

# **Journey with Me: *Refugee Stories that Change Lives***



Figure 1 Flickr user Kris Krug

**-A refugee justice workshop-**

**Leviticus 19:33-34**

<sup>33</sup> *“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. <sup>34</sup> The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”*

New International Version

## Endorsement

Our community of churches in Canada has an honourable history of welcoming and helping refugee families settle here. Today, with the displacements caused by war, poverty, and environmental damage, refugee populations are higher than any time since World War II. The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Race Relations believe that the deepening refugee crisis; policy changes that create new hardships for refugees in Canada; and our heritage of Biblical hospitality as a community, create both a responsibility and opportunity for Canadians. Acting together with our refugee neighbours, we can seek justice, speak hope, and build a context of welcome in our communities. This is important because our refugee neighbours are so much more than refugees.

We are excited, prayerful and hopeful that this workshop will help build communities of faithful and faith-filled people to act for justice for and with refugees.

**-Darren Roorda**

*Canadian Ministries Director, Christian Reformed Church in North America*

## Acknowledgements

The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue is thankful for the partnerships and conversations that have made this resource possible. Our profound thanks to:

The Refugee Justice Task Force: Humberto Lopes (Office of Race Relations, Christian Reformed Church), Samia Saad and Rob Datema (The Lighthouse), Jenn McIntyre (Romero House), Katie Karsten (Diaconal Ministries), Angela Tuininga, Rebecca Walker (World Renew) and Danielle Rowaan (Canada Justice Team, Christian Reformed Church). Your passion and vision inspired and nurtured this work! Your organizations have also made generous commitments to this work – Thank you!

Global Learning Partners and the intrepid Jeanette Romkema, our project designer and passionate co-journeyer with refugees.

Our US colleagues in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) justice and reconciliation ministries (Office of Race Relations, Office of Social Justice) have blazed a trail in passionate and principled action with vulnerable migrants. Their *Church Between Borders* project, inspired by CRC Synod 2010's reflections on migrant justice, was a creative catalyst for our work.

The CRCNA Canada Foundation for their generous support of the development of this educational resource.

We also wish to thank the following groups for permission to use their material:

Portions of *Some Definitions* are from *Partners: Welcoming Refugee Friends to Canada* and the Presbyterian Church of Canada workshop *Making Connections: Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World*.

*Who is a Refugee* (Task 2) is adapted from *Introductory Ice Breaker* in the KAIROS workshop on refugees and migration *Welcoming the Stranger: Post 9-11*.

[http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/Welcoming\\_Uprooted.pdf](http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/Welcoming_Uprooted.pdf)

*Prayer* (Task 7) is from *Study: Making Room Good Samaritan*. Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, Philippines, 1995 (abridged version), as well as <http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/refugees/rworship.stm>

*Scripture Passages* is from *Church between Borders: A guide to welcoming the stranger* by the Office of Social Justice and Office of Race Relations of the Christian Reformed Church.

## Table of Contents

Leviticus 19:33-34	2
Endorsement	3
Acknowledgements	4
Table of Contents	5
Some Helpful Terms	6
<b>Topical Program</b>	
Welcome and Prayer	7
Task 1 – An Overview of Our Time Together	8
Task 2 – Why Does This Matter	9
Task 3 – What the Bible Says About Refugees	10
Task 4 – Walking in Someone Else’s Shoes	11
Task 5 – The Christian Reformed Church	13
Task 6 – What Are You Going to Do	14
Closing Poem and Prayer	15
<b>Appendix</b>	
Statements from the CRC - <i>Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony</i>	17
Statements from the CRC - <i>Synod 2010: Committee to Study the Migration of Workers</i>	18
Ideas for Action	19
Resources	20
My Action Plan	21

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## Some Helpful Terms

**A refugee** is a person forced outside of his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

**A refugee claimant** is a person outside of his or her country of nationality who has made a claim to be a refugee, and is waiting for the claim to be investigated. Refugee claimants have the right, under Canadian and international law, to remain in the country until the claim has been reviewed and either accepted or rejected. Sometimes the term “asylum seeker” is also used.

**A privately sponsored refugee** is a refugee who has been resettled to Canada under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP). Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) organizations with support from Canadian citizens provide financial and settlement assistance for refugees they sponsor usually for one year after arrival.

