

**Lesson Plans That Work**  
**Year B – First Sunday After Epiphany**  
**Gospel Lesson for All**

**Scripture: Mark 1:4-11**

This Sunday is also known as Baptism of our Lord as it is the day on which we remember Jesus' baptism by John the Baptizer.

*Note: This is the first of a four-part series on The Episcopal Church's refugee resettlement program through Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM). We begin this 4-week conversation about refugees and immigration with the promises we make as Christians and Episcopalians through our Baptismal Covenant.*

**Theme: Recommitting Ourselves to Our Baptismal Promises**

**Before:** The Baptismal Covenant is on pages 304 -305 of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). Consider posting the Baptismal promises somewhere in the room for the children to look at. If possible, review and queue up the following video for use in your discussion:

- Episcopal Migration Ministries – Advancing a Legacy of Welcome (<https://vimeo.com/51561972>)

Find a picture of a dove that you can trace. Here is a link: <http://www.clipartbest.com/drawings-of-doves>. Make enough copies for everyone in the room. Or, have the printed version available for children to trace.

If you haven't yet explored the legal definition of "refugee" or The Episcopal Church's ministry of refugee resettlement, you may want to briefly explain prior to showing the two short videos.

The Episcopal Church has been engaged in loving service and advocacy on behalf of and alongside refugees for 75 years, dating to the late 1930's, as Jews and other groups fled Nazi Europe. The international legal definition of "refugee" was codified in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees:

*[A refugee is a person who,] owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.*

Today there are more than 50 million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide, the highest number since World War II. Durable solutions for refugees include return to their home country when it is safe to do so, to integrate into the country of first asylum, or resettlement to a third country. Resettlement is the option pursued when the other two solutions are not possible. Less than 1% of the global refugee population will ever be resettled. The United

States is the global leader in refugee resettlement, resettling more refugees each year than all other resettlement countries, combined. In fiscal year 2015, the United States will resettle 70,000 refugees. Of this number, Episcopal Migration Ministries, one of only nine refugee resettlement agencies in the US, will resettle more than 5,000 refugees from places like Syria, Nepal, Burma, Afghanistan, Iraq, Congo, and many other countries. Episcopal Migration Ministries works through a network of affiliate partners, who, in turn, work with the local community to ensure successful resettlement and integration of new refugee neighbors. Schools, hospitals, employers, landlords, public transportation, law enforcement, community organizations, communities of faith and Episcopal congregations are all vital partners in resettlement.

If you would like to learn more about particular groups of people The Episcopal Church and other resettlement agencies resettle, you can find up to date statistics on the status of refugees in the world using this link: <http://www.unrefugees.org/>. Finally, if you have time, research the status of refugees in your community. Use the EMM network affiliate map to identify a resource in your area: <http://bit.ly/1swkPif>.

If you have questions, feel free to email or call Allison Duvall, EMM's program manager for church relations and engagement, at (212) 716-6027 or [aduvall@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:aduvall@episcopalchurch.org). She will be happy to assist you in enriching your lesson plan with information about Episcopal Migration Ministries and refugee resettlement.

**Beginning:** As everyone arrives, welcome them to the room and invite them to your gathering area. As they arrive ask them about their week. Ask them if they have ever seen someone being baptized. What do you think happens when someone is Baptized?

**Opening Prayer:** Loving God, you gave us the sacrament of Baptism so that we may be reminded of our commitment to your loving service and to being a people of reconciliation. Be with us as we renew this commitment and discover new ways to live into the promises we have made through our own baptisms. Amen.

### **The Story: Mark 1:4-11**

In the Bible, we get to hear the story of Jesus' baptism. He was baptized by John in a river just outside the community where he grew up. Read Mark 1:4-11.

When we are baptized, we all make promises about what we believe and how we hope to act. Read the Baptismal Covenant on pages 304-305 in the Book of Common Prayer. ]

Ask everyone to reflect on their Baptismal Covenant as they watch the 2-minute video on The Episcopal Church's work in refugee resettlement through Episcopal Migration Ministries: <https://vimeo.com/51561972>

Share a few statistics on refugees. If you were able to find local resources on refugees, share the statistics you found.

### **Reflection Questions:**

- I wonder what happens when someone is baptized?

- I wonder if you remember being baptized? I wonder if anyone has ever told you the story about when you were baptized?
- I wonder if being baptized means that you make promises to act in a certain way?

**Activity:**

First you need to ask each child to use construction paper and glue to make a community. Your community should include land and sea and air.

Now post one copy of the dove in the front of the room. You are going to write down all the ways that you can be “loving and kind” people in the world. Examples include: helping others, being nice to people, helping your parents.

Give each child a copy of the dove and ask them to write words in the dove – or help them if they are not yet able to write. Ask them to color in the dove and place it on the construction paper community. Save the papers as we are going to add other characters in future weeks.

**Activity:**

If you have time, watch a video that shows us one way that we can be kind and caring people: <https://vimeo.com/51561972>

Explain that there are people who have to move away from their homes to stay safe. Share a few statistics on refugees, as appropriate. If you were able to find local resources on refugees, share the statistics you found.

**Closing:** Instead of a traditional closing prayer, read the promises of the Baptismal Covenant inviting participants to respond with “I will, with God’s help.”

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

People I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People I will, with God’s help.

As they are leaving, remind participants to reflect upon their Baptismal promises over the next week.

### **Mark 1:4-11**

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

*Written by Wendy Johnson*

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*Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), the refugee resettlement agency of The Episcopal Church, welcomes thousands of refugees each year from conflict zones across the globe. Working in partnership with offices and groups within the church as well as with governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), and a network of 30 affiliate offices in 26 dioceses, Episcopal Migration Ministries provides vital services for thousands of refugee families upon their arrival in the United States.*

*In 2015, Episcopal Migration Ministries is celebrating 75 years of refugee resettlement in The Episcopal Church through the year-long #ShareTheJourney campaign. #ShareTheJourney is a multi-media effort to educate, form, and equip Episcopalians to engage in loving service with resettled refugees and to become prophetic witnesses and advocates on behalf of refugees, asylees, migrants, and displaced persons the world over.*