

**METHODISTS AND IMMIGRATION:  
A Prayer Service for Welcoming the Stranger**

**PRELUDE**                      **“Everybody In”**                      Peter Mayer

**WELCOME**    Grace Wallace, COSSO Coordinator

**INTRODUCTION**      Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples, COSSO Spiritual Formation Director

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

We are a nation founded by immigrants; a country created by the love of God.

**We are people set free by forgiveness in Jesus Christ; people called to reach out and welcome strangers; people whose lives cry out for love and fellowship.**

We have come not to praise ourselves, but to praise the holiness of God.

**We have come not to boast of what we have done, but to proclaim the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, by extending our hands to our neighbors and strangers.**

With all our being, we will praise God and tell of God's goodness,  
**in acts of kindness and love, toward those among us in all times and places.**

**PRAYER OF WELCOME**

O God of welcome, we give you thanks for our nation. We celebrate the richness and diversity that we all bring to the world and our communities, and that you call each of us by name. Today, as we worship you, reconvict us to work for justice and to stand for love that is rooted in your hospitality and your welcome for all.

**May the words we say and the meditations of all of our hearts bring joy to us and those we meet, for you are our Refuge and our Strength. Amen.**

**HYMN**                                      **“Jesu, Jesu”**                                      UMH 432

**FIRST READING: PSALM 46:1-3**

*PAUSE*

**HISTORY SPEAKS: JOHN WESLEY AND IMMIGRATION**

**VOICE 1:** Listen now to some historical statements about our Methodist connection with immigration:

FIRST, John Wesley himself traveled to the American colonies as a missionary, an experience that profoundly shaped his personal faith and his ethical stands on slavery and the rights of indigenous people. Mr. Wesley was a migrant, or a temporary immigrant.

**VOICE 2:** SECOND, when he returned to his country, his "heart-strangely-warmed" experience took place in an immigrant congregation of German Moravians in London, under the guidance of an immigrant pastor. Mr. Wesley's entire ministry was sparked and nourished by the ministry of immigrants.

**VOICE 3: THIRD**, the first two Methodist Bishops in the US were both immigrants, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke. Our line of clergy begins with hands laid on people by immigrants.

**VOICE 4: FOURTH**, every missionary sent around the world to plant Methodism somewhere was an immigrant. We are a global church because of the ministry of immigrants.

*From a 2025 immigration forum of UM churches on Cape Cod, MA*

*PAUSE*

### **PRAYER FOR HOSPITALITY**

**God of the migrant,  
God of the widow and the stranger,  
you are made known in our Savior Jesus Christ.  
Born as a migrant, exiled as a refugee,  
he knew the pain of homelessness,  
and taught his friends the meaning of love.  
Lead us as we seek to be your church, rooted in Christ's hospitality and justice,  
loving who Jesus loves. Amen.**

*Adapted from the World Council of Churches, "In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples,"  
November 1997 (<https://washingtonmemo.wordpress.com/newsletter/spring09/worship-resources/>).*

**HYMN**

**"Help Us Accept Each Other"**

*UMH 560 (tune 545)*

**SECOND READING Isaiah 58:6-7**

*PAUSE*

### **PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS**

Today, Gracious God,  
we worship you, born among us as a refugee,  
forced to leave your place of birth and go to a foreign land.  
**Born as one of us, we worship you, Refugee God.**

Today, Gracious God,  
we worship you as one forced to flee from danger,  
trying to avoid arrest and murder,  
finding a home among strangers.  
**Born as one of us, we worship you, Refugee God.**

Today, Gracious God,  
we worship you as one who lived on the margins,  
who taught and demonstrated the depth of love.  
**Born as one of us, we worship you, loving God.**

We thank you for the wisdom of strangers from the east  
who found and worshiped you in a stable.

We thank you for the faith of those who believed and continued your mission.

We confess we are not always open to the wisdom strangers may bring.

We do not seek to live among those whose lives are different from ours.

**Forgive us.**

**We thank you for your grace, for speaking words of love and forgiveness to us.**

**Thanks be to you, loving God. Amen.**

*Adapted from Refugee and Migrant Service, Aotearoa, New Zealand, sourced through  
the World Council of Churches website ([www.oikoumene.org/](http://www.oikoumene.org/)).*

PAUSE

### **PRAYER FOR OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS, OPEN DOORS**

O Lord, help us to live out your commandments in every aspect of our lives:

**Open our hearts that we may see the needs of people seeking refuge.**

**Open our minds that we may hear people's cries for justice.**

**Open our doors that we may assist neighbors near and far.**

Show us where love, hope, and faith are needed.

**Use us as ministers of your healing.**

**Let us not be afraid to protect the weak because of anger and hatred,  
or to defend the poor because of the power of the rich.**

Strengthen each of us in our ministry that in these coming days  
we may stand for justice and work for peace.

**We ask for courage in opening our hearts, minds and doors. Amen.**

*Adapted from the United Methodist Committee on Relief website (archived at  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20110825082921/gbqm-umc.org/umcor/refugees/rworship.stm>)*

HYMN

“O God of Every Nation”

UMH 435

**THIRD READING Matthew 22:36-40**

PAUSE

### **PRAYERS FOR UNDERSTANDING**

With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray,

For the whole family of God and all of God's creation:

For us to be filled with truth and love, and by your grace find understanding:

God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the peace of the church, that our divisions may be overcome, so that, united in  
Christ, we may serve the world and bear witness to your love:

God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the peace of the world,

for respect and understanding among nations and faith traditions:

God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the gifts of wisdom and hospitality, that all our gifts might be used for healing your creation, the climate, and all creatures on land, sea and air:

God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For all who suffer in mind, body, or spirit,

may we have hearts that love and eyes that see our neighbors as ourselves:

God of mercy, **bring us your peace.**

*Adapted from "Welcome the Stranger Worship," a liturgical resource from Global Refuge  
(link under resources below)*

*PAUSE*

### **PRAYER FOR A VISION OF HOPE**

We pray for a vision of hope,

not in one person but in all people, to lead to peace, not violence.

**Someday, oneness with creation, not dominance, will be our common goal.**

**Someday, acts of kindness and love will be experienced by all people.**

Then our prayers for peace and love will bring all nations to the table,

to communicate and listen, and experience the goodness of God.

**Someday can be today for you and me. Amen.**

*Adapted from BOW 521*

**HYMN**

**"For the Healing of the Nations"**

UMH 428

### **BLESSING AND TRAVELING MERCIES**

The Lord be with you,

**And also with you.**

The Lord bless you and keep you in all your travels.

The Lord bless all immigrants and citizens as one.

May the Lord free us and the world from all hatred.

May the Lord show us again, the way of peace.

In the name of God our Creator, Jesus Christ our Savior, and the Holy Spirit our Hope,

**Amen.**

**POSTLUDE**

**"Draw the Circle"**

*Worship & Song 3154 (dif. tune)*

### **SOME RESOURCES:**

- [https://ncm.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/resources\\_for\\_immigration-focused\\_worship.pdf](https://ncm.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/resources_for_immigration-focused_worship.pdf)
- <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/blog/no-holiness-but-social-holiness>
- [https://globalrefugeconnect.org/resourcecenter/refugee\\_community\\_engagement/training\\_folder/mobilization/welcome\\_the\\_stranger\\_worship\\_order\\_englishpdf](https://globalrefugeconnect.org/resourcecenter/refugee_community_engagement/training_folder/mobilization/welcome_the_stranger_worship_order_englishpdf)
- <https://www.liturgytools.net/2016/01/hymns-world-day-for-migrants-and-refugees.html>