

Liturgy on Migrant Justice

Prepared by the WSCF

Migration is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, people have moved across borders for economic and political reasons. Migration is a phenomenon affecting our societies and our lives deeply. Migration can be understood as a movement of a person from one place to another, from the country where the person is born to another one, but this movement can occur even within the same country.

Migration, defined as one of the global issues of the early twenty-first century, is - in itself - a neutral word; it does not have any negative connotation in its definition. The concept of migration includes among others:

1. Refugees, internally displaced persons and other uprooted people
2. Persons migrating for labour and economic reasons
3. Persons migrating to join their family

The forms of migration can be distinguished according to the motives (economic, family reunion, refugees) or legal status (irregular migration, controlled emigration/immigration, free emigration/immigration) of those concerned. People can move 'voluntarily' or they can be forced to leave their home.

Globalisation has increased the levels of forced migration. It has led to widening socio-economic disparities which have provided an incentive for people to leave their own countries and seek opportunities elsewhere. In many countries, the impact of globalisation has resulted in precipitated instability of various kinds. This instability may be countered by forms of repression, extending from limitations on individual freedom of expression through to the suppression of an independent press, political parties, trade unions, or religious organisations.

"Migration in the modern world, in both its forced and 'voluntary' versions, has to be understood as arising for many people as an act of necessary adaptation to developments beyond their individual control. In many instances, people migrate in order to ensure their basic survival; in others, because the task of living with a degree of dignity and hope for a marginally better future require movement to another country." (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe – CCME)

The Bible itself is full of migration stories. The Holy Family had to flee persecution; Ruth migrated to join her family; Abraham and Sarah were migrants for a variety of other reasons; the whole history of the people of Israel is a migration story. Another aspect to migration is also represented in the Bible; after 'the fall', God made human beings aliens on the Earth (Gen. 3:20-24), a theme that runs through all the Scriptures even up to Jesus saying "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).

To prepare for this liturgy please:

1. Read the liturgy through and adapt it for use in your situation. The structure is a suggestion; different parts are optional and can be modified according to your local situation.
2. Organise the venue; in your university or college, in a church supportive of your SCM, or in the place where you usually gather with your group. If possible, organise the liturgy outdoors or in a public place like a railway station.
3. Brainstorm about symbolic acts to be carried out during the worship (e.g. people could sit on luggage, suitcases, full backpacks, or they could make a cross of them, or of passports, travel documents, travels tickets, or phrasebooks)
4. Find someone or some people (student, senior friend or clergy) to prepare a sermon/reflection. It would be appropriate for the sermon/ reflection to be about the scripture readings chosen or generally on migration. A few people could reflect on the theme on the basis of Scriptures or tell how they have experienced or encountered Migration in their own life. Inviting local refugees or migrants and exchange students from your university to share their own experiences and to participate in the liturgy is recommended.
5. In consultation with the preachers/speakers choose the scripture readings from these:

Genesis 3: 20-24	Genesis 4
Genesis 7-8	Genesis 12
Genesis 18: 1-8	Genesis 27: 41-29:1
Genesis 34	Genesis 37: 12-36
Exodus 1	Exodus 2: 11-22
Exodus 12: 37-14: 31	Numbers 35: 9-15
Joshua 20	The Book of Ruth
1 Kings 17: 7-16	2 Kings 25: 8-21
Psalms 119: 1-3, 5, 19-20	Psalms 120-134
Isaiah 58 (especially verses 6-8)	The Book of Jonah
Matthew 1: 18-2:23	Matthew 25: 35-40
Sending of disciples I & II (i.e. Matthew 10 and 28: 16-20)	

Luke 2: 1-20

Luke 9: 57-62

Luke 14: 15-24

Hebrews 11

Revelation/Apocalypse 21: 1-7, 9-26, 22: 1-5

6. Organise the map and candles for the confession and the images to be projected/ displayed during the intercessions

7. Find people to lead the liturgy; try to have several people (women and men, students and senior friends) taking the leader's part

8. Decide whether the offering will go to your movement, the WSCF Centennial Fund, the Ecumenical Assistance Programme or another aspect of WSCF's work. Organise baskets to collect offerings in. Announce that there will be a collection for WSCF/ SCM. If for WSCF send a cheque to the IRO with indication of where you wish the money to go e.g. Centennial Fund or EAP.

9. Invite students and senior friends to share this liturgy

PRAYER

Welcome and sharing peace

Leader: We gather in the name of God, Creator, liberator and sustainer

All: Amen

Leader: We gather as a part of the human community, of the body of Christ.

Let us greet one another in peace and love.

(Participants greet one another with words/signs of peace)

Song

O Heavenly King (in appendix)

Leader: We gather as a community joined by our faith, let us join in the prayer Jesus' taught us, each in her or his own language

Lord's prayer

Confession

(During the confession people light candles and place them on a map to mark different places that people have had to leave and where they have had to go.)

Leader: Creator, you told us to love our neighbours and to see you in the face of a stranger. There is nothing to be proud of about loving our close ones. But to love a stranger challenges us everyday.

Leader: Redeemer, when I saw you hungry and thirsty on my way to the supermarket, I kept on thinking about what to cook tonight. You were a stranger but I was afraid to get to know you. It was easier for me to stay with my family and friends, discussing the topics we always do. You were in need of clothes, I was not in need, but fancied to buy something new that would make me look good. You were sick in prison, I thought it was the duty of the charity organisations to visit you.

Leader: In a million faces we saw your face, God.

It was you running for your life,

It was you smuggled to a foreign country,

It was you crying to stay in the asylum,

It was you filling out the forms without understanding the language,

It was you forced to take the job I would not do, paid badly, treated like a second-class citizen, crying with homesickness, feeling completely out of place, missing your country and your people. I failed to see your face God, in the faces of my sisters and brothers.

Leader: Giver of life, you made us to live in this planet together and to take care of each other. Forgive me for seeing only to my own comfort and not other people's needs. I was afraid to challenge myself. I was comfortable with the way I lived. I put your will aside and focused on mine. Help me to find my roots and to see that I am also a migrant, far from my heavenly home.

All: God, help me to find a new spirit, a new way to live a full life as a visitor on this planet, help me to find my home in you wherever I am.

Absolutions

Leader: Jesus says: If you forgive anyone's sins, they will be forgiven (John 20:23). Be confident that as you forgive your neighbour, God has forgiven you all your wrongdoings.

Leader: God says: Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. (Isaiah 1:18). Amen.

A reading from the Old Testament

A reading from the New Testament

Reflections/ Sermon

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

All: I believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became human; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of the Father.

And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; of His kingdom there shall be no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the prophets.

In one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

Intercessions

(If possible images appropriate to the prayers should be projected or displayed and those present should be invited to keep their eyes open and uses these images as part of their prayers.)

Leader: On their journey, oh God,
 Be with the women trafficked from their homes for sex
 Who like Dinah are seen only as objects to be used and discarded
 Enable us, your body to stand for those without their dignity
 That Your Kingdom come
All: Your will be done

Leader: On their journey, oh God
 Be with those who are trafficked from their homes for cheap labour
 Who like Joseph are slaves, seen and nothing more than property
 Enable us, your body to stand for those without a voice
 That Your Kingdom come
All: Your will be done

Leader: On their journey, oh God
 Be with those whose lives have been turned upside down by natural disaster
 Who like Noah have no option but to find new lives elsewhere
 Enable us, your body to stand for those without a place
 That Your Kingdom come
All: Your will be done

Leader: On their journey, oh God
 Be with those who look for better lives
 Who like Moses strive for a promised land
 Enable us, your body to stand for those without hope
 That Your Kingdom come
All: Your will be done

Leader: On their journey, oh God
 Be with those who flee persecution
 Who like Jesus, leave everything behind because those in power see them as 'different'.
 Enable us, your body to stand for those without peace
 That Your Kingdom come
All: Your will be done

Leader: On their journey, oh God
 Be with those separated from their families
 Who like Ruth are searching for 'belonging'
 Enable us, your body to stand for those without love
 That Your Kingdom come
All: Your will be done

Silence

Prayer for WSCF

Leader: God, we pray for the World Student Christian Federation, a community of students on a journey. Help us to walk with people who are oppressed, uprooted, homeless, undocumented

All: Make your way plain before us (Ps. 5.8)

Leader: Strengthen the work of the Student Christian Movement in schools, colleges and universities, so we may powerfully proclaim your Gospel to the students of the world

All: Make your way plain before us

Leader: Bless all those who plan SCM events, who organise students and senior friends, who write magazines, prayers and websites, who participate in liturgies, meetings and protests, who fundraise to enable our journey together, those who pray for WSCF, and all those who keep the Federation's vision alive

All: Make your way plain before us

Leader: Be with all those who travel for WSCF, those who travel freely and those who are denied visas, harassed at borders, sent back home

All: Make your way plain before us

Leader: We thank you for our WSCF friends and comrades who have now completed this earthly journey, especially those who have been killed because they sought to walk with you. We give you thanks for their vision and courage

All: Make your way plain before us

Leader: Guide WSCF by your Holy Spirit so that our journey together may be one of joy, compassion, solidarity and courage, in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

Song

God, in your Grace (in appendix)

(During which offerings for the WSCF may be collected)

Sending out

All: When I put my coat on, when I wrap my scarf about my neck, and pull on my gloves, help me to remember these gifts; the privileges of being warm, of being comforted.

Leader: As I walk down the street, may my gaze be diverted, and not focused only on the goal of the friend I will visit, the comfortable chair I will sit in, or the dinner I will eat, but to feel and understand and contemplate my role in reaching out to the hungry around me, to the elderly lady with the outstretched hand by the metro, to a shy friend who has left her family to study or work far from home and will spend the evening alone, to the family who is struggling to file their residence papers.

All: When my passport is stamped, or when a stamp is not even needed, help me not to take these privileges for granted.

Leader: May my dedication be as Ruth's, may I not be satisfied with what I have, but seek to travel from my comfort zone, follow, and serve as You would lead. May I not be complacent to visitors in my home, but reach out to all, as the Bridegroom calls for and welcomes his beloved guests. May all find rest in the hospitality I may offer, just as the Samaritan offered hospitality and care to his wounded enemy.

All: Lord you have called us to become the least; help us to go out and serve all, providing comfort and warmth to all those not at home among us.

Leader: As we progress through the hours, our days and weeks, help us to dwell, serve, and remember in solidarity those migrating among us—opening ourselves, and giving of all You have given us.

All: Let our love for others always be sincere; may we faithfully follow your command to share with those in need and to practice hospitality (Romans 12), remembering that we too are strangers in this world, strangers together "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11). Amen

Song

You shall go out with joy (in appendix)

Liturgy prepared by WSCF Europe Region and WSCF Inter-Regional Office, Geneva.