



Liturgy for World Refugee Day 2023



European
Methodist
Council

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Introduction

As people of faith, we are called to be a voice for the voiceless, to advocate for justice, to welcome the stranger, to extend hospitality, and to work towards a world where all individuals can find safety, refuge, and a place to call home. We acknowledge that the refugee crisis is a global challenge, affecting millions of lives across the world. As Methodists, we are part of a wider family that spans continents and cultures. Therefore, we join hands as members of the European Methodist Council to commemorate and dedicate a special Sunday for migrants and refugees, on the Sunday closest to the 20th June, which is World Refugee Day.

The CCME (Churches commission on migration in Europe) writes in its letter to the churches concerning the International refugee day: «As churches and Christians, our calling is to be witnesses and servants of the Resurrection, as well as to be promoters of new life in justice and peace for all, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, or religion. We know that we are part of a global fellowship of Christians in remembering together those affected in their respective regions, and in reflecting on the causes of their displacement.

Let us remember the documented, as well as the undocumented, who died at the European borders; let us share our sorrow in prayer.

Please take note that some service material is taken from the CCME Commemoration Day June 2018 worship materials, which can be accessed through the following link: [CCME Commemoration Day June 2018](#)

*With thanks to OPCEMI, CCME, and
Universidad Madero - Iglesia Metodista de México A.R.
for their valuable contribution to the preparation of these materials.*

Information Note from CCME

- Around 2,400 persons lost their lives in 2022 on the borders of the Mediterranean alone, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)¹. This represents an increase compared to the previous years in which COVID-19 substantially reduced mobility. Deaths in the Mediterranean continue, and little-known places of emergency, like the borders of Belarus with the EU or in the (English) Channel last year, received more attention as deaths increased. Regions outside Europe such as the Sahel remain major dangers for many on the way to Europe.
- Since 2000, more than 30,000 people are reported by IOM and other sources to have lost their lives on their way to Europe, drowning at sea or in rivers, suffocated in containers on trucks or ships. The fate of those still in international waters or waters of North African countries is often unclear and their numbers increase as EU member states send boats back to Libyan waters.
- As in previous years, 2022-23 has not seen any systematic activity from states in search and rescue. An ongoing criminalisation of civil society actors in search and rescue or assistance at the land borders or those rescued themselves have remained evident and a major concern for the churches.
- Churches in Europe have responded to the ongoing loss of life at the borders of and in Europe by offering practical solidarity, but also by advocating for safe and legal ways for refugees and migrants to enter Europe. Churches in several countries have concretely offered to host those rescued at sea or relocated to unblock the political impasse and allow for disembarkation. Churches in several places are supporting or launching search and rescue initiatives. Development and humanitarian organisations of churches are working on mitigating the consequences of the ongoing crisis. Churches are among those to have organised broad civil society assistance to those forced to flee within and from Ukraine.



- CCME, together with partners, launched the “Safe Passage” project a few years ago. An exchange between churches for safe passage has thus been facilitated. Projects for sponsoring safe refugee arrivals through resettlement, humanitarian visa/humanitarian corridors and other pathways have been undertaken by more and more churches in Europe. These efforts have been connected through events conducted in October 2022. On a political level, in December 2019 the EU pledged for more resettlement after 2020 – a pledge of which CCME reminded member states in June 2023. However, the pledge of places for 2023 remains disappointing with less than 16.000 places pledged for resettlement (in addition to some 13.000 humanitarian admissions).

- The General Assembly of CEC, held in Budapest in July 2013, renewed the call on churches “to commemorate those who have died on their journey to find a dignified life in Europe through an annual day of prayer.” In past years, many churches and parishes across Europe have taken up this call and held commemoration services, prayers or vigils around 20 June, International Refugee Day.

*(from the letter of the CCME and CEC on 4th May 2023:
"World Refugee Day: Call to commemorate refugees who lost their lives at
the European border)*

Worship

Hymn

Welcome and Introduction to the theme *(during the introduction you can show stories, photographs and some figures from this cruel conflict)*

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

Today is World Refugee Day and we decided to make the words of Micah 6:8 the theme of this special service. These words of the prophet challenge us in a special way with regard to the situation of refugees.

