of churches in Canada has an honourable history of welcoming and helping refugee families settle here. Today, with the displacements caused by war, poverty, and environmental damage, refugee populations are higher than any time since World War II. The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Race Relations believe that the deepening refugee crisis; policy changes that create new hardships for refugees in Canada; and our heritage of Biblical hospitality as a community, create both a responsibility and opportunity for Canadians. Acting together with our refugee neighbours, we can seek justice, speak hope, and build a context of welcome in our communities. This is important because our refugee neighbours are so much more than refugees.

We are excited, prayerful and hopeful that this workshop will help build communities of faithful and faith-filled people to act for justice for and with refugees.

-Darren Roorda

Canadian Ministries Director, Christian Reformed Church in North America

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http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/Welcoming_Uprooted.pdf

Prayer (Task 7) is from *Study: Making Room Good Samaritan*. Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, Philippines, 1995 (abridged version).

Scripture Passages is from *Church between Borders: A guide to welcoming the stranger* by the Office of Social Justice and Office of Race Relations of the Christian Reformed Church.

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Some Helpful Terms

A refugee is a person forced outside of his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. (*United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*)

A refugee claimant is a person outside of his or her country of nationality who has made a claim to be a refugee, and is waiting for the claim to be investigated. Refugee claimants have the right, under Canadian and international law, to remain in the country until the claim has been reviewed by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada and either accepted or rejected. Sometimes the term “asylum seeker” is also used.

A privately sponsored refugee is a refugee who has been resettled to Canada under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP). Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) organizations provide support to Canadian citizens, who provide the financial and settlement assistance typically for one year after arrival for refugees they sponsor.

A Government Assisted Refugee is a refugee who the Government of Canada supports in their initial resettlement in Canada.

An “Irregular” Refugee is a refugee who crosses a border by foot, smuggling, or other means in order to make claims for refugee status at inland offices. Whether a person arrives at an official Port of Entry or comes across at an irregular location, they have the right to identify as a refugee and receive all corresponding protections while their claim is evaluated. While Canada does not authorize people to cross the border at irregular locations, when a person does so as a refugee claimant, it is not a crime, there are no charges laid against them, and their claim is not any less valid. (You can find further information about irregular arrivals at crcna.org/CanadaRefugeeFacts.)

An immigrant is a person who chooses to leave one country to settle in another. To immigrate to Canada, people must apply and be selected while living outside of Canada.

An internally displaced person (IDP) is a person who has fled war, famine, or persecution, but has not left his or her country of origin. Many IDPs have fled for similar reasons as refugees, but they remain inside the boundary of their country and are under the care of their government. Most IDPs hope they can return home soon. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has a limited mandate to care for IDPs.

A migrant is a person who moves to another country without being granted the rights of permanent residence. Migrants often leave their homes due to extreme poverty, environmental catastrophes, and forced displacement due to projects such as dams, mines or the introduction of foreign markets. In Canada, most migrants come under temporary worker programs such as seasonal agricultural or live-in caregiver programs, which afford few rights or protection from abuse. Undocumented migrants are another growing reality in Canada. They are economic “refugees/migrants” who tend to live under the radar.

A migrant worker is a person who has left his or her homeland and has moved, sometimes seasonally, in order to find work.

A permanent¹ resident is a person who has been granted permanent resident status after having come to Canada as an immigrant or as a refugee. This term has replaced the term “landed immigrant”.

An application for permanent residence on Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds (H&C) is an application that may be available to someone who is seeking permanent residence on the following grounds: the best interest of the child, establishment in Canada or hardship (different than risk) in their country of origin. In the past “H&C” has been a viable option for refugee claimants who have received negative decisions; however it is becoming less accessible due to significant restrictions that were put in place in 2012.

¹ Although based on changing legislation, “permanent” may not be so permanent any more.

Welcome and prayer

Task #1 Overview of Our Time Together

As an overview of our time together today, we will begin by looking at the objectives of this workshop.

