

Refugee Week 2021:

Unity – The way forward

This resource is a starting point for Worship Leaders and Children's Ministry Leaders to use during intergenerational worship or children's ministry activities. It can also be provided to parents to continue the conversation about Refugee Week at home.

Devotional

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Psalm 46:1 (NIV)

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

I wonder what you think of when you hear the word, 'refuge'? 'Refuge' means a place that provides shelter. Have you ever built a cubby house using lots of blankets over a table or chairs? It feels safe and warm inside and can be a special place where we feel like we belong. A refuge is something like that cubby house.

It makes sense then, that in the bible, God is described as "our refuge". If we talk (pray) to God when we feel scared or in danger, He will hear us and help us to not feel as scared. If people are being hurtful to us, we can tell God how we feel and he will comfort us. God helps us to feel safe.

To help us get a better understanding about what it might be like to find safety after being in a scary place, let's imagine you've recently met two children.

Amena and Akram (popular Syrian names) are a brother and sister who come to your Salvos Kids Church or after school program (Kids in the Kitchen, SAGALA, KidZone Club, etc). They might look a bit different to your other friends, and don't talk so much.

After a couple of weeks of smiling at them and saying, "Hi", you start to ask them about their family and where they live. It's a little bit tricky to talk to them at first, because Amena and Akram are still learning how to speak English. They spoke a different language in their home country and they are finding it a bit hard to remember all the new words. Drawing pictures and saying the Australian word for what you've drawn, helps the children to understand you.

Eventually, Amena is able to tell you that they only came to Australia a little while ago, before that they lived in a camp. They shared a tent with their mum, and their dad died. Akram said there were other kids who lived at the camp, and he missed playing games with them. The children have not seen their Aunts and Uncles, cousins or Grandparents since they left their home. They feel sad when they think about how far they are from family.





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As you get to know Amena and Akram better, you learn that they have started going to a school nearby and they want to make friends, but sometimes it's hard. The other kids don't always understand what Amena and Akram are trying to say, they eat different types of food that look and smell strange to them, and the games they play are sometimes different to the ones that Amena and Akram are used to. There is lots to learn and sometimes that can feel scary for them. They are glad that they can be friends with you when they come to the Salvos with their mum.

Because we are people who love God and want to follow his example of caring for others, there are many things we can do to welcome our new friends who have moved into our community, started coming to our school, or are new to our church. Jesus said "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger you welcomed me" (Matt 25:35). As followers of Jesus, we want to be welcoming and show the example of Jesus to everyone in our communities. It doesn't matter where they come from, what they look like or how they speak. Jesus taught us to welcome everyone, and there are many ways you can help welcome new people who may have travelled long distances to find refuge in our safe places.





Refugee
Week



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Questions to think about

- When you feel scared or unsafe, is there a person or place you go to for help?
- If you needed to leave your home in a hurry, what three things would you take with you?
- Talk to your family about "What can you do to welcome a new family who has come to your school or church?"

What can I do to help?

- LEARN – learn about the stories of Asylum seekers and Refugees so that you can have a better understanding of what they have gone through.
- WELCOME – smile, invite them to sit with you, talk to them about things you enjoy (you might learn that you have something in common).
- CELEBRATE – share a meal together and talk about the kinds of food they like best. Share a recipe that your family enjoys and talk about the culture and customs in each of your homes and countries.

Important Facts

- Asylum Seeker: is a person looking for protection because they are unsafe in their own country. They may have already been hurt or they might be afraid of being hurt or treated badly. They are waiting for another country to welcome them.
- Refugee: is a person who asked for protection from another country and received it. They may already have been resettled in another country or be waiting for resettlement.
- Not every asylum seeker becomes a refugee, but every refugee starts out as an asylum seeker.