At the start of the service greeting and call to respond:

Leader: Friends, we have gathered here to praise God and to witness to our faith as we celebrate the life of migrants and refugees who have died on their way to Europe and at the EU’s borders. We come together in grief, acknowledging our human loss. May God grant us and the family members and those survival victims, grace, that in pain we may find comfort, in sorrow hope, in death resurrection.

(Adapted from the United Methodist Book of Worship: A Service of Death and Resurrection) <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-service-of-death-and-resurrection>

All: Respond to this call!

Let us in caring for our own future and the future of our countries not forget those who are fleeing, on their way to us, on the way to Europe.

Let us, in the face of the huge changes in the Arab countries and elsewhere, find a new policy that takes human rights seriously and does not do deals with dictatorships for our own economic interests nor raise up fences and security measures.

Let us remember those who have perished while fleeing, and those who die from despair in our own countries because of the cold and the indifference of others.

There will be a future in Europe only when we learn to share with each other, with the stranger among us. This is the promise of the Old and the New Testaments.

Lord help us that we may recognize and see your presence in those fleeing to us by welcoming them.

Let us prepare acts of worship, pray and light candles for the victims who are among us and for the many who have no name.

Let us not forget those who have died as victims of our border security systems, victims of our prosperity and egoism.

Let us remember together:

That God did not create borders in the world, but humans after wars and conquests, through treaties, agreements and purchases, borders were established.

That we too have been refugees since time immemorial, that in many of our countries, our own fate as migrants and refugees has not been forgotten.

And let us measure the depths of our Christian faith by how we remember, commemorate and take action.

This is not an action or a campaign. This is a moment to pause and reflect.

Herein lies the power. This is an act of worship, a place where we struggle to hear the Word. If we take this seriously, our words will have the power to heal.

CCME Commemoration Day June 2018 document, which can be accessed through the following link: [CCME Commemoration Day June 2018](#)

Psalm 15 | (alternating voices)

- 1 Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?
Who may live on your holy mountain?
- 2 *The one whose walk is blameless,
who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from their heart;*
- 3 whose tongue utters no slander,
who does no wrong to a neighbor,
and casts no slur on others;
- 4 *who despises a vile person
but honors those who fear the Lord;
who keeps an oath even when it hurts,
and does not change their mind;*
- 5 who lends money to the poor without interest;
who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.
Whoever does these things
will never be shaken.

Hymn

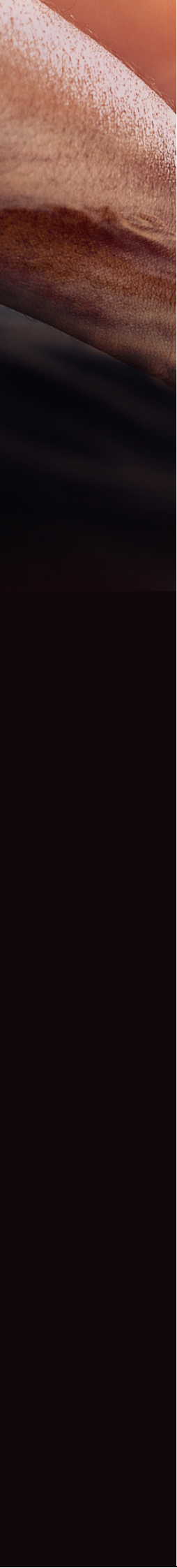
Prayer of Confession and Intercession. *(a purple cloth could be placed on the table and as the prayers are read out, candles of different colours are lit and pictures of refugees in the community are placed on the table.)*

Liturgist: Lord, before you we come, acknowledging our forgetfulness and that our homes, churches and arms have been closed out of shame, fear and dread, which has been greater than our genuine commitment to embrace and give shelter...forgive us beloved God.

All: Forgive us Lord for forgetting that I was a stranger and you welcomed me with your grace and love, refuge you gave to my life by being my great Saviour.

Liturgist: We pray for all those refugees, men, women and children, hurting and homeless... forgive us Lord our forgetfulness of them all today.

All: Forgive us Lord for forgetting that I was a stranger and you welcomed me with your grace and love.



