

Reflection and Prayer for World Refugee Day



Scripture Reading:

“... [A]n angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod” (Matt. 2:13–15, NRSV).

Scripture Reading:

“So she said, ‘See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’ But Ruth said, ‘Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there I will be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!’ When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her” (Ruth 1:15–18, NRSV).

Reflection:

The book of Ruth opens with the couple, Elim and Naomi, fleeing their homeland of Judah with their two sons because of a famine. They sojourned to the country of Moab where they remained and took up a life for ten years. Elim died in Moab. Naomi’s two sons married Orpah and Ruth in Moab. Naomi must have loved her daughters-in-law and they must have loved her because when her sons died, Orpah and Ruth insisted on remaining with Naomi.

For more information, visit
<https://pda.pcusa.org/page/world-refugee-day/>

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/family-detention/>

Even when Naomi was readying to leave their homeland of Moab to return to her home in Judah, the two clung to her and begged to accompany her to a new country. Ruth clung on the tightest and, uttered the beautiful words in the scripture reading. Ruth prevailed and convinced Naomi to let her come and the two traveled to Judah where Naomi was now able to host Ruth as a sojourner in her country.

The decision to migrate from one country to another is not easy. Nor is it singularly motivated. Joseph and Mary fled to protect their child. Elim and Naomi left to save their family from starvation. Ruth left her homeland to keep the home she had found in the family that she loved. The decision to migrate is also not the end of the story. Naomi, a sojourner in the beginning of the book of Ruth, becomes a host by the end. Jesus, a refugee at birth, heals and turns hearts and for thousands of years after he continues to be refuge for the weary.

—Teresa Waggener, Office of Immigration Issues, Office of the General Assembly

Prayer:

God of the journey,
We remember that Mary and Joseph
Had to flee to Egypt,
Taking Jesus to safety,
Leaving home behind.
Remembering,
We pray for sisters and brothers
Around your world
Who are forced to leave their homes.
We pray for brothers and sisters who are
Driven from home by natural disasters.
We pray for sisters and brothers who are
Driven from unnatural acts of violence and persecution.
We pray for brothers and sisters who are
Driven from home because of inadequate responses to natural events.
We pray for those who leave their countries and cross borders.
We pray for those who are internally displaced,
Finding new places to live within their own country.
We pray for those who are exposed to freezing cold and searing heat,
Those who lack food, water, shelter, and other necessities of life,
Those who are exploited, violated, and abused, and
Those who mourn the loss of place and all that brings.
We give thanks for the strength, courage, and grace of our sisters and brothers
Who are refugees or internally displaced.
We give thanks for the contributions they make in their new places
And for the ways in which they enrich our lives.
Guide the leaders of the world to find creative ways to respond,
To extend protection and provide safe haven,
To care compassionately and respectfully for the needs of our sisters and brothers,
To address the situations and circumstances that force people to leave their homes.
To do justice and to seek peace.
Show us ways that we can support our brothers and sisters whom we encounter.
Inspire us to engage in the efforts to create a world
In which all have a safe place to call home.
We pray in the name of the refugee Jesus,
Amen.



Refugees on a boat.

—Mark Koenig, Director, Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations