An Ecumenical Reflection, Prayer and Action
ON MIGRATION, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT JUSTICE

Grace to Ask: As Disciples of Jesus Christ, we will grow in our understanding of how to integrate in the daily challenges of our lives, the lives of people who migrate especially those living in difficult, dangerous and oppressive situations and to make choices that will be transformational for all people.

To Prepare: Download and display a map showing the migration of Abraham and Sarah or other biblical figures. Access to the internet and Bibles are needed. You can also download recent stories of migrants and refugees in oppressive situations.

Please See attached the document or click in this link CWWM4 Advocacy Paper and as a group read paragraphs 2 and 3 of the “Church Witnessing with Migrants” Advocacy Paper. What initial impressions or question arise?

Discuss current situations and examples in the Bible that have forced people to migrate.

- Violent Situations – Matthew 2: 13-18
- Environmental degradation- Ruth 1:1-6
- Militarization – Micah 2:1-2
- Wars- Judges 1:22-26
- Lingering conflicts – Genesis 33: 12-17
- Political persecution – Acts 12: 1-4

Keywords to take note: Internally-displaced persons and refugees (distinguish between these two terms)

Key Concepts: People as commodities; globalization and global marketplace

CRITICAL ANALYSIS: Read Amos 5:11-15 and James 5: 1-6 How were people treated as commodities in biblical times? How are people treated as commodities today? How can employers value the dignity and worth of people who migrate? Discuss your understanding of globalization and global marketplace. How does it intersect with the idea of people as commodities? What is “Freedom of Movement” as described in the Advocacy Paper? Read also Genesis 12:1-9. In what situations could/should migrating peoples be included in dialogue pertaining to their destinies, human rights and welfare? Where do discussions take place that limit migration as a strategy for development?

REFLECTION/DEEPENING : From Micah 4:4 “ They shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken”. “It is a way of saying that “the right of all peoples to stay, prosper and live with provision and without fear anywhere, be it in their own countries or as migrants in another” can be a reality.”

“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not oppress the stranger. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” Lev 19:33-34

“The mission of the Church, herself a pilgrim in the world and the Mother of all, is thus to love Jesus Christ, to adore and love him, particularly in the poorest and most abandoned; among these are certainly migrants and refugees, who are trying to escape difficult living conditions and dangers of every kind. For this reason, the theme for this year’s World Day of Migrants and Refugees is: Church without frontiers, mother to all.
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The Church opens her arms to welcome all people, without distinction or limits, in order to proclaim that “God is love” (1 John 4:8.16). After his death and resurrection, Jesus entrusted to the disciples the mission of being his witnesses and proclaiming the Gospel of joy and mercy. On the day of Pentecost, the disciples left the Upper Room with courage and enthusiasm; the strength of the Holy Spirit overcame their doubts and uncertainties and enabled all to understand the disciples’ preaching in their own language. From the beginning, the Church has been a mother with a heart open to the whole world, and has been without borders.

The Church without frontiers, Mother to all, spreads throughout the world a culture of acceptance and solidarity, in which no one is seen as useless, out of place or disposable. When living out this motherhood effectively, the Christian community nourishes, guides and indicates the way, accompanying all with patience, and drawing close to them through prayer and works of mercy.” (Excerpts taken from Pope Francis’ Message for 2015 World Day for Migrants and Refugees)

“A Church that points toward “an active partnership with God in speaking truth to powers, confronting and transforming unjust, inhuman, discriminatory ideologies, cultures and realities,” so that the world may be what God wanted it to be.” (Excerpt from “The ‘Other’ is My Neighbor- Developing an Ecumenical Response to Migration”- World Council of Churches).

Penitential Prayer: God, you have created every person in your image, every person exists with an inherent dignity and worth, yet sometimes we have been blind to the divine image in the other, especially in those who are outsiders to our nation, culture or class. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy

God you call us to welcome the stranger into our midst, to extend the kind of hospitality that will transform the stranger into friend, the outsider into neighbor, yet too often we have raised walls of animosity to those who seek shelter among us, especially those driven by war, oppression and economic exploitation to seek life in a strange and foreign place. Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy.

God you call us into a community working for the common good of all people, making choices that bring hope, justice, truth and freedom to our world, yet sometimes we have failed to speak out against injustice and lift up the oppressed. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

We have through our blindness to the situation of the exploited, our deafness to the cries of the oppressed, and our insensitivity to the stranger, become ourselves strangers to God. The God of all creation is never blind, deaf or insensitive, and through the welcome of divine forgiveness draws us together as friends of God, and sisters and brothers in solidarity with each other. Amen.

Transformational Response: Having read and prayed about paragraphs 2 and 3 of the CWWM Advocacy Paper, what action steps can you or we take that are likely to be transformational within your sphere of influence? (SHARING)

Prayer of Commitment/Action

One: Caring, Just One, you have created us in your likeness. We are all part of your holy family.

All: We commit ourselves to welcome the stranger in our midst not only because we were once strangers but because we are kin.
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One: Caring, Just One, you invite us to offer hospitality because that is where we can find you; where we can find ourselves entertaining angels.

All: We commit ourselves to opening our hearts to this reality and basing our social justice work on this principle of divine equality.

One: Caring, Just One, you have asked us to read the landscape of our fears, the terrain of other peoples’ sorrow and turn our borders into bridges of compassion.

All: We commit ourselves to not live in fear and work toward the creation of humane borders that acknowledge that no human being is illegal for seeking the right to work and feed their family.

One: Caring, Just One, you have asked us to stand up to the powers and principalities that destroy human dignity.

All: We commit ourselves to creating a fair immigration system that recognizes immigrants’ full humanity and eliminates barriers to their full participation in society.

One: Caring, Just One, you have asked us to create just laws for all your people.

All: We commit ourselves to standing against punitive legislation that deprives immigrants of due process or civil rights, and in support of laws that protect and ensure these rights.

One: Caring, Just One, you created this world and all that is in it and it is good.

All: We commit ourselves to its preservation through changing our lifestyles from ones based on limitless consumption and thus limitless exploitation of others.

One: The Caring and Just One has prepared us to be living sanctuaries for love and justice. May we cross all the boundaries that separate us from our own true self and from others. May we know the joy and suffering of interconnectedness. May we have the wisdom and courage to say No to unjust laws that deprive people of their dignity and rights. May our solidarity with immigrants be a transforming power in the world. May we work together to restore and rebuild our beloved communities.

BLESSING: May God’s blessing be upon us all as we work together towards Micah’s vision where “everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid.” May we be bearers of God’s likeness and instruments of God’s compassion and hospitality, justice and peace, abundance and sustainability. AMEN

References :

- http://umc-gbs.org/content/articles/CWWM4_Advocacy_Paper.pdf