

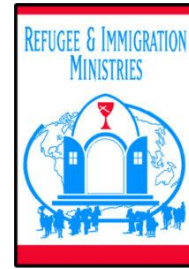
REFUGEE &  
IMMIGRANT  
WELCOME  
SUNDAY JUNE 18, 2017  
Let us love not in word  
or speech, but in truth  
and action. - 1 John 3:18



Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope



Disciples Refugee &  
Immigrant  
WELCOME SUNDAY  
June 18, 2017



Go here for Disciples information and resources to help you prepare to participate in Disciples Refugee and Immigrant Welcome Sunday on June 18th, or for an event to honor refugees and immigrants on any day near that time!:

<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/refugee-immigrant-welcome-sunday/>. See our resources in the pages below and [here](#) at <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/planning-resources-for-welcome-sunday> as you plan for your special celebrations and actions, and go [here](#) or click “subscribe” on our Refugee & Immigration Ministries website at <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/> to receive our “RIM WRAP” with consistent updates, education, and calls to action in support of vulnerable immigrants and refugees! Also, be sure your church prepares for supporting immigrants and refugees at General Assembly by reading the “On Becoming Immigrant Welcoming Congregations,” GA-1723 resolution [here](#): [https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GA-IMMIGRANT-WELCOMING-CONGS-SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY\\_FINAL\\_02\\_03\\_2017.pdf](https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GA-IMMIGRANT-WELCOMING-CONGS-SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY_FINAL_02_03_2017.pdf)

We choose to lift up the voices of refugees and immigrants above all because of God’s commandment that “*the foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born*” (Leviticus 19:34.) We choose especially to highlight refugees and immigrants now because of particular challenges families face in this moment; when there are more refugees than at any point since World War II, and as immigrants are reporting increasing fears of family separation amidst vocal rhetoric and policies against immigrant communities. We invite you to JOIN US in gathering STORIES of inspiring immigrants and refugees connected to our Disciples faith family by adding stories you know [here](#): <https://goo.gl/forms/rmx4bGukNWFlyEnz2>.

We celebrate the strengths and courage of refugees and immigrants as a part of our commitment in joining the “[Ecumenical Declaration: Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope](#).” Disciples signed the Declaration in March 2017 together with Church World Service global communions and National Council of Churches partners. The statement can be found at: <https://greateras1.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ecumenical-Declaration-Protecting-Welcome-Restoring-Hope.pdf>. One promise made in our declaration is to honor refugees throughout our congregations through a Welcome Sunday or other special event of solidarity during June. Church World Service has provided abundant resources for congregations to use in planning services and special welcome events, as well as social media graphics, advocacy resources, banner designs, refugee stories, and music to honor refugees and immigrants at this site: <https://greateras1.org/act/congregations/>. And note: the first 20 congregations to register your Welcome Sunday/event [here](#): <https://greateras1.org/act/congregations/congregational-events/> will win a FREE “Refugees Welcome” banner for your church, region, or school!

We honor refugees and immigrants on June 18<sup>th</sup> or a nearby day also because World Refugee Day is celebrated each year on June 20<sup>th</sup>. World Refugee Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001, to mark the 50th anniversary of the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. World Refugee Day provides an opportunity to support increased welcome and understanding of refugees, to encourage advocacy in support of refugee resettlement, to build awareness of immigrant and refugee challenges and contributions, and to strengthen justice for all who have come seeking new life and hope after tragedy and loss. Find a full toolkit of background information, refugee stories, and refugee advocacy resources for World Refugee Day at: <https://www.rcusa.org/world-refugee-day/>.

Contact a Refugee Resettlement Office nearest you to invite a local refugee or immigrant speaker to your event. See a list of offices and addresses/numbers [here](#):

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/580e4274e58c624696efadc6/t/590cfdb4beba6bc604ab3acd/1494023605419/Public+Affiliate+Directory+5-5-17.pdf>, and find a map [here](#): <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/580e4274e58c624696efadc6/t/583c76e7440243877aff59ef/1480357955543/PRM-RPP+Affilaite+Sites+2016+-+LG>.

Note: As Disciples, our primary partner for refugee resettlement is Church World Service agency. But if you do not live within 50 miles of a CWS office, we encourage you to link with another resettlement partner nearby! Also, consider inviting local media to cover your event, to raise visibility for welcome in your area!

Questions? Contact Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries (RIM) Director  
5 Thomas Circle NW, Washington, DC 20005, [stanley@dhm.disciples.org](mailto:stanley@dhm.disciples.org) or 202-957-7826.



## Resources for Planning Your Refugee & Immigrant Welcome Sunday or Event On June 18<sup>th</sup> —or Another Time Soon!



### MUSICAL VIDEO WELCOME

**“Look in My Eyes”—Refugees at Home in Lancaster, PA.  
(depicting the diversity and gifts of refugee populations entering the United States)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFLQ5YJXNN4>**

### CALL TO WORSHIP

**Leader:** Creator of all, we gather today thankful that you have welcomed us, and remembering your call for Abraham and Sarah to travel to a new land so all families of the earth may be blessed.

**People:** We give thanks that through our hardest times, God has heard our cry and responded with hospitality. Help us look deeply in the eyes of those who have sacrificed and braved dangers to seek safety among us.

**Leader:** Just as God has never forgotten our needs, we are called to walk alongside those who have been mistreated, persecuted and outcast.

**People:** God, strengthen us to be family for those neighbors we already know, and to find ways to be family for newcomers and the vulnerable that we have yet to meet. Help us welcome all with hope into our community, even as your life has shown us what welcome means and what love best looks like.

**Leader:** Let us work together with refugees and immigrants from many different lands to welcome them in, and let us pray that each crisis which results in pushing communities from their homelands may soon end.

**People:** God, encourage us to know that wherever we share hospitality with others, we find in those relationships opportunities to more deeply see your face and do your will.

**All:** As we wait for You to answer these prayers, we re-commit ourselves to be a welcoming congregation lifting up immigrants and refugees in our midst and preparing ourselves to advocate with them by our side. Amen.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Oh God, our creator and liberator, we pray for all those who face the trials and tribulations of exclusion. We lift up all those who have been made outcast in our world; for those impoverished by inequality, for those who find themselves in the cold from homelessness, for those who are treated differently because of their skin color or religious background. Today on this welcome weekend, we say a special prayer for all the refugees in the world who have faced violence and persecution. Now many of them face discrimination upon arriving to the safety of this land. Strengthen our faith to be accepting to all and fortify our witness to advocate for just and humane policies that expand the path of welcome for refugees to join our communities. In the same way, we pray for all those who face sickness and disease, in our congregation and throughout our community. May Your blessing comfort them and may Your healing power touch them. In the Spirit of love and compassion we pray. Amen.

## SERMON BACKGROUND NOTES

Based on the Lectionary Text for June 18<sup>th</sup>: Genesis 18:1-15  
The Visit of God & Angels to Abraham and Sarah's Tent

Anyone raised in the South learns early on what “a ‘lil sumthin’” really means. You don’t dare come to grandma’s house already full—or even having had a snack before arrival—because her in-the-door greeting of “Welcome, and let me just bring you a ‘lil sumthin’” results most often in a full table presentation of green beans, mashed potatoes with gravy, fried chicken, chocolate pie, and enough sweet tea to float you to the ocean! And to refuse to eat what’s offered is also an affront that can lead to family discussions that may leave you wishing you’d never come to visit.

The Old Testament text in today’s lectionary represents two stories that together form a “circle of hospitality.” Verses 1-8 provide a glimpse of Abraham and Sarah in a tent “fully intent” on welcoming guests—and offer a picture of multiple characteristics of hospitality that provide insights about how we are to treat “strangers among us” today. Verses 9-15 portray the reality of God’s identity as One who seeks to embody hospitality far even beyond the bounds of what is considered possible in our human understanding; and calls us to trust in the assurance of God’s blessings and healing beyond our imaginings. Our trust is commanded, and can renew our strength to continue to welcome others. God’s hospitality offered to our lives is no joke...and even more than with a Southern grandma, refusing to accept its power and blessing will leave us stranded in fear that will minimize our capacity to reach out to others.

Abraham’s promise of “a morsel” in verse 5 became even more than Grandma’s best ‘lil sumthin’ Southern spread, as we see him model what hospitality can best look like as he greeted his guests warmly, spoke to them with respect, offered water to drink, asked Sarah to fix them bread cakes, offered to wash dust off their feet, offered the shade of his trees, offered a valuable cow for food, prepared butter and milk to drink, and offered his presence under the tree as they ate. And, throughout all these gestures, we see that Abraham moved quickly—further showing the priority he placed upon meeting the needs of his guests—as the text tells us he “ran...to meet them” (vs. 2), “hurried into the tent” (vs. 6), and “ran to the herd” (vs. 7). Sarah and their young employee likewise “hastened” to prepare the bread and calf. And in verse 16 just beyond our passage, we see that Abraham further carried out a departing act of hospitality, as well, when he accompanied his guests on the start of their journey “to send them on the way.”

