



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

GATHER: AFGHANISTAN

A Toolkit for Communities

2020

Dear friends,

Thank you for joining us and hundreds of communities across the United States to celebrate *Gather: Afghanistan 2020*. Together we honor the journey of the migrant and the refugee. Together we seek to understand the global realities that our brothers and sisters face. Together we respond to fear, pain, and persecution with compassion, generosity, and open arms to welcome the stranger.

This year, we will be celebrating the lives of the Abdullah family from Afghanistan, who came to the United States in 2019. We share their story along with a number of resources to equip you, your family, and your community to intimately engage in the lives of our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters.

Though today's circumstances do not allow us to ***gather*** in person, we remain committed to standing together to support our migrant and refugee friends.

Peace,

Kristin Witte

Director for Outreach



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

In this toolkit, you will find a variety of resources to help guide your group through the Abdullah family's story for a fun and engaging experience. You can use these resources to host a special evening or afternoon for your immediate household, a close group of friends, or community group. We recognize that this year has brought many challenges to being together in person, so we encourage you to think creatively about how to connect with your friends and family through video platforms and outdoor spaces to fully enjoy this experience in a safe and comfortable way. We recommend reading through the whole toolkit before planning your event.

Additionally, you will find a few concrete ways you and your group can take action to support migrant and refugee families like the Abdullahs.

Act: host a virtual *Gather: Afghanistan 2020* event

Donate: to help other families like the Abdullahs

Advocate: to support the welcome and safety of more families

Pray: for our brothers and sisters who seek safety and protection

Teach: Learn more and share the story of the Abdullah family

Use the following resources to host an evening with your family, friends, or community group celebrating *Gather: Afghanistan 2020*.

We know this year has presented many challenges to being together in person. We recognize those challenges and the creative solutions you and your communities have come up with to be present without necessarily being in person. We encourage you to continue to find creative ways to virtually gather and be together.

In this section, you will find the following resources:

Music Recommendations

Recipes

Discussion Questions

For more information on the history and overview of conflict in Afghanistan and for the Abdullah family story, please see the Teach section on page 7. We recommend either having friends and family read the section and watch the video prior to the event or taking time at the beginning of your event to read this section and watch the video before engaging in the discussion questions.

Music Recommendations

Music is a core expression of culture. From weddings to funerals, graduations to marching off to war, music is often the backdrop to some of the most important moments of life. Under Taliban rule, music was essentially banned in Afghanistan. Only certain types of religious songs and chants were permitted. If anyone was found in violation of this rule, they could be arrested and punished. This ban led to the forced migration and even death of many Afghan musicians. While the ban was lifted when the Taliban were ousted, music is still frowned upon in many parts of the country.

As you host your *Gather: Afghanistan 2020* event, we encourage you to share the history of music in Afghanistan and play some background music.

Zohra Orchestra is the first Afghan all-women's orchestra founded in 2014. Check out some of their songs on the Afghanistan National Institute of Music's [YouTube](#) page.

For You can learn more about the Zohra Orchestra on the [Zohra Orchestra webpage](#) and through this [Time article](#).

Check out other music from the Afghanistan National Institute of Music on their [YouTube](#) page

Play this [concert](#) from The Safar ensemble consisting of the Turkish ney flautist Kudsi Erguner, masters and students of the Afghanistan International Institute of Music (Kabul), as well as students from the Musikgymnasium Schloss Belvedere (Weimar) and three German jazz musicians.

Recipes from Afghanistan

Like music, food is a powerful expression of culture. People gather over food, stories are shared at the dinner table, and food is one of the most anticipated parts of any celebration! Not only is food essential for the human body to function, but it also is a way to celebrate both similarities and differences across cultures.

This year, we've partnered with Humaira Ghilzai of [Afghan Culture Unveiled](#) to share some traditional recipes from Afghanistan for you and your family to try! Check out the specially curated menus below.

