WHY WE GO

People Groups: **The Displaced**

Ask God To

- Forgive us for being slow to respond to the needs of the displaced.
- Give us understanding and wisdom as we consider the plight of refugees and reach out to them!
- Send out gospel-hearted professionals to care for refugees and provide opportunities for them to hear the truth of Christ in a language they can understand.
- Touch the hearts of the persecutors and those responsible for unrest, that they may have a life-changing encounter with the Lord, much like Saul on the road to Damascus!

Today the African continent, along with many other parts of the world, is witnessing global migration on a staggering scale. Driven by economic distress, political and social upheaval, war or natural disaster people are taking to the road. Hundreds of thousands from other faith traditions – especially Islam and Buddhism – have ended up on our doorstep.

Uprooted peoples have many names: migrants, refugees, exiles, fugitives, displaced persons, trafficking victims and asylum seekers. They share a common vulnerability and have experienced trauma. Fleeing persecution, atrocity and hardship, they embark on treacherous journeys by foot, by cart, by raft and by bus. Some die along the way. Many families are torn apart.

Entire villages flee Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria and Al Shabaab in Kenya. Meanwhile since the Syrian Civil War began in March 2011, more than half of the country's 22 million people have been forced to leave their homes. Urban centres swell with economic migrants. Survivors of the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal and Afghanistan must either rebuild or relocate.

As Christians, we are called to minister to the oppressed for their physical needs (James 1:27) and to pray for their eternal salvation. Together let's use these horrific situations for good. God is providing his Church with a window of opportunity for the truth of the gospel to be shared and adopted by many.

In the midst of the statistics, let us remember one story: In the dead of night a young man and his wife rise from their beds, swiftly pack a few belongings and wake their young son. They flee into the darkness, leaving behind possessions, livelihood, friends, neighbours and home. A very long journey lies ahead to a safe haven they have never seen before, a place where the language, food, culture and religion will be utterly foreign. Soon after their departure, a political tyrant unleashes a massacre in their community.

This story is happening today; it is also Jesus' story. At birth he was the child of homeless, migrant parents forced to leave their town at the decree of foreign occupiers. Soon afterwards he was the child of fugitives. From his birth in an animal shelter to his early childhood in exile, Jesus' life echoes the reality of millions of children and their families today.

Our churches have been slow to respond to the amazing opportunities presented by today's mass migration of peoples. May we now commit ourselves to exploring and developing effective ways of reaching out to those who have been uprooted.

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. Deuteronomy 10:18-19

Photo by Simon Awan