



WE WERE FOREIGNERS

Worship Resources for Migration Justice

Suggested Worship Practices

1. Remembrance of the Dead – read the names of those who have been killed while in CBP custody, ringing a bell after each name.
2. Include poetry written by immigrants, such as these suggestions:
 - *Home* by Warsan Shire
 - *Refuge* by JJ Bola
 - *The Icebreaker* by Yovanka Perdigao
 - *Warchild* by Yomi Sode
3. Incorporate practices or languages from immigrant communities that are represented in your congregation. For example, if you have a family in your congregation who has migrated from South America, invite them to speak a prayer in Spanish.

Prayers and Litanies

Opening Sentences

Leader: Praise the LORD!

Congregation: Praise the LORD, O my soul!

L: I will praise the LORD as long as I live;

C: I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

L: Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob; whose hope is in the LORD their God,

C: God who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.

L: The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.

C: The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the orphan and the widow.

All: The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!

Adapted from Psalm 146

Leader: With what shall we come before the Holy One, and bow ourselves before God on high?

Congregation: Shall we come before God with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

L: God has showed you, O people, what is good; and what does the Holy One require of you?

C: To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

Taken from the Book of Worship, United Church of Christ, adapted from Micah 6

Prayers for Refugees and Migrants

Lord God, you cross every border
between divinity and humanity
to make your home with us.
Help us to recognize your face
in the refugee family,
seeking safety and protection;
in the migrant worker,
bringing food to our tables;
in the asylum-seeker,
seeking security and compassion;
in the unaccompanied child,
traveling in a dangerous world.
By the gift of your Holy Spirit,
encourage and empower us
to cross borders of our own –
showing kindness, seeking justice,
offering welcome, giving shelter.
This we pray in the name of the one
who fled as a child to Egypt,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Holy God, as you have accompanied your people
through times of captivity, wilderness, and exile,
shelter and sustain all those who flee persecution,
oppression, warfare, violence, hunger, and poverty.
Open our hearts and homes, our gates and doors,
so that they might find safety, peace, and welcome –
a place to live in freedom and without fear;
through Jesus Christ, the hope of the world. **Amen.**

Both taken from the Presbyterian Book of Common Worship, page 630-631

The Immigrant's Creed

By Rev. Jose Luis Casal

I believe in Almighty God,
who guided the people in exile and in Exodus,
the God of Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon,
the God of foreigners and immigrants.

I believe in Jesus Christ, a displaced Galilean,
who was born away from his people and his home,
who fled his country with his parents when his life was in danger.
When he returned to his own country
he suffered under the oppression of Pontius Pilate,
the servant of a foreign power.
Jesus was persecuted, beaten, tortured, and unjustly condemned to death.
But on the third day Jesus rose from the dead,
not as a scorned foreigner but to offer us citizenship in God's kingdom.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the eternal immigrant from God's kingdom among us,
who speaks all languages, lives in all countries, and reunites all races.

I believe that the Church is the secure home
for foreigners and for all believers.
I believe that the communion of saints begins
when we embrace all God's people in all their diversity.

I believe in forgiveness,
which makes us all equal before God,
and in reconciliation, which heals our brokenness.

I believe that in the Resurrection
God will unite us as one people in which all are distinct,
and all are alike at the same time.

I believe in life eternal,
in which no one will be foreigner,
but all will be citizens of the kingdom
where God reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Prayers of Lament

L: With the Israelite slaves of old we cry out:

The children of the poor are deprived of human freedoms.

Their parents work for the oppressor.

O God, why does injustice settle comfortably in high places?

The few have plenty to waste, but the many are needy?

Here may be added a sung Kyrie or Trisagion

Hear us, O God: **Hear us, O God.**

Show yourself, O God: **Show yourself, O God.**

Give us your life: **Give us your life.**

Here keep a time of silence

Here these words, and receive their power:

God the Father promises a kingdom of justice and joy.

God the Son lived and died for the least of these.

God the Spirit strengthens us to build a city of peace.

Thanks be to God: **Thanks be to God.**

Presbyterian Book of Common Worship, page 610

Prayers for Those Who Work in Justice

God of power and might,

We pray for people everywhere who long for freedom,
who are ready, eager to do as you have commanded.

Bring down oppression's rule;

overturn unjust laws;

break the chains of those still enslaved;

banish every form of human trafficking.

Compel us, without delay, to enter a new place

where all lives are honored and all voices are heard.

God of tenderness and compassion,

who washed the disciples' feet, one by one.

We pray for people whose feet are tired
and dusty from hard labor;

for those whose backs are bent by care and worry;

for those laid low by illness or guilt or grief.

Wash away, we pray,

the tiredness of our bodies and souls.

Hold gently in your healing hands
the broken places in our lives and relationships.

Be our company in isolation,
our source of hope in despair,
and the way forward at every dead end.