Liturgist: Forgive us, beloved God, for we have done nothing to build shelters where all those who are homeless can come, for those who are forgotten and banished from their land and home... forgive us for our negligence of selfishness and foolishness. Forgive us Lord for forgetting that I was a stranger and you welcomed me with your grace and love,

All: O gracious God who looks with love and compassion on the poor, the needy, the lonely, the immigrants, the marginalised, and the refugee, forgive us our forgetfulness and fear to embrace all those who suffer believing that among us they will find a refuge...You are the omnipotent shadow, you are the shelter, the hope, the refuge and the peace of the suffering. Forgive us and let us rekindle the flame that announces that among us there is room for the stranger, for the despised, for the foreigner and for all who are discriminated against... Fill us with the goodness of your Spirit of love that embraces and comforts the suffering and as a community we reflect compassion and brotherhood. Amen.

*Rev. Raquel Itzel Villalvazo Moreno, Liturgist
Universidad Madero - Iglesia Metodista de México A.R.
taken from the Liturgy "UNA CASA DE REFUGIO DE AMOR Y SANIDAD."*

Creed

I believe that God can and will let good come out of everything, even the greatest evil. For that to happen, God needs human beings who let everything work out for the best.

I believe that in every moment of distress God will give us as much strength to resist as we need. But it is not given to us in advance, lest we rely on ourselves and not on God alone. In such faith all fear of the future should be overcome.

I believe that even our mistakes and shortcomings are not in vain and that it is no more difficult for God to deal with them than with our supposedly good deeds.

I believe that God is not timeless fate but waits for and responds to sincere prayer and responsible actions.

D. Bonhoeffer

Bible Readings:

Micah 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12

Sermon

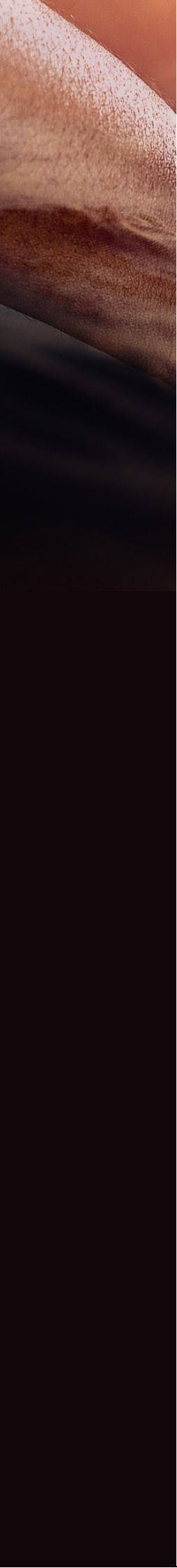
Hymn

TABLE OF BREAD, COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP. *(The sharing of the table of the Lord is suggested to be taken all at the same time, i.e. the portions or pieces of bread and the cups are shared out and until the whole community has participated in one feeling and action.)*

Invitation: Come, all you who are weary, burdened with work and sorrow; come, all you who have been despised, come, this is the refuge of love and peace! Come to the beautiful table of opportunity, salvation, shelter and true peace...Come, do not delay any longer, there is rest and embrace in brotherhood, do not hesitate any longer, come, it is Christ who invites us to his refuge of truth! This is the table of refuge, a home where we can eat and rest without fear. Let us participate in it keeping in mind all those who seek refuge, home and a place to be...not only for them but in the commitment to act, without selfishness and forgetfulness, it is time to act...Let us pray:

Beloved God of goodness, just as your son was an immigrant who sought refuge among us seeking where to lie down, to rest, and we did not receive him. He was scorned and forgotten, discarded with no home where to be born, he was saved by your grace to a safe haven where your love brought him to birth...

All: Today you allow us this banquet, undeserved by our actions, an open table you serve us with love and kindness, not rejecting our lives and providing the refuge we seek and so long to find... we come to you naked, exposed and with no excuse to present - you are the lodging of every wayfarer who desires to find life and peace... you receive us with the table of refuge, nourishment and you give us forgiveness. We prostrate ourselves, surrendering everything to you in humility, with nothing to hide, accepting your command to go and preach.



Minister: This is the table of rest, of refuge to the homeless, family table and home where all may rest, Come and let us eat together in fellowship supper, remembering Christ's perfect sacrifice our word of Truth!

