

24-7 PRAYER CANADA

Prayer Walk for Refuge Prayer Guide
May 2021

Instructions

This guide is provided to help you focus on the realities facing displaced people, as well as some biblical reflections about refugees, as you walk your 10K. It is designed with a short reading for before each new kilometer. However, if you are experiencing God's presence and voice already through one reading, do not feel the need to move to another topic just because you have passed another thousand metres. Use this guide in whatever way will help you to pray most effectively on your journey. For more information about 24-7 Prayer Canada, go to www.247prayercanada.com. You can also learn more about how you and your church can walk alongside refugees in Canada and around the world with our partner, IAFR Canada, at www.iafr.ca.

K1: Unaccompanied Minors



Dzaleka refugee camp – Malawi, Hair Extension Training; photo credit Tom Albinson, IAFR

According to UNICEF, “During the first half of 2020, countries in Europe recorded some 218,755 new asylum seekers. Nearly a third of them (69,010) were children.”

Imagine living in a situation so dire that you have to choose between keeping your teenaged children with you or sending them far away for their own safety.

This is the reality that hundreds of thousands of families are facing right now. Young people have crossed the Mediterranean Sea, fleeing from conflicts in places like Afghanistan, Syria, or The Democratic Republic of Congo. They have left their families behind and have sought safety in Europe.

Other children and teenagers are fleeing gang violence in Latin and South America, and still others are crossing borders in Africa, leaving parents behind in dangerous situations. Wherever refugees are seeking safety along the refugee highway unaccompanied minors are among them.

As you walk this first kilometre, pray for safety for unaccompanied minors to find a place of welcome. Pray for their families who are unable to leave unsafe situations.

K2: The Numbers

According to the UNHCR's most recent statistics, there are approximately 79.5 million displaced people in the world. This is about 1% of the world's population. Approximately 85% of this number are being hosted in developing countries, with only about 107,800 having the opportunity for resettlement in places like Canada, Australia or the United States. In other words, the poorest countries in the world are being relied on to carry far more than their share of the load. In 2019, only 5.6 million people in the world were able to return to their countries of origin.

A significant majority of displaced people on earth are not welcomed in the most affluent and secure countries, and at the same time, returning to the home from which they were forced to flee is not an option. The countries hosting them are doing their best, but most have enormous economic and social challenges of their own.

As you walk this kilometre, have the courage and faith to pray big prayers, for God to move in the hearts of nations and governments, for peace, and for the millions of people who have fled war, violence and persecution to find a place of safety.

K3: The Church

The Bible is filled with characters who experienced displacement, including Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, Naomi, Ruth, and Daniel, just to name a few.

Consider the fact that so many of our Biblical heroes, including Jesus Christ, were refugees. As you ponder this, also remember Jesus' words, found in Matthew 25:

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom 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, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

During this next kilometre pray for God's Church in the world. Somehow welcoming displaced people has become a political issue, and along with many governments and societies, Christians too are often motivated by fear, prejudice or misunderstanding. We have sometimes become blind to the clear Biblical imperative to welcome the stranger. Pray for churches and denominations around the world to wake up to God's instructions, that they may experience the immense privilege of welcoming. Pray that God helps churches to see the amazing possibilities for their communities once they joyfully and enthusiastically embrace new possibilities. Pray also for the millions of God's people who are trying to live out Jesus' instructions to welcome, that God will encourage them and provide all that the Church needs to fulfill his commands.

K4: Major Refugee Populations

According to the UNHCR, these were the 5 countries from which the most refugees originated in 2019. More than two thirds of all the forcibly displaced people in the world came from these countries:

- Syria – 6.6 million
- Venezuela – 3.7 million
- Afghanistan – 2.7 million
- South Sudan – 2.2 million
- Myanmar – 1.1 million

As you walk this fourth stretch of the journey, focus on 1 or 2 of these countries, and particularly focus on the conflicts and injustices that are causing people to have to flee. Pray for peace in these nations and regions. Pray for peace on earth.

K5: Lebanon

The Bible frequently mentions Lebanon as a majestic place, most vividly by highlighting the image of their cedars. For example, in Song of Songs, both poets at one time refer to the beautiful imagery of Lebanon:

He: “Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon” (4:11)

She: “His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars” (5:15)

Lebanon has a rich history and is an important nation in the Middle East and the world. However, it is currently facing enormous challenges. According to the UNHCR, in 2019, 1 in 7 people in Lebanon was a refugee. It is hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria, but also from countries such as Iraq and Palestine.

In addition, Lebanon’s economy is suffering deeply, its government is absent, and along with the rest of the world, it has had to contend with the challenges of COVID19. On top of all of this, on August 4 2020, a shocking explosion at Beirut’s port devastated the city.



