

Internet Resources (con'd.)

U.S. Committee for Refugees:
<www.refugees.org> and <www.refugeesusa.org>

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children:
<www.womenscommission.org>

Global Project on Internally Displaced People:
<www.idpproject.org>

National Immigration Forum:
<www.immigrationforum.org>



In the Eyes of a Stranger

A video about the global refugee crisis and how churches can restore hope to refugees through resettlement and advocacy.

Director: Terry D. Peterson
A PIC Production

UCC Refugee Ministries is supported by the UCC's *One Great Hour of Sharing* offering.

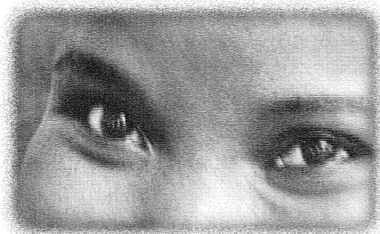
For more information, contact
Refugee Ministries Office
UCC Wider Church Ministries
700 Prospect Avenue, 7th floor
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 736-3212/3213
website: <www.ucc.org/ministries/refugees>.



**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



In the Eyes



of a Stranger

Study Guide

"For the Lord your God ... loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

— Deut. 10:17-19, NRSV

About "In The Eyes of a Stranger"

Around the world people are forced to flee their homes because of war, civil unrest, ethnic cleansing and persecution. As refugees, they struggle to survive. Many wait in refugee camps unsafe and uncertain about the future. This video shares the inspiring insights of UCC members who have welcomed refugees through the refugee resettlement program. Restoring hope to refugees is a central theme. "In The Eyes of a Stranger" tells how we, through participation in refugee resettlement, advocacy and *One Great Hour of Sharing* can respond to God's call to be bearers of hope.

In the Eyes of a Stranger was produced to introduce churches to the transforming ministry of refugee resettlement.

Audience and Setting

Who is your audience? Whether your group is a Mission Outreach Committee, a youth group, a Bible study group or an adult education group, this video, because of its short length and engaging topic, allows for group discussion.

What are your goals for the gathering? Is your group desiring to learn more about the world refugee crisis and ways to respond? Is your congregation considering refugee sponsorship? Whoever your audience is, there is something you can learn from this video.

In preparation make sure you have the equipment needed to show the video. You will need a VHS player and TV monitor. Before showing the video, preview it and consider how you feel about the message.

Review the discussion questions and decide which ones to use with your audience.

Gather other educational materials you may desire to use. See the list of available resources. Print out some Bible verses and have individuals read them aloud.

Bible Study

Include Bible study, prayer and worship as part of your experience with *In the Eyes of a Stranger*. Begin with these:

Lev. 19:33-34 (NRSV)

"When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

Matt. 2:13 (See also Matt. 2:13-23) (NRSV)

"An 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."

Matt. 25:34-36 (Inclusive Language Lectionary)

"Come, O blessed of [God], inherit the realm prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Consider these questions:

1. What are some of the central messages conveyed in these scriptures?
2. How does God view strangers? How does God expect us to treat strangers and aliens?
3. Why did Joseph take Mary and their child, Jesus, into Egypt? How important was it for them to have a place such as Egypt to go to?
4. Jesus identifies with those in need. How are we to respond?
5. How do these scriptures relate to church involvement in refugee ministries?

Discussion Questions

1. What was the single most memorable scene in the video for you? Why?
2. What is mission? In the context of the global refugee crisis, what is God's mission? How can we as Christians take part in that mission? In what way is refugee resettlement a mission outreach?
3. The beginning of the video presents the many troubling images we see every day of people suffering in the world. How can we overcome the sense of indifference or inadequacy we feel in the face of so much need in the world?

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4. People sometimes feel anxious about welcoming strangers. The Rev. Myron Cloyd said that “Educating a few people was the first significant challenge we faced, because some folks aren’t as open to people who are different from them. So we had to do a lot of educating about and know what the Jok family’s experience was.” What are your concerns about welcoming refugees? What can be done to help people overcome these fears?

5. If we welcome refugees, we can experience growth in our faith in God. Barbara James said, “Refugee settlement has been a wonderful growth process for me. It made me dig deep. It makes me angry at times, frustrated at times, but very prayerful most of the time, but in those prayers, God always comes through.” How might helping refugees make you feel vulnerable? How is refugee sponsorship an act of faith for both the sponsor and the refugee?

6. Sustaining hope is a challenge for refugees. Sylvia Robles said that “some of our families arrive after being in a refugee camp for 11 years. That means the kids haven’t been in school and their health may not be good.” How does the possibility of resettlement restore hope? Why is participating in refugee resettlement an important way to help others?