**An immigrant** is a person who chooses to leave one country to settle permanently in another. To immigrate to Canada, people must apply and be selected while living outside of Canada.

**An internally displaced person (IDP)** is a person who has fled war, famine and persecution, but has not left his or her country of origin. Many IDPs have fled for similar reasons as refugees, but they remain inside the boundary of their country and are under the care of their government. Most IDPs hope they can return home soon. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has a limited mandate to care for IDPs.

**A migrant** is a person who moves to another country without being granted the rights of permanent residence. Migrants often leave their homes due to extreme poverty, environmental catastrophes, and forced displacement due to projects such as dams, mines or the introduction of foreign markets. In Canada, most migrants come under temporary worker programs such as seasonal agricultural or live-in caregiver programs, which afford few rights or protection from abuse. Undocumented migrants are another growing reality in Canada. They are economic “refugees/migrants” who tend to live under the radar.

**A migrant worker** is a person who has left his or her homeland and has moved, sometimes seasonally, in order to find work, and does not have the right to stay permanently.

**A permanent<sup>1</sup> resident** is a person who has been granted permanent resident status after having come to Canada as an immigrant or as a refugee. This term has replaced the term “landed immigrant”.

**An application for permanent residence on Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds (H&C)** is an application that may be available to someone who is seeking permanent residence on the following grounds: the best interest of the child, establishment in Canada or hardship (different than risk) in their country of origin. In the past “H&C” has been a viable option for refugee claimants who have received negative decisions; however, it is becoming less accessible due to significant restrictions that were put in place in 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> Although based on changing legislation, “permanent” may not be so permanent any more.

## Welcome and prayer

### Task #1 Overview of Our Time Together

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As an overview of our time together today, let's have a look at the objectives for this workshop.

By the end of our time together, we will have done the following:

- Shared our connections with refugees and refugee issues
- Examined a list of Bible verses and discussed what we believe God is telling us about refugees and how we are called to respond
- Role-played a real situation for a refugee here in Canada and expressed what it feels like (for this brief time) to be a person in these shoes
- Charted and discussed the ripple effect of positive and negative treatment of refugees in Canada
- Read and discussed two statements from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) about refugees
- Listened to a presentation of the refugee work being done in the CRC and what resources are available
- Developed an action plan for your church or group, and shared it with the large group
- Prayed for our walk with our refugee brothers and sisters in Canada, and in the world.

*What questions do you have before we start?*



Figure 2 Flickr user Agustin Ruiz

*In 2013, more than 10,380 people came to Canada and made an asylum claim.*

-Government of Canada

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/canada.asp>



## Task #2 Why Does This Matter

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Let's start by meeting each other and seeing how we are connected to this topic of refugee justice: I'm going to read a list of statements. If the statement applies to you please stand up, say your name and a brief explanation of why you are standing. Sit back down if the new statement does not apply to you. After each statement we will hear from a few of you.

STAND UP IF you have been involved with sponsoring a refugee in Canada...

STAND UP IF you have done volunteer or paid work with/for refugees...

STAND UP IF you know someone who has been or is a refugee...

STAND UP IF you are from the Global South<sup>2</sup>...

STAND UP IF you have worked in or done extensive travel to a country in the Global South...

STAND UP IF you have read or heard news coverage today relating to refugee issues...

STAND UP IF your church or a group you belong to donates money to an organization working with refugees or refugee issues...

*All our lives are touched by refugees and issues of welcome or exclusion in Canada.*



Figure 3 Flickr user Michael Chu

Bill C-49 was introduced in 2011 to deter human smuggling however, this bill in essence mostly targets refugees, not the smugglers. Refugees are subject to arbitrary detention, separation of families and long-term restrictions on landed status.

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<sup>2</sup> Here we have used the term “Global South”. In the past the term “developing country” was usually used. However today this can feel offensive to those from this area, as this concept assumes others are not properly developing. Saying from the Global South is better and it challenges dominant and oppressive concept of development. Some people also like to use the term “2/3s world”.

## Task #3 What the Bible Says about Refugees

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Take a few minutes to read the Bible texts below. Then with the people at your table, discuss what God is telling us about refugees and how we are called to respond.

*Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt... (Exodus 22:21)*

*When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the stranger. The aliens who reside with you shall be to you as the citizens among you, and you shall love them as yourselves, for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt. (Leviticus 19:33-34)*

*...You and the foreigner shall be the same before the Lord... (Numbers 15:15)*

*[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you... (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)*

*Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner... (Deuteronomy 27:19)*

*Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker... (Proverbs 14:31)*

*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves... (Proverbs 31:8-9)*

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God... (1 John 4:7-21)*

*Gentiles are no longer strangers, Jesus has made strangers and Israelites part of one Body. (Ephesians 2: 11-21)*

*Heroes of the faith were strangers on earth. (Hebrews 11:13)*

*I was a stranger and you invited me in. (Matthew 25: 31-46)*

*Show hospitality to strangers because you might be entertaining angels. (Hebrews 13:2)*

Let's hear some of your thoughts and I will write them at the front.

*At the end of 2013, there were more than 51 million people forcibly displaced from their homes - the highest number since the Second World War.*  
-UNHCR website

## Task #4 Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

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4A We are going to spend the next 15 minutes “stepping in someone else’s shoes”. We are going to take time to get *a small taste* of what it feels like to be a refugee in Canada. This is not only an exercise in which we are going to learn something with our *minds*, but we are also going to experience it with our *hearts*. I invite you to make space for this role-play and prepare yourself. *These are real people in real situations in Canada, most from the Christian Reformed Church.*

Everyone should be equally divided into groups of 4-5 people. Each table is made up of refugees from around the world. Each of you has a unique situation, and some of you share common experiences in Canada or in your journey to get here.

On your own, take a few minutes to read your profile sheet. You will need to stay “in character” for 15 minutes to begin to feel how your character may feel. Take a few minutes now to understand who this person is (as best as you can) before starting. Step into their shoes...

NOTE: *It may feel strange or even uncomfortable to behave like someone you are not. We ask that you give it a try and do the best you can. The more “in character” you are, the more empathy you will build for the person, and the more meaningful the role-play will be for everyone at your table.*

At your table, take 15 minutes to discuss these questions and whatever else comes up for you:

- *How do you feel about being a refugee in Canada?*
- *What is the (policy) issue you faced/have been facing?*
- *What has been happening in your life as a result?*
- *What are your worries and concerns?*

In June 2012 the Federal government introduced cuts to the Interim Federal Health Program. Refugees are now denied access to basic health care. These changes unjustly discriminate against people in need and, worse, leave some people to suffer debilitating illnesses or to die without treatment.



Figure 4 Flickr user Nate Steiner

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You are now out of your role as a refugee.

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4B Let's hear some of the feelings that surfaced as you were doing the role play. I'll write them on a flip chart so we can see the range of emotions in this room.

- *What comes to mind when you see these emotions?*
- *What questions arise for you?*

4C At your table, take 10 minutes to discuss this question:

- *What possible ripple effect do you foresee as these refugees continue to live out their lives in Canada? In other words, what are all the possible consequences on a marriage, on the children's education, on the families, on the communities, etc.?*

Map out your thoughts on the flip chart paper (one positive column and one negative column) on your table. Feel free to use words, pictures, or any other communication tool.

- *What do you notice from what was written or drawn?*
- *What surprises or worries you?*
- *What questions or comments do you have?*



Figure 5 Flickr user Kris Krug

*Many migrants have come here to get a better standard of living. We have come here because our lives are in danger.*

-a refugee

## Task #5 The Christian Reformed Church

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5A The CRC has a long history of engagement with refugees. An example is World Renew's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, started in 1979, and relief and development initiatives.

Let's take a few minutes to read some excerpts from two CRC documents about refugees: 1. *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, and 2. *Synod 2010 – Committee to Study the Migration of Workers* (see **APPENDIX pp26-27**).

Underline what you especially like in these words and circle the parts which echoes what we read earlier in the Bible.

Let's hear a sample of what you highlighted.

5B Turn to the person beside you and take 5 minutes to discuss the following:

- *What refugee work has your church or individuals in your church been involved in over the years?*
- *What results have you seen from this work?*
- *Has this work increased or decreased? What are the reasons for this?*



Figure 6 Flickr user epSos.de

Bill C-31 implemented in 2012 introduced changes to Canada's refugee determination system including changes such as very tight timelines that deny refugee claimants a fair chance to prove their claims. As well, the bill introduced 'designated country of origin' that serves to limit appeals and create a list of safe countries from where refugee claimants will not be accepted.

