

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

**Scripture: Mark 1:14-20**

In the season of Epiphany, we follow Jesus' early ministry and calling of his disciples. Today's Gospel reading includes the well-known, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

*Note: This is the third in a four-part series on The Episcopal Church's refugee resettlement program, Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM). Today's lesson asks us to reflect on the many ways we are called go out into the world to be "fishers of people."*

**Theme: Fishers of People**

**Before:** If possible, review and queue up the following videos for use in your discussion:

- A Transformational Ministry (<http://vimeo.com/39646777>)
- Refugee Community Allies (<http://vimeo.com/39648553>)

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:** Welcome everyone as they arrive. Ask everyone to center themselves and ponder this question, "How have you been a 'fisher of people' in your own life and work? How have you seen others be 'fishers of people' and how did they 'catch' you?"

**Opening Prayer:** Loving God, we thank you for bringing us in safety to this new day, for bringing us together for conversation, reflection, and encouragement. We ask that you be with us this day, inspire us, open our hearts that we may hear your voice. Amen.

### **The Story: Mark 1:14-20**

Last week we heard and reflected upon the Gospel of John's version of Jesus' calling of his disciples. Today we hear the Markan version of this story. Read Mark 1:14-20.

### **Reflection Questions:**

**Ask the group to engage in conversation about the reflection questions posed at the beginning of the gathering:**

- How have you been a 'fisher of people' in your own life? In your family, with your friends, in work or in school?
- How have you seen others be 'fishers of people' and how did they 'catch' you?
- In a pluralistic world, how are we to be 'fishers of people' while also respecting the dignity of every human being, their stories, and their identities? *(If the group is intergenerational, briefly explain the concept of pluralism for children and youth.)*

Explain that many refugees fled their homelands due to persecution, threats, and violence on account of their religious identities. An important component of the United States resettlement program and the Episcopal Church's ministry of refugee resettlement is respect for the cultural and religious heritage and identity of the refugees who arrive in our country seeking safety. How do we live into our call to be fishers of people when engaging with those who have different cultural and religious backgrounds and identities?

Watch the two videos:

- A Transformational Ministry (<http://vimeo.com/39646777>)
- Refugee Community Allies (<http://vimeo.com/39648553>)

**Reflection Questions:**

- There is a well-known saying, “Preach the Gospel. If necessary, use words.” In the videos we watched, how do the individuals and the congregation of St. Alban’s Episcopal Church preach the Gospel through their words and actions?
- How do you, and how does your congregation, preach the Gospel in word and deed?
- In what ways do we understand and live into the call to be ‘fishers of people’? How is God calling you to this work?

**Closing:**

Loving God,

You have called us to be fishers of people,

To share the good news of your redeeming love with the world.

Open our hearts to the ways you ask us to do this in our lives,

In our work, in our play, with our families, friends, and all those we meet.

Inspire us, strengthen us, bless us to do your will. Amen.

## **Mark 1:14-20**

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea-- for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

*Written by Allison Duvall*

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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.*

