

YOUTH ACTIVITY ONE

RISE UP ANEW : AS COMMUNITY

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Rev. Derek Tompkins, edited by Week of Compassion

With these resources, a brief reflection is included on the theme for this year's Special Offering - **RISE UP ANEW** - and then each youth activity includes:

BACKGROUND - stories from Week of Compassion, with links to the site for more information. Useful in the youth leader's own understanding and preparation, or to share with the youth to lead into the related activity and discussion.

DISCUSSION - Expand or select from the questions that best suit your youth.

ACTIVITY - Simple prep with minimal supplies needed.

These activities are suitable for both middle- and high-school youth and can be adapted, in background and discussion, to best fit the age and make-up of your youth group(s). Where possible, notes about sensitive or complex conversations are included.



LAMENTATIONS 3:21-23

Yet it is because I remember all this that I have hope.
YHWH's favor is not exhausted,
nor has God's compassion failed.
They **RISE UP ANEW** each morning,
so great is God's faithfulness. (The Inclusive Bible)

God's mercies are new every morning. To many of us, a simple reminder, perhaps even a glimmer of breath, new life, and hope.

And yet we also know that for many people in the world, every morning still means struggle. Every morning still means worry. Every morning still means disease, and fear, and lament that will not end.

We are exhausted. But God never is.

We are fatigued. But God's compassion never fails.

We know everything that has led us here. And because of that we hope. And we rise up anew each morning. We do. Because God does.

Through Week of Compassion, Disciples recommit to the work of hope - borne out of lament, and suffering, and uncertainty, it is hope just the same. God's compassion has not failed. Week of Compassion is committed to that great faithfulness, too.

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2021, as the government of Afghanistan collapsed and families were rapidly evacuated, Week of Compassion reaffirmed refugee response as an ongoing priority and employed increased resources, including the Afghan Welcome congregational grants, to support local churches helping Afghan families to establish a new life in an entirely new place under deeply stressful circumstances. Out of the desperation and disconnect of this crisis, opportunity and community have somehow thrived.¹

In [New Homes & New Hope](#), one church leader explains:

Once a house is secured, it still needs absolutely everything to turn it into a home. Our first task was to furnish the apartment, and helped by the generosity of a local Realtor, we quickly gathered all the furniture and household items (including bicycles, freezer, washer/dryer, etc) ... We are also helping the family with financial literacy, paying bills, and budgeting...

Many refugee children fall behind in school, as educational opportunities are often limited in refugee camps or host countries; these children then face challenges catching up in the United States. They may struggle because of language differences, difficulties as a result of trauma and bullying. Congregations help not just financially or by giving needed items, but by developing supportive relationships, giving families a better, safer opportunity. Week of Compassion mentors, including youth, have the chance to help those who are being bullied or struggling to adapt.

¹ Find this background and the host congregation's story at Week of Compassion's 'Stories' page ([New Homes and New Hope](#)), and in the Mission Moment - Afghan Refugee Response in the [2023 Special Offering online resources](#).

ACTIVITY ONE

Process Note: It is entirely possible that one of your youth has had an experience similar to this, where their language or other difference has left them feeling frustrated or lost. You might want to rely on an adult sponsor to lead this activity with you, whom you can prepare in advance, and let the youth observe the conversation before going into the discussion. You know your group best; plan accordingly.

Have a “conversation” with one of your youth (or adult sponsors). You can use the script below to have the conversation, where you speak only in Finnish. Don’t worry that you don’t speak Finnish, just say the words the best you can make them out. There is no grade for pronunciation in this activity.

Hei. Mikä sinun nimesi on? = Hello. What is your name?
Mikset puhu suomea? = Why don’t you speak Finnish?
En ymmärrä sinua. = I don’t understand you.
Tämä on hyödytöntä. Onnea. = This is useless. Good luck.

DISCUSSION ONE

- When have you tried to communicate and it didn’t go well?
- When have you felt different, left out, or embarrassed because you didn’t understand something - or because you couldn’t make others understand you?
- Imagine you moved to a different town, school, or church, and this is how your conversations went with everyone you encountered.
- *Find definitions and concepts at the [Week of Compassion refugee and immigrant response page](#) to guide further discussion:*
 - What does it mean to be a refugee? How do people end up as refugees? What is happening in the world that might cause the next wave of refugees coming to North America?
 - *Talk about how Week of Compassion helps refugees in many places build relationships and find resources to help them adapt.* What does this show us about how we should treat people around us, whether they’re new to us or not?

ACTIVITY TWO

SUPPLIES:

- blindfolds
- construction paper circles/dots to mark places at each station
- random items to collect (or pictures of items) from each station

Create at least four stations (as many as you want) with colored dots on the floor as ‘landing’ spots for the teams. You’ll need half the number of dots as you have youth, because they’ll be paired up. At each station, have items to collect. For example, a table with green dots on the floor around it, with bags of chips, or a bin full of ping-pong balls, etc., as the items to collect.

Pair the youth, with one being blindfolded. The one not blindfolded is to verbally (only) guide their blindfolded partner to the first station (they can go in any order). Once the blindfolded person is standing on the ‘dot’ at the station, they can collect the item (or picture of the item) and switch who is blindfolded/who guides, and move on to collect the next item.

Note: You could have different items at each station, or all stations could have the same item. The point is for the exercise to be somewhat repetitive, where teams are guiding each other to various stations, with little ‘meaningful’ outcome.

DISCUSSION TWO

- What is it like to be the guide and what is it like to be the blindfolded person?
- How did it feel to succeed in getting to the first dot?
- How did it feel to have to trust someone else to get there?
- What is it like to work over and over to get to the same outcome at each station?
- What kinds of ‘systems’ do you have to deal with to get what you want in your everyday life? [*driver’s ed/driver’s license, voting age, standardized tests, college entrance exams*]
 - How do you learn what the steps of these processes are and how to follow them? What are the frustrations? What does ‘success’ look like?
- Knowing the kinds of things you deal with in your own life every day (licenses, tests, traffic, school), how might Week of Compassion help churches prepare refugees to acclimate to a new setting?
 - What are some of the things you think a new resident in this country would have to do and learn to make it through day to day life?
 - *Print/Share/Discuss [The Refugee’s Journey and the Asylum Process Map](#) from Church World Service.*
- What are places and ways we can partner with Week of Compassion and walk with those in need?
 - *Refer to the [Week of Compassion immigrant and refugee response page](#) for insights and information.*