Photo credit:mbsandiego.com

As you walk this kilometre, pray for God’s people in Lebanon to have perseverance and to experience his provision, both for themselves and for those they love and serve. Pray for the approximately 1 million refugees in their country, for the recovery of their economy, and for their government to find a way to stand on its feet with wisdom and righteousness.

K 6: Canada

“Over the last ten years, 55 per cent of all resettled refugees were welcomed in the United States of America (575,600), 20 per cent to Canada (210,600) and 11 per cent to Australia (114,500).”
(<https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf>)

The good news is that over the past decade Canada has ranked second in the world when it comes to resettling refugees. Also, our refugee sponsorship program is unique in the world and makes a difference in the lives of many refugees.

On the other hand, less than 1% of refugees in the world are resettled each year, with the vast majority of the responsibility for hosting displaced people placed on the shoulders of neighbouring, often poorer countries.

At the end of 2019 Canada was also home to 97,012 refugee claimants, (or asylum seekers) whose cases were still pending. Every refugee starts somewhere in the world as an asylum seeker – someone asking for safe refuge. Waiting for an asylum claim decision is a psychological and emotional challenge for anyone whose life and future are waiting in the balance.

Pray for Canada’s government and society to be compassionate and welcoming. Pray for churches, organizations, communities and individuals involved with refugee sponsorship, that they will have all they need to welcome newcomers with kindness and generosity. Pray also for all those who walk alongside refugee claimants in Canada. And most importantly pray for refugees and refugee claimants currently in Canada, for stable housing, employment, community, and faith.

K7: Holy Imagination: Pray with those who grieve

For this part of the journey, ask the Holy Spirit to ignite your holy imagination. This may not be easy. Particularly ask God for insight regarding people along the refugee highway who, right now, in this moment, are experiencing grief. Their hearts are broken. Can we walk with them? Perhaps for a few minutes we need to stop walking, and stand, or sit, or kneel, to align ourselves with despairing people who might feel like they lack the strength to keep going.

Perhaps they have lost family members or loved ones to war or violence. Perhaps they have been long separated from people they love. Perhaps they have been rejected from a country where they sought asylum. Perhaps they are facing physical pain. Perhaps right in this moment their lives are in great danger.

Walk with them, stand with them, intercede for them – plead their case to heaven.

K8: Pray Scripture



Worshiping in Iraq: photo credit Tom Albinson/IAFR

During this next kilometer, read and allow Isaiah 25:1-10 to guide your prayers...

*O LORD, you are my God;
I will exalt you, I will praise your name;
for you have done wonderful things,
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.
2 For you have made the city a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;
the palace of aliens is a city no more,
it will never be rebuilt.
3 Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.
4 For you have been a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from
the heat.
When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter
rainstorm,
5 the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;
the song of the ruthless was stilled.*

*6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make
for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged
wines strained clear.
7 And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;
8 he will swallow up death forever.
Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from
all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take
away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.
9 It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so
that he might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.
10 For the hand of the LORD will rest on this
mountain.*

K9: Sudan

Sudan is the only country that is in the top 10 on the UNHCR's lists for refugee originating countries (735,000), refugee hosting countries (1.1 million), and highest number of internally displaced persons (1.9 million).

Great numbers of people have fled from Sudan due to conflicts, war, and political upheaval - including revolution - which deposed their president in April 2019. Sudan also faces significant economic and environmental challenges.



Sudanese Christian Praying: photo credit Tom Albinson/IAFR

In addition, Sudan represents a sad global reality, that significant refugee-producing countries also host many refugees fleeing from unrest in neighbouring countries. Sudan currently hosts over a million refugees from countries including South Sudan, Eritrea, Syria, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Chad and Yemen (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/sdn>).

Pray for Sudan. Pray for God's grace, provision and mercy for all of those who need refuge. Pray for lasting peace and wise and compassionate leadership for Sudan and all of its neighbours.

K10: Praise and Thanksgiving

Here are 3 reasons to be hopeful:

1. God is alive and well across the world along the refugee highway.
2. Refugees are more than people in need; they are an important part of the solution.
3. God has begun a worldwide movement of his people to welcome and love refugees.

As you walk this final kilometre, praise God, and give thanks for the ways he is working around the world. Join with David, who himself experienced forced displacement, in praying Psalm 138, a song of praise:

*¹ I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;*

*² I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your
steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word
above everything.*

*³ On the day I called, you answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.*

*⁴ All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O
LORD,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.*

⁵ They shall sing of the ways of the LORD,

for great is the glory of the LORD.

*⁶ For though the LORD is high, he regards the
lowly;*

but the haughty he perceives from far away.

*⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my
enemies;*

*you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.*

*⁸ The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.*