



Advent & Christmas 2021

“Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt...” Matthew 2: 14
The story of Jesus’s family being refugees who had to flee without warning in the dark night, could spark our imagination anew. During the season of Advent and Christmas, we encourage you to pray for refugees and asylum seekers with deep compassion about the fact that there seems to be no place of welcome for so many – either within their own countries or the new country that they were hoping would provide safe harbour.

FORCIBLY DISPLACED WORLDWIDE MID-2021

26.6 million refugees ¹	20.8 million refugees under UNHCR’s mandate 5.7 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA’s mandate	4.4 million asylum-seekers	3.9 million Venezuelans displaced abroad ²	48.0 million internally displaced people end-2020
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There are now more than 84 million displaced people worldwide, 26.6 million refugees and 4.4 asylum seekers. A large percentage of all refugees and asylum seekers are children, many separated from their families. Data is available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>
124 refugees and asylum seekers remaining in Papua New Guinea are to be abandoned by the Australian Government, who announced recently that it is withdrawing from its agreement with PNG. A further 107 people remain confined to Nauru. Another 88 are still in locked detention – part of the group transferred to Australia for medical reasons. www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-06/australia-stop-processing-asylum-seekers-in-png-manus/100517926

Pray for refugees and asylum seekers

Remember those making perilous journeys from war zones, leaving all security and possessions, even passports behind, as they flee from conflict and persecution. Pray particularly for children travelling in extremely dangerous conditions.

Pray for the governments involved

Pray for wisdom for all those in authority who make decisions that impact refugees. Pray for leaders to tackle the root causes of the refugee crisis and for countries around the world to share the challenge and to seek ways to build new futures.

Pray for countries in crisis

During the crisis of COVID-19 so many countries are dealing with old and new outbursts of political unrest, war, violence, kidnapping (especially of young girls for the soldiers and young boys to be coerced into becoming soldiers against their will) and many are displaced or have to flee to save their lives. Please pray for a widely shared yearning for safety, peace and stable constructive governments.

Pray for communities and organisations helping refugees

Many organisations, churches and communities and individuals are working tirelessly to care for refugees and asylum seekers. Community groups, such as Circle of Friends <https://cofa.org.au>, do not take time off during Christmas but continue to support many who need rent relief, medical and energy bills to be paid or who simply need a friend during dark times. Please pray that all would be given wisdom and energy in response to families and children in great need.

IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY WE SEE GOD CHOOSING TO BECOME OUR NEIGHBOUR BY TAKING ON HUMAN FLESH. THIS IS AN ACT OF LOVE FROM GOD THAT DRAWS US INTO THE STORY OF GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL CREATION AND INVITES US TO BE WITNESSES TO GOD'S LOVE THROUGH OUR LOVING ACTION IN THE WORLD.

REV. SHARON HOLLIS, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Pray for Afghanistan

Considering the Taliban taking control again of Afghanistan, we seek the wisdom and relief for the vulnerable at risk and others in these volatile circumstances, especially the women who are not allowed to walk unaccompanied in public or who lost jobs due to these rules.

Summary of Afghanistan Response to date

Since the fall of Kabul, almost 2000 Afghan locally engaged employees and family have been brought to Australia, in addition to about 2000 Afghans granted protection visas since 2013. More than 1600 other Afghans have also been evacuated since 18 August, adding to more than 10,000 Afghans that Australia has granted permanent protection to since 2013. More than 130,000 people in Afghanistan have applied for humanitarian protection in Australia. (SMH, 17 November 2021)

Pray for Afghan refugees and Afghan churches

Pray for Afghan people fleeing the country to find refuge quickly. Some who had lived in Australia since the previous war years are still struggling with visa's not processed, families not being allowed to join them, or are struggling anew as a mother, sister or brother sought by the Taliban could not escape in time. Communication lines are often cut, and many families do not know where relatives in Afghanistan are. Please pray for the provision of safe and welcoming communities, as well as compassionate assistance in the months and years to come. Pray for the Afghan church and believers who remain in the country, especially in their work with other faith-traditions to stand in solidarity with those with goodwill and to be agents of hope.

Pray for refugees with the 2021 Christmas Bowl resources

<https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources>

For each week of advent, you can access worship resources including sermon starters, PowerPoint presentations and clip art as well as videos.



The Syrian conflict, now in its 10th year, is one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time. And its civilians just like Lilia* and her young family who are suffering the most.

**An awareness raising
video resource**

**produced by the Synod Refugee
Advocacy Group**

<https://vimeo.com/605416093>

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