By the end of our time together, we will have completed the following tasks:

- Shared our connections with refugees and refugee issues
- Examined a list of Bible verses and discussed what we believe God is telling us about refugees and how we are called to respond
- Role-played a real situation for a refugee here in Canada and expressed what it feels like (for this brief time) to be a person in these shoes
- Charted and discussed the ripple effect of positive and negative treatment of refugees in Canada
- Read and discussed two statements from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) on the topic of refugees
- Listened to a presentation on the CRC's involvement in refugee justice work and the resources available through this work
- Developed an action plan for your church or group, and shared it with the large group
- Prayed for our walk with our refugee brothers and sisters in Canada, and around the world.

What questions do you have before we start?



*Churches offer a vision of a
place where all are at home.
-CRC member*

Figure 2 Flickr user Agustin Ruiz

Task #2 Why Does This Matter

Let's start by meeting each other and sharing our connection to refugee justice. I'm going to start by reading a list of statements. If the statement applies to you, please stand up, say your name, and explain why you are standing. Sit back down if the new statement does not apply to you. After each statement, we will hear from a few of you.

STAND UP IF you have been involved with sponsoring a refugee in Canada...

STAND UP IF you have done volunteer or paid work with/for refugees...

STAND UP IF you know someone who has been or is a refugee...

STAND UP IF you are from the Global South²...

STAND UP IF you have worked in or done extensive travel to a country in the Global South...

STAND UP IF you have read or heard news coverage today relating to refugee issues...

STAND UP IF your church or a group you belong to donates money to an organization working with refugees or refugee issues...

The experiences of refugees in Canada and the various responses of welcome/exclusion within Canada have, in some way, impacted each one of us.



Figure 3 Flickr user Michael Chu

Many meetings, raising awareness and fundraising events... and the paperwork... oh yes, the paperwork. But that moment when the kids run down the hallway to greet you as an Uncle or Aunt, or one of the parents deliberately pull your leg, you know it has all been worthwhile.

-CRC member

² Here we have used the term “Global South”. In the past the term “developing country” was usually used. However today this can feel offensive to those from this area, as this concept assumes others are not properly developing. Saying from the Global South is better and it challenges dominant and oppressive concept of development. Some people also like to use the term “Two-Thirds World”.

Task #3 What the Bible Says about Refugees

Take a few minutes to read the Bible texts below. Then with the people at your table, discuss what God is telling us about refugees and how we are called to respond.

Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt... (Exodus 22:21)

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the stranger. The aliens who reside with you shall be to you as the citizens among you, and you shall love them as yourselves, for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

...You and the foreigner shall be the same before the Lord... (Numbers 15:15)

[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you... (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)

Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner... (Deuteronomy 27:19)

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker... (Proverbs 14:31)

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves... (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God... (1 John 4:7-21)

Gentiles are no longer strangers, Jesus has made strangers and Israelites part of one Body. (Ephesians 2: 11-21)

Heroes of the faith were strangers on earth. (Hebrews 11:13)

I was a stranger and you invited me in. (Matthew 25: 31-46)

Show hospitality to strangers because you might be entertaining angels. (Hebrews 13:2)

Let's hear some of your thoughts and I will write them down at the front of the room.

No matter what the risk of welcoming refugees might be, we seek to follow the call of the church, to live and love as Jesus did, extending hospitality to those who need it most.

-CRC member

Task #4 Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

4A We are going to spend the next 15 minutes “stepping in someone else’s shoes”. We are going to take time to get *a small taste* of what it feels like to be a refugee in Canada. This is not only an exercise in which we are going to learn something with our *minds*—we are also going to experience it with our *hearts*. I invite you to make space for this role-play and prepare yourself for this experience. *These are real people in real situations in Canada. The Christian Reformed Church has, in some way, helped each one of these people.*

Everyone should be equally divided into groups of 4-5 people. Each table is made up of refugees from around the world. Each of you has a unique situation, and some of you share common experiences in Canada or in your journey to get here.

