



The Church of Scotland
World Mission Council

Together We Walk



A Meeting of Cultures

Immigration in Europe

A resource for young people to explore immigration in Europe and the responses of our partner churches

Opening Activity – Yes/No Statement Game

Place one large sign saying 'YES' at one side of the room and another saying 'NO' at the opposite side.

Ask the young people to stand in the middle. Explain to them that you will be reading a statement and if they agree they should move to the 'YES' side of the room and if they disagree they should move to the 'NO' side of the room.

Once the group has split, ask the young people to express their opinions ensuring they are met with respect and anyone who doesn't want to contribute it not forced to.

Have a practice with the statement: 'I live in Scotland.'

Statements

- Immigrants are people who choose to leave their own countries of their own free will.
- Immigrants come into our countries to steal our jobs.
- Immigration results in a more vibrant community, comprised of lots of different exciting cultures.
- Our government should help immigrants with housing, healthcare and schooling.
- Christians shouldn't be concerned about immigration.
- Groups of immigrants in our cities can be threatening.

Case studies:

Print off the following photographs of refugees and place them on the table or floor.

Explain to the young people that you would like them to pick a photograph that they feel drawn to and will ask them to tell the rest of the group about it and why they picked it.

Once they have answered the following questions, you can let them know a little bit about each photograph

- What story does the picture tell you?
- What drew you to it?
- How would you feel if this was a photo of one of your friends?
- Does this photograph make you feel differently about immigrants and refugees?

Bible Study: Ephesians 2: 11-22 We Are One

What type of Christians do you often find it difficult to get along with? What might influence these tensions?

Consider some of the difficulties that could be faced when immigrants come into churches in Europe. What sort of divisions might there be?

Read Ephesians 2: 11-22

Discussion Questions:

- What divided the Gentiles from the Jews?
- What are the two reconciliations that Christ achieves?
- How are they related?
- How do the images Paul uses in verses 19-22 emphasise the unity Christians have with one another?
- What rules and requirements would you be inclined to enforce (like the law in verse 15) that might cause divisions and tensions?
- How do you think this bible reading relates to our discussions about immigrants?

Partner Church Story: The Waldensians

Our partner church in Italy is part of a project called 'Being Church Together'(BCT), which is inspired by Eph 2: 19.

Italy has had a steady flow of immigrants since the 1970s, but since the 1980s many protestant African Christians came into the country.

The churches realised that these Christians needed somewhere to worship so began a process which aims to integrate immigrants into Italian churches, creating multi-cultural congregations which celebrate diversity. Nowadays, 20% of the Waldensian church is comprised of immigrants!

BCT asserts the biblical theme of welcoming the stranger and the 'oneness in Christ', which transcends cultural and ethnic barriers.

This process has had a transformative impact on the Italian churches, because the Waldensian ministers work together with African pastors to bridge cultural gaps between the immigrants and Italian members of the church – although this is tricky because they sometimes clash over ecclesiological and ethical issues!

BCT answers a spiritual call to be a beloved community where different identities and traditions can be reconciled and unified in Christ. Through the commitment to oneness in Christ and the implementation of practical support, the work of the Waldensian church is enriching the Protestant Church in Italy, providing a spiritual and practical solution to the immigrant presence, while boosting the numbers in the pews and reinvigorating congregations.

- Can you imagine this happening in Scotland?
- In what ways could we reach out to immigrants in our schools and communities?

Prayer:

Sit in a circle and give a different verse of this prayer to different young people.

Alternatively, you might

A Prayer for Immigrants and Refugees

O God, we meet you in the eyes of our uprooted sisters and brothers
knocking at our doors,
seeking admission to our wealthy and prosperous nations.
We ask you to protect them during their perilous journey,
as they cross the seas in old and fragile boats
or lie hidden in raggedy trucks and old cars with no air, no water or light.
O God, only you know their desperation;
only you know what they hope for.

God, we pray for their countries,
countries whose people and natural resources have been exploited
by our country, among others, for centuries
and now are plagued by war, famine, poverty,
all of which we tend to ignore or minimise.

We pray that these lands, now hopeless and depressed, will flourish again
and again be able to feed their children.

O God, we pray for ourselves:
Help us to see what to this point we haven't seen or perhaps have not wanted to see.
Help us to understand that our human family is one family,
that our hopes and fears are common everywhere,
that what you give is for all your children and not for some only.

Help us, O God, to open doors and hearths to migrant sisters and brothers
who bring with them the light of your love.

We pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.

By Paolo Naso, National Coordinator of Being Church Together, Italy