7. Some folks have experienced changed lives because of this ministry of hospitality. The Rev. Larry Kleiman said, “My greatest joy to be involved in refugee resettlement is to see the amazing transformation that happens in people’s lives. Because to me transformation is really at the heart of the Gospel and what it’s all about.” What does transformation mean to you? Have you ever experienced a moment of transformation? In what ways can involvement in refugee resettlement be transforming for you and the refugee?

8. What are you and your church willing to do to reach out to refugees and be “bearers of hope”?

Biblical Roots for Involvement in Refugee and Immigration Ministries

by the Rev. Joan Maruskin (used by permission)

The Bible is the ultimate immigration handbook. It is written by, for and about immigrants, refugees and migrants. Adam and Eve are exiled from the Garden of Eden to make their home in a new land (*Gen. 3: 22-24*). Noah and his family are victims of a natural disaster that makes it necessary for them to rebuild their world (*Gen. 6-8*). Abraham and Sarah are sent from their land to a place which they will be shown (*Gen. 12:1*). Moses is a criminal alien fleeing for his life, who returns to lead the Israelites out of political, ethnic and religious persecution to the promised land in search of religious freedom (*Exodus*). Ruth follows her mother-in-law and is dependent on Boaz for food and life (*Ruth*). Old Testament prophets flee for their lives and find protection and help in strange lands.

In the New Testament, the Messiah becomes an undocumented refugee fleeing to Egypt, with his parents, Mary and Joseph, to escape political persecution and death (*Matt. 2:13-23*). Jesus begins his public ministry by reading from the sacred book of Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (*Luke 4:16-19*). He lives out his life as an itinerant teacher with no place to lay his head (*Matt. 8:20*). Throughout the New Testament, the stranger is affirmed and included as Jesus repeatedly reaches out to the stranger. The New Testament closes with John living as an exile on the Isle of Patmos.

Throughout both the Old and the New Testaments, we are repeatedly instructed to care for and welcome the alien, the stranger, the sojourner. This is modeled by Abraham, when he welcomes the strangers near the oaks at Mamre — the strangers who are the manifest Lord (*Gen. 18:1-8*). The hospitality mandate is reaffirmed in *Heb. 13:2*, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

If you would like to do more ...

To help refugees, there are a variety of things you can do. You can:

1. Give generously to **One Great Hour of Sharing** at your church. OGHS provides significant support to the refugee programs of UCC Refugee Ministries, Church World Service and its affiliate network.
2. Share a “Moment for Mission” on refugees and challenge your church to prepare “welcome kits” for an arriving family.
3. Advocate for refugees. Join the **UCC Justice and Peace Action Network** by logging on to <www.ucc.org/justice/jpan>. You can also see a list of issues and send a letter to your representatives via <www.ucctakeaction.org/action>. Share refugee concerns in your church newsletter.
4. **Co-sponsor a refugee** through your local church and **Church World Service** affiliate. Refugee sponsorship may include:
 - welcoming refugees at the airport
 - locating and furnishing housing
 - collecting furniture and household supplies, food and clothing
 - providing transportation
 - helping locate jobs
 - enrolling adults in English classes and children in school
 - making appointments for medical check-ups
 - providing orientation to the new community

These efforts help to enable refugees to achieve self-sufficiency.



Further reading and study

Recommended resources

Refugee Journal: Telling the Story of UCC Refugee Ministries. A 16-page booklet featuring four inspiring stories of refugees as they begin a new life in the U.S.A. with the help of UCC congregations engaged in refugee resettlement through UCC Refugee Ministries. The Refugee Journal also shares the history of UCC involvement in welcoming refugees since 1946. #WCMRJ. Free.

Restoring Hope in a Broken World. A poster showing a refugee woman and child which bears the UCC and CWS logos. #WCMRH. Free.

The Uprooted Game. A board game for youth or adults to build an understanding of some of the realities faced by refugees. Includes a description for conducting an uprooted simulation game. #BWMTUG. \$3.00 each.

The above three resources can be ordered by calling United Church of Christ Resources, toll free, at 1-800-537-3394.

Facts Have Faces: Uprooted Peoples. A study guide offering a broad look at the global refugee crisis. This is an excellent resource providing statistics and quotes with ideas on how to take action. Church World Service, Elkhart, IN:2003. To order call 1-800-297-1516; #ED 0373, \$.20 each.

Internet

United Church of Christ, Refugee Ministries:
<www.ucc.org/ministries/refugees>

Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program:
<www.churchworldservice.org>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:
<www.unhcr.ch>



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