

ref·uge /'ref,yooj,'ref,yooZH/

noun

1. a condition of being safe or sheltered from pursuit, danger, or trouble.
2. something providing shelter.

April 24, 2022
First Presbyterian Church

Welcome to Vespers.

Please make yourself at home.

This service is designed to be very casual. Feel free to move about the building, giving yourself and others space.

There are candles in the front should you want to light one in remembrance of anyone or anything.

Call to Worship

Gate A-4
by Naomi Shihab Nye

Wandering around the Albuquerque Airport Terminal, after learning my flight had been delayed four hours, I heard an announcement: "If anyone in the vicinity of Gate A-4 understands any Arabic, please come to the gate immediately."

Well—one pauses these days. Gate A-4 was my own gate. I went there. An older woman in full traditional Palestinian embroidered dress, just like my grandma wore, was crumpled to the floor, wailing. "Help," said the flight agent. "Talk to her. What is her problem? We told her the flight was going to be late and she did this." I stooped to put my arm around the woman and spoke haltingly. "Shu-dow-a, Shu-bid-uck Habibti? Stani schway, Min fadlick, Shu-bit- se-wee?" The minute she heard any words she knew, however poorly used, she stopped crying. She thought the flight had been cancelled entirely. She needed to be in El Paso for major medical treatment the next day. I said, "No, we're fine, you'll get there, just later, who is picking you up? Let's call him."

We called her son, I spoke with him in English. I told him I would stay with his mother till we got on the plane and ride next to her. She talked to him. Then we called her other sons just for the fun of it. Then we called my dad and he and she spoke for a while in Arabic and found out of course they had ten shared friends. Then I thought just for the heck of it why not call some Palestinian poets I know and let them chat with her? This all took up two hours.

She was laughing a lot by then. Telling of her life, patting my knee, answering questions. She had pulled a sack of homemade mamool cookies—little powdered sugar crumbly mounds stuffed with dates and nuts—from her bag—and was offering them to all the women at the gate. To my amazement, not a single woman declined one. It was like a sacrament. The traveler from Argentina, the mom from California, the lovely woman from Laredo—we were all covered with the same powdered sugar. And smiling. There is no better cookie.

And then the airline broke out free apple juice from huge coolers and two little girls from our flight ran around serving it and they were covered with powdered sugar, too. And I noticed my new best friend— by now we were holding hands—had a potted plant poking out of her bag, some medicinal thing, with green furry leaves. Such an old country tradition. Always carry a plant. Always stay rooted to somewhere. And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and I thought, This is the world I want to live in. The shared world. Not a single person in that gate—once the crying of confusion stopped—seemed apprehensive about any other person. They took the cookies. I wanted to hug all those other women, too. This can still happen anywhere. Not everything is lost.

Singing

You Have Redeemed My Soul
By Don and Lori Chaffer

**You have redeemed my soul from the pit of emptiness
You have redeemed my soul from death**

I was a hungry child, a dried up river
I was a burned out forest and no one could do anything for me
But You put food in my body, Water in my dry bed
And to my blackened branches
You brought the springtime green of new life

And nothing is impossible for You

Response Taize Song

Psalm Composing: A name for God

By Hillary Thomsen

O Lord, my refuge, my peace, my strength
I hope and trust in you alone

Reading

Psalm 91
Assurance of God's Protection

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."
For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.
Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling place,
no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.
Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.
With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

Response

Psalm Composing: A complaint

Singing

O God Our Help in Ages Past By Isaac Watts and William Croft

O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home

Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure
Sufficient is Thine arm alone
And our defense is sure

Before the hills in order stood
Or earth received her frame
From everlasting Thou art God
To endless years the same

A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun

Time like an ever rolling stream
Bears all its sons away
They fly forgotten as a dream
Dies at the opening day

Our God our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come
Be Thou our guard while troubles last
And our eternal home

Litany

Litany for Refugees By Fran Pratt

God, we lift up to you the plight of our sisters and brothers
fleeing from their homes

Escaping war, extermination, persecution.

We pray in solidarity with those who must uproot themselves
and their families in order to survive.

Be with them now, Oh God.

We remember that Jesus himself, along with his parents, were
refugees escaping genocide.

Give us Christ's compassion for those endangered.

For refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Burma, Ukraine,
Venezuela, South Sudan, Ethiopia we pray:

For provision for practical needs,

For safe passage through distressed regions,

For a home, a hope, and a future.

For aid organizations and workers in those regions, we pray:

For the love of Christ to flow through them,

For world awareness and support of their needs and work,

For effectiveness in helping distressed people.

We are reminded of mandates you've given us, to extend
hospitality to strangers,

To love our neighbor as ourselves.

May we live in light of your commands, and in the light of Your
love, even when it is inconvenient.

We love because You first loved us.

May we generously give, serve, and listen, sharing in the
richness of the Kingdom of God,

Extending grace and mercy to all.

Amen

Response Singing

Psalm Composing: A petition

All The Poor And Powerless By David Leonard and Leslie Jordan

All the poor and powerless
And all the lost and lonely
And all the thieves will come confess
And know that You are holy

And all will sing out hallelujah
And we will cry out hallelujah

All the hearts who are content
And all who feel unworthy
And all who hurt with nothing left
Will know that You are holy

Shout it, Go on and scream it from the mountains
Go on and tell it to the masses that You are God

Story

Hillary Thomsen

Response

Psalm writing: Reorientation
Sharing of Psalms

Poem

Shoulders
By Naomi Shihab Nye

A man crosses the street in rain,
stepping gently, looking two times north and south,
because his son is asleep on his shoulder.
No car must splash him.
No car drive too near to his shadow.
This man carries the world's most sensitive cargo
but he's not marked.
Nowhere does his jacket say FRAGILE,
HANDLE WITH CARE.
His ear fills up with breathing.
He hears the hum of a boy's dream
deep inside him.
We're not going to be able
to live in this world
if we're not willing to do what he's doing
with one another.
The road will only be wide.
The rain will never stop falling.

Benediction

All Ye Refugees
By Chelsey Scott, Flo Paris,
and Kellie Haddock

I am the One, the earth is My handmade work
And the skies I laid them wide, beauty unfurled
Horizon to horizon, Creation to creation sings you home

Welcome Home, gather round, All ye refugees come in

Oh refugee, I did not cast you out
In death and broken ground salvation springs
My body and My blood, the healing that you need
Come and receive

Watch and wait and see what is yet to be
Watch and wait and see for the morning

Go out in joy, Join the great procession
The mountains and the heavens all will rejoice
Horizon to horizon creation to creation with one voice

*Please take as long as you want in the sanctuary,
and when you do leave, do so quietly.
Thank you for being here!*

*If you would like to contribute to a future vespers service,
please contact:*

Nicki Lang, Cultivator of Sacred Space



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