

Episcopal Migration Ministries
Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday after the Epiphany
Gospel Lesson for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Background: This is the second in a four-part series focusing on The Episcopal Church work with refugees. Today's lesson focuses on the ways in which we are called to the ministry of refugee resettlement through our Baptism, through the work of the Holy Spirit and through passion for justice for all of God's people.

Theme: I Have Called You by Name

Before Class: Look at the Baptismal service in The Book of Common Prayer, pages 299-308, particularly the prayer prayed over the newly baptized on page 308. Gather 4"x4" pieces of material or paper, markers, newsprint, and any art supplies you may want to use to create a "me" quilt, which will depict the gifts for ministry each child sees in themselves.

Beginning: As we are reminded in today's Gospel, most Christians are Baptized and called into ministry for God. Oftentimes the most difficult part is figuring out exactly what we should be doing. During this season of Epiphany, we are going to record, for our own eyes only, "epiphanies" that come to us through the Gospel readings about in what ways we are called into ministry with refugees. First, we start with the things we are good at, then we compare that to the things that refugees need. Where these meet is our call from God.

If you haven't yet explained who refugees are to the children, you may want to take a moment 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 very badly 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>.

Opening Prayer: Dear God, please help us to better understand ourselves, understand each other and understand you so that we know how we can be of service in the world. Amen.

The Scripture: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 Ask for volunteers to read the part of the narrator, John the Baptist, and the voice of God. See below for script.

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to be baptized?
- What happens when you are baptized?
- Are you changed in any way?
- Is there anything you have to do because you are baptized?
- Is there any way you have to be?

Activity: Give the children the material scraps, paper, crayons, markers, glue and any other art supplies you have. Ask them to think of one thing they are good at or one word they would use to describe themselves. Now ask them to draw or represent on the square anything they can think of that makes them special – something they are good at, something really nice that they did, something they are proud of. At the end of class, ask each child to hold up their square to describe what they represented and then place their square in a designated space so they can continue to work in coming weeks.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for our time together and for helping us to get to know ourselves and each other better. Amen.

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Narrator: As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying,

John: “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Narrator: Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven,

God: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Episcopal Migration Ministries

Episcopal Migration Ministries 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, nongovernment organizations, and a network of 30 affiliate offices in 26 dioceses, EMM provides vital services for thousands of refugee families upon their arrival in the United States. More information at www.episcopalchurch.org/emm.

The Episcopal Public Policy Network

The Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN) is a grassroots network of Episcopalians across the country dedicated to carrying out the Baptismal Covenant call to "strive for justice and peace" through the active ministry of public policy advocacy. EPPN is part of The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations located in Washington, D.C. The actions, programs, and ministry of the Office of Government Relations are based entirely on policies approved by the church meeting in General Convention or by the Executive Council. More at <http://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org>.

If you have questions, contact Allison Duvall, EMM's 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.

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