On your own, take a few minutes to read your profile sheet. You will need to stay “in character” for 15 minutes to begin to feel how your character may feel. Take a few minutes now to understand who this person is (as best as you can) before starting. Step into their shoes...

NOTE: *It may feel strange or even uncomfortable to behave like someone you are not. We ask that you give it a try and do the best you can. The more “in character” you are, the more empathy you will build for the person, and the more meaningful the role-play will be for everyone at your table.*

At your table, take 15 minutes to discuss these questions and whatever else comes up for you:

- *How do you feel about being a refugee in Canada?*
- *What is the (policy) issue you faced/have been facing?*
- *What has been happening in your life as a result?*
- *What are your worries and concerns?*

*I can't put it into words.
We've been given our lives back.
-A Sponsored Refugee*

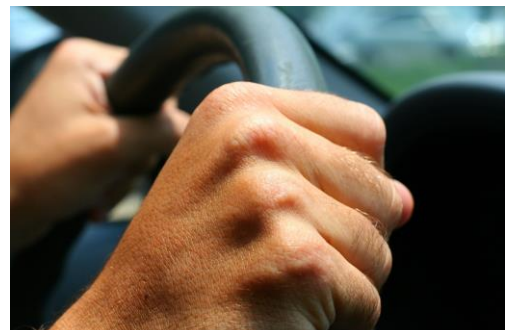


Figure 4 Flickr user Nate Steiner

You are now out of your role as a refugee.

4B Let's hear some of the feelings that surfaced as you were doing the roleplay. I'll write them on a flip chart so we can see the range of emotions in this room.

- *What comes to mind when you see these emotions?*
- *What questions arise for you?*

4C At your table, take 10 minutes to discuss this question:

- *What possible ripple effect do you foresee as these refugees continue to live out their lives in Canada? In other words, what are all the possible consequences on a marriage, on the children's education, on the families, on the communities, etc.?*

Map out your thoughts on the flip chart paper (one positive column and one negative column) on your table. Feel free to use words, pictures, or any other communication tool.

- *What do you notice from what was written or drawn?*
- *What surprises or worries you?*
- *What questions or comments do you have?*



Figure 5 Flickr user Kris Krug

Many migrants have come here to get a better standard of living. We have come here because our lives are in danger.

-A Refugee

Task #5 The Christian Reformed Church

5A The CRC has a long history of welcoming, supporting, and becoming neighbours to refugees. In 1979, World Renew, then the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, was one of the first organizations to participate in Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. World Renew also actively supports refugees seeking asylum in many countries around the world through aid and relief efforts.

Let's take a few minutes to read some excerpts from three CRC documents about refugees: 1. *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, 2. *Synod 2010 – Committee to Study the Migration of Workers* and 3. Excerpt from "Statement on the Treatment of Refugees from CRC leaders" (2017) (see **APPENDIX pp 18-20**).

Underline what you especially like in these words and circle the parts which echoes what we read earlier in the Bible.

Is there anything you feel is missing from these documents?

Let's hear a sample of what you highlighted.

5B Turn to the person beside you and take 5 minutes to discuss the following:

- *What refugee work has your church or individuals in your church been involved in over the years?*
- *What results have you seen from this work?*
- *Has this work increased or decreased? What are the reasons for this?*



Figure 6 Flickr user epSos.de

There are a number of ways that God's people are called to respond to the injustices we see around us. When we look to God, and to God's vision for us, we find an invitation to remember, pray, and advocate.
-CRC member

Task #6 What Are You Going to Do

6A Read the list of *Ideas for Action* (**Appendix p. 22**). Use this list as a starting point to begin brainstorming what you as an individual and your church as a community can do to continue to engage with this topic and intentionally reach out to our refugee brothers and sisters in Christ. We need each other!

