

Episcopal Migration Ministries
Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – First Sunday after the Epiphany
Gospel Lesson for Younger 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 stamp pad, paper, markers, newsprint to hang onto the wall and any art supplies you may want to use. At the end of class each child's artwork will be hung on the newsprint.

Beginning: Tell the children that God has always known each of them, even before each was born when each was just a tiny little batch of cells in their mother's body. God knows who you are and gives you special things that you are really good at. Some of us are good at drawing. And some of us are good at sports. Not all of us know everything we are good at but I bet all of us can think of something. God wants us to use the things we are good at to make the world a better place. One of the ways we can make the world a better place is to help people who need us, like 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: Thank you God for making us special and blessing us with your spirit. Amen.

The Story: John the Baptist had been telling people they needed to be baptized. Lots of people were coming to hear John and then go into the river to be baptized. Jesus saw all the people going into the river to be baptized and Jesus went into the river, too, and was baptized by John. As he came up out of the river, he could hear God's voice telling him that God was pleased with Jesus. People could see a dove come down from the sky and fly right above Jesus' head. The Holy Spirit sometimes shows up as a dove. Today, when we are baptized, we hear the priest say: "N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. Amen."

Activity: Give the children paper, crayons, markers, glue and any other art supplies you have. One by one, allow them to place their thumb on the stamp pad and make a thumb print on their paper. Now ask them to draw themselves in the picture and 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, give each child tape to hang their paper on the newsprint. As they hang it up, ask them to describe what they drew.

Closing Prayer: Dear God, thank you for making us special and letting us belong to you forever. Amen.

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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