(adapted from redcross.org.au)

Where to go for more info:

- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre: <https://asrc.org.au/>
- Refugee Council of Australia: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/>
- Refugee Week Website: <https://www.refugeeweek.org.au/>
- Salvation Army Diversity and Inclusion Team:
<https://my.salvos.org.au/toolkit/resource/national-diversity-and-inclusion-team-resources/1771/>
- Globe Trottin' Kids – World Refugee Day Resources and Activities for children:
<https://www.globetrottinkids.com/world-refugee-day-resources-activities-for-kids/>

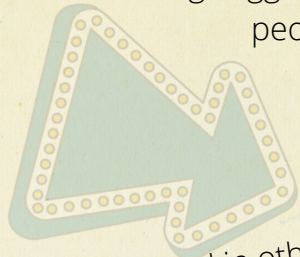




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Activities For Children

The following suggestions could be used in a children's program, worship or at home to help connect with people who may have come to Australia as an Asylum seeker or Refugee.



Culture:

Being interested in other cultures can help us to be welcoming to new friends from different places. You might want to learn a few words (like 'hello', 'welcome', 'please', and 'thank-you') in other languages.

People who are born in countries other than Australia might be used to wearing different types of clothes. Ask your leaders if you could have a multi-cultural day where everyone can have the opportunity to wear traditional clothes from other countries (many schools already do this).



Craft – Friendship Bands

One way to welcome new friends is by giving and receiving gifts. We also show that we are including others and accept them when we do things together with them. One way to do this is by making friendship bands. Instructions are found below for a very simple version, but a quick google and you can find quite elaborate designs made from a variety of materials.

<https://www.makefilmpay.com/kids-crafts/simple-braided-friendship-bracelet/>

- Cut three strands 80cm in length of your chosen colours of knitting wool.
- Fold in half and tie a loop.
- Sort the same colour threads together.
- Pull the left-hand threads over the centre threads.
- Pull the right-hand threads over the centre threads.
- Pull the left-hand threads over the centre threads.
- Pull the right-hand threads over the centre threads.
- Repeat the following steps until you have reached your desired bracelet length.
- Tie an end knot.
- Split the ends into two groups and tie to loop



**Simple Braided
Friendship Bracelet**

[makefilmpay.com](https://www.makefilmpay.com)



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Games

Another way to show unity and acceptance is by playing games together. It might be by choosing someone to be on your team, or letting them be "Captain". It's also the process of teaching one another and learning the rules. Hopefully it's a way to have fun and a few laughs. In the story we looked at before, Akram said that he missed playing games with his friends from the camp. If you have a new friend who has moved to Australia from another country, you might like to ask them what types of games they like to play. You might even discover that you already know the same games but with different names. Maybe they can teach you a new game to play together. Here are some examples of a few games that you might like to play with your new friend:

- Hopscotch
- Football (Soccer)
- Basketball
- Marbles
- Hacky sacks



Food

Sharing food is a great way to build friendships and make everyone feel like they belong. Often we have to be really brave to try something new, but it is important to remember when refugees first arrive in Australia, they might not have tried any of our food, and they have to be really brave to try new food each day!

- (If COVID-19 restrictions allow) Have a selection of international foods for the children to try (be aware of any allergies in the group). Explain that although we may not like some of these "new" foods, some of our "normal" foods are new and not very nice for our friends. If you try something that you don't like, give your new friends a 'fist pump' for being brave enough to try new foods in Australia. Ask them what foods they don't like to eat. (If COVID-19 restrictions don't allow for this, consider a "take home and try" bag, and a note for parents to lead the discussion.)
- Recipe cards: Create a Corps recipe book. Give each child a page to take home and write a recipe on with the help of a parent (including title, ingredients, method, food country of origin if known or family country of origin, and contributing person's name and email). Prompt and have spare pages to provide any and all members of the corps to include a recipe. Type, collate and email out the recipe book to anyone who would like a copy (do not include individual email addresses in the recipe book).
- Invite your new friends to tell you about the types of food they like to eat, or a meal that their family likes to eat on special occasions. Maybe you could ask them to teach you how to make it. You can also talk about the types of food your family likes to eat. You might even like to invite them for dinner one day (check with parents/guardians first).