

Unfinished

A publication of The Mission Society

Summer 2016 | 62



Rediscovering hospitality

Getting serious about welcoming the stranger

UNFINISHED
Summer 2016, Issue 62

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Unfinished is a publication of The Mission Society.
Subscriptions are free upon request.

Send subscription requests, change of addresses, and all correspondence to P.O. Box 922637, Norcross, Georgia 30010 or call 800.478.8963 (FAX 770.446.3044). The Mission Society is funded entirely by gifts from individuals and local congregations. All gifts are tax-exempt and are gratefully acknowledged. *Unfinished* is a member-publication of the Evangelical Press Association. Please visit The Mission Society online at: themissionsociety.org.

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Cover photo:

Our thanks to the Genesis Photo Agency, whose team of photographers have been covering the refugee story in the Middle East and Europe.

This refugee, probably from Afghanistan, arrived in Lesbos Island, Greece. She survived the dangerous sea crossing from Turkey known as the "Voyage of Death." Photo by Jedediah Smith/Genesis Photos.

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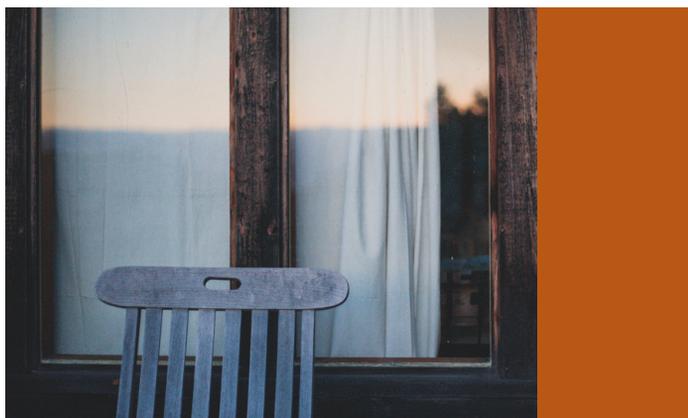
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**Jorge Acevedo, Lead Pastor
Grace Church, Cape Coral, FL**



Table of Contents

“Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember...those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.”
—Hebrews 13:1-3, ESV



The perils of hospitality

Examining our resistances to welcoming the stranger

4 Offering the welcome of God

The simple and extraordinary ways your Mission Society missionaries are caring for refugees

10

Perspective

Blessed to be a blessing: How two familiar stories can shape our response to our global crisis

2

Prayer

Blessed are the desperate: How to pray for those who seek refuge

23

Home for the exiles

Wondering how you can get involved? Here's how some Atlanta friends have done it.

24

Happenings

News from The Mission Society's office and fields:

28

Asbury Theological Seminary and The Mission Society sign Global Partnership

The Mission Society moves to expand diversity

The Mission Society signs GC2 statement

From 14 countries, missionaries come together in Costa Rica; testify to deep renewal

News

Cross-cultural ministry opportunities available now

Our most recently deployed missionaries

Our newest colleagues

30

World

God's heart or our fear: Let Scripture guide our view of refugees

32

Church Ministry

A story of intervention: How my home church served a refugee family

34

Calling

Sometimes we serve shame: A surprising truth about hospitality

36

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Blessed to be a blessing

How two familiar stories can shape our response to the global crisis



In 2015 more than a million migrants and refugees like these crossed into Europe alone, reports the BBC. Millions more are being absorbed into Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. The situation has been described as the “worst humanitarian crisis of our generation.” But “God is the God who helps,” writes President Wilkins. “And while God doesn’t expect any of us to help everyone in need, I know that God has blessed us to be a blessing.”

Photo by Jedediah Smith/Genesis Photos, Nov. 9, 2015, camp near border of Austria and Slovenia

We know the story of the Titanic well—or we think we do. On April 15, 1912, the Titanic grazed an iceberg and began taking on water. The crew took the precaution of loading some passengers into lifeboats and lowering them into the freezing waters. Did you know that only 20 lifeboats made it to the water? Most of them were less than half full with room for many more people. Despite later pleas for help as hundreds more passengers ended up in the deadly water, most of the lifeboat crews were afraid to return. Ultimately, with nearly 1,500

During the sinking of the Titanic, with nearly 1,500 people dying in the water and seeking rescue, the lifeboats rowed away. One boat was an exception.

people dying in the water and seeking rescue, the boats rowed away. One boat was an exception. As it turns out, the officer of Lifeboat #14, Harold Lowe, did what none of the other officers did. He knew he had to respond. So he managed to get some other boats to take on some of his passengers. Then he returned to the sinking ship to pick up survivors. He knew he couldn’t save them all. But he could save some. There is a church in Colorado that has made Lifeboat #14 its defining image. Although they care about the people in

the boat, they are even more concerned with reaching those who are still dying in the icy waters of life around them. Realizing that the life God has blessed them with is intended to allow them to bless others, they are focused outward on the least, the last, and the lost.

Troubled by the nonchalant

As I think of this story, I think how Jesus was both troubled by and concerned for people who were nonchalant about others dying in “the icy waters of life.” Remember the story of Lazarus and the rich man? It is one of His most compelling stories, and also one of His most haunting.

It is a simple story really, about a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus (which means “God is my help”). Jesus

How your church can help

Interested in ministering to displaced families, but don't know where to start? Visit GC2Summit.com/resources for helpful resources, including a list of refugee resettlement agencies by state; 10 preaching points about God's heart for refugees; six videos available for your church to help Syrian child refugees; and a free download of "A Church Leader's Tool Kit on the Syrian Refugee Crisis." Also see, on page 29, information about the GC2 Summit, in which more than 100 Christian leaders gathered to discuss a best response to the refugee crisis.

says that Lazarus was dumped on the rich man's doorstep daily. The rich man lived a decadent life while Lazarus simply longed for the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Interestingly, as soon as Jesus has introduced both characters to His listeners, He says that they both died.

Then He shocks everyone. According to Jesus, the rich man was taken to Hades (hell) while the poor man went to heaven. Although there is much more to the parable, my focus often returns to the set-up. What is going on with the rