



IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY WE SEE GOD CHOOSING TO BECOME OUR NEIGHBOUR BY TAKING ON HUMAN FLESH. THIS IS AN ACT OF LOVE FROM GOD THAT DRAWS US INTO THE STORY OF GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL CREATION AND INVITES US TO BE WITNESSES TO GOD'S LOVE THROUGH OUR LOVING ACTION IN THE WORLD.

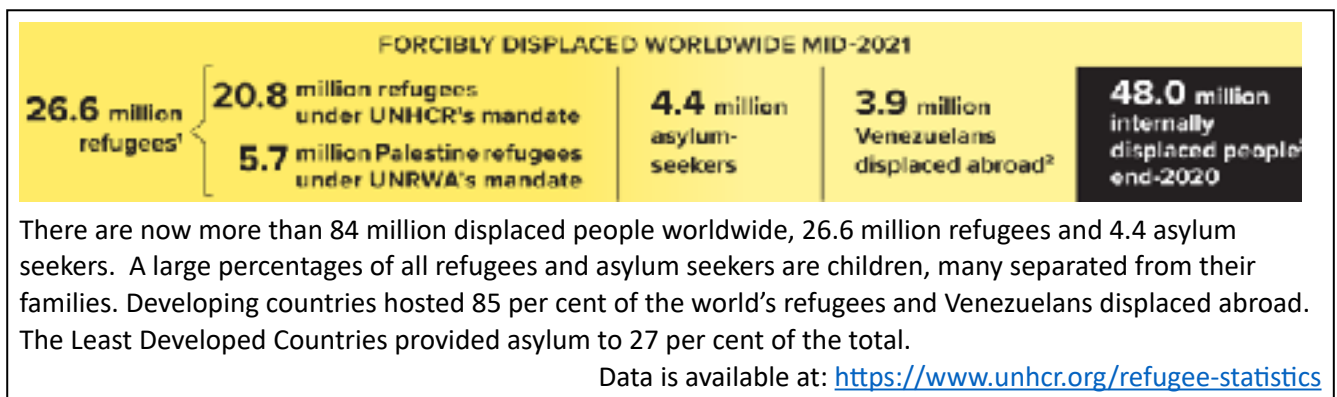
REV. SHARON HOLLIS, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Advent & Christmas 2021

"Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt..." Matthew 2: 14
The story of Jesus's family being refugees who had to flee without warning in the dark night, could spark our imagination anew. During the season of Advent and Christmas, we encourage you to pray for refugees and asylum seekers with deep compassion about the fact that there seems to be no place of welcome for so many – either within their own countries or the new country that they were hoping would provide safe harbour.

Pray for refugees

Remember those making perilous journeys from war zones, leaving all security and possessions, even passports behind, as they flee from conflict and persecution. Pray particularly for children travelling in extremely dangerous conditions.



Pray for the governments involved

Pray for wisdom for all those in authority who make decisions that impact refugees. Pray for leaders to tackle the root causes of the refugee crisis and for countries around the world to share the challenge and to seek ways to build new futures.

Pray for countries in crisis

During the crisis of COVID-19 so many countries are dealing with old and new outbursts of political unrest, war, violence, kidnapping (especially of young girls for the soldiers and young boys to be coerced into becoming soldiers against their will) and many are displaced or have to flee to save their lives. Worsening economic situations, geo-political tensions and climate-induced problems are creating more instability and food-security challenges. Please pray for a widely shared yearning for peace and stable constructive governments.

Pray for communities and organisations helping refugees

Many organisations, churches and communities and individuals are working tirelessly to care for refugees and asylum seekers. Community groups, such as Circle of Friends <https://cofa.org.au>, do not take time off during Christmas but continue to support many who need rent relief, medical and energy bills to be paid or who simply need a friend during dark times. Please pray that all would be given wisdom and energy in response to families and children in great need. Ask how you might contribute to and get involved in Pilgrim's Circle of Friends.

Pray for Afghanistan

In light of the Taliban taking control again of Afghanistan, we seek the wisdom and relief for the vulnerable at risk and others in these volatile circumstances, especially the women who are not allowed to walk unaccompanied in public or who lost jobs due to these rules. The life of families without males is very difficult as shopping for basics may now be seen as unlawful/threatening restrictions on movements and/or the proven fear of being taken as Taliban brides. Many doctors, nurses and teachers have not been paid for months and struggle to look after their own families. Please pray for all to have continued opportunities for education, work and equal participation in the public sphere, and also for regular work-payment.

Pray for Afghan refugees and Afghan churches

Pray for Afghan people fleeing the country to find refuge quickly. Some who had lived in Australia since the previous war years are still struggling with visa's not processed, families not being allowed to join them, or are struggling anew as a mother, sister or brother sought by the Taliban could not escape in time. Communication lines are often cut, and many families do not know where relatives in Afghanistan are. Please pray for the provision of safe and welcoming communities, as well as compassionate assistance in the months and years to come. Pray for the Afghan church and believers who remain in the country, especially in their work with other faith-traditions to stand in solidarity with those with goodwill and to be agents of hope.

Pray for refugees in Ethiopia with the 2021 Christmas Bowl resources

<https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources>

For each week of advent you can access worship resources including sermon starters, PowerPoint presentations and clip art as well as videos to use with your congregation, either in person or online.



The Syrian conflict, now in its 10th year, is one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time. And it's civilians just like Lilia* and her young family who are suffering the most.

An awareness raising video resource

produced by the Synod

Refugee Advocacy Group

<https://vimeo.com/605416093>

For further information, please contact

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