Menu One

Main: *Qabili Palav, Afghanistan's national dish*

Side: *Borani Banjan, Braised Eggplant with creamy yogurt sauce*

Optional: *Salata, Tomato, Cucumber and Cilantro Salad*

Dessert: *Falooda, Afghan Ice Cream Sundae*

Tea: *Chai, Afghan Tea*

Menu Two

Main: *Lawang, Turmeric Braised Chicken in a Yogurt sauce*
(this dish is best with Challaw, a rice dish)

Side 1: *Challaw, Afghan Twice Cooked White Rice*

Side 2: *Sabzi, Braised Afghan Spinach*

Optional: *Salata, Tomato, Cucumber and Cilantro Salad*

Dessert: *Sheer Birinj, Afghan Rice pudding*

Tea: *Chai, Afghan Tea*

Coming soon: Stay tuned for a special cooking demonstration with Humaira. Attendees will receive special access to "Planning an Afghan Feast," a special guide developed by Humaira Ghilzai.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to spark conversation at your event. Encourage your friends and family to expand on their answers and ask other questions!

Take some time to share about a time when you felt out of place. It could be joining a new school or job, moving to a new city, or traveling around the world.

- ✿ What were some things you felt during that time?
- ✿ What was new or strange to you? What was familiar?
- ✿ Was there anything that helped you feel more comfortable?

What do you first think of when you think of Afghanistan?

- ✿ What has informed those thoughts or ideas? What images do you see about Afghanistan?
- ✿ What surprised you or stood out to you most about the history of Afghanistan?

What role does music play in your life?

- ✿ Now imagine a world where music was banned and those caught playing it were punished. What would your reaction be?
- ✿ What ways would you maintain creativity and artistic expression?

Does the Abdullah family fit into what you think of Afghanistan? Why or why not?

- ✿ Do you see any similarities or differences between your family and the Abdullah family?
- ✿ What parts of U.S. culture do you think you would be most surprised about if you moved here for the first time?

What ways do you see yourself engaging in the story of migrants and refugees in your community?

- ✿ Do you have any experience working with people from other cultures in your community?

Think about the food you are eating.

- ✿ What kinds of foods are part of your family traditions?
 - ✿ What food do you enjoy most during holidays?
 - ✿ What is your favorite comfort food?
- ✿ What flavors are familiar to you?
- ✿ What flavors are new to you?
- ✿ Which foods would you make every day? Which would you save for special occasions?
- ✿ What ingredients or tools were challenging to find?
 - ✿ How do you think refugees feel when they can't find those ingredients in their new community?
 - ✿ If you were forced to migrate to a new country, what ingredients or tools would you miss the most?

Together, we can make a difference.

With the help of our amazing partners and communities, LIRS is able to help refugee and migrant families like the Abdullaha.

Your contribution will help us continue to provide intensive support to newly arrived refugees, to place vulnerable children in safe, loving homes, and to empower new Americans to become successful, contributing members of their communities.



Visit lirs.org/give to donate or send your contribution to:

LIRS
700 Light Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
Memo: *Gather: Afghanistan 2020*

ADVOCATE

Advocacy is an essential part of our ministry. Families like the Abdullahs are waiting to be approved to travel to the United States and find safety and a new life.

Every September, the President sets the refugee admissions goal for the coming fiscal year. Fiscal Year 2020's refugee admissions goal of 18,000 was the lowest in the history of the program— but the need for resettlement has never been greater, with an estimated 37,000 people displaced from their homes due to violence, persecution, or war each day.

This year we are asking our supporters to take action and advocate for a higher number of refugees for Fiscal Year 2021.

To advocate, go to lirs.org/advocate.



Though we might not all come from the same faith background, we ask you to share these thoughts as we petition for the protection and safety of our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan.

Almighty God, today we lift Afghanistan in our prayers. We pray for the young women and girls, for the young men and boys, for the elderly, for the sick, the tired, and the vulnerable who might feel helpless in a time of chaos and unrest. We pray for those who have lost families, friends, and loved ones. Give them strength and patience during their times of sorrow and grief. Comforting God, we pray for the violence and chaos to end.