All: We seek forgiveness for our forgetfulness of the despised to forget, we take this bread with commitment, knowing that we must bring, a bread to feed the hungry and a cup of salvation to proclaim, nourishment to the forgotten and embrace the refugee in hope of life and peace.

Institution *(Take the elements of bread and wine and suggest this paraphrase of Christ's words of consecration)*

This is the bread that was broken and blessed body of Christ the Saviour, let us all eat of it, in remembrance of his love let us proclaim his life, death and resurrection, feeding all those who hunger without ceasing.

This is the cup shared and blessed, a new covenant invites us, to shelter and restore. It is the cup of Salvation - in remembrance of His blood shed for the refugee and poured out of love.

It is the table that nourishes our journey without ceasing, strengthened in Christ we must never again be silent, with this good food we must move towards paths of justice, equality and brotherhood, let us share the bread and wine as a community, a refuge open to all who have nowhere to rest.

Distribution of the elements of the table. *In imparting the elements of the communion table, the following is suggested:*

If for lay people and ministers or church:

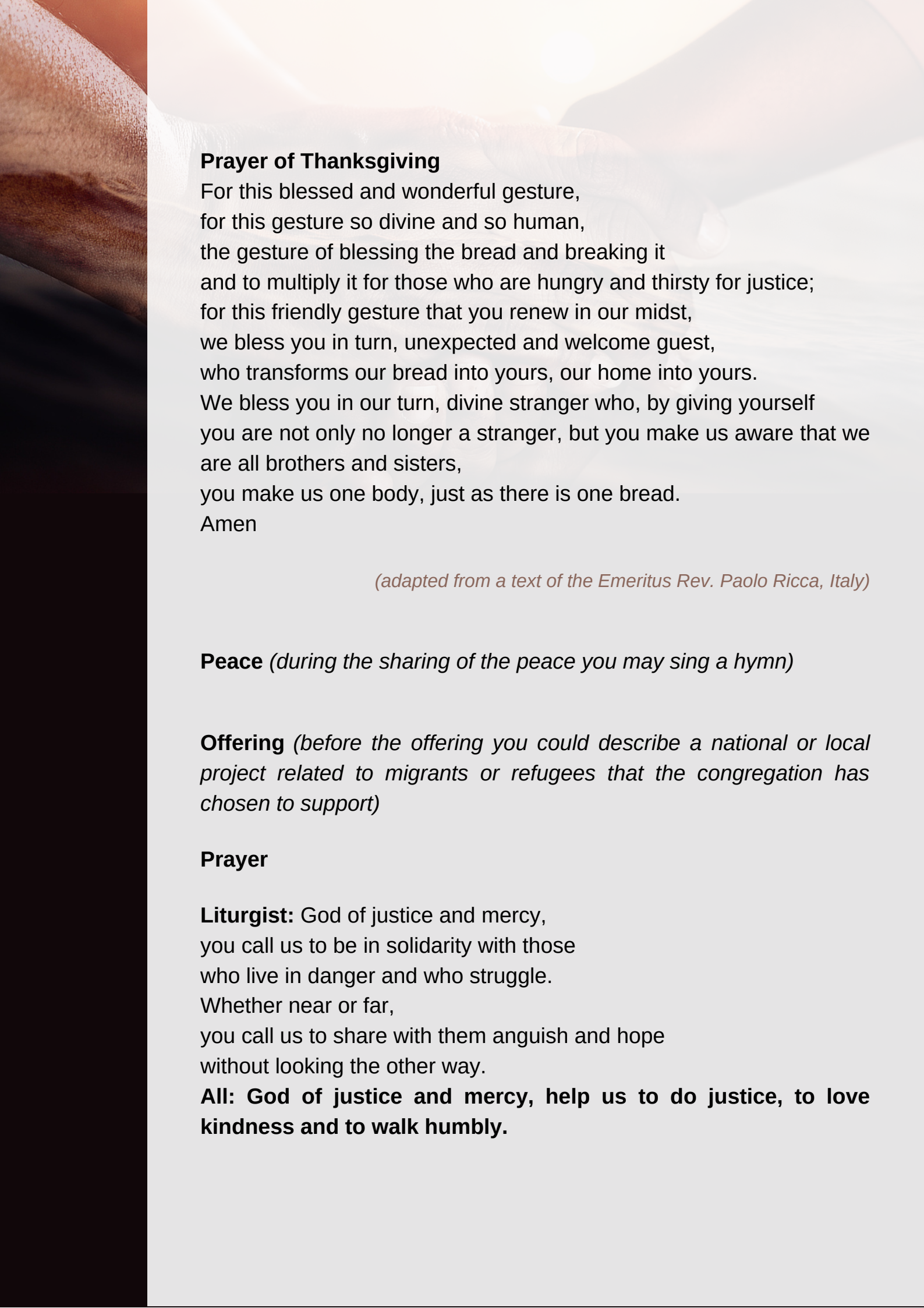
Come eat the bread and drink the cup as nourishment that affirms your walk, fulfilling Christ's mission to be a refuge and fellowship.