- *What else comes to mind that is not included in the list?*

6B Now with these ideas in mind and the list of resources in **APPENDIX p.23** complete the ACTION PLAN on the next page. Remember, these are things you are actually committing to do.

Be prepared to share a sample of your plans with the group.



The way people have shown up time and time again to help our families through moves, groceries, doctor's appointments, etc. It is amazing how God could see this picture before we even had the pieces in our hands and how beautifully it has all come together. God was there. God is there. God will continue to be there.

-CRC member

Figure 7 Flickr user Rafael Medina

My Action Plan

WHO	WHAT	WHEN

Closing Poem and Prayer

Reader #1

Don't call me a stranger;
I need to feel at home;
Especially when loneliness cools my
heart.

Reader #2

Don't call me a stranger;
The soil we step on is the same;
But mine is not "the promised land."

Reader #3

Don't call me a stranger;
The colour of my passport is different;
But the colour of our blood is the same.

Reader #4

Don't call me a stranger;
The language I speak sounds different;
But the feelings it expresses are the
same.

Reader #5

Don't call me a stranger;
I toil and struggle in your land;
And the sweat of our brows is the same.

Reader #6

Don't call me a stranger;
Borders, we created them;
And the separation that results is the
same.

Reader #7

Don't call me a stranger;
I am just your friend;
But you do not know me yet.

Reader #8

Don't call me a stranger;
We cry for justice and peace in different
ways;
But our God is the same.

O Lord, open our eyes that we may see the needs of refugees;
open our ears that we may hear people's cries for justice;
open our hearts that we may assist sojourners near and far.

Show us where love, hope and faith are needed.

Use us as ministers of your healing.

Let us not be afraid to protect the weak because of the anger of the strong,
or to defend the poor because of the power of the rich.

Sustain us so that in these coming days
we may be able to do some work of peace for you.

We ask these things in your blessed name. Amen.

Appendix

Statements from the Christian Reformed Church

Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony

God's New People

34. In our world,
where many journey alone,
nameless in the bustling crowd,
Satan and his evil forces
seek whom they may scatter and isolate;
but God, by his gracious choosing in Christ,
gathers a new community—
those who by God's gift
put their trust in Christ.
In the new community
all are welcome:
the homeless come home,
the broken find healing,
the sinner makes a new start;
the despised are esteemed,
the least are honored,
and the last are first.
Here the Spirit guides
and grace abounds.

The Mission of God's People

41. Joining the mission of God,
the church is sent
with the gospel of the kingdom
to call everyone to know and follow Christ
and to proclaim to all
the assurance that in the name of Jesus
there is forgiveness of sin
and new life for all who repent and
believe.
The Spirit calls all members
to embrace God's mission
in their neighborhoods
and in the world:
to feed the hungry,
bring water to the thirsty,
welcome the stranger,
clothe the naked,
care for the sick,
and free the prisoner.
We repent of leaving this work to a few,
for this mission is central to our being.

Synod 2010 – Committee to Study the Migration of Workers

“... the experience of being displaced—of being a migrant and a refugee—lies at the very heart of the biblical narrative.”

“God desired Israel to extend to the strangers among them every kindness and courtesy because in so doing, the Israelites would be mirroring their God who extended his grace, his lovingkindness, to the Israelites who were just as much an immigrant people in God’s eyes as anyone else on the earth.”

“... the gospels present the ministry of Jesus as being all-inclusive. But of particular interest to Jesus and to his kingdom were first and foremost precisely those people whom the religious establishment in his day excluded—in great contradistinction to everything God had taught in his law. The last, least, lost, and lonely fringe members of the world—the strangers in our midst—were the ones Jesus saw and loved first of all.”

“Churches are called to be hospitable to immigrants, but hospitality alone will not solve the myriad problems that plague the immigration systems in the United States and Canada.... Christians are right to advocate for immigration policies within a given nation that will be more just, fair, and generous and that will assist the nation in welcoming more strangers as citizens, not fewer.”

