

REFUGEE SUNDAY 2024

CHILDREN'S GROUPS ACTIVITIES INTRODUCTION



THE MATERIAL

The Kids' Church materials we have provided this year are to be used as you feel appropriate in your church setting. We know that every church is different. You may have a congregation that comprises a wide range of different cultures, including people who are seeking asylum or refugees; you may have a mono-cultural congregation, keen to find out more about, and to offer support to, those seeking asylum in the UK; or you may have a congregation somewhere in between.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Whatever your church setting, we hope the materials supplied will be of use to Kids' Church leaders. In preparing, you will need to consider the children you are teaching. Are any of them from a refugee background? How will those children 'hear' what is being taught? Each of the Bible passages focuses on empowerment: those considered on the fringes of society for whatever reason (race / religion / gender / cultural background / poverty) become part of God's kingdom by His grace through their actions and words. 'Outsiders' become 'insiders'. The least become the first. The humble become the exalted.

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USEFUL LINKS

World Vision, "How to Talk to Kids about Refugees"

<https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/how-to-talk-kids-about-refugees>

The Methodist Church, "Supporting refugee and asylum seeking children and young people"

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/children-youth-family-ministry/the-well-learning-hub-equipping-and-supporting-workers/responding-to-war-in-ukraine/supporting-refugee-and-asylum-seeking-children-and-young-people/>



FEEDBACK & SHARING

We would love to hear about your experience of using this material in your church community. Please send us an email to emily@welcomechurches.org to let us know how you got on. Please also consider sharing (with permission) on social media using #refugeesunday and tagging @welcomechurches

FEELING SAFE

ALL AGES



INTRODUCTION

You will encourage your congregation to think about what helps them to feel safe, what it's like when we don't have the things that make us feel safe, and what we can do to feel better. This will all be framed in the context of what refuge means; what a refugee is; and the biblical mandate to extend welcome and love to strangers in our midst, and to care for those who have been persecuted.

YOU WILL NEED

A large bag with items in that might represent a person's safety, for example:

- a teddy bear (to represent toys)
- a family photo (to represent family / friends)
- a small model of a house (Monopoly / Lego etc to represent a home)
- a Bible (to represent faith)
- a blanket (to represent a warm bed to sleep in)
- a can of food (to represent food and drink)
- a first aid kit (to represent good health).

Decide how many items you want, or if there's anything additional that's particularly relevant to your congregation.



ASK AND EXPLAIN #1

Ask your congregation: what helps you to feel safe? As responses are made, take items out of your bag to match with them, and ask a volunteer to hold each at the front. (You can have as few / many as you choose to shorten / lengthen the all age slot.)

Now explain: sometimes, people have to leave behind everything that helps them to feel safe. One by one, take away the items from the volunteers at the front and put them back in the bag.

ASK AND EXPLAIN #2

Ask your congregation: how might you feel if you had to leave behind everything that helps you to feel safe and go to another country, or move a long way from home? Take answers from the congregation.

Now explain: a person who has to leave their country because it isn't safe for them to stay there is called a refugee.



ASK AND EXPLAIN #3

Ask your congregation: what does the word refuge mean?

Now explain: a refugee is a person who is looking for a new safe place to be. They are looking for a refuge.

ASK AND EXPLAIN #4

Ask your congregation: what can we do to help people feel safe? Take a few answers - give prompts as required e.g. what can you do if a new child at school doesn't speak English and looks a bit left out?

Now explain: all through the Bible, we are told to love the foreigner; show hospitality to those who are hungry, thirsty, need clothes, are unwell and are in prison; and speak up against injustice. It's our job to welcome refugees - so we need to be places of safety.

PRAYER

We thank You, Lord, that You made us in Your image

We thank You that You gave us eyes to see
Help us to see when things are not fair

We thank You that You gave us mouths to speak
Help us to speak out against injustice

We thank You that You gave us hands to care
Help us to be gentle and kind in all our actions

We thank You that you have blessed us with homes, families and friends
Help us to be generous and share all that we have

We thank You that You are the perfect refuge
Help us to be like You as we welcome refugees

We thank You that You gave us hearts to love
Help us to show Your love in all we do

Amen



COME TO THE PARTY

2-5 YEARS OLD



VERSES

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Luke 14:12-14 (NIV)

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." Matthew 25:35

AIM

To explore what it feels like to be hungry or thirsty, tired, lonely, or left out; and to think about how we can help people who feel like this.

BACKGROUND

The Luke passage is set in the context of Jesus eating at the house of a prominent pharisee, where people were jostling for the most important position. Jesus teaches his host to invite the humble, not just those that can repay with their own invitation. He goes on to teach about the Kingdom of God being like a banquet to which the invited guests do not come, so invitations are given to the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame. The context for the verse in Matthew is a series of parables that Jesus tells about the coming of the Kingdom of God. He describes how the righteous and the unrighteous will be separated at the end of time on the basis of their lived-out faith on earth.



EITHER

CIRCLE TIME (8 MINUTES)

Place a large cloth bag or pillowcase in the middle of the circle, and tell the children that it has some really precious things inside it. Tell them that you have put into it some of the things you treasure most from your home. (You might like to include family photos, a teddy bear, a piece of jewellery, a book, a bar of chocolate etc, enough for one each for your class to hold.) Children try to guess - take objects out one by one (giving clues if need be!), and let children hold one each.

Ask the children about the things that matter most to them in their home - e.g. their pets, bedroom, bike, family. Imagine that one day they're told they've got to leave their home and town. It is no longer safe. They can take only one small object with them. What will that be? Which one item that has come out of the pillowcase do they think you would take with you? Why?

Explain in very simple terms what a refugee is: a person who has to leave their own country because it's not safe to stay there. How might that feel?



OR

INTRODUCTORY GAME (8 MINUTES)

Play the game "You're my friend if...". Everyone stands up and spreads out. One of the leaders starts, and says, "You're my friend if..." and says something about themselves e.g. "You're my friend if you're a girl." All the girls then come and stand by that leader to be their friends. Repeat a few times, but try to make sure a few times that one person is left out - it could be the leader themselves. Ask what it's like to be left out. How does it feel? Have you ever been left out of a game or a party? Is it a good thing to leave people out of games?

Ask if any of the children can remember what a refugee is. Do you think a refugee might ever feel left out? Why?



CRAFT (8 MINUTES)

You will need: strips of card, enough to make headbands, 1 per child; Self-adhesive jewels / decorations; "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." Matthew 25:35 printed out 1 per child, to stick on headbands.

Children make a party crown each. Talk about parties, what we like to wear, what's it like being invited.

BIBLE STORY (10 MINUTES)

YOU WILL NEED

- a few party invitations - fewer than you have children in the room.
- a table set up with some plates and cups, a jug of juice or water, and some age-appropriate snacks e.g. breadsticks, slices of apple. (Check beforehand with parents / carers about any food allergies etc.)
- a few props for you to dress up as e.g. a member of the royal family,
- a few props for your friends e.g. colourful sashes.

Divide the children up, some to be invited to the party, some not.

Retell the story of Jesus being invited to eat. Give out invitations to a few children, sit them at the table looking at the food and drinks. Ask the other children - what is it like to be missed out? Ask the children at the table - what can we do to help these children? Draw extra chairs around the table, lay extra plates etc. Make sure everyone gets a share of the snacks and drinks.

How can we help people who might be feeling left out? (Eg share toys at nursery, play together at the park when we're out with our mums / dads / grandparents, smile to new children in church and say hello.)





CHAT AND EAT (6 MINUTES)

Encourage children to share food with each other, say please and thank you. Talk about what it feels like to share and to make other people feel happy and welcome.

RESPONSE (4 MINUTES)

Read the Bible verse that's stuck on their party crowns to the children. Ask them - if Jesus was in the room, would you invite Him to a party? Would you give Him food and drink, and special clothes to wear? Explain that Jesus has said that every time we include somebody who's a bit left out, it's as if we have invited Him to a party!

PRAYER AND REFLECTION (4 MINUTES)

(Children hold out their hands, thumbs up.)

Thank you, God, for all the good things you have given us especially....

(Thumbs down.)

Dear God, we are glad you know about all the bad things that happen in the world, especially....

(Thumbs sideways.)

We pray for those who are in need, especially those who are refugees....

(Thumbs pointing inwards.)

