

The General Commission on Religion and Race has developed these three worship resources for diverse congregations that may have many members who are recent or previous immigrants to the country and the community. These devotionals remind us of our own journey where we leave the familiar and venture into new and unknown territories. Together, we are urged to accept our brothers and sisters as Jesus accepts us all.

Immigration Worship Resources

Loving the Sojourner

Invocation

Leader: In the presence of a God whose word has called the earth and the stars into being,

People: We stand in awe.

Leader: In the presence of a God whose arms have held children,

People: We stand in trust.

Leader: In the presence of a God whose breath has stirred within us and caused our hearts to thirst for justice,

People: We stand in need.

Leader: Before you, Giver of Life, we come in faith, in search of love and justice and wholeness.

People: Be with us; hear us, we pray. Amen. *Source: Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program, September 1993*

Hymn 159 Lift high the Cross

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Our Father who art in heaven,

People: You will that we, your children, build a new earth of sisterhood and brotherhood, not a hell of violence and death.

Leader: Holy be your name,

People: That in your name, Lord, there be no abuse, oppression, or manipulation of your children.

Leader: Your kingdom come.

People: Not the kingdom of fear, of power, of money, of seeking peace by means of war.

Leader: Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,

People: Over this land of ours and other sister lands that changed their songs of joy because of oppression and the whine of shrapnel.

Leader: Give us this day our daily bread,

People: The bread of peace, Lord, so that we can plant maize and beans, watch them grow, and share them as a family.

Leader: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

People: May our personal and national interests be not the coin of our exchanges. May our laments be changed into songs of life, clenched fists into open hands, cries of orphans into smiles.

Leader: Lead us not into temptation,

People: The temptation of conformism, of doing nothing, the temptation to refuse to work for you in the search for justice and peace.

Leader: Deliver us from evil,

People: From being Cain to our brother, from being arrogant, from believing ourselves to be lords of life and death. Amen. *Source: Prayer of Salvadoran refugees*

Scripture Reading

Meditation

Response to the Word: The Maasai Creed*

Together:

We believe in the one High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. He created Man and wanted Man to be happy in the world. God loves the world and every nation and tribe on the Earth. We have known this High God in darkness, and now we know Him in the light. God promised in the book of His word, the Bible, that He would save the world and all the nations and tribes.

We believe that God made good His promise by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, a man in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left His home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and man, showing the meaning of religion is love. He was rejected by his people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross, and died. He lay buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch him, and on the third day, He rose from the grave. He ascended to the skies. He is the Lord.

We believe that all our sins are forgiven through Him. All who have faith in Him must be sorry for their sins, be baptized in the Holy Spirit of God, live the rules of love and share the bread together in love, to announce the Good News to others until Jesus comes again. We are waiting for Him. He is alive. He lives. This we believe. Amen. (Source: The **Maasai Creed** was composed in 1960).

Hymn 301 Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

Benediction

All: God of the stranger, you have been made known to us in Jesus Christ, who was born as a migrant and exiled as a refugee. Lead us as we leave this place of worship to build a community rooted in hospitality to strangers and justice for all. Amen.

***NOTE:** The Maasai Creed is a creed composed in about 1960 by Western Christian missionaries for the Maasai, an indigenous African tribe of semi-nomadic people located primarily in Kenya and northern Tanzania. The creed attempts to express the essentials -of the Christian faith within the Maasai culture (<http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/pelikan/masai.shtml>).

Immigration Worship Resources II

Loving the Sojourner

Call to Worship

How do we know when God is with us? There are times when we are led where we do not plan to go. Let us come to this time of worship, open ourselves to God, and begin our journey.

Hymn 64 Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty

Litany

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through many centuries from native peoples whose history in this land has no recorded beginning.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through many centuries from Spanish, French, and English sailors who came to conquer a new world.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through a couple of centuries from Africans who were forced to come.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through a couple of centuries from Asians desperate for a way to earn a living.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through this century from Latin Americans fleeing oppression.

Leader: We are the children of God.

People: Some of us come through this century from Mexicans seeking a way to feed their children.

Leader: We are the children of God.

Unison: God, we are your children. Unite us into a loving family. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Prayer of Confession

Leader: For our failure to feel the sufferings of others, and our tendency to live comfortably with injustice,

People: God forgive us.

Leader: For the self-righteousness which denies guilt, and the self-interest which strangles compassion,

People: God forgive us.

Leader: For those who live their lives in careless unconcern, who cry "Peace, peace" when there is no peace,

People: We ask your mercy.

Leader: For our failings in community, our lack of understanding,

People: We ask your mercy.

Leader: For times when we are too eager to be better than others, when we are too rushed to care, when we are too tired to bother, when we don't really listen, when we are too quick to act from motives other than love,

People: God forgive us. *Source: Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness, South Africa*

Hymn 432 Jesu, Jesu

Meditation

Responsive Prayer

God our Creator;

As we join the large spectrum of Christians in different churches who are praying for immigrants and refugees, we realize that we are, in fact, asking for changes in our own society.

We pray for politicians,

that they may be willing to share the prosperity of our country with all people – not only with their own citizens.

Send them someone who will give a name

and a human face to the immigration and refugee challenges, and thus show them the inhumanity of current legislation.

We pray for journalists and others who work in the media,

and thus influence public opinion. Send into their experience events which will safeguard them from cynicism and invite them to use their capacities to generate a friendlier atmosphere toward immigrants and refugees.

We pray for the police and immigration officers at our airports,

who exercise power over the lives of people – often without a real knowledge of their situation. Send into their lives people who are able to help them understand the reality of the economic immigrant, the poor immigrant and the asylum seekers.

We pray for ordinary citizens in our country,

that we may not be naive or indifferent, but join those who are working to alleviate the lot of immigrants and refugees.

God, our Creator,

have mercy on us; we, who are acting as if freedom, peace and the well-being of our country were meant for our benefit alone.

God, our Creator,

All: help us to become changed people, and to change our attitudes, as well as the laws of the land so that your justice may prevail. Amen

Source: Adapted from: A Prayer from Finland in "With All God's People: The New Ecumenical Prayer Circle," p. 74, 1989 WCC Publications, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland.

Hymn 733 Marching to Zion

Benediction

All: Renewed by your spirit in this time of worship, O God, we leave to become witnesses to the unity of your people here and around the world. As we have been welcomed into your presence, we leave to become a welcoming presence in a world where fear and hatred separate people from one another. Go with us now into the future, and strengthen our resolve to embrace those we meet with your love. Amen.

Immigration Worship Resources III

Renewing the Covenant:

Loving the Sojourner

Service of Prayer and Worship

Call to Worship

Dear friends in Christ, today we gather to stand with those who have been torn from their homes and communities by violence, poverty, and the ruin of God's good earth. "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands." (Isaiah 65:21-22) Come let us worship. *Source: World Council of Churches, "In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples," November 1997*

Hymn 92 For the Beauty of the Earth

Responsive Prayer

God of the widow and the stranger,
you are made known in our Savior Jesus Christ.
Born as a migrant,
exiled as a refugee,
he knew the pain of homelessness
but taught his friends the meaning and challenge of love.

**All: Lead us as we build communities
rooted in hospitality and justice. Amen**

Source: World Council of Churches "In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples," November 1997

Scripture Reading James 5:16-17

God of grace and God mercy help us to live out the covenant you made with us in our baptism.

Reader #1: The Bible is full of stories of sojourners, strangers without homes, whom God called people to protect. The Israelites were themselves sojourners for forty years after the exodus from Egypt, as they sought the Promised Land. God did not let the Israelites forget that they had been without a homeland for such a long time; the ethic of welcoming the sojourner was woven into the very fabric of the Israelite confederacy. It was more than an ethic, it was a command of God. "Do not mistreat or oppress a stranger; you know how it feels to be a stranger, because you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9).