If it is for a refugee:

Come and enjoy the bread of life and the cup of salvation as nourishment for your journey, affirming the refuge Christ gives you.

*Rev. Raquel Itzel Villalvazo Moreno, Liturgist
Universidad Madero - Iglesia Metodista de México A.R.*

Holy Communion Liturgy taken from "UNA CASA DE REFUGIO DE AMOR Y SANIDAD."



Prayer of Thanksgiving

For this blessed and wonderful gesture,
for this gesture so divine and so human,
the gesture of blessing the bread and breaking it
and to multiply it for those who are hungry and thirsty for justice;
for this friendly gesture that you renew in our midst,
we bless you in turn, unexpected and welcome guest,
who transforms our bread into yours, our home into yours.
We bless you in our turn, divine stranger who, by giving yourself
you are not only no longer a stranger, but you make us aware that we
are all brothers and sisters,
you make us one body, just as there is one bread.
Amen

(adapted from a text of the Emeritus Rev. Paolo Ricca, Italy)


Peace *(during the sharing of the peace you may sing a hymn)*

Offering *(before the offering you could describe a national or local project related to migrants or refugees that the congregation has chosen to support)*

Prayer

Liturgist: God of justice and mercy,
you call us to be in solidarity with those
who live in danger and who struggle.
Whether near or far,
you call us to share with them anguish and hope
without looking the other way.

All: God of justice and mercy, help us to do justice, to love
kindness and to walk humbly.



Liturgist: *(the reader places a cross made with the wood of a ship or branches of a tree, or a piece of barbed wire on the table of the Holy Supper)*

God of justice and mercy,

we pray for those who migrate in search of a more solid, free and secure life.

Many of them lose their lives in the difficult migratory routes: in Libyan prisons, in the desert, in the snowy forests of the Balkans or in the Mediterranean Sea.

May our solidarity be founded on concrete actions and not consist only of beautiful statements.

May our solidarity be based on perseverance and not on the tragedy of the moment.

All: God of justice and mercy, help us to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly.

Liturgist: *(the reader places a basket with fruits and vegetables on the table of the Holy Supper)*

God of justice and mercy,

we pray for the many, foreigners and natives, who live in labour exploitation in the fields;

for those who see their work at risk

due to factory relocations and financial speculation;

we pray for foreigners without documents or who risk losing them because they are the most exposed to illegal and dangerous jobs;

let us not sell their safety and legality to buy cheap food and products.

All: God of justice and mercy, help us to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly.

