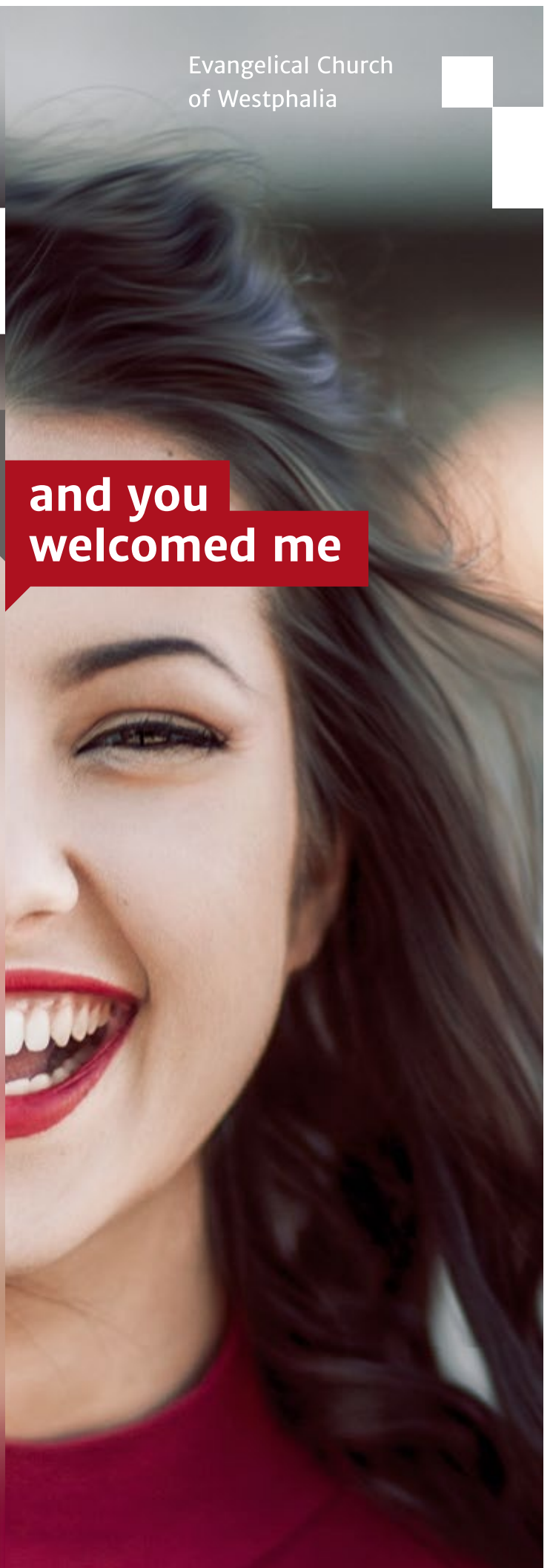


Resource materials for the keynote paper

I was a
stranger

and you
welcomed me



I was a stranger and you welcomed me

A project day on refugees for secondary level II. The project day may be organised across different subjects (Religion–Politics–Social Studies–Ethics)

by Ursula August, Education Institute

The issue and why it is worth exploring

Many students are concerned about the arrival of refugees in Europe. Their attitudes are influenced by the current political debates, the wide range of reactions to refugee and migrant movements, and media representation of the issue. And they often have personal experience with young refugees in their own schools. Attitudes fluctuate between empathy and resistance. Through changes of perspective that, to a certain extent, enable students to imagine themselves in a refugee situation, they can grasp both the rational and emotional reasons why refugees are induced to leave their home countries. The keynote paper offers some changes of perspective with its stories of refugees. Engaging with the biblical texts and practical examples of church advocacy and assistance for refugees are two more ways of considering the matter from a different angle.

Propositions and text modules from the keynote paper

- The introduction to the keynote paper describes the present challenges of displacement and their causes, e.g. “Over a million children, women and men have fled their home country since 2015 from war, terror, political persecution and violence, and have come to us in Germany in the hope of a life without fear of death” (PDF page 9)
- “For some years there has been much more immigration from civil war areas, e.g. Syria. Owing to persecution, fleeing, wars and famine, the number of asylum seekers in NRW rose in 2015 and 2016 to over 300,000. Since 2017 the number has been falling” (PDF page 25).
- Related to the causal analysis is the biblical and theological memory from which we can gain ideas for responding to refugees in the present. It focuses on the fundamental experience of the people of Israel, the way Jesus behaved with ‘strangers’, and action as ‘disciples of Jesus’ (1.2 and 1.3, PDF pages 13–23)

- The keynote paper clearly focuses on a culture of welcome, not of self-defence. Through its practical examples and role models it encourages us to create such a culture: “With overwhelming energy, countless citizens, Christian communities, Christian and secular welfare organizations, initiatives, associations, companies and unions – in cooperation with local community leaders – dedicated themselves to the integration of the refugees and created a welcoming culture to an unexpected degree” (3.3, 4.1 and 4.2, here also references to examples from work with refugees).

How do the propositions and text modules from the keynote paper link with religious education?

The keynote paper finds links in the following areas of the NRW syllabus for Protestant Religious Education secondary level II (grammar schools/comprehensive schools):

- Area 4: The church and its responsibility in the world
- Area 5: Responsible action from a Christian viewpoint

Materials, media on DVD

- Federal government (no date): Flucht und Asyl: Fakten und Hintergründe (background facts on asylum), www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/flucht-und-asyl (accessed on 8.8.17)
- Refugees. Background and facts, www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de
- Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) (2017): “And you welcomed me – ten convictions on fleeing and integration from a Protestant viewpoint,” www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds_doc/2017-04-11_Wort_zur_Lage.PDF
- Film on volunteering for refugee work

- “Will leben – Willkommen” (Want to live – welcome), interactive stopovers on refugees and migrants, Bread for the World exhibition. Can be borrowed from MÖWe.

Practical ideas

Modules for a project day

■ “Why people flee” – reasons (2 hours)

- “The people that walked in darkness...” – a cutter ran aground off Lampedusa – introductory story (PDF page 19) (key words: hunger/social hardship)
- A group of Christians from different Muslim countries talks about taking leave and fleeing (PDF page 38) (key word: religious persecution)
- Report by a Syrian civil war refugee (key word: war) under: stories told by refugees on the UNHCR webpage: www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de
- Conclusion: Video on understanding displacement and expulsion, Südwind (cf. interactive online version of the keynote paper, 2.2)

Die Schüler erhalten ein Textblatt mit der Genfer Flüchtlingskonvention von 1951.

■ “Meeting God in the stranger” (2 hours)

- Students work in small groups on the booklet: “And you welcomed me – ten convictions on fleeing and integration from a Protestant viewpoint”. They write out the theological grounds appearing at the start of the respective ‘conviction’ on DIN-A4 cards and display them in the room.
- Or: small group discussions on two Bible passages (Deuteronomy 4:13b–15, Matthew 25:31–46). What appeals to me about the text? What is less appealing? Do the passages provide helpful ideas for dealing with the topic of refugees? Sum up the statement of one of the texts in a slogan for a demonstration banner or chant.

■ “I was a stranger – and you welcomed me” (2 hours)

- Start with the YouTube music video “Europa” by Die Toten Hosen.
- Then discuss the song lyrics.
- Possible working groups on projects representing counter-approaches:
 - “Mediterranean Hope” – guaranteeing safe passages (PDF page 50)
 - Together and learning from one another – the example of the Hans Ehrenberg School in Dortmund (PDF page 40)
 - Film on volunteers working with refugees

In parallel to this project day, you could open the exhibition “Want to live – welcome” – interactive stopovers on refugees and migrants, on show for two weeks for the whole school and other actors working with refugees.

Contacts

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