Sheltering God, we pray for all the families and individuals who are forced to leave their homes. We pray for protection and guidance as they embark on a dangerous journey in hopes of finding a safe refuge. For all Afghan families who have moved to a new place trying to start a new beginning, Loving God, give them courage and patience to find their place and surround them with people who will show them unconditional love. For all those who have remained in Afghanistan, Steadfast God, protect them. Let your love and mercy be a source of comfort for all.

Reigning God, we lift Afghanistan and pray for healing across the country. We pray for the sick, we pray for the wounded, we pray for the broken hearted, we pray for the ones who are lost. Eternal God, gather your children and protect them wherever they are and wherever they may go.

Prayer written by an Afghan Immigrant, name omitted for safety.



Afghanistan: The Abdullah Family

The Abdullah Family

The Abdullah Family came to the United States in February of 2019 as Special Immigrant Visa holders. Soon after they arrived, the three teenage children were enrolled in our Refugee Youth Career Pathways program to help support their education and career goals.

In a special interview, the Abdullah family graciously shared what it was like to come to the United States, a few things that surprised them about U.S. culture, and how they find ways to maintain their identity while building a new home in the United States.

1. What was it like coming to the United States?

“We sounded like a child that lost her mother in the middle of shopping mall. When we first came here we felt so strange and alone. We didn’t know a soul here. It was all so lonely. Of course, leaving your own home and coming to 100% different place is so hard, but hope was what keep us going. And we were happy and sad at the same time. It was totally strange.”

2. Is there anything that surprised you about U.S. culture?

“What surprised us was how rules are implemented and how people are obeying them. It’s just so surprisingly cool. And also how people don’t look at anyone and everyone is busy with their own company and don’t disturb or harass anyone. We really find it good.”



3. What are some things that remind you of home in Afghanistan?

“Whenever we go to Virginia, it reminds us of home because the weather is same like my country. Many Afghans live there, and a lot of Afghani restaurants and grocery store are there. We buy Afghani food from there and it makes us so happy and reminds us of home. Our homes are always in our heart but we are also trying to make a home in United States.”

Refugee Youth Career Pathways (RYCP)

With funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement and additional support from the Starbucks Foundation, LIRS launched the Refugee Youth Career Pathways program in 2018. Through this initiative, LIRS helps refugees between the ages of 16-24 pursue academic and workforce opportunities that lead to long-term professional employment. Refugee youth in this age group often find themselves working in low-skill jobs to support their families, and opportunities for them to start careers with long-term potential are limited. This program is designed to propel refugee youth beyond these obstacles in order to establish a viable career path.

To hear more about the Abdullah family and their involvement in RYCP, check out their video at lirs.org/youth.

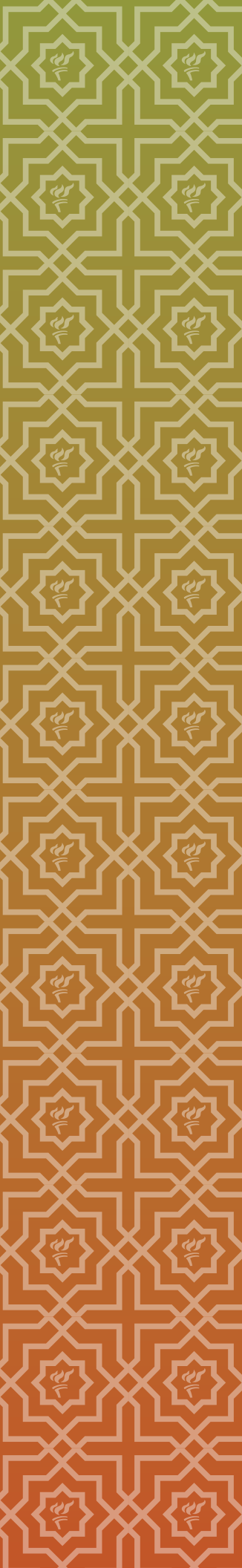
SIVs

In 2009, Congress passed the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009. This allows for special immigrant visas (SIVs) to be given to Afghans who have worked for at least one year as translators or interpreters, or who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government in Afghanistan. Now, many of them are facing threats to their lives because of their work in support of the U.S. The visas allow these wartime allies to seek refuge and safety in the United States. Since the act was put into place, the United States has received more than 65,000 Afghan SIVs. In Fiscal Year 2020, we've welcomed over 8,800 individuals from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan History of Conflict

