



Lutheran Immigration  
and Refugee Service

# GATHER: AFGHANISTAN

A Toolkit for Congregations

2020

Dear friends,

Thank you for joining us and hundreds of congregations 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 the call of Jesus our Lord and Savior 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 lift up their story along with a number of worship resources to encourage you and your congregations 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 and loving them as Christ has called us.

In His Love,

*Kristin Witte*

*Director for Outreach*



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# HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

In this toolkit, you will find a variety of worship and educational resources to help guide your congregation through the Abdullah family's story for an intentional and worshipful experience. You can incorporate these resources for congregational worship, a Sunday School class, or to provide a unique experience for a small group study.

Additionally, you will find a few concrete ways you and your congregation 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 dedicate a congregational worship, a Sunday School class, or a small group study to *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 congregation have come up with to continue to be God's church. We encourage you to continue to find creative ways to virtually gather and be together in one spirit.

In this section, you will find the following resources. Please use and adapt them to best fit your needs:

Order of Worship

Select Commentaries, Weekly Prayers, and Hymns

Prayer

Litany

## Order of Worship: Service of the Word Basic Outline and Suggestions

### *Basic Outline*

Gathering Song (May include a hymn or a recording from World Refugee Day)

Greeting

Prayer (see page X)

One or two readings from scripture

Sermon or Meditation

Litany

Sharing of the Peace

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

Dismissal



## With Suggestions

Gathering Song (see Hymn Suggestions)

Greeting

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C: And also with you.**

Prayer

(see page X)

Scripture Reading

(See the Scripture and Commentaries for September 20, October 18,  
and November 22)

Reflection – a time to reflect on God’s call to welcome our neighbor.

Activities might include:

Provide sermon or brief meditation on one of the scripture readings

Listen to the Sermon by Pastor Emmanuel Jackson

Discuss the materials about Afghanistan

Litany (see page X)

Sharing of the Peace

Lord’s Prayer

Blessing

L: The God of steadfastness and encouragement  
grant us to live in harmony with one another,  
in accordance with Christ Jesus.

**C: Amen.**

L: The God of hope fill us with joy and peace in believing,  
so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

L: The God of all grace bless us now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

Sending Song

Dismissal

L: Go in peace. Welcome the stranger.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

## Commentaries, Weekly Prayers, and Hymns

Weekly prayers and commentaries can be found at [lirs.org/migrant-refugee-sunday/](https://lirs.org/migrant-refugee-sunday/)

Suggested hymns (All hymn numbers refer to Evangelical Lutheran Worship):

### Sept 20th

- 587 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy  
708 Jesu, Jesu

### October 18th

- 706 The People Walk  
707 Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us

### General Hymns

- 529 Jesus, We Are Gathered  
530 Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather  
645 Christ is Made the Sure Foundation  
712 Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service  
713 O God of Every Nation  
716 Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace  
720 We Are Called  
725 When the Poor Ones  
726 Light Dawns on a Weary World  
729 The Church of Christ in Every Age  
819 Come All You People  
887 This is My Song

### Litany

P: Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives.**

P: For the Abdullah family, building a new life and envisioning a future where they make a difference in the world. Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives.**

P: For mentors who guide refugee youth as they explore new opportunities and integrate into their new communities. Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives.**

P: For employers who offer career pathways and the prospect of security to refugee youth. Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives.**

P: For the 2 million Afghan people displaced in their own country, who live in hope of security and wholeness in their homeland. Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives.**

P: For the 5 million Afghan people who are displaced outside of Afghanistan, who search for new homes and opportunities. Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives.**

P: For the 2.3 million Afghan people registered as refugees who await welcome in a new country. Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives.**

P: For good government, led by legislators and other policy makers who place common good above self, and who pursue peace and justice with integrity and wisdom for displaced people throughout the world. Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives.**

P: For an end to policies that restrict refugees from finding safe haven in new homes. Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives.**

P: For compassion and courage to speak on behalf of our brothers and sisters displaced from their homes by war and unrest. Gracious God,

**C: Open hearts. Open doors. Restore lives. Amen.**



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## Together, we can make a difference.

With the help of our amazing partners and congregations, LIRS is able to help refugee and migrant families like the Abdullah's.

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](https://lirs.org/give) to donate or send your contribution to:

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

# ADVOCATE

**“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”**

**–Matthew 25:40**

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](https://LIRS.org/advocate).



# 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 it 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. Because of their age group, refugees targeted by this program often must work low-skilled jobs to support their families, while 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](https://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. It started when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and has continued through successive waves of conflict from both internal and external forces. In the last two decades, Taliban rule and the aftermath of the fall of the 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. 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 home without the accompaniment of 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, many served alongside the United States.

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

*Center on Foreign Relations:*

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan>

*Migration Policy Institute:*

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/afghanistan-displacement-challenges-country-move#:~:text=Even%20before%20the%20conflict%2Ddriven,to%20the%20Silk%20Road%20days.&text=In%20the%20following%20decade%2C%204.6,assisted%20returns%20process%20in%20history>

## Sharing with Kids

We know that the realities of our migrant brothers' and sisters' lives are difficult to talk about, especially with children. Below is a modified story to share with kids along with a few additional resources to help talk to children in your congregation and families about the journey of our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters.



### 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.

Check out our companion toolkit, *Gather: Afghanistan 2020, A Family and Community Resource!*

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

- *Recipes*
- *Art*
- *Music*
- *And Discussion Questions for you and your family!*

# 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**