Hymn 434 Cuando El Pobre (Stanza 1)

Time for Silent Prayer

God of grace and God of mercy help us to connect with those who sojourn amongst us.

Reader #2: A sojourn implies uprootedness; sojourners are uprooted people. At times uprooted people in the Bible were looking for a home, but other times they were not. Often they were telling those who would listen that the real home was a spiritual home-with God providing accompaniment. Sojourners were messengers. The message they sent then as well as today is that the Spirit of God is with each of us as we sojourn through life. We are all on a journey, and God is with us. Such was the message of Moses and many of the prophets; such was the message of John the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness; and such was the message of Jesus Christ, whose own life was characterized by uprootedness.

Hymn 434 Cuando El Pobre (Stanza 2)

Time for Silent Prayer

God of grace and God of mercy help us to be in solidarity with those who are uprooted.

Reader #3: The infant Jesus and his family had to flee to Egypt to avoid persecution and death; they became refugees, sojourning in Egypt until they could come home. Jesus was a person on the move. Jesus' ministry occurred throughout the countryside of Judea, and his life was marked by uprootedness: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). Jesus made a point of spending time with the poor, the powerless, the despised and rejected. Jesus did so while spreading the word of God's steadfast love, the same love spoken of in the Book of Hosea: "I will betroth you to me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness and justice, and in loving kindness and mercy" (Hosea 2:19, New King James Version).

Hymn 434 Cuando El Pobre (Stanza 3)

Time for Silent Prayer

God of grace and God of mercy help us to share your steadfast love with those who sojourn amongst us.

Reader #4: Jesus embodied the love of God to the world and modeled how we are to act with love and compassion for the sojourner. In fact, Jesus' most pointed description of how human beings should behave once they are aware of God's love is in the story of the good Samaritan, in which the love of God is expressed through the compassion of a stranger: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10:33-34, King James Version). This is the radical love of God as expressed by Jesus Christ. It transcends race, nationality, and religion and is a love that cries for justice and peace; it is a love that is sorely needed today. (BOR, Resolution #265. Immigrants and Refugees: To Love the Sojourner)

Hymn 434 Cuando El Pobre (Stanza 4)

Time for Silent Prayer

Scripture Reading MATTHEW 25:31-4

Morning Meditation

Creed for Immigrants

Side 1: I believe in Almighty God, who guided his people in exile and in exodus, the God of Joseph in Egypt and of Daniel in Babylon, the God of foreigners and immigrants.

Side 2: I believe in Jesus Christ, a displaced Galilean, who was born away from his people and his home, who had to flee the country with his parents when his life was in danger, and who upon returning to his own country had to suffer the oppression of the tyrant Pontius Pilate, the servant of a foreign power. He was persecuted, beaten and finally tortured, accused and condemned to death unjustly. But on the third day, this scorned Jesus rose from the dead, not as a foreigner but to offer us citizenship in heaven.

Side 1: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the eternal immigrant from God's Kingdom among us, who speaks all languages, lives in all countries, and reunites all races.

Side 2: I believe that the Church is the secure home for all foreigners and believers who constitute it, who speak the same language and have the same purpose.

Side 1: I believe that the communion of saints begins when we accept the diversity of the saints. I believe in the forgiveness which makes us all equal, and in the reconciliation which identifies us more than does race, language and nationality. I believe in the Resurrection, God will unite us as one people in which all are distinct and all are alike at the same time.

All: I believe in the life eternal beyond this world, where no one will be an immigrant but all will be citizens of God's Kingdom that has no end. Amen. (From *Fiesta Cristiana: Resources for Worship*, ed. by Joel E. Martínez and Raquel Martínez).

Holy Communion

The lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

All honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

The Breaking of the Bread and Sharing of the Cup

Hymn 593 Here I am, Lord.

Benediction