God of all good gifts,
thank you for setting a table of welcome for everyone;
for making room whether we are faithful or faithless or failures.
We pray that all who are hungry will find enough to eat
and clean water to drink
as we share and live more responsibly.
Teach us to sit down with enemies,
sharing common meals and common hopes.
Make us true servants of yours
for the sake of the world.
Teach us to love as you love
for the sake of the world.
We pray for faith that is worth handing on
to yet another generation
for the sake of the world you love.
In Christ's name we pray. **Amen.**

Jewish

Tisha B'Av

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
<https://www.hias.org/>

As we prepare to observe Tisha B'Av and commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem that led to the exile of the Jewish people for centuries to come, we are acutely aware that we find ourselves in the midst of the worst refugee crisis in recorded history, with more than 70 million people displaced worldwide. Given these extraordinary numbers, the continued attacks on asylum and the refugee resettlement program in the United States are even more inhumane.

Of course, we know that the proverbial 10th of Av will come, and we will rise up from our mourning with renewed resolve to support refugees and asylum seekers. First, though, we take time to dwell fully in the mourning demanded by the 9th of Av. We fervently lament the many cruel actions this administration has taken to limit the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to seek safety in our country, and we mourn for lives destroyed and lives lost.

The text below is a modern addition to the book of Lamentations – a 6th chapter – meant to express our mourning over the contemporary refugee and asylum crises. Please note that, because the text is in English, rather than Hebrew, some of the trope markings will appear backwards (e.g., munach, mapach, etc.).

Eicha - **A**las! A country once built on the promise of liberty and justice for all
now isolates herself from the cries of those seeking safety on her shores.

Built by the hands of refugees and immigrants, she
chips away at the right to asylum,
dispensing with founding principles so
essential as her DNA.

Forgotten are the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free.

Gone is the dream of protection in the face of violence and persecution.

“Her enemies are now the masters” (1:5).

Inhumane executive orders barring Muslims and refugees.

Jarringly separating parents from children.

Keeping out compassion and decency, a wall in their place.

Lady Liberty weeps at her shuttered gates.

Mixed multitudes we were when we left Mitzrayim, the narrow place;

now, the world narrows around the 70 million displaced people around the globe.

Only God’s voice can be heard bellowing calls to welcome, protect, and love the
stranger -

partners in continued redemption we are no longer.

Quiet in the face of moral depravity are her citizens,

reinforced by hateful rhetoric spewed from seats of power.

Self-evident truths -

that human beings are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain
unalienable rights -

undone by cowardice, malice, and greed.

Verily, we know where God dwells amidst this suffering -

God is in the eyes of those fleeing for their lives.

Why, then, have we forsaken the Divine call to love the stranger as we would love
ourselves -

xenophobia instead taking root in our souls?

You are the hero for whom you are searching:

Zion cannot be returned to if we do not first turn to those calling our names.

Christian Sermon Starters

Lectionary Texts for August 11th

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

- The prophet Isaiah speaks to a people who are performing religious rituals in an effort to please God yet are forsaking God's people.
- Who in your congregation or community might be the oppressed, the orphan, or the widow?
- Who in the context of immigration in Texas might be the oppressed, the orphan, or the widow?
- In what ways are our actions performative or habitual? How can we turn our actions into means of worshiping God and honoring our duty to our migrant brothers and sisters?
- In what ways can you or your congregation "learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow?"

Genesis 15:1-6

- Abram cries out to God in distress that he has no children, for his land would be inherited by one of his slaves. God assures him that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky.
- Who today would be considered an heir of the house of Abram?
- How can you connect this story to our inheritance through Jesus Christ?

Psalm 50 1-8, 22-23

A psalm calling for the renewal of God's covenant.

- In what ways do we renew our covenant with God?
- Who is included in this covenant?
- What opportunities does migration offer to expand and renew our covenant with God?

Psalm 33: 12-22

A psalm praising God, the creator of the universe.

- Imagine how those seeking asylum have run from war and violence, famine and economic ruin. How has God guided their journey? How does God look down on them in favor?
- Given the current climate around immigration, where does America fall on the spectrum of king or warrior to those who hope and fear in the LORD? Where does your community fall? Where do you fall?

Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16

A retelling of the story of Abraham and his faith in God.

- How do the stories of migrants and asylum seekers embody the belief that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen?"

- Think of Abraham's story of setting out not knowing where he was going, living in a foreign land. How does that story resonate with the stories of migrants?
- How do the stories of migrants resonate with the verse "If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one."
- How can we work to make our country "a better country...a heavenly one" for those who come here seeking asylum or a better life?

Luke 12: 32-40

Luke speaks to earthly possessions and always being prepared for the coming of our Lord, as we don't know when will happen.

- For migrants who have given up everything and left their home to find a better place to live, where is their treasure? Where do their hearts lie?
- What are the ways we are preparing for the coming of the Son of Man? Do these ways conflict with how we are called to care for 'the least of these,' including migrants?

Educational Resources

Muslim

Information on the Migration to Abyssinia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Migration_to_Abyssinia

Catholic

Social Teaching on Immigration and the Movement of Peoples

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/catholic-teaching-on-immigration-and-the-movement-of-peoples.cfm>

Buddhist

Reunite Immigrant Families: 5 Actions, 5 Buddhist Remembrances

<http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/reunite-immigrant-families-5-actions-5-remembrances/>

My actions are my only true belongings.

I cannot escape the consequences of my actions.

My actions are the ground upon which I stand.

Thich Nhat Hanh