For me, the highlight has been a development of a solid friendship that crosses divides of culture, religion, and language. As our guests have gotten used to the different way we live our lives and see our world, we too have learned a little of the challenges they have overcome and how that shapes them and their world-view today. We have learned from one another and we are all richer and wiser from the experience.

-CRC member

Excerpt from “Statement on the Treatment of Refugees from CRC leaders” (2017)

“...The Old Testament repeatedly issues a call to welcome, love, defend, and not oppress the foreigner (e.g. Ex. 23:9, Deut. 10:19, Lev. 19:34, Zech. 7:10); the New Testament emphasizes the virtue of hospitality toward strangers (e.g. Matt. 25:35, Heb. 13:2). It is clear that our church has been called by Scripture and our own unique history to the work of welcoming refugees, and the need to welcome has never been felt more deeply than today.

The CRC has long been a church quick to welcome refugees. And in fact, many members of our churches came as refugees themselves. So many of our congregations, in both the United States and Canada, have experienced the blessing that comes with walking alongside a newly arrived family as they restart their lives in a new place. In some cases, those refugee friends have joined our churches, becoming members of the CRC family. We are better, stronger, more faithful, and nearer to the kingdom because of the way God has worked through those relationships.

Co-sponsoring refugees has become a fundamental part of who we are, and how we experience God.”

Ideas for Action

1. Buy a children's book about refugees for someone you know or your church library (see *Resources* for ideas).
2. Ask your minister to preach a sermon on the topic (see *Resources* for ideas).
3. Sponsor a refugee (call the *Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program* of World Renew).
4. Watch a film about refugees with your youth group and discuss it (see *Resources* for ideas).
5. Use a children's book about refugees in your children's worship time during a church service. (See the toolkit at www.crcna.org/JourneyWithMe)
6. Organize a fundraising event to raise funds for humanitarian aid and support (call International Disaster Response of World Renew for ideas).
7. Write a letter to a politician (call or visit the website of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue for ideas).
8. Book a workshop with a staff member of the Centre for Public Dialogue on how to do Biblical Advocacy.
9. Organize another workshop in your church (see *Resources* for ideas).
10. Choose a book about refugees for your next book club meeting (see *Resources* for ideas).
11. Focus an entire church service on refugees:
 - April 4 – Refugee Rights Day in Canada
 - Mid-April – Refugee Sunday in the CRC (This date changes annually and is typically on the Sunday following Refugee Rights Day in Canada.)
 - June 20 – World Refugee Day (Find resources at crcna.org/WorldRefugeeDay)

Resources

CRC Resources

The below resources are available at: www.crcna.org/JourneyWithMe

Articles

Bible verses

Children's books

Children's story during church service

Prayers

Recommended reading

Sermons

Skits

Sunday school activities

Videos

Other Workshops

Welcome the Stranger: Post 9-11

http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/Welcoming_Uprooted.pdf

A KAIROS workshop on refugees and migration.

Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World

<http://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/?wpdmdl=112>

A workshop for adults by the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

Welcoming Refugee Friends to Canada

http://presbyterian.ca/wp-content/uploads/cm_partners_welcoming_refugee_friends_to_canada_2009.pdf

A workshop for children and youth by the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

Websites on Refugees and Migration

Canadian Council for Refugees

www.ccrweb.ca

Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue

www.crcna.org/PublicDialogue

World Renew

www.worldrenew.net/refugees

Diaconal Ministries Canada

diaconalministries.com/living-justly/newcomers/

Amnesty International Canada

www.amnesty.ca/refugee/

Citizens for Public Justice

www.cpj.ca/private-sponsorship-and-public-policy

Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada

www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees.html

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org/>

KAIROS-Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

www.kairoscanada.org

Office of Social Justice for the Christian Reformed Church

www.justice.crcna.org/refugees

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

www.unhcr.ch

