



Prayer Walk for Refuge Guide 2022

Instructions

This guide will help you focus on some of the realities faced by displaced people in the world, as well as on some theological reflections about refugees. There is a short reading for each new kilometre. 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, whether you're walking 2 kms or 10.

You can also learn more about how you and your church can walk alongside refugees in Canada and around the world by going to www.iafr.ca. Want to grow deeper in praying for refugees? Visit our colleagues at 24-7 Prayer Canada, particularly the month of June's [prayer room resources](#).

Kilometre 1: The numbers

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently more than 100 million displaced people on earth – that is around 1 in every 80 people on the planet. Of these, about half are under 18 years old.

On the other hand, in 2020, only 251,000 out of these millions of people were able to return to their countries of origin. In addition, only 34,400 refugees were resettled to third countries in 2020. In total, this accounts for less than one half of one percent of the displaced people on earth. The vast majority are therefore “stuck” as internally displaced people (IDPs) in their countries of origin, or are in transitory countries, living in “temporary” homes such as refugee camps. They cannot return home, and they cannot move forward.

Pray for Canada and other countries to be more open to welcome refugees, and for radical and innovative solutions and partnerships around the world to find ways to welcome more people into safety. Pray for the populations of many countries, and particularly Christians, to have open hearts towards welcoming.



Mavrovouni Refugee Camp on Lesbos Island in Greece

Kilometre 2: Compounding Crises



A COVID19 hygiene supplies-provision project to refugee camp residents in Uganda, run by I Live Again Uganda with IAFR Canada

The UNHCR highlights two global crises that have had a disproportionate impact on refugees:

1. COVID19: “People who have been forcibly displaced or who are stateless have been among the hardest-hit groups of society, facing increased food and economic

insecurity as well as challenges to access health and protection services.”

2. Climate Change: “Climate change is also driving displacement and increasing the vulnerability of those already forced to flee. Many are living in climate ‘hotspots’ where they typically lack the resources to adapt to an increasingly inhospitable environment.”

Those in our world already facing overwhelming situations are also those most affected by these other crises. During this kilometre pray for God’s miraculous provision, deliverance, and help for displaced people, and especially for those who are trying to recover from the global pandemic and its restrictions, as well as those whose environments are made even more difficult due to climate change.

* <https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/>

Kilometre 3: Afghanistan

“Afghanistan’s displacement crisis is one of the largest and most protracted in UNHCR’s seven-decade history. We’re now seeing a third generation of Afghan children born in exile,” says UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. In 2021, violence in Afghanistan intensified and spread through the country. The immense challenges of the Taliban’s resurgence led to nearly 700,000 Afghans being forced to flee their homes. This is in addition to the 2.6 million Afghan refugees in the world prior to 2021, as well as the 3.5 million displaced people within Afghanistan (<https://www.unhcr.org/afghanistan.html>). The impact since 2021 on women and girls has been particularly devastating. 80 percent of all forcibly displaced within Afghanistan are women and children.

The challenges and conflicts within Afghanistan have continued for more than 40 years. Pray for peace and transformation in Afghanistan, and for the millions of Afghans around the world who have been forced to flee for generations, including those who have fled in the last year.

* <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/afghanistan/>

Kilometre 4: Ukraine

According to World Vision in May 2022:

More than one month into the conflict in Ukraine, over 6 million people, including 2 million children, have fled to neighboring countries in a crisis that continues to intensify, with casualties and displacement growing. In addition to the 4 million refugees, 7.1 million people are believed to have been displaced within the besieged country, meaning that nearly one of every four Ukrainians have been forced from their homes.

The overwhelming majority of refugees and displaced individuals are children and women.

As you walk, pray for peace in the Ukraine, for God’s protection for the people in danger from this war, and for all the people who have been forced to flee who are seeking a safe place.

Kilometre 5: Peacemakers

James 3:18 says, "Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness." The very next 2 verses, James 4:1-2(a) say, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight."

Because of the chapter break between them, these two passages are rarely read together. However, together they paint an interesting picture. Peacemakers will harvest righteousness, but standing in the way of peace are the selfish and impure desires of our hearts. We are greedy, we covet, we lack faith, and we pursue selfish pleasures. Therefore conflict. Therefore quarrels. Therefore war.

As we pray for governments and systems to change, let's also remember to pray for our hearts. Jesus teaches that our actions and the fruit we bear in our lives, whether good or bad, come from whatever is already in our hearts. This is a personal message for individuals, but also for societies and nations. What is in our hearts is expressed in our elections, our policies, and our conflicts.



A prayer wall at Open Homes Hamilton, an IAFR Canada refugee home-hosting ministry

As you walk this 5th kilometre, ask God to examine your own heart. Ask for Jesus' Kingdom of peace to come to our world and our hearts. Pray also for God to raise up peacemakers all over the world who will spread his message of love, hope and reconciliation.

Kilometre 6: Worship

Revelation 7:9-12 says:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: 'Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!'

During this kilometre, use your sanctified imaginations. Picture yourself alongside the angels, as well as the worshipers from every tribe, tongue and nation, all gathered before the throne of God. Imagine what this wonderful, beautiful, and diverse multitude looks like. Give thanks to God and lift up your faithful prayers on behalf of those individuals, families and nations currently in turmoil.

Kilometre 7: Palestinian Refugees

According to the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency), Palestine refugees are defined as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.” These 1.5 million people, registered with the UNRWA “live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.” (<https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>)

Exodus tells us that the Israelites wandered the desert wilderness for 40 years. Throughout those years, God heard the cries of the people and met their needs by providing them with Manna and Quail. Throughout this time their needs were sustained by their God, and their spirits were kept alive by the hope of the Promised Land.

Sadly, there are always new and emerging conflicts in the world. They dominate the news and rightly motivate us to pray. However in the midst of all of this refugees from Palestine and other conflicts in the world (such as the Democratic Republic of Congo) have lived in limbo for decades. Do we believe that the same God of Israel hears their cries as well? As you walk this kilometre, consider the words of 19-year-old Mahmoud Mustafa, a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon. “Asked what his dream job is, he laughs: ‘We’re refugees, we can’t dream here. We’re just worried about living today.’” (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/palestinians-lebanon-living-prison-171215114602518.html>)

Kilometre 8: Family Separation

In Genesis 44, Joseph, now second only to Pharaoh in Egypt, tests his brothers. He has framed them for a crime to force his younger brother Benjamin to have to remain with him in Egypt. In verses 27-29, their older brother Judah pleads his family’s case:

“Your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons. One of them went away from me, and I said, “He has surely been torn to pieces.” And I have not seen him since. If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my grey head down to the grave in misery.’

Little did Judah know that he was addressing the very lost brother to whom he referred. Nonetheless in Judah’s plea we catch a glimpse of the fear and sorrow faced by families who are separated from their loved ones by injustice, conflict, or death.

Family separation is a consistent reality faced by countless displaced people. Parents and children are separated in any number of ways, including governmental policies of family separation when asylum seekers are placed in detention, unaccompanied minors fleeing for safety while their families remain unable to join them, fathers or mothers going ahead of their families in hopes of someday being reunited somewhere safer, as well as separation due to tragedy during their refugee journey on the sea or the road.

When people are separated from their families they can relate to Jacob’s sorrow upon hearing of the loss of his son: “‘No,’ he said, ‘I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave’” (Genesis 37:35). Often refugee families are separated for many years and even decades. Sadly, some are never reunited. Thanks to modern technology, many millions can now connect across the world on the internet, but they are unable to hold their loved ones, or be there for one another through their struggles.

Pray for family reunification for displaced people around the world. Pray for comfort and hope for people who are waiting in turmoil having been separated from loved ones.

Kilometre 9: Canada's Forcibly Displaced People

We move now from praying for separated families in the world to Canada's own history of forcibly separating families. Canada has its own history of terrible injustice that resulted in the internally displacement of indigenous people within our borders. During the past couple of years mass graves of indigenous children from various residential schools across the country have been located. The following is from a CNN article updated on March 2, 2022 (<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/02/americas/canada-indigenous-residential-school-potential-graves-st-bernard-mission/index.html>):

Officials uncovered 169 potential unmarked graves on the grounds of a former Catholic residential school in Canada, an Indigenous tribe in Alberta said Tuesday.

The Kapawe'no First Nation, which is located over 200 miles northwest of Edmonton, said the discovery was made at the former St. Bernard Mission School at the Grouard Mission site. The potential graves were identified using ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and drone imagery, officials said.

The residential school was one of several in Canada that thousands of mostly Indigenous children were forced to attend after being separated from their families between the 19th century and the 1990s. At least 150,000 Indigenous children from across the country were affected by the practice, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said...

In May 2021, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc community confirmed remains of 215 children who attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School were found. A month later, the Cowessess First Nation in Saskatchewan announced the discovery of at least 750 unmarked graves on the grounds of the former Marieval Indian Residential School.

In British Columbia, 182 human remains in unmarked graves were found in July 2021 at the site of the former St. Eugene's Mission School near the city of Cranbrook.

Ask the Holy Spirit to direct your prayers for Canada. Ask for God's hope, his justice, and his future.

Kilometre 10: Praise and Thanksgiving

As you walk this final kilometer, take time to praise God and give him thanks for all he has done in your life, and for all he is doing along the refugee highway. Allow Psalm 100 to be your guide:

A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.
Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his^{al};
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.
For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*



A school for Syrian refugee children in Beirut run by the Beirut Nazarene Church in partnership with IAFR Canada