By performing every act, Abraham and Sarah were demonstrating the commitment to care for the vulnerable that was expressed through deeply held cultural practices and values during Biblical times in the Middle East. It is worth noting the magnitude of love and respect for the visitors that was shown even through the amount of grain that Abraham asks Sarah to use in her preparations of bread. His “three measures of fine flour” requested was the equivalent to about thirty quarts of flour!! That extravagance could have fed dozens. The calf that Abraham butchered likewise could likely have fed up to a hundred people—a small village! (See Bill T. Arnold’s *Encountering the book of Genesis*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998, p. 100.)

For even more of a background, see the article “Travelers and Strangers: ‘Hospitality’ in the Biblical World” by Dennis Bratcher, available through Christian Resource Institute at: <http://www.criovoice.org/travelers.html>. At Bratcher points out, in ancient times, both travelers and persons who sought to settle permanently outside their homeland were often called “foreigners, strangers, or sojourners” because they didn’t belong to a particular community or group. Hospitality offered protection and acceptance, and built up goodwill to reduce the chance of any hostilities developing between long term residents and newcomers. Hospitality was—and IS—about more than “being kind.” Hospitality always helps to hold our communities together!

In verses 9-15, God then attempts to demonstrate an even greater depth of hospitality to Sarah and Abraham by seeking out Sarah in vs. 9 (when it was cultural practice for wives to be in a separate part of the tent during the meal), by acknowledging her in conversation as a woman beginning in verse 10 (which showed great respect, and was beyond the bounds of typical culture), by promising she would bear a child at her very old age (and remember—Abraham himself was more than 99—as we learned in Chapter 17, verse 1!), and by reassuring her once more in verse 14 of his promise to fulfill the deepest desire of her heart to bear a child.

Sarah would have been strongly aware that travelers were supposed to accept whatever a host offered to them, because to not do so was considered extremely offensive. However, her faith struggled in the passage to see herself as a “traveler/journeyer” before God who so desires to offer love and a relationship to her. Her trust of God could give her what she craved the very most...the ability to conceive and have a child that would provide her warmth and joy, as well as stability, respect, and removal from criticism in the ancient world.

In preaching, we can seek to encourage listeners to model the generous hospitality in our faith tradition, shown through Abraham and Sarah’s welcome. We likewise can encourage listeners to identify with Sarah’s difficulty in believing that “the joy of her heart” could be given her—beyond all human limitations-- by God. We can point out how our lack of faith in God’s identity as one hospitable to us in ways “far beyond our human imagining” threatens to diminish our own hospitality, and perhaps feeds our rhetoric of division and exclusion of refugees, immigrants, and others. To more deeply trust God’s blessings to us can enlarge our hospitality to and acceptance of others. It likewise enhances our nearness to God, and provides God joy as we demonstrate our trust in God’s goodness given to us and intended for all his children.

### CHILDREN’S SERMON

Based on Genesis 18:1-15

The Visit of God & Angels to Abraham and Sarah’s Tent

By William Compton, RIM Intern, Eureka College



#### **\*Reading of scripture\***

I’d like to start off the morning with a question: What do you all like best about your home? **\*Wait for responses\***

I really, really like my home, too. When I’m at my home, I feel relaxed, I have good food, and I’m surrounded by people who love me. Overall, home is pretty cozy, right? Could you imagine having to leave your home for a really long time? Maybe forever? **\*Wait for responses\***

Abraham and Sarah had to do just that. They were called by God to leave, and so they left and trusted and trusted God along the way—even though it was very scary. Sometimes people have to leave their homes, and it isn’t so easy. It’s actually really difficult, and it takes a lot of courage. They don’t know where they’re going, or who’s going to be there...and they might not even have their family with them. Families who are forced from their homes because of persecution are often called “refugees.”

Our Disciples churches have welcomed people before who were persecuted and had to leave their homes as refugees. A long time ago, Eureka Christian Church in Illinois welcomed the first refugee family from Germany, who had been forced to leave their home and country because they were Jewish. They had a young daughter named Irmgard Wessel. A very mean man named Hitler had discriminated against them, and didn’t accept their religion or background. So they had to escape from their homeland and come here to America. It was tough, because Irmgard and her family didn’t know anybody here, and they had to leave behind everything they knew.

But then, a Disciples church just like ours welcomed them. They gave the people who came to them, called refugees, food and a place to stay. They showed them love and kindness. As Irmgard grew up, she was an excellent student at our Disciples college in Eureka, and she lived her life helping others as a social worker. Even after she died at an old age, her family gave money in her honor to help refugees, because as her grandson said, “My mother never forgot what a difference it made in her life when the church welcomed and loved her family as refugees.”

In the Abraham story we read, after Abraham had traveled to a new home and when he was over ninety-nine years old, he was surprised when God and two angels came to visit his tent. What exactly did Abraham and Sarah do for those strangers? **\*Wait for answers\***

Abraham didn't know they were coming, but he immediately jumped up to welcome his guests. Sarah made cakes for them. Abraham prepared some meat, gave them water, and also washed their feet because they were tired and dusty. They did all these things because they remembered how God had always blessed them in their journeys.

That's right. Abraham and Sarah, as well as the people at the church who met Irmgard's family, were called to serve and help those who came to their community. They gave them abundant food and water, invited them in, washed their feet, and offered smiles and respect. They treated them as love, and like friends. And even better, they **wanted** to do those things.

We are called also to be kind to our neighbors, and to love and welcome anyone who comes to us—even if they are new, or from different backgrounds than ours. How do you think you can show welcome and respect to someone new this week? And help those who need help? **\*Wait for responses\***

Let's close in prayer:

Dear God,

You show us that you love us every day. Our family loves us. Our friends love us. Please, God, help us return that same love to others. Let us help those who need help, and welcome those who need a friend. Thank you, God, for the chance to love our neighbors. We love you. Amen.

### **YOUTH GROUP OR ADULT STUDY Learning About Refugees**

The First Disciples Refugee Family and Our Church's Ongoing Response  
By William Compton, Eureka College  
With Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries

#### **PART ONE: \*Begin by telling story of Irmgard Wessel\***

Irmgard Wessel was a young Jewish girl who lived in Germany during the time that Hitler rose to power. During that time, she and her family faced prejudice and discrimination. But, it wasn't until a few particularly striking moments, such as an attack on a Jewish orphanage, the burning of a synagogue, and the invasion and destruction of their home by Nazis that her parents decided to help her escape to England to be safe. Her parents went through many tests, examinations, and trials before they also fled Germany to go to New York, in America. Once in the U.S., they got the jobs they could and immediately started to learn English. They hoped to leave New York, but only after reuniting with Irmgard. This finally happened after a year-and-a-half of separation. This experience of being pulled apart as children and parents because of war and persecution is often common among refugees.



*Photo of Irmgard Wessel, child in the first refugee family resettled through the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*

Once they were reunited, they were sent to a hostel run by Quakers in the Midwest, to learn more about how to live in America. In that Center in Scattergood, Iowa, twelve Americans helped train thirty refugees. The refugees did work around the house and in the fields, attended classes and lectures, and took occasional trips to the city. Eventually, a group from the local Christian Church of Eureka, Illinois visited the hostel. Members of the church had been praying for months to find ways to help the refugees they had heard about who faced difficult hardships.

The church felt their prayers were answered as they met the young Irmgard and her family, and they immediately invited them to come to their community in Eureka, Illinois. Once there, they helped to resettle the refugees in a local apartment; complete with beds, food, and other necessities. As the family remembers, "We were welcomed by the church, and came to know the congregation when we were invited to a potluck dinner."

The town itself did its best to be helpful and prepare the family for a good life in America, even though residents were from a different religion and culture than Irmgard's family. The town and the family enjoyed learning from one another! Irmgard attended high school, became an excellent student at Eureka College, and eventually was given American citizenship, accepted a job outside of Eureka, and got married. She worked throughout her life as a social worker to help others until her death at the age of nearly 90.

Irmgard Wessel is survived by four children, eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Her grandchildren now operate a family foundation that helps support other refugees. In November of 2015, when one state refused to resettle Syrian refugees, Irmgard's grandson sent a large contribution to the state who decided to accept and welcome

the family. He did that, he said, in honor of his grandmother Irmgard "because she never forgot how the church in Eureka had loved and accepted her family when they were refugees."

For Discussion:

**Why do you think Eureka Christian Church went above and beyond to help the refugees at the hostel?**

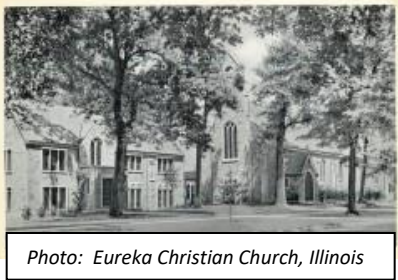


Photo: Eureka Christian Church, Illinois

**How would you imagine the church members may have responded to any who may not have immediately accepted the family? What might you have said to encourage their acceptance in that time?**

## **PART TWO: Exploring Genesis 18:1-15--The Visit of God & Angels to Abraham and Sarah's Tent**

Ask:

**Is there a time in your life that someone needed your help and you didn't help them? How about time when you did help them?**

The story of the visit of three guests to Abraham and Sarah is a kind of "cycle of hospitality" story! It shows us a great example of hospitality through Abraham and Sarah's care for the visitors in verses 18:1-8. And in 8:9-15, we get a sense of God's desire to be hospitable and identity as one who deeply hopes for those who follow to TRUST in his hospitality for our lives.

Divide into teams and act out the story in 18:1-8, and the action in 9-15. After you do, discuss these questions:

**In verses 1-8, what are the different ways that you see Abraham communicating hospitality for his guests?** (Some answers can include: greeted them warmly, spoke to them with respect, offered water to drink, asked Sarah to fix them bread cakes, offered to wash dust off their feet, offered the shade of his trees, offered a valuable cow for food, prepared butter and milk to drink, offered his presence under the tree as they ate. And throughout all these gestures, Abraham moved quickly—showing the priority he placed upon meeting the needs of his guests—as he "ran...to meet them" (vs. 2), "hurried into the tent" (vs. 6), and "ran to the herd" (vs. 7). Sarah and their young employee also "hastened" to prepare the bread and calf. Even in verse 16 just beyond our passage, we see that Abraham carried out a departing act of hospitality, as well, as he accompanied them on the start of their journey "to send them on the way.")

By performing every act, Abraham and Sarah were demonstrating the commitment to care for the vulnerable that was expressed through deeply held cultural practices during Biblical times in the Middle East. For even more of a background, see the article "Travelers and Strangers: 'Hospitality' in the Biblical World" by Dennis Bratcher, available through Christian Resource Institute at: <http://www.crivoice.org/travelers.html>. Hospitality was—and IS—about more than "being kind." Hospitality always helps to hold our communities together!

In ancient times, both travelers and persons who sought to settle permanently outside their homeland were often called "foreigners, strangers, or sojourners" because they didn't belong to a particular community or group. Hospitality

offered protection and acceptance, and built up goodwill to reduce the chance of any hostilities developing between long term residents and newcomers.

**In verses 9-15, how does God attempt to demonstrate hospitality to Sarah and Abraham?** Some responses can include: by seeking out Sarah in vs. 9 (when it was cultural practice for wives to be in a separate part of the tent during the meal), by acknowledging her in conversation as a woman beginning in verse 10 (which showed great respect, and was beyond the bounds of typical culture), by promising she would bear a child at her very old age (and remember—Abraham himself was more than 99—as we learned in Chapter 17, verse 1!), and by reassuring her once more of his promise in verse 14.

Sarah would have been strongly aware that travelers were supposed to accept whatever a host offered to them, because to not do so was considered extremely offensive. However, her faith struggled in the passage to dare trust that God could give her what she craved the very most...the ability to conceive and have a child that would offer her warmth and joy, as well as stability, respect, and removal from criticism in the ancient world. **Can you identify with Sarah's difficulty in believing that "the joy of her heart" could be given her—beyond all human limitations-- by God?**

**Discuss who "strangers" and "newcomers" are in your own community, and in our country. What kinds of attitudes have you seen demonstrated against them? Are there any types of hospitality you might want to "hasten" to offer?**

### **PART THREE: Learning About Refugees Today**

**View these Resources and** read these backgrounders to help you begin to answer these questions:

**Can you identify any of today's refugee populations in crises? Who is a refugee? Who is hosting refugees, and why are displaced persons being forced to flee their countries?**

Week of Compassion Refugee Related Short Vimeos:

Shares the Context of How a Person in the World Becomes Displaced or a Refugee Every 5 Seconds--  
<https://vimeo.com/150431390>

Tells the Story of an Afghani asylee helped by Disciples in Virginia, with protected identity--  
<https://vimeo.com/151014135>

Shares definition of a refugees, and locations and numbers where the globe's refugees are located--  
<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/03/27/518217052/chart-where-the-worlds-refugees-are>

Angelina Jolie shares the views on the need to work to diminish root causes that produce refugees--  
<https://www.peacedirect.org/us/angelina-jolie-urges-world-to-tackle-root-causes-of-refugee-crisis/>

**What are some critical statistics about the world's refugees, and U.S. refugee resettlement figures?**

UNHCR's short video of faces and flights of global refugees and families forcibly displaced--  
<http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>

A concise 1 page handout of U.S. and global refugee resettlement statistics from UNHCR-- <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement-in-the-united-states.html>

**What is the U.S. Refugee Vetting Process for refugees?**

A step-by-step visual guide to the security vetting process for refugees who apply to come to the U.S.--  
<http://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/USCRI-Security-Screening-Process-5.16.16.pdf>

Previous U.S. Director of Homeland Security's brief video on the U.S. Refugee Vetting Processes:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQUIxQ6TFZc>

### **What can you personally and your church do to aid today's refugees? What can the church do?**

See this page for ideas: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/refugees/hospitality-kits/>, and see the World Refugee Day Toolkit at: <https://www.rcusa.org/world-refugee-day/> and other Resources for welcome and advocacy on our Refugees Welcome site, found at: [www.refugeesarewelcome.org](http://www.refugeesarewelcome.org).

**Discuss ways your church will continue to discern through prayer and choose to act to stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees.**

### **STATEMENTS AND POETRY**

Consider reading excerpts in your worship or other event from one or more of the following, and discussing the messages in each:

[“Ecumenical Declaration: Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope.”](#) Disciples signed this Declaration in March 2017 together with Church World Service global communions and National Council of Churches partners. The statement can be found at: <https://greateras1.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ecumenical-Declaration-Protecting-Welcome-Restoring-Hope.pdf>.

General Assembly resolution GA-1723, “On Becoming Immigrant Welcoming Congregations,” to be presented at this summer’s GA. Find it [here](https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GA-IMMIGRANT-WELCOMING-CONGS-SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY_FINAL_02_03_2017.pdf): [https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GA-IMMIGRANT-WELCOMING-CONGS-SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY\\_FINAL\\_02\\_03\\_2017.pdf](https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GA-IMMIGRANT-WELCOMING-CONGS-SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY_FINAL_02_03_2017.pdf)

Langston Hughes, 1902 – 1967: Let America be America Again  
(a poem of hope beyond exclusion for our nation.)

Let America be America again.  
Let it be the dream it used to be.  
Let it be the pioneer on the plain  
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed--  
Let it be that great strong land of love  
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme  
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty  
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,  
But opportunity is real, and life is free,  
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,  
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?  
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,  
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.  
I am the red man driven from the land,  
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek--  
And finding only the same old stupid plan  
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.



I am the young man, full of strength and hope,  
Tangled in that ancient endless chain  
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!  
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!  
Of work the men! Of take the pay!  
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.  
I am the worker sold to the machine.  
I am the Negro, servant to you all.  
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean--  
Hungry yet today despite the dream.  
Beaten yet today--O, Pioneers!  
I am the man who never got ahead,  
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream  
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,  
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,  
That even yet its mighty daring sings  
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned  
That's made America the land it has become.  
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas  
In search of what I meant to be my home--  
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,  
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,  
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came  
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?  
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?  
The millions shot down when we strike?  
The millions who have nothing for our pay?  
For all the dreams we've dreamed  
And all the songs we've sung  
And all the hopes we've held  
And all the flags we've hung,  
The millions who have nothing for our pay--  
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again--  
The land that never has been yet--  
And yet must be--the land where every man is free.  
The land that's mine--the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME--  
Who made America,  
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,  
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,  
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose--  
The steel of freedom does not stain.  
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,  
We must take back our land again,  
America!

O, yes,  
I say it plain,  
America never was America to me,  
And yet I swear this oath--  
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,  
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,  
We, the people, must redeem  
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.  
The mountains and the endless plain--

All, all the stretch of these great green states--  
And make America again!

### **"Home" by Warsan Shire**

*(Note: Warsan Shire is a Somali poet, born in Kenya, and working as a writer and educator in London. Her debut book was "Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth," published in 2011 by flipped eye.)*

Consider reading selections of Shire's powerful poem below, to build understanding of a refugee as one who, according to Article 1 of the U.N.'s "1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees", is: *"someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion."*

#### HOME, by Warsan Shire

no one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark  
you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city running as well

your neighbors running faster than you  
breath bloody in their throats  
the boy you went to school with  
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory  
is holding a gun bigger than his body  
you only leave home  
when home won't let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you  
fire under feet  
hot blood in your belly  
it's not something you ever thought of doing  
until the blade burnt threats into  
your neck  
and even then you carried the anthem under  
your breath  
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilet  
sobbing as each mouthful of paper  
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.

