

*High Commissioner's Dialogue  
on Protection Challenges  
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## **CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON CARING FOR REFUGEES AND THE DISPLACED**

1. For Christians, the call to respond to the needs of migrants, refugees, and those fleeing persecution and seeking asylum is not ideologically based - it is biblically mandated.
2. The Exodus from slavery to freedom became the linchpin of Hebrew identity. From generation to generation, and in the present day, the memory of the Exodus is kept alive in both the Jewish and Christian traditions, not as ancient history but as our history, our story (Cf. Exodus 3:7-8, Deuteronomy 6:20-21, 23-25). The laws of Israel's God show a "preferential option" for the stranger, the alien, the poor and defenseless. "You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19). Since the plight of the dispossessed matters to God, it must matter to God's people.
3. The foundational event in the history of Christians is the Christ event: the incarnation, life, teaching, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Through the Christ event, we see God and know who we are and what we are called to do. Jesus was a Jew; he shared the passion for justice and concern for the stranger found in the Hebrew Bible. Jesus' story is the story of welcome, of inclusion, of service both to citizens and to the strangers in their midst, particularly those who were considered outsiders. Jesus told his followers that when they fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and those in prison, they were doing it to him. When they failed to do those things, they failed to serve him (Matthew 25:31-45).

### Lutherans and Refugees

4. Because of its refugee heritage and its embrace of the profound biblical and theological grounds for "welcoming the stranger", the Lutheran church is deeply involved in refugee matters.
5. It is an involvement that stretches back to biblical times. In the Old Testament we see the story of a refugee people - the people of Israel who fled from Egypt. In the New Testament there is a refugee family - the Holy Family who sought refuge in Egypt. Yes, Jesus was a refugee. At the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther himself had to be spirited away and given sanctuary at the Wartburg Castle. At the end of World War II, when one out of every six Lutherans in the world was a refugee, Lutherans experienced both suffering and service. It continues to this day through the work of the Lutheran World Federation and the many Lutheran service

organizations, congregations, and individuals who offer a hand of welcome to those who have been displaced.

6. The member churches of the Lutheran World Federation remain committed to promoting human rights, peace and reconciliation, to alleviating human suffering and to addressing the root causes of social, economic and gender injustice. To be Lutheran is to engage in service, as we are freed by Christ to love and serve the neighbor.

“Our service in the world and our care for creation are integral to our Lutheran identity.”

*Contributed by Ralston Deffenbaugh, The Lutheran World Federation*

### The Parable of the Good Samaritan

7. In reading the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke's Gospel (Lk. 10:25-37) we find answers to the questions of "who is my neighbor?" and "who must I love as myself" in order to fulfill the obligations of God's law. The victim's circumstances, apart from the fact that he is traveling to Jericho, are not known. It is unknown, for instance, whether he was in some way responsible for what befell him or whether he had travelled imprudently. Yet, the parable shows that these questions are not important. The only real consideration is responding to the needs of a neighbor.

8. The Samaritan, not subject to the law, is the person who fulfills this obligation.

9. The Samaritan's care for the injured person is liberating. He tells the inn keeper that he will pay for any unmet expenses. Under the custom of the time, the victim would have automatically gone into indentured servitude to the landlord for unmet debts. The Samaritan's actions saved him from becoming a servant. This is a story that urges its readers to reflect on the questions of who is the object of assistance, what type of assistance is to be given, and how complete that assistance should be.

*Contributed by  
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