

EUROPEAN METHODIST COUNCIL LITURGY FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES 2019

Produced by the Italian members of EMC for International Refugee Day 2019



Introduction

Migration in Europe in recent years has developed to radically new dimensions. Therefore, the European Methodist Council has decided to give particular attention to this theme which leaves no one unaffected. The EMC last year asked its member churches to dedicate a special Sunday for migrants and refugees, on the Sunday closest to the 20th June, which is International Refugee Day. When this is not possible it should be used in a service of worship to be held as close as possible to the 20th June. Each year a different country will provide a liturgy for this Sunday worship service. Below you will find a proposal from the Italian members of EMC. We hope it will be useful and you can adapt it to your situation.

Psalm 59:16: *“But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.”* or **Psalm 46:1**

Call to Worship

Leader: We are gathered for worship today in the name of God who takes care of every creature as a father and as a mother; Who in Jesus Christ is on the side of the weak and those who are treated without justice; Who in his Holy Spirit gives us the capacity to give solidarity to those who suffer and the power to resist all that threatens and destroys life. We believe that our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth for that we bless His name forever.

Congregation: Be blessed His name forever. Amen

Hymn

Welcome and Introduction to the theme *(during the introduction you can show photographs of the trauma of boat people or people stopped by a wall or barbed wire)*

“Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.” (Psalm 69,15)

Today is International Refugee Day and we decided to make the words of Psalm 69 the theme of this special service. The prayer of the psalmist gives voice to those who are in our thoughts today.

But who are the migrants and refugees and why are they trying to reach Europe?

They are people fleeing persecution, war, misery and famine, and many - in an attempt to get to our shores - are literally sunk in the vortex, in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea or the Atlantic or have been blocked in the cold of mountains by borders of barbed wire or walls.

They are men, women and children who, often aware of the risks of their choice, have decided to flee because the situation in their country offers no other possibility, because - as a refugee once said — "I just want to live".

(Some figures (statistics) to frame the topic...)

Silently remember the dead.

Confession of sin: “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.” (Proverbs 3:27)

Prayer

Dear God, source of life,
 we gather together in the name of Jesus who had nowhere to lay his head,
 no safe place, no secure home, no passport or visa, no certified citizenship.
 We gather around him in our safety, security, and we are afraid of the ‘illegal immigrants’.
 We are closing our borders, thinking that they are a threat to our life, that they will take our jobs.
 We are also glad for cheap seasonal workers who take care of our tomatoes and fruit.
 But we also know very well that you are the God who welcomes strangers,
 that you do not withhold good from those in need.
 We feel this deep tension between your truth and the way we live.
 We do not ask for an easy way out,
 but for courage and honesty and faithfulness to face this.
 That we may meet them not with our prejudices,
 but with open eyes and open arms fed by your word of mercy and love,
 the only nourishment that makes us human.
 Forgive our trespasses, so that we may change our habits and inclinations
 and conform to your vision of a new world where everybody can live in dignity.
 You are the God of all forgiveness.
 We pray in the name of your holy Son Jesus.
Amen.

(After the prayer, small candles could be lit, and placed in a water bowl or font while keeping silence or praying.)

Assurance of Forgiveness

“Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7,18-19)

Brothers and sisters, this promise of forgiveness is fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ.
 In him the distances are filled with love and the separations are torn down to create new life.
 With joy we receive this proclamation, with joy we respond committing to live the love of God. Amen

Hymn

Bible Reading: Jonah 2,2-9

Sermon

Poem on Refugees

(Instead, you could prepare a few short meditations by reading only a biblical verse that speaks about welcoming foreigners, or about unity in Christ that goes beyond our divisions and social prejudices, or about Jesus as refugee. At the end of each meditation, two or three members of the congregation could break a piece of a wall made of boxes with words written on them such as 'racism, fear, prejudice, hatred, war, separation' and then continue building a bridge with the same boxes - which on the other side have words written on them such as 'love, peace, solidarity, etc...'. You will need to make a base on which to put the boxes to give the shape of the bridge.)

Hymn

HOLY COMMUNION

Prayer of Introduction

Our God, you are the God who loves the stranger, who gives him bread and clothes.
 You are the God who protects the foreigner, and defends the orphan's cause.
 You are the God who becomes a foreigner with foreigners, a refugee with refugees.
 "I was a stranger and you did not accept me", your Son, Jesus, warns us.
 "When, Lord - is our answer - did we see you a stranger?
 If we had seen you in need, we would certainly have welcomed you".
 Forgive us, Lord, because despite our many words
 we don't know how to recognize you and we don't know how to welcome you
 in the stranger, in the refugee, in the poor, in every outcast.
 Forgive our short-sightedness, our dryness,
 and shatter the barriers we build every day
 to avoid to recognize in the other a brother, a sister.
 Lord Jesus, we are not worthy of being welcomed at your table:
 but we ask you to perform the miracle of Emmaus once again,
 when the disciples invited you, believing you a stranger.
 When the evening came they urged him strongly to stay with them
 And that poor dinner, shared with an unknown traveler,
 was transformed into your Supper: and their eyes were opened.
 Open our eyes today, Lord, so that we know to
 recognize your presence, so that we know how to welcome the other
 as you welcomed us, and that we welcome you in the other.
 Turn our poor table into your Supper:
 that we who have prepared this bread and this wine
 invite you, that we may become guests of your table.
 Amen

Institution

On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, "he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22,19-20)

Hymn or canticle

Invocation

On the night of the first day of resurrection, the stranger who had walked with the disciples stayed with them at Emmaus; and “*When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him...*” (Luke 24,30-31a)

Come, Lord Jesus, break with us the bread of your love
and do that, by receiving it, through the Holy Spirit,
we recognize you, and that, recognizing you,
we know how to love you and our neighbour,
Amen

The Breaking of the Bread

THE BREAD THAT WE BREAK
IS THE COMMUNION WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST
WHO WAS GIVEN FOR US.

THE CUP OF BLESSING
THAT WE GIVE THANKS FOR
IS THE COMMUNION WITH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST
THAT WAS POURED OUT FOR US

Prayer of Thanksgiving

For this blessed and wonderful gesture,
for this gesture so divine and so human,
the gesture of blessing the bread and breaking it
and to multiply it for those who are hungry and thirsty for justice;
for this friendly gesture that you renew in our midst,
we bless you in turn, unexpected and welcome guest,
who transforms our bread into yours, our home into yours.
We bless you in our turn, divine stranger who, by giving yourself
you are not only no longer a stranger, but you make us aware that we are all brothers and
sisters,
you make us one body, just as there is one bread.
Amen

(Holy Communion liturgy adapted from a text of the emeritus rev. Paolo Ricca)

Peace (during the sharing of the peace you may sing a canticle or song)

Offering (*before the offering you could describe a national or local project related to migrants or refugees that the congregation are choosing to support*)

Intercessory Prayer (*put a long black or purple cloth on the communion table and each of the readers take the opportunity to light a candle and to place it on the cloth after saying one of the phrases of the intercessory prayer*)

Reader 1: Lord, we bring to you the weeping and wailing of the mothers of this world, waiting for their children who have disappeared in the sea, in the desert, in uncertainty:

Congregation: “**I was a stranger and you welcomed me**”

R2: Refugees, men, women and children, from the war zones of this world, who are fleeing hunger and poverty, in the hope of a better, more secure life.

C: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me"

R3: We bring to you our lament for those who have died stranded at our borders, those who have died fleeing through deserts, mountains and seas. We call upon you and we join in the cry of those who have died seeking justice and a better world.

C: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

R1: Lord, we bring to you our shame for turning away and remaining silent. We have enough to eat in Europe - and do not see that we also create the causes of hunger. We are insatiable and do not realize that is the cause of many wars. We're silent, when we should speak and act.

C: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

R2: Lord, we bring before you our political leaders, who are not making decisions about mere numbers, but about the destiny of many human beings. Sharpen their awareness of how things are interrelated. Keep their consciences alert. Let them develop rules that are guided by humanity and a vision of peace.

C: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

R3: Lord, give us the strength to bear witness to the suffering of your children on the run, on their way to us, at our borders, in refugee camps and among us, in detention, waiting to be deported, in fear of the dangers that lie ahead, in mourning for those who have died. Help us, Lord.

A: Hear our prayer. Amen

*(adaptation from a prayer of Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)
and German Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum)*

The Lord's Prayer

Sending and Blessing

L.: As we prepare to go out from the church
to face the challenges of our existence and of the world,
we invoke God's blessing on us.

May God bless us giving the strength to seek justice.

May God bless us giving the wisdom to take care of every living being on earth.

May God bless us, giving the love that raises us to new life.

In the name of the Father, creator of the whole world,
of Jesus Christ, our new Covenant,

and of the Holy Spirit, which opens our eyes and hearts to God.

May we go in peace giving witness to the hope that we receive in Christ.

A: Amen.

Closing Hymn