

For the first time since World War II, the UN Refugee Agency placed the number of forcibly displaced refugees worldwide at 59.5 million. Even in Biblical times, we read about people who crossed a border for trade or protection, were trafficked across a border, or exiled to another country.

We pray for the protection of those forced to flee, embrace those who have made it safely to our country, and celebrate how our new neighbors have become beacons of hope and renewal in our communities. Together, we have welcomed the stranger in Christ's name.

We pray:

Mighty Lord, as you guided the Israelites, through the wilderness,
be a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day for refugees in search of
new hope and new life.

As you brought the Israelites out of bondage to freedom,
bring refugees out of persecution to safety.

As you protected the Israelites through 40 years in the desert,
protect those who languish for years in refugee camps.

Wipe away their tears of sorrow,
that their mourning may give way to joyous hope.

Put an end to warfare and tyranny,
that some may return home without fear of violence.

Open the doors of safer nations,
that some may find new homes in new lands.

Rebuild their lives,
that they might enjoy the fruit of labors in peace.

Revive their hope,
that they might face a future with promise.

Shine your grace upon them,
That they might know your love.

Strengthen their bonds of friendship and family,
That we might serve one another with encouraging love.

Bless our nation with a spirit of openness,
That our communities and country may be renewed and strengthened by
newcomers.

And inspire your churches to welcome the stranger,
That together we might build communities of hope where strangers become
neighbors and friends, and brothers and sisters.

Amen.

Deaconess Diane Kaufmann

Adapted from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, ELCA Refugee Sunday Kit.