

Overview of series materials

Lent 2017

Challenged to embrace a larger definition of “neighbor” in the midst of the global refugee crisis and US immigration challenges, Creekside UMC in Sutter Creek, CA, committed to learning and praying about different refugee groups during this past Lent as a first step to engagement. Information used for weekly bulletin inserts and brief worship segments is included here for others to use as they wish. The content can easily be adapted for other times of year.

Materials include:

- a newsletter article introducing the series
- bulletin inserts for each week with background on a refugee group, seven prayer suggestions (one for each day of the week), and sources for more information
- scripts of 5- to 8- minute presentations (Refugee Moments) for each week that augment the inserts, lifting up personal stories to humanize the crises.

The focus countries/areas are (1) Syria, (2) Afghanistan, (3) Somalia, (4) Myanmar, (5) Palestine, and (6) the Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador in Central America. The first three are the largest source countries for refugees worldwide under the care of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Myanmar ranks 8th but was included to spread the map a bit and make the point that not all violence is perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalists (in Myanmar, radical Buddhists are forcing Muslims to flee the country). Palestinians are actually the largest and oldest refugee group in the world but under the care of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), not UNHCR. Finally, the Central American group was included to address refugees who literally are our neighbors, geographically speaking.

Sources are cited for all information in the Refugee Moments. Background for the bulletin inserts was largely drawn from the relevant refugee agencies.