

## Welcome & Purpose

World Refugee Day is an international day designated by the United Nations to honor refugees around the globe. Like other of our more somber holidays, it is not a day of celebration *per se* because we do not celebrate the fact that millions of people have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution. Rather, **World Refugee Day is an occasion to build empathy and understanding** for their plight and to recognize their resilience in rebuilding their lives.

Every year on June 20 we take time to honor these brave people and to gather our resolve to work towards a better, more peaceful, more ecologically friendly future where all people can live safely in whatever homeland they call their own.

In our modern world, there are over 100 million displaced people. In fact, every minute 20 people leave everything behind to escape war, persecution, or terror.

A **refugee** is someone who fled their home and country owing to ‘a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion’. Many refugees are in exile to escape the effects of natural or human-made disasters.

We as people of faith include these resources in our worship because we know this to be an issue of faith. Time and time again, God calls us to care for the orphan, the widow, the oppressed, and the foreigner. In our Christian tradition, we remember from the book of Deuteronomy, when God tells “**You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.**”

This World Refugee Day, we thank you for taking the time to honor refugees in our services, our prayers, our sermons, and our songs. **May we also honor God by showing welcome to the stranger, and expanding the circle of radical hospitality and love, to offer support, resources, and a home, refugees in our own communities. Amen.**