

Episcopal Migration Ministries
Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – The Feast of the Epiphany
Intergenerational Gospel Lesson

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Background: This week, the church celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany, which begins the six-week season of Epiphany. Epiphany recognizes the manifestation of the divine in Jesus and recalls the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt to escape the tyranny of King Herod, who ordered the Massacre of the Innocents in Bethlehem.

Forced to flee, Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus became what we now call refugees.

The Holy Family's experience is mirrored today in the plight of more than 60 million displaced persons worldwide, including at least 19 million refugees. Many are in camps or cities in places such as Rwanda, Kenya and Jordan, hoping that someday it will be safe enough to return to their communities. Some, however, find that they must journey to a new country to begin again. For 70,000 refugees in 2015, that journey brought them to the United States.

The journey of a refugee is never easy. Someday these journeys may no longer be necessary; someday persecution and violence may cease to drive displacement and rob refugees of their communities and nations.

Until that day, please join Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) in working toward safer, brighter futures for refugees.

For more than 75 years, the Episcopal Church has welcomed and supported refugees in the United States. Working in partnership with Episcopal faith communities as well as with local governments, non-government organizations (NGOs) and a network of 30 affiliate offices, Episcopal Migration Ministries provides safe passage, vital services, hospitality and friendship for thousands of refugee families resettling in the U.S. every year.

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>.

Over four weeks – January 3, 10, 24 and 31 - Episcopal Migration Ministries is providing bulletin inserts and Lesson Plans That Work that will help you learn more about the plight of the refugee and how you can join this life-saving and life-giving ministry.

To learn more about supporting refugee resettlement on a local level, contact Allison Duvall, Episcopal Migration Ministries manager for Church Relations and Engagement, aduvall@episcopalchurch.org or visit <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/emm>.

Theme: The Holy Family were Refugees

Before Class: Select the activities you want to do and note the supplies you will need for each activity.

Gathering: You will need nametags, markers or crayons. Provide name tags inviting people to write how they prefer to be addressed: Connor, Ms. Jane, Father Joe, etc. then ask everyone to sit in a circle.

Preview: Tell the group we will offer a prayer to our God who is right here in the center with us, we will hear the story from the Bible, and do some things together to help us explore where this story is calling us. (Tell them one or two of the activities you have selected and what time you expect the session to conclude.)

Opening Prayer: O God, we ask your living protection of all refugees yearning for freedom and hope in a new land. May we ever remember that the Holy Family, too, were refugees as they fled persecution. Bless, guide and lead us in faith to open doors and to open our hearts through this ministry of hospitality. Give us strength, vision and compassion as we work together to welcome those in need. We ask this in the name of Christ. Amen.

The Story: Matthew 2: 1-12 Invite someone to read the passage or tell it, like this:

People far from Bethlehem had heard the news: The baby, long ago promised in the Bible, had been born.

Three very wise people just knew it was true. “We must go find the child and bring gifts,” they said to each other.

So the three started out on their trip and saw a very bright star far off. This had to be the sign. They traveled for days. When they got to Bethlehem, King Herod called the wise ones to come to his palace and told them to bring him the news if they found this child. The wise ones were wise enough to know that the King was jealous of this child and was not to be trusted.

The wise ones continued their journey until the star stopped right over the place where the child was. Mary invited them in; they knelt by the child and presented their gifts. Then they left and went home -- by another road.

Questions:

- I wonder why King Herod so frightened of a small child?
- What do you think was in the dream of the wise men that warned them not to return to Herod?

Activity: Preparing for a Journey

Materials needed: 3x5 cards or paper; pens or pencils

Read this introduction to your group: Imagine for a moment that you are refugees much like Jesus and the Holy Family. You have to leave your home to go to a new place that is safe. You

can only bring what you can carry in a backpack because your only way to escape is by walking 100 miles through the desert. You are in imminent danger so you only have one minute to decide. What 10 items would you bring?

Give participants five minutes to write down their items.

Next read this: Because you have to carry food and water, you have to cross off five items that you will leave behind. You only have 1 minute to decide what to keep. What is left in your bag?

Discuss with the group what types of items they decided to keep. Ask the group how they decided what was most important to bring with them.

Discuss what materials might be most helpful to refugees arriving in a new home.

Activity: Home By Another Road

Supplies: Paper, writing utensils

The wise men were forced to go home by a different road. Each of us undertook a journey just to arrive at church. Hand out paper and something to write with. Ask every participant to create a map of the route they used to get to church. Now ask every participant to create a map of how they could get home using a different route. Is it longer to get home by this second route? Why would they take this route? Would they take it if there were a car accident or something that might impede timely progress? What if you were on a bus or other public transit? How convenient would it be to take another route home? What if your route home was cut off? What would you do? What if it became too dangerous to get home? Where would you go?

Activity: King's Cake

The tradition is to provide a cake with one hidden treasure – and the person who finds it is king for the day. Given that less than ½ of 1% of all refugees are resettled to a third country like the United States, they may feel something like the person who is “king” on Epiphany. Use a King Cake to determine the one refugee who will be resettled. How does it feel to be the only one of the group moving to a safe and secure environment? How does it feel to be the group left behind?

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for loving each of us and for helping us to share the good news we have received. 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.

Published by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

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