We pray for ourselves, that we may be extra kind to..... Amen

WORSHIP SONG IDEAS

- Doug Horley, [Help me be your eyes Lord Jesus](#)
- Listener Kids, [This Little Light of Mine](#)
- Jana Alayra, [Everybody, Everywhere](#)



CRAFT PRINTABLE

**“FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT,
I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO DRINK,
I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU INVITED ME IN”** MATTHEW 25:35

**“FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT,
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GO AND BE LIKE HIM!

5-8 YEARS OLD



VERSES

- The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

AIM

To explore how the man attacked by robbers was cared for by someone very different from himself. What might it mean for us to care for someone very different?

BACKGROUND

Jesus told this story to answer the question, Who is my neighbour? He didn't answer it directly but pointed to the least likely person who went out of his way to care for someone in need. Then Jesus said, "Go and be like him!" Ouch! Refer as often as appropriate to the welcoming ministry of the church.



EITHER

CIRCLE TIME (6 MINUTES)

Ask children about the things that matter most to them in their town and in their home – e.g. their pets, bedroom, bike, friend, park. Imagine that one day they're told they've got to leave their home and town. It is no longer safe. They can take only one small object with them. What will that be?

This is the question many adults and children ask themselves when they have to leave their home country and become refugees. Talk about the church's ministry to refugees, as appropriate.

INTRODUCTORY GAME (6 MINUTES)

YOU WILL NEED

- resource sheet images printed on small slips of paper, allowing for a total of 7 images per child: someone sad and hungry, a burnt-out building, someone behind bars, a dried-up tree or riverbed – to represent hunger, war, persecution, climate change;
- 4 small containers with one of the images and the matching word stuck to each.

Introduce each image. Ask what the children think it represents. (Explain using age-appropriate language.) These are the reasons why people leave their own country to travel to another, hopefully to a safer place.

Place the containers around the room, or even better, outside. Explain that each child will be given one slip of paper to post in the right container, then come back to you for another one. The challenge is to complete this in 4 minutes. (It may take longer.)



OR

INTRODUCTORY VIDEO (6 MINUTES)

Aardman and Save the Children, "Home" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJ3mOQaA5nE>)

Watch the video together.

Afterwards, ask: why do some people have to run away from their homes? What would they feel if they come to a new place where people eat different foods and speak a different language? (Remind children of prompts in video - look different / like different things / war.)

BIBLE STORY (12 MINUTES)

YOU WILL NEED

- 6 or more hats / scarves for the cast in the story,
- a big bag,
- a little bag,
- a first aid kit / calpol / doctor's set and a chair; or playmobil, duplo figures and a donkey if being less dramatic.

One adult could read the story and another organise the participants.

Sit in two lines facing each other, at least 2 metres apart. Put a chair (a rock) at one end. Hide two (or more) robbers (wearing baseball caps) behind the chair. Their victim stands at the other end of the line.

JESUS TOLD THIS STORY:

A man, let's call him Jacob (wearing an ordinary hat /scarf) woke up in the city of Jerusalem. He got ready to travel along the stony, lonely road to Jericho. (He picks up the little bag.) He was nervous. Not many people travelled down this road. Bandits waited for people walking on their own to attack and rob them.

He set off on his own. Suddenly from behind a rock, two bandits jumped out at him (instruct the bandits not to touch their victim), knocked him to the ground, grabbed his bag, and ran off! (Robbers rejoin the line.)

Jacob lay there in great pain. His leg was bleeding badly. He thought he'd never be able to walk again. The sun was very hot. He began to feel worse. Then he heard some footsteps. Someone was coming to help him.

It was the leader of worship in the temple in Jerusalem. A very important man (dressed in a smart scarf, maybe tied around his waist)!

"Help" cried Jacob. He saw this was the leader of worship in the temple. "Oh good!" he thought. He will know I am a Jew, like him. He will help me. But the leader of worship walked straight past Jacob, looking the other way.



Jacob lay there. His leg was still bleeding. He was getting worse. He was getting hotter. Then he heard some footsteps. Someone was coming to help him.

It was the man who welcomed people into the temple in Jerusalem (dressed in a scarf / hat).

"Help" cried Jacob. He saw this was the man who welcomed people into the temple. "Oh good!" he thought. He will know I am a Jew, like him. He will help me. But the man who welcomed people walked straight past Jacob, looking the other way.

Jacob lay there. Both his legs were bleeding. He was getting worse and worse, and hotter and hotter. Then he heard some footsteps and the sound of donkey hooves. Someone was coming to help him.

It was a Samaritan (wearing an ordinary scarf), someone who had nothing to do with the temple, was not a Jew, the sort of person Jacob really disliked.

"Help!" cried Jacob but he did not expect this man to stop. But this man did. He got off his donkey, came over to Jacob, then went back to his donkey.

"He's leaving me!" Jacob thought. But no! This Samaritan picked up his bag (big bag) and took out his first aid kit / doctor's set - chat about what needed to be done. After wiping away the blood, wrapping bandages around his legs and giving him some Calpol to take away his headache, he put Jacob on his donkey. They set off down the road to Jericho.

Before long they came to a hotel. The Samaritan, who was so very different from Jacob, paid the owner of the hotel to look after Jacob. "If it costs more than I've given you," said the Samaritan, "let me know when I next call by. I'll pay you the extra." Wow!

JESUS ASKED THIS QUESTION:

Who might you expect to help Jacob? Who actually went out of his way to help Jacob?

EITHER

CHAT (6 MINUTES)

Talk with the children about other children who are different from them - boys / girls; older / younger; different races / skin colours; speak English / don't speak English; children they like / dislike. Adults and children who've had to leave their own country, becoming refugees, seeking a safe place, a refuge, will be different from us. They might be treated like the first two men treated Jacob.

What sort of help might refugee children need? What could we do to help?



OR

SORTING GAME (6 MINUTES)

Ask one child to choose a friend who has something the same as them e.g. same coloured eyes, same gender, item of clothing. The rest of the group has to try to guess what the common feature is. If after 3 guesses, they haven't worked it out, the 2 children choose another friend with the same feature. Continue until the common feature has been identified. Play again if there is time. Then ask the question: how are we all the same? How are we different?

Sometimes adults and children have to leave their own country. They will be different from us, and might be treated like Jacob was treated by the first two men.

What sort of help might refugee children need? What could we do to help?

RESPONSE (10 MINUTES)

YOU WILL NEED

- paper, felt tips, pens

Imagine that you are a child of your own age who has left their own country and arrived here. They're sad and have only brought one special thing with them. (Refer back to your earlier discussion).

They have no toys. Think about your toys. Which one toy would you like to give this child, to say they are welcome and you want to help them? Draw that toy.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Talk about the pictures. How difficult would it be to give that toy away? Would they want to wrap it up to show that it's a present? Would they want to know more about the refugee child to give them a toy that they might really like?

(Children hold out their hands, thumbs up.)

Thank you, God, for all the good things you have given us especially....

(Thumbs down.)

Dear God, we are glad you know about all the bad things that happen in the world, especially....

(Thumbs sideways.)

We pray for those who are in need, especially those who are refugees....

(Thumbs pointing inwards....)

We pray for ourselves, that we may be extra kind to..... Amen





CRAFT PRINTABLE



WHAT REALLY MATTERS?

9+ YEARS OLD



VERSES

- The book of Ruth (Ruth 1:1-22)

AIM

To explore the emotions of Naomi and Ruth who became refugees, reflecting on God's care for those who are refugees today.

BACKGROUND

The story of Ruth and Naomi is about people becoming refugees and fleeing to a safer place. All the details of the story cannot be included in the session. Encourage the children to use their imaginations as they engage with the Bible reading. Refer as often as appropriate to the welcoming ministry of the church.

CIRCLE TIME (6 MINUTES)

Ask the children about the things that matter most to them in their town and in their home – e.g. their pets, bedroom, bike, friend, park, games console, family. Imagine that one day they're told they must leave their home and town. It is no longer safe. They can take only one small object with them. What will that be?

This is the question many adults and children ask themselves when they have to leave their home country and become refugees. Talk about the church's ministry to refugees, as appropriate.

EITHER

INTRODUCTORY GAME (6 MINUTES)

YOU WILL NEED

- a range of images printed on small slips of paper, allowing for a total of 7 images per child: to represent hunger, war, persecution, climate change (see resources sheet);
- 4 small containers with one each of the words hunger, war, persecution and climate change stuck on.

Introduce each word and ask what the children understand by that word. (You may need to elaborate on the types of persecution.) Explain that these are the main reasons why people leave their own country to travel to another, hopefully safer place.

Which do they think would be the worst reason?

Place the containers around the room, or even better, outside. Explain that each child will be given one image which they need to post in the correct labelled container, then come back for another one. The challenge is for them to do this in 4 minutes. (It doesn't matter if it takes longer.) At the end, check briefly that the correct images are in each box - it may be that the same image is posted into different containers. Explore with children as appropriate.



OR INTRODUCTIONARY VIDEO (6 MINUTES)

The Guardian, "Kids, refugees, questions: 'What is it like to have no home?'"
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctCaKH-2Wm8>)

Watch video together. Afterwards, ask the children: what did you see? How did it make you feel? What would you ask a refugee child?

BIBLE STORY (10 MINUTES)

YOU WILL NEED

- 6 children to play the parts of Elimelek, Naomi, Mahlon, Kilion, Ruth, Orpah, an assistant;
- 2 empty boxes of food, labelled Bethlehem and Moab;
- either side of the room, tins of food, cereals, jam - enough to fill a box, plus a few extra tins

Slowly read Ruth chapter 1 in a modern version (eg [Easy English Bible: Ruth](#)). Encourage the emotional reactions and movements involved in the story. Explain that Naomi and Elimelek belonged to the people of Israel and worshipped God. They lived in Bethlehem at the start of the story, the town where King David and, centuries later, where Jesus was born.

RUTH CHAPTER 1:1-22

Verse 1a - Ruth and Orpah stand by the filled Bethlehem box; Elimelek's family stand together in front of that box. Your assistant empties the box and puts the food in the Moab box

1b-2 - when you read out names, each person steps forward. The 4 travel slowly to the full box and sit down.

3-4 - Elimelek dies, (however he chooses to die), Orpah and Ruth each stand next to one of the sons.

5 - the sons die (however they choose to), the 3 women stand close together.

6-18 - your assistant puts the extra tins into the Bethlehem box, the women set off, stand and discuss, and weep. Orpah goes back, and the two carry on slowly.

19-22 - Naomi weeps, Ruth looks around, and they sit down.

CHAT TOGETHER (5 MINUTES)

Ask about the different feelings Naomi must have had in these 10 stages:

1. in Bethlehem with the full box
2. the empty box and famine
3. travelling to Moab (sadness at leaving her family)
4. the husband dies (explain she's a foreigner in a land with a different religion)
5. her sons marry
6. they die (more sorrow)
7. she hears the news of the end of the famine
8. Orpah leaves
9. Ruth stays
10. they arrive in Bethlehem.



Talk about the emotional roller coaster of anyone who is a refugee, fleeing to another place for safety.



RESPONSE (6 MINUTES)

YOU WILL NEED

- A4 paper cut in half vertically, pens, felts – or you could do this altogether using a flip chart

Invite the children to pick one stage of Naomi's journey. Give the children paper for them to write down (maybe in pairs) what would have helped them at their stage of the journey, if they'd been Naomi. Talk about it.

Then briefly tell them what happened to Naomi next. Remind them that Ruth is now the one who is a refugee living in another country. She has become a worshipper of the God of Israel. She trusts God. Boaz, a member of Naomi's family, takes care of Naomi and Ruth. Boaz marries Ruth and she gives birth to a son, called Obed, who was to become the grandfather of King David. Naomi and Ruth find shelter and a home in Bethlehem. Ruth remains far from her family.

So how did God look after Naomi and Ruth, and provide them with what they needed? (Draw out that it was through other people.) Talk about what you could do for refugees in this country.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION (7 MINUTES)

YOU WILL NEED

- a bowl of salty water, the box of food, a candle

Sit around the bowl, box of food and candle. Ask the children what they want to tell God about their sadness, represented by tears in the bowl. How do they want to pray for those who are refugees in the UK, represented by the box of food? Remind them that God is like a light in the darkness for everyone, and that we too are called to be like light, and to show God's love, to those around us.





CRAFT PRINTABLE

HUNGER

WAR

PERSECUTION

CLIMATE CHANGE

