

Mount Hollywood United Church of Christ – Los Angeles
Second Sunday in Lent – March 12, 2017
Rev. Anne G. Cohen, Minister

Genesis 12:1-4a

For Reflection

“You know, those of us who leave our homes in the morning and expect to find them there when we go back - it's hard for us to understand what the experience of a refugee might be like.”

- Naomi Shihab Nye, American Novelist (b.1952)

Becoming Refugees

No one volunteers to be a Refugee...
Migrants: Immigrants and Emigrants
Documented or paperless
Foreign or domestic
Employed or unemployed
These humans make choices – often hard choices
But they choose.

No one volunteers to be a Refugee...
[Or a Slave – by the way]
Refugees have no choice
Forced to abandon home or die
Forced to flee from rising tides or falling bombs
Death threats or drought
Driven out by child soldiers or tyrants
Terrorists or tsunamis

No one volunteers to be a Refugee...
Taking only what they can carry
Taking only what they need for the journey
Leaving treasured quilts and photographs
Leaving books and children's drawings behind
Leaving the graves of loved ones untended in once sacred ground
Leaving familiar work and landscapes and horizons
Leaving behind the comfortable habits
Of daily life and the once relative safety of Home
Family, Neighbors, Village, Native Land

No one volunteers to be a Refugee...
Choosing a dream over a reality
Seeking higher income or an improved educational system
Reasoning that to live in a Democracy would be an improvement
Packing up hopes and children and parents for a locational benefit.
These refugees are cut loose suddenly
Dislocated by disaster, natural and unnatural
Imposed by forces beyond their control
Facing down mortality on all sides and running
Running through the fire, away from the sucking tide
And the mortar fire and the bullets
Beyond the visible threat, hoping to make it to safer, higher, dryer, land.

No one volunteers to camp out for years, decades
In dusty, muddy fields of foreign lands
Starving, unclean, dying of colds and curable diseases
Waiting to be driven out again
By circumstances beyond anyone's control
Random patrols of un-self-regulated teens
Well-armed and well-trained for work no sane adult would undertake
Moved from even this hell-hole by
Shifting borders and theatres of war
Lack of rain or help or medicine or hope

No one volunteers to limp and crawl for thousands of miles
With babies and invalids and targets on their backs
Numb with grief and fear
Carved out by loss and loneliness
Seemingly abandoned by G-d
And the unmitigated cruelty of compassionless rulers
Some elected by our own devices
Appointed to protect our privilege and our pride
Against our better judgment, our self-interest, or even our intentions.

No one crosses deep water on leaking boats
Over-filled and under navigated
By greedy traffickers in human flesh
Sailing into the unknown with death behind and beneath them
Uninsured for damages to body and soul and mind
And if undrowned
Forced into language barriers and culture clashes
Unrecognized past accomplishments and underestimated intelligence
Hindered in education and job prospects

Facing patronization and pity and poverty
And a serious lack of popularity.

No one volunteers to be a Refugee...
Not the Hebrews escaping slavery in Egypt
Not the Syrians escaping civil war
Not the Armenians or the Guatemalans
Or the Rwandans fleeing genocide
Not the 13 million residents of U.S. coastal zones
And millions more around the globe
Facing rising sea levels
Drowning islands and villages and cities
Unsaved by dykes or levees or a lack of urban planning
Murdered and forcibly moved by those who would deny science and common sense
The forces of nature and greed and lunacy
Beyond Belief
Killing the Barrier Reef
Melting our Polar Refuge from the Solar Heat
Beating down and silencing the cries of Exponential Extinction
Creaturely demise and Climate revenge
Which has no regard for economic status, age, color or gender
Taking us all down together
All refugees until, like Dodos, we cease to exist.

No one volunteers to be a Refugee...
Certainly, not you or me or anyone we know
In their right minds would choose such a status
Over-vetted, distrusted, dependent on the kindness of strangers
Whose hearts vary in size
Whose choices are numerous and often callous
Whose leaders redefine compassion as traitorous
Hiding behind lies and word salad disguises
Hoarding their wealth for their own advancement
Draining and refilling swamps with the same corrupted corpus
Of penthouse dwelling blood-sucking humans
Whose instincts we too embody
Inclinations with which we do battle daily
In G-d's name.

No one volunteers to be a Refugee...
No one. G-d knows. G-d bless their bloody feet.
G-d lead us into the ways of compassion
Offering to others what we are destined to need

Becoming refugees in turn
Unless...
Unless...

Scripture Reading for Sunday March 12, 2017 – Second Sunday in Lent – Year A

Genesis 12:1-4a

1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." 4a So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

<http://www.climatechangenews.com/2016/03/23/us-faces-rising-tide-of-climate-change-refugees/>

US faces rising tide of climate change refugees

By the century's end, millions of US citizens could become climate refugees.

A study of US counties vulnerable to sea level rise warns that if the coasts are not protected, the movement of people could match the scale of the 20th-century "Great Migration" of African-Americans from the south to the northern states.

Altogether, the new research concludes, more than 13 million people could be affected by a sea level rise of 1.8 metres. This is the high end of climate science projections for sea level rise, but even at the low end a rise of 0.9 metres will put more than 4 million people at risk.

And another study of vulnerability worldwide suggests that, everywhere, the chance of being affected by sea level rise has been underestimated. What matters in such calculations are the concentrations of population in the coastal zones.

Migration/KPCC

Some economic report on KPCC noted that unemployment rates have been higher as the mobility of American citizens has been lower. People used to find jobs wherever they were available and move to those places where they could work. Now people are more likely to buy a home, get rooted in a community, be reluctant to pull kids out of schools and circles of friends. Often both partners will be employed and if one has a job it is harder to move so that the other can follow a job.

CWS Condemns Rewritten Executive Order Against Refugees and Muslims Global Ministries (Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ)

"The facts speak for themselves: refugees are not only some of the world's most vulnerable people, but also the most heavily vetted individuals to enter the United States. Restricting access to their safety based on nationality or religion is misguided and un-American."

"Today's order is effectively the same executive order we saw issued in January --and our opposition to it will not waver. CWS continues to stand in solidarity with refugees and our Muslim brothers and sisters. We remain confident that our justice system will ultimately prevail in this assault on human and constitutional rights. We call on the Administration to rescind this order, and urge Members of Congress to do everything in their power to stop its implementation."

United Church of Christ News

UCC leaders condemn revised White House travel ban

The new order temporarily restricts refugee admissions to the United States for 120 days, and, similar to the version signed in January, halts travel to the U.S. for 90 days to anyone from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen seeking a new visa. Travelers from Iraq are not barred — a change from the first version of the order due to that country's role in fighting ISIS.