Afghans have been fleeing the violence in their home country and seeking refuge and protection for more than 40 years. The conflict started when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and has continued through successive waves of violence and aggression from both internal and external forces. In the last two decades, Taliban rule and the aftermath of the fall of the Taliban regime have led to outbreaks of violence and a bitter legacy of maltreatment of women and children.

In 1996, the Taliban was formed out of resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan which lasted from 1979 to 1989. Their goal was to impose stability and rule of law after years of conflict between internal rival groups. However, the regime neglected social services and basic state functions and imposed strict justice based in pre-Islamic tribal code and interpretations of



Sharia Law. They required women to wear head-to-toe burqa, banned music and television, and jailed men whose beards they deemed to be too short.

After the 9/11 attacks in New York City, the United States declared its “war on terrorism” and sent troops to Afghanistan to help dismantle the Taliban. Between 2002 and 2009, the United States committed over \$38 billion in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to help “reconstruct Afghanistan.” Political unrest, internal conflict, and the presence of US troops in Afghanistan continue to this day.

Women and children face even more challenges in times of crisis. During Taliban rule, women were not allowed to receive education or work and could not leave their homes without a male chaperone. Taliban officials were reported to kidnap women and sell them into forced prostitution. According to a report by the Catholic international development charity CAFOD, an estimated 86 percent of women and girls never received a formal education and nearly 60 percent of girls were married by the age of 16. Though some would say the safety and rights of women have improved over the last few years, reports of domestic violence against women continue. The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security still ranks Afghanistan as one of the worst countries for women.

Today, there are nearly 2.5 million registered refugees from Afghanistan who are fleeing violence and waiting for protection and a chance to rebuild their lives. Many of them are everyday citizens who are looking for a safe place to call home, and many others served alongside the United States.

For a more in-depth look at the history and conflict in Afghanistan, check out:

Center on Foreign Relations

Migration Policy Institute

Sharing with Kids

We know that the realities of our migrant brothers' and sisters' lives are difficult to talk about, especially with children. Below are some additional resources to help talk to children in your families and congregations about the journey our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters face.



Additional Books:

For Younger Children:

Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed

Stepping Stones by Margriet Ruurs and artwork by Nizar Ali Badr

Refugees and Migrants by Ceri Roberts

The Journey by Francesca Sanna

We Came to America by Faith Ringgold

For Elementary and Middle School Age Students:

We Are Displaced by Malala Yousafzai (2019)

The Lines We Cross by Randa Abdel-Fattah (2017)

THANK YOU

Thank you for taking this journey with us as we seek to better understand our calling to welcome the stranger and share in the journey of our migrant brothers and sisters.

Are you part of a faith community who is looking for a deeper way to engage in a ministry of welcome?

Check out our companion toolkit, *Gather: Afghanistan 2020, A Toolkit for Congregations*. Find the toolkit at lirs.org/gather.

Do you want to dive deeper into the culture of Afghanistan? Download our toolkit at LIRS.org/gather for:

- ✿ *Worship Resources*
- ✿ *Weekly Prayers*
- ✿ *Commentaries*
- ✿ *Litanies*
- ✿ *Hymns*
- ✿ *And more!*

YEARLY CALENDAR 2020-2021

"A Year of Women and Girls"

Annual Programs

September 1, 2020 through October 31, 2020
Gather: Afghanistan

November 1, 2020 through December 4, 2020
Hope for the Holidays

February 17, 2021 through March 29, 2021
Stand Up, Speak Up

June 1, 2021 through August 3, 2021
Summer Interactive

Other Key Moments

November 29, 2020 through December 24, 2020
Advent

January 6, 2020
Epiphany

May 23, 2020
Pentecost

June 20, 2021
World Refugee Day