

Lesson Plans That Work
Year B – Third Sunday After Epiphany
Gospel Lesson for Older Children

Scripture: Mark 1:14-20

In the season of Epiphany, we follow Jesus' early ministry and calling of his disciples. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus says, "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 this video for use in your discussion:

- Refugee Community Allies (<http://vimeo.com/39648553>)

If you haven't yet explained who refugees are to the children, you may want to take a moment before showing the video to introduce them to the idea of human migration and why some people might move. Some people move in search of jobs and a better life for their families. Some people are forced to move for their own safety. Refugees are people who are forced to move for their safety; if they stayed in their homeland, they may be hurt or even killed by people who do not want them there. Some refugees are able to return to their homes after some time, but many are never able to return home. A small number of those refugees are able to resettle in the United States. The Episcopal Church helps refugees to resettle in the United States through Episcopal Migration Ministries. Episcopal Migration Ministries resettles over 5,000 refugees annually from places like Nepal, Burma, Afghanistan, Iraq, Congo, and many other countries that are not safe for them.

If you would like to teach the children a little bit 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. She will be happy to assist you in enriching your lesson plan with information about Episcopal Migration Ministries and refugee resettlement.

Beginning: Welcome the children as they arrive, asking them about their week. Ask them if they have ever been fishing, or know someone who likes to go fishing. "What is fishing like? How do you have to behave while you're fishing?"

Opening Prayer: Loving God, thank you for bringing us together today to learn more about each other. Help us listen to each other and for your voice, so that we may learn what it means to be a follower of Jesus and a fisher of people. Amen.

The Story: Mark 1:14-20

Today we hear another story about how Jesus called his disciples. Read Mark 1:14-20.

Reflection Questions:

- What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “Follow me and become fishers of men?”
- We are Jesus’ followers, his disciples, today. What does it mean for us to “fishers of people?”
- Have you heard this saying: “Preach the Gospel; if necessary, use words”? What do you think that means? What is the Gospel? How do we preach the Gospel without words?

Activity:

Explain that one of the ways that we preach the Gospel without words is by sharing God’s love with people we meet – treating them with kindness, respect, compassion, and love. We do this in many ways in our Church, including by welcoming refugees to our country and letting them know we care about them.

Have the children watch the following video:

- Refugee Community Allies (<http://vimeo.com/39648553>)

Reflection Questions:

- Who in the video was a fisher of people? Who shared God’s love?
- How did they share God’s love?
- How do your church share God’s love?
- How can you share God’s love with those you meet?

Closing: If the room allows, ask the children to sit in a circle on the floor. If you are able, demonstrate a tall sitting posture, with legs crossed and hands on your knees.

Explain to the children that we will close the lesson with a short meditation and with prayer. Let them know they may sit with eyes open or eyes closed, whatever makes them feel most comfortable.

Meditation:

Leader: Sit up so that you feel you are growing taller, toward the sky, and with your legs crossed and hands on your knees, so you feel connected to the ground.

Breathe in deeply, breathe out slowly.

Breathe in deeply, breathe out slowly.

Now, think about a time when someone made you feel loved, cared for. What did that person do to make you feel loved?

(Remain silent for about 30 seconds while you allow the children to think about the memory.)

Now, think about kids you know at school. Sometimes new kids start attending our schools, and they might start off not knowing anyone. Think about what that might feel like – to feel alone, to feel like you don't know anyone.

(Remain silent for about 30 seconds while the children think about this.)

New people come to our communities, too. Refugees are people we have learned and prayed about the past few weeks. Imagine what it might be like to not only be in a new place, but a new place where everything is different from what you know – even the language. How can you be a fisher of people? How can you show God's love to refugees and other people who are new to your community?

(Remain silent for about 30 seconds).

We will end our time together with prayer.

Loving God,

We know what it is like to feel lonely.

We know that you love us and lift us up, especially when we feel sad and alone.

Show us how we can share your love with others who may be sad and alone.

Help us to be kind to those we meet, especially new kids at school and new people in our community.

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.