

World Refugee Day: A Biblical Call to Compassion and Justice

In the current global refugee crisis, Christian organizations worldwide unite on World Refugee Day to bring attention to the struggles faced by millions of displaced individuals. The exponential rise in forced displacement, caused by conflict, persecution, violence and natural disasters, demands a compassionate response rooted in biblical teachings on welcoming the stranger, justice and love.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports a staggering increase in the number of refugees, with 108.4 million individuals uprooted from their homes by the end of 2022, compared to 38.5 million in 2011. These numbers are a testament to the immense challenges faced by those who are forced to leave everything behind in search of safety and a better future.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to extend our hands in mercy and hospitality. The gospel message reminds believers of their responsibility to care for the vulnerable, the marginalized and that stranger among us.

This is evident in the efforts of Christian organizations such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which advocates for justice, peace and protection for displaced persons. They urge nations, including the United States, to fulfill their role as global leaders in refugee resettlement, increasing admissions to provide sanctuary for those in need.

Throughout history, Christians played a pivotal role in extending compassion to refugees. Recognizing the significance of this mission, Christian organizations, working in partnership with churches, have been authorized by the State

Department to resettle refugees. One notable example is the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), which has served immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees since 1939. Their dedicated work has welcomed over 500,000 individuals, offering them a place to rebuild their lives and find hope in the midst of despair.

World Relief, a global Evangelical humanitarian organization, shares personal stories of refugees on its website, humanizing the issue and inspiring empathy. These stories reveal the resilience and faith of individuals like Malian, who, like biblical figures Joseph and Daniel, overcame their adversities through their unwavering trust in God's providence. Malian's journey from war-torn Burma to finding a new home in the United States reflects the transformative power of faith and the compassionate response in which Christians are called to walk.

Christian organizations such as the ELCA and LIRS invite their members to engage in a national day of advocacy, urging them to raise their voices and contact elected representatives to support refugee admissions. This call to action aligns with biblical teachings that emphasize the importance of standing up for justice and caring for the most vulnerable members of society.

In addition to practical engagement, Christians utilize creative expressions to bring awareness to the plight of refugees. The band Ooberfuse premiered their song, "Show Me Love," ahead of World Refugee Day. Their music amplifies their message of love, compassion and solidarity with those affected by displacement.

World Refugee Day serves as a poignant reminder of the strength, resilience and courage exhibited by refugees worldwide. By embracing the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger, Christians demonstrate God's love to those in desperate need, fostering hope, healing and a brighter future

for all who have been forced to flee their homes.

As the global community continues to grapple with the challenges of forced displacement, may Christians worldwide rise to the occasion, guided by Jesus' example in justice, compassion and hospitality. {eo}

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