you have to understand,  
that no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land  
no one burns their palms  
under trains  
beneath carriages  
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck  
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled  
means something more than journey.  
no one crawls under fences  
no one wants to be beaten  
pitied

no one chooses refugee camps  
or strip searches where your  
body is left aching  
or prison,  
because prison is safer  
than a city of fire  
and one prison guard  
in the night

is better than a truckload  
of men who look like your father  
no one could take it  
no one could stomach it  
no one skin would be tough enough

(excerpts removed)

i want to go home,  
but home is the mouth of a shark  
home is the barrel of the gun  
and no one would leave home  
unless home chased you to the shore  
unless home told you  
to quicken your legs  
leave your clothes behind  
crawl through the desert  
wade through the oceans  
drown  
save  
be hunger  
beg  
forget pride  
your survival is more important

no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear  
saying-  
leave.

run away from me now!  
i dont know what i've become  
but i know that anywhere  
is safer than here

## GAME

### **“You Bet We Vet!!”—A Game to Teach About the U.S. Refugee Vetting Process By William Compton, RIM Intern, Eureka College Student, Christmount Staff**

Make space at your event for children, youth, adult, or other community members to play the following game to learn about the refugee vetting process in the U.S.

See these resources as helpful backgrounders as you prepare:

A concise 1 page handout of U.S. and global refugee resettlement statistics from UNHCR-- <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement-in-the-united-states.html>

A step-by-step visual guide to the security vetting process for refugees who apply to come to the U.S.-- <http://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/USCRI-Security-Screening-Process-5.16.16.pdf>

Previous U.S. Director of Homeland Security's brief video on the U.S. Refugee Vetting Processes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQUIxQ6TFZc>

Our country is the leader in refugee resettlement. In fact, since 1975, the U.S. has welcomed over 3 million refugees into the country. However, each refugee applicant must first be screened and interviewed by a refugee agency. It's only after *that* that the U.S. puts refugees through its own vetting process (a multi-stage process of careful examination). This process is done outside of the country and can take as long as 2 years. This vetting process involves:

- **2** inter-agency security checks
- **3** separate in-person interviews
- **4** biometric security checks

- 5 separate background checks
- 6 different security databases
- 8 U.S. Federal Government agencies

This game/learning activity is meant to highlight these specific numbers and show youth the rigorous and difficult experience that is the U.S. refugee vetting process.

### **Summary**

Kids will divide into equal teams (ideally 2) in a large, open space. Throughout the large space, objects will be spread around. Certain objects will correspond to the above statistics. For example, each team will have 8 objects of the same kind that correspond to the 8 U.S. federal government agencies. Each team will also have 6 objects of the same kind that correspond to the different security databases. This continues down the numbers so that, finally, each team also has 2 objects of the same kind that correspond to the inter-agency security checks. These objects could be purchased in bulk at a dollar store, or could be objects that are found around the church. So, for example, each team could have:

- 8 ping-pong balls
- 6 markers
- 5 balloons
- 4 pinwheels
- 3 Bibles
- 2 hats

Anything can be used, as long as you have enough of each object to suffice for both teams. Each team will be given a sheet of paper which has the vetting process statistics (at the top of the page), as well as the object that corresponds to each statistic. So, for example:

- 8 U.S. Federal Government Agencies (ping-pong balls)
- 6 different security databases (markers)
- 5 separate background checks (balloons)
- 4 biometric security checks (pinwheels)
- 3 separate in-person interviews (Bibles)
- 2 inter-agency security checks (hats)

Once the game is initially started, an announcer will shout out a certain statistic, but exclude the number. S/he might begin by shouting “Biometric security checks!”, and the kids will have to look at their sheet to see which number that is, and also which object they need to run and find. The statistics can be read out-of-order to make the youth more alert. Kids will take turns running out to find the objects and bringing them back to their group. It will be the job of the announcer to stay on track, calling out the next statistic as each group needs to hear it. The first group to bring back all objects (and the correct objects, as they are called) is the winner!

### **Extra Challenges**

If the youth want to do the game again, or if you think they can handle it immediately, you could pick one of these extra challenges:

- Don’t write down the corresponding object next to the statistics the youth are given. Then, when they run out to look for objects, they will know how many of a certain object they have to find; however, they won’t know which object to look for at first. They will have to find the object, for example, of which there is only 2, or only 5.
- Remember how the vetting process can take as long as 2 years to complete? See if the teams can complete the game within 2 minutes!
- You could always make the objects a bit more hidden for an extra challenge.

