

# World Refugee Day

## Worship Resources

### Call to worship

**LEADER:** We give praise to our God who gathers us as one people.

**PEOPLE:** We delight in our God who has mercy upon us.

**LEADER:** We seek to be one with refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants.

**PEOPLE:** Clear our eyes that we may see the sufferings of displaced people.

**LEADER:** We welcome those whose lives have been dislocated by war, famine and injustice.

**PEOPLE:** Open our ears that we may hear the cries of those deep in despair.

**LEADER:** We express our solidarity with all who search for a new life, a new home, a new promise.

**PEOPLE:** Guide our feet that we may spread comfort; loosen our tongues that we might speak words of hope.

**LEADER:** Give us open hearts that we may be truly welcoming to the stranger in our midst.

**ALL:** God remind us that through our acts of hospitality we are restored to you. *Amen.*



DRC, Fred Otieno/LWF

### Gathering prayer

Holy and merciful God, You have created us all in your image; we exist because of the radical welcome that You granted each one of us at birth; You have created us as refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants; You have called us to be your hands and feet in the world, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked and set the captives free; God, hear our prayer for peace, for justice, for community; hear our prayer for your will on earth to be as it is in heaven. God, be with us now, empower us, guide us, sustain us and glorify us in your name. *Amen.*

# Prayers of the people

God, we pray for your children, all over the world, displaced by human disaster. Lord, we hear the cries of the suffering; we see the violence in our midst.

We pray for our brothers and sisters in sub-Saharan Africa – Mali, Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea; we grieve the nearly 16 years of conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo – the unrest, the millions displaced; we mourn the murders, disappearances, mass rape and torture; we mourn the millions of refugees forced to live in overcrowded camps and urban slums with no opportunities for work or recreation.

***‘...we pray for all those displaced by violence and unrest...’***



We pray for your children in East Asia, the Near East, South Asia and Latin America; we pray for Burmese refugees forced to flee continued conflict, seeking essential services like healthcare and education. We pray for your children in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Iran, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Syria; we pray for all those displaced by violence and unrest, for those forced to leave their homes with no hope of return, for those without appropriate documentation or means of economic livelihood.

God, we pray for all your people and for your church; we pray that you might strengthen us and sustain us with your Spirit, your mercy and your grace; allow us to heed your call to welcome the stranger in our midst; open our minds that we learn from and be challenged by difference; open our hearts that we might act in compassionate service towards the other. *Amen.*

## Gospel scripture: Luke 7:36-8:3 (New Revised Standard Version)

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him – that she is a sinner." Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

"Teacher," he replied, "speak."

“A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt.” And Jesus said to him, “You have judged rightly.”

Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out; and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza; and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

## SERMON NOTES:

### ‘Radical Forgiveness, Radical Welcome’

One interpretation of this text picks up on the theme of radical welcome. This unnamed woman, in spite of her social status (what Luke refers to as “sinful”) practices deliberate, far-reaching hospitality. She goes out of her way to anoint Jesus with oil when she learns of his arrival; her tears take the place of water to wash his feet (it was customary to wash dust off the feet of guests who traveled a long way on dusty roads). Lacking a towel, she dries his feet with her hair; she then kisses and anoints his feet with oil. These are all things that his Pharisee host and Simon do not do.



U.S., Carol Fouke/CWS

Yet what is unique about this passage is not so much the exhibition of the unnamed woman’s hospitality, but rather the cause. The welcome displayed by the woman is the result of something unexpected – God’s radical forgiveness. Jesus explains to Simon that her demonstration of hospitality is the result of being forgiven: “Her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love.” (7:47) Jesus discerns the forgiveness that she has already experienced. He sees her as one who has been freed from a great deal of moral debt.

Yet, whereas the pardon has been granted by God prior to this encounter, the forgiveness only becomes fully realized during her interaction with Jesus. This radical welcome has a circular effect: because she is forgiven, she extends welcome, and her ability to welcome becomes her salvation.



In other words, by his own authority Jesus confirms forgiveness on the woman; this is the eschatological forgiveness of God resulting in human restoration with the divine will.

God's word in this Gospel text is that forgiveness is the source of our own ability to welcome others. Radical welcome, in this context, is based on having a relationship with God – one that empowers us to be vulnerable, take risks and welcome the other. In the process, we open ourselves up to being transformed, and like the unnamed woman, we are able to “show great love.” (7:47) According to this passage, salvation occurs at the intersection of forgiveness and hospitality, restoring the relationship between divine initiative and human response.

***‘Radical welcome... is based on having a relationship with God – one that empowers us to be vulnerable, take risks, and welcome the other.’***



Karen refugee children in Syracuse proudly show off their new backpacks. Christ Community United Methodist Church refugee resettlement mission makes backpacks and school supplies a priority for new arrivals. Photo: Christ Community United Methodist Church

## Response to the Word/Call to action

As people of God who have blessed with the gift of God's radical forgiveness, how can we practice radical welcome?

The promise of God's forgiveness has been shown through the incarnation of God's Word made known to us in Christ Jesus. Through God's unconditional forgiveness, we are empowered to bestow the gift of God's grace to our brothers and sisters who have been



Church co-sponsors in the U.S. welcome refugee family from Cuba.

displaced through persecution and violence. One way to practice this radical welcome is to join with our partners at Church World Service to welcome refugees who arrive to the United States and into our community. Through donating our time and resources in service to refugees, we can extend radical welcome. Through extending this welcome we are restored to the will of God.

To find out more about welcoming refugees in your community, please contact

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Or, for more information, visit [cwsglobal.org/refugeesaction](http://cwsglobal.org/refugeesaction).

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