Liturgist: *(the reader places a flag of peace on the table of the Holy Supper)*

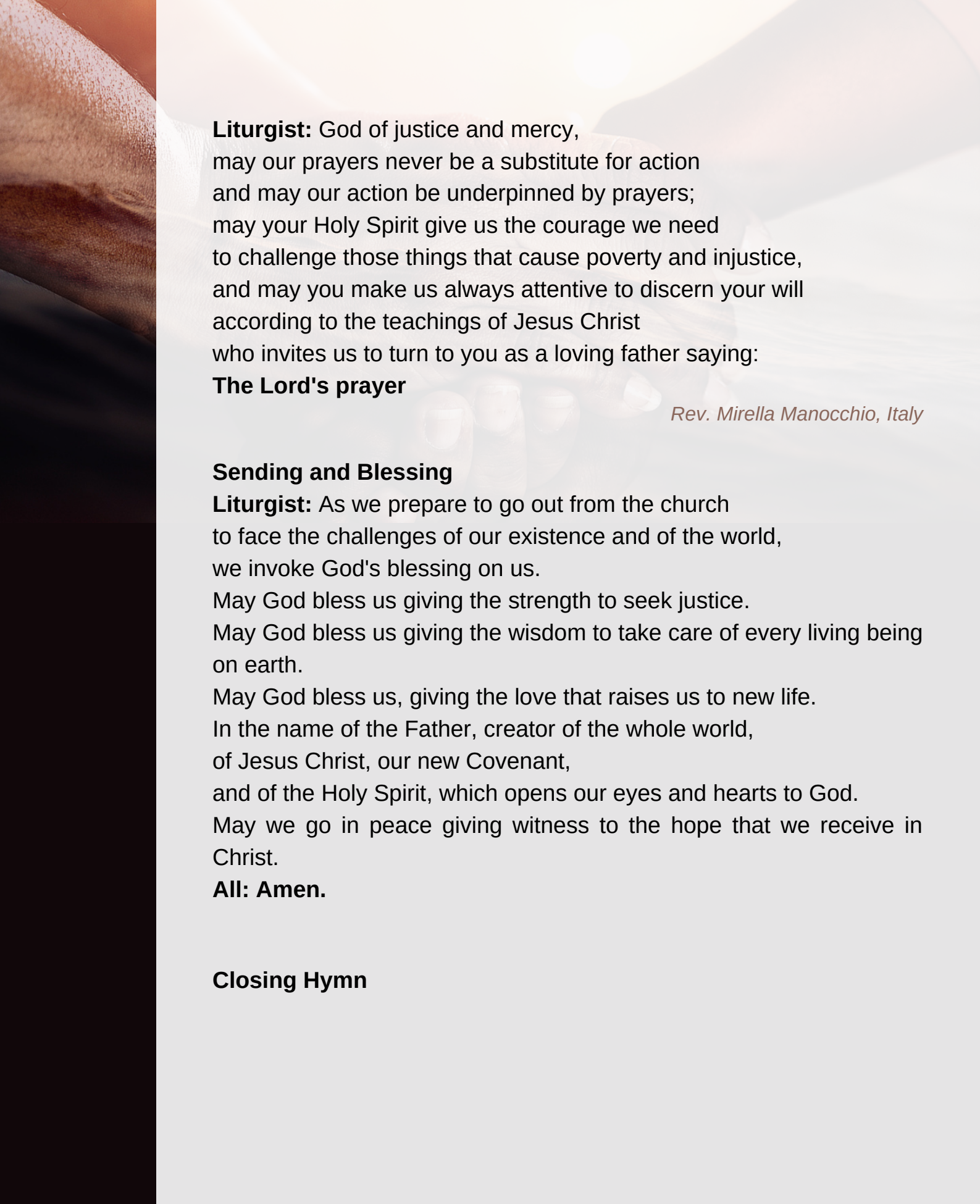
God of justice and mercy,

allow us to give comfort where there is pain,

joy where there is discomfort;

let us be your instruments of peace, justice and mercy.

All: God of justice and mercy, help us to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly.



Liturgist: God of justice and mercy,
may our prayers never be a substitute for action
and may our action be underpinned by prayers;
may your Holy Spirit give us the courage we need
to challenge those things that cause poverty and injustice,
and may you make us always attentive to discern your will
according to the teachings of Jesus Christ
who invites us to turn to you as a loving father saying:

The Lord's prayer

Rev. Mirella Manocchio, Italy

Sending and Blessing

Liturgist: As we prepare to go out from the church
to face the challenges of our existence and of the world,
we invoke God's blessing on us.
May God bless us giving the strength to seek justice.
May God bless us giving the wisdom to take care of every living being
on earth.
May God bless us, giving the love that raises us to new life.
In the name of the Father, creator of the whole world,
of Jesus Christ, our new Covenant,
and of the Holy Spirit, which opens our eyes and hearts to God.
May we go in peace giving witness to the hope that we receive in
Christ.

All: Amen.

Closing Hymn