Please take pictures of your children, youth, student, or adult group participating in the “You Bet We Vet!” game, and send it to: [sstanley@dhm.disciples.org](mailto:sstanley@dhm.disciples.org) for sharing through our “RIM WRAP” newsletter. To register to receive the newsletter, go to: <https://www.disciplehomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/>

## REFUGEES WELCOME BANNER/POSTER CRAFT

By William Compton, RIM Intern, Eureka College Student, Christmount Staff

This craft involves making a banner! You could use butcherblock paper, vinyl, burlap material, or anything else that works and is easy to use. Each kid will make a “Refugees Welcome” banner. Make fun requirements that correspond to the above statistics, such as:

- 8 different colors
- 6 small, decorative pictures (flowers, a church, etc.)
- 5 flags of countries that refugees come from
- 4 people holding hands (or celebrating)
- 3 reasons you love refugees
- 2 Bible verses that relate to refugees

Again, the different requirements for the banners could be whatever you wish to make them. Somewhere in the center, write in large letters “Refugees Welcome”. Then, after you’re done, display your banners where the whole church (or better yet – the whole town) can see them! And beside each banner, encourage youth to write, describe, or draw the U.S. refugee vetting process.

### GATHER AND SHARE STORIES IN SUPPORT OF REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Share stories with your family of faith about your experiences as refugees or immigrants, and about how your lives have been enriched through knowing refugees and immigrants. PLEASE--JOIN US in gathering STORIES of inspiring immigrants and refugees connected to our Disciples faith family by adding stories you know [here](https://goo.gl/forms/rmx4bGukNWFLyEnz2):  
<https://goo.gl/forms/rmx4bGukNWFLyEnz2>.

### HOLD A RALLY IN SUPPORT OF REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Go to: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/refugee-immigrant-welcome-sunday/> for sample signs that can be printed for your event. Use the posters above, if you have made some! Establish a march route and recruit a cultural musician to assist. See and engage in the action below for messages to raise and share during your rally!

**ACTION ALERT: Urge Your Local, State, and National Leaders to Welcome Refugees**

Right now, it is more important than ever for all of our elected officials to hear that their communities welcome refugees. Refugee resettlement saves lives, encourages other countries to keep their doors open to people needing protection, and promotes regional stability and global security. We cannot turn our backs on refugees we have pledged to welcome. Nor can we discriminate against individuals based on where they’re from or what religion they practice. Refugee resettlement must continue to be a cornerstone of U.S. global leadership.

More than 65 million people have been persecuted and forced from their homes and are seeking safety. As a nation, we must uphold our values of generosity, hospitality and compassion. We simultaneously face this displacement crisis and current events and proposals that threaten the future of refugee resettlement. Our actions must match the need and live up to our welcoming legacy. Please spread the word and have everyone you know share this alert!

Call your Senators and Representatives: 1-866-940-2439 Tell Them Your Community Welcomes Refugees

Please call the same number three times to be connected with your Representative and both of your Senators.

Here’s a sample of what to say: “I am a constituent from [CITY, STATE], and I urge the you to welcome refugees and support the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Resettlement is a core American legacy that extends hospitality and

offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety. My community welcomes refugees and I urge you to reflect the best of our nation by supporting refugee resettlement in the United States.”

You can also tweet your policy makers: “.@SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE, my community stands #WithRefugees! Show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting U.S. refugee resettlement! #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1”

Share This Message with Your State and Local Officials!

Your state and local leaders need to hear the same message. Tell them that your community welcomes refugees. To contact your state and local officials, visit: [contactingcongress.org/local](http://contactingcongress.org/local) and [usa.gov/elected-officials](http://usa.gov/elected-officials). To tweet your state and local officials, click to find the twitter handles for your governor and state legislators.

It is more important than ever for all our nation’s lawmakers to represent the hospitality that communities across the country are demonstrating. Take action today to stand with refugees.

For more tips on how to make your voice heard with Members of Congress, click here:

<https://twitter.com/i/moments/798297193559904258>

Please spread the word and send this alert to your networks. Please tell us if you take action (opens a new webpage)! Follow @RCUSA\_DC on Twitter and “like” Refugee Council USA on Facebook for up-to-date alerts.

*Stay tuned for further resources, stories, and updates to come as we approach “Refugee and Immigrant Welcome Sunday!” Also, as June 18<sup>th</sup> is also “Father’s Day,” look for our new “Don’t Deport My Dad!” toolkit coming soon, too!*

*For questions and additional information, Contact Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries (RIM) Director  
5 Thomas Circle NW, Washington, DC 20005, [sstanley@dhm.disciples.org](mailto:sstanley@dhm.disciples.org) or 202-957-7826.*

*RIM is a Ministry of Disciples Home Missions*

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