## Task #6 What Are You Going to Do

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6A Listen to the list of ideas you and your church can do to continue to engage with this topic and intentionally reach out to our refugee brothers and sisters in Christ so together we create a positive exciting future (see **APPENDIX p.19**).

- *What else comes to mind?*

6B Now with these ideas in mind and the list of resources in **APPENDIX p.20** complete the ACTION PLAN on **APPENDIX p.21**. *Remember, these are things you are really going to do.*

We will share a sample of your plans.



Figure 7 Flickr user Rafael Medina

The number of refugee claimants arriving in Canada has been going dramatically down (10,000 fewer in 2010 than in 2009). Refugee claims in Canada are dramatically down in the first half of 2013, 50% less than last year. The drop in numbers follows the introduction in December 2012 of [changes to the refugee determination system](#), reducing the rights of refugees. At the current rate, there will be fewer claims in Canada in 2013 than in any year since the early 1980s.

## Closing Poem and Prayer

### Reader #1

Don't call me a stranger;  
I need to feel at home;  
Especially when loneliness cools my  
heart.

### Reader #2

Don't call me a stranger;  
The soil we step on is the same;  
But mine is not "the promised land."

### Reader #3

Don't call me a stranger;  
The colour of my passport is different;  
But the colour of our blood is the same.

### Reader #4

Don't call me a stranger;  
The language I speak sounds different;  
But the feelings it expresses are the  
same.

### Reader #5

Don't call me a stranger;  
I toil and struggle in your land;  
And the sweat of our brows is the same.

### Reader #6

Don't call me a stranger;  
Borders, we created them;  
And the separation that results is the  
same.

### Reader #7

Don't call me a stranger;  
I am just your friend;  
But you do not know me yet.

### Reader #8

Don't call me a stranger;  
We cry for justice and peace in different  
ways;  
But our God is the same.

O Lord, open our eyes that we may see the needs of refugees;  
open our ears that we may hear people's cries for justice;  
open our hearts that we may assist sojourners near and far.

Show us where love, hope and faith are needed.

Use us as ministers of your healing.

Let us not be afraid to protect the weak because of the anger of the strong,  
or to defend the poor because of the power of the rich.

Sustain us so that in these coming days  
we may be able to do some work of peace for you.

We ask these things in your blessed name. Amen.

# Appendix



## Statements from the Christian Reformed Church

### Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony

#### *God's New People*

34. In our world,  
where many journey alone,  
nameless in the bustling crowd,  
Satan and his evil forces  
seek whom they may scatter and isolate;  
but God, by his gracious choosing in Christ,  
gathers a new community—  
those who by God's gift  
put their trust in Christ.  
In the new community  
all are welcome:  
the homeless come home,  
the broken find healing,  
the sinner makes a new start;  
the despised are esteemed,  
the least are honored,  
and the last are first.  
Here the Spirit guides  
and grace abounds.

#### *The Mission of God's People*

41. Joining the mission of God,  
the church is sent  
with the gospel of the kingdom  
to call everyone to know and follow Christ  
and to proclaim to all  
the assurance that in the name of Jesus  
there is forgiveness of sin  
and new life for all who repent and  
believe.  
The Spirit calls all members  
to embrace God's mission  
in their neighborhoods  
and in the world:  
to feed the hungry,  
bring water to the thirsty,  
welcome the stranger,  
clothe the naked,  
care for the sick,  
and free the prisoner.  
We repent of leaving this work to a few,  
for this mission is central to our being.

## Synod 2010 – Committee to Study the Migration of Workers

“... the experience of being displaced—of being a migrant and a refugee—lies at the very heart of the biblical narrative.”

“God desired Israel to extend to the strangers among them every kindness and courtesy because in so doing, the Israelites would be mirroring their God who extended his grace, his lovingkindness, to the Israelites who were just as much an immigrant people in God’s eyes as anyone else on the earth.”

“... the gospels present the ministry of Jesus as being all-inclusive. But of particular interest to Jesus and to his kingdom were first and foremost precisely those people whom the religious establishment in his day excluded—in great contradistinction to everything God had taught in his law. The last, least, lost, and lonely fringe members of the world—the strangers in our midst—were the ones Jesus saw and loved first of all.”

“Churches are called to be hospitable to immigrants, but hospitality alone will not solve the myriad problems that plague the immigration systems in the United States and Canada. ... Christians are right to advocate for immigration policies within a given nation that will be more just, fair, and generous and that will assist the nation in welcoming more strangers as citizens, not fewer.”

Combined with these policy initiatives is government language like “bogus refugees” and “queue jumpers”. This language is pejorative and misleading. It pits refugees against the rest of Canadians and it pits refugee claimants against refugees seeking resettlement. This negative language suggests that those who wait in camps overseas are the ‘real’ refugees while those who make their claim in Canada jump the line and are not as deserving. The truth is that all refugees are people who have been forced from their homes by human rights abuses. All refugees have a right to protection, wherever they are. We should not expect refugees to wait passively for someone to help them.

## Ideas for Action

1. Buy a children's book about refugees for someone you know or your church library (see *Resources* for ideas).
2. Ask your minister to preach a sermon on the topic (see *Resources* for ideas).
3. Sponsor a refugee (call the *Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program* of World Renew).
4. Watch a film about refugees with your youth group and discuss it (see *Resources* for ideas).
5. Use a children's book about refugees in your children's worship time during a church service. (See the toolkit at [http://www2.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue\\_toolkit.cfm](http://www2.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_toolkit.cfm))
6. Organize a fundraising event to raise funds for humanitarian aid and support (call International Disaster Response of World Renew for ideas).
7. Write a letter to a politician (call the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue for ideas).
8. Organize another workshop in your church (see *Resources* for ideas).
9. Choose a book about refugees for your next book club meeting (see *Resources* for ideas).
10. Focus an entire church service on refugees:  
  
    April 4 – Refugee Rights Day in Canada  
    April 12 – Refugee Sunday in the CRC  
    June 20 – World Refugee Day
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.

## Resources

### CRC Resources

The below resources are available at: [http://www2.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue\\_toolkit.cfm](http://www2.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_toolkit.cfm)

Articles	Recommended reading
Bible verses	Sermons
Children's books	Skits
Children's story during church service	Sunday school activities
Prayers	Videos

### Other Workshops

*Welcome the Stranger: Post 9-11*

[http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/Welcoming\\_Uprooted.pdf](http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/Welcoming_Uprooted.pdf)

A KAIROS workshop on refugees and migration.

*Staying Rooted in an Uprooted World*

<file:///C:/Users/Jeanette/Downloads/Refugees-AdultStudy-1012.pdf>

A workshop for adults by the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

*Welcoming Refugee Friends to Canada*

[http://presbyterian.ca/wp-content/uploads/cm\\_partners\\_welcoming\\_refugee\\_friends\\_to\\_canada\\_2009.pdf](http://presbyterian.ca/wp-content/uploads/cm_partners_welcoming_refugee_friends_to_canada_2009.pdf)

A workshop for children and youth by the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

### Websites on Refugees and Migration

Canadian Council for Refugees

[www.web.net/~ccr](http://www.web.net/~ccr)

Centre for Public Dialogue

<http://www2.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue.cfm>

World Renew

<http://www.worldrenew.net/refugeesponsorship>

Diaconal Ministries Canada

[diaconalministries.com/wp/doing-justice/refugees](http://diaconalministries.com/wp/doing-justice/refugees)

Amnesty International Canada

[www.amnesty.ca/refugee/](http://www.amnesty.ca/refugee/)

Citizens for Public Justice

<http://www.cpj.ca/private-sponsorship-and-public-policy>

Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada

[www.cic.gc.ca/ref-protection](http://www.cic.gc.ca/ref-protection)

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org/>

KAIROS-Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

[www.kairoscanada.org](http://www.kairoscanada.org)

Office of Social Justice for the Christian Reformed Church

[http://www2.crcna.org/pages/osj\\_refugees.cfm](http://www2.crcna.org/pages/osj_refugees.cfm)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

[www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)

## My Action Plan

WHO	DOES WHAT	WHEN

*Now who are you going to share this plan with?*