

Discussion Guide for Syrian Refugee Webinar and On-demand Video

Over 3.2 million Syrian refugees have fled their homes since the outbreak of civil war in 2011. Most have fled to the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and Iraq. As the conflict continues to create new waves of refugees, neighboring asylum countries have been stretched beyond the breaking point as they try to provide protection and assistance.

To serve these refugees and to enable countries within the region to continue providing sanctuary, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has asked resettlement countries, of which the United States is the global leader, to increase admissions for Syrian refugees. In 2015, the United States anticipates resettling thousands of Syrian refugees. In addition, the United States has committed more than \$3 billion in aid to victims of the Syrian conflict.

In December 2014, Episcopal Migration Ministries and Episcopal Public Policy Network are sponsoring a one-hour webinar to explore the current status of Syria's refugees, the U.S. role in alleviating the crisis, and how The Episcopal Church is uniquely positioned to respond to this humanitarian emergency.

The webinar and on-demand video, along with this Discussion Guide, are ideal for Sunday forums, discussion groups, youth groups, and formation classes.

Questions for reflection:

- Describe the images that come to mind when you think about refugees from the Syrian conflict. Has your local news or social media given much coverage to the refugee crisis resulting from this war? Discuss why.
- What is the United States' responsibility in providing aid to refugees from the Syrian conflict? Why?
- If an individual from Syria assists the United States in combating local terrorist activities, does the United States have a responsibility to protect that individual, perhaps even giving that person unique status for resettlement in the United States?
- Thinking theologically, what are Christians called to do in the current refugee crisis resulting from the Syrian conflict?
- How can you and/or your faith community support newly resettled Syrian refugees?

You can find up-to-date statistics on the status of refugees in the world using this link: <http://www.unrefugees.org>. If you would like to find out about The Episcopal Church's work in resettling refugees in your community, use the EMM network affiliate map: <http://bit.ly/1swkPif>.

Activity:

Materials needed: 3x5 cards or paper; pens or pencils

Read this introduction to your group:

Imagine for a moment that you are a refugee. You have to leave your home to go to a new place that is safe. You can only bring what you can carry in a backpack because your only way to escape is by walking 100 miles through the desert. You are in imminent danger so you only have one minute to decide. What 10 items would you bring?

Give participants five minutes to write down their items. Next read this:

Because you have to carry food and water, you have to cross off five items that you will leave behind. You only have 1 minute to decide what to keep. What is left in your bag?

Discuss with the group what types of items they decided to keep. Ask the group how they decided what was most important to bring with them.

Discuss what materials might be most helpful to refugees arriving in a new home.

What next?

During Epiphany, you can focus your adult education or Sunday School activities on exploring refugee resettlement. Video-based lesson plans for Epiphany 1 through Epiphany 4 are available on Lesson Plans That Work and a bulletin insert for Epiphany is available through Episcopal Digital Network.

If you have questions, feel free to call or email Allison Duvall, EMM's program manager for church relations and engagement, at (212) 716-6027 or aduvall@episcopalchurch.org.

Episcopal Migration Ministries

Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), the refugee resettlement agency of The Episcopal Church, welcomes thousands of refugees each year from conflict zones across the globe. Working in partnership with offices and groups within the church as well as with governments, nongovernment organizations, and a network of 30 affiliate offices in 26 dioceses, EMM provides vital services for thousands of refugee families upon their arrival in the United States.

In 2015, EMM is celebrating 75 years of Episcopal Church refugee resettlement through the yearlong #ShareTheJourney campaign. #ShareTheJourney is a multimedia effort to educate, form, and equip Episcopalians to engage in loving service with resettled refugees and to become prophetic witnesses and advocates on behalf of refugees, asylees, migrants, and displaced people the world over. More information at www.episcopalchurch.org/emm.

The Episcopal Public Policy Network

The Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN) is a grassroots network of Episcopalians across the country dedicated to carrying out the Baptismal Covenant call to "strive for justice and peace" through the active ministry of public policy advocacy. EPPN is part of The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations located in Washington, D.C. The actions, programs, and ministry of the Office of Government Relations are based entirely on policies approved by the church meeting in General Convention or by the Executive Council. As Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori reminds us, "The voices of the people of faith must be a prophetic impetus for lasting change, toward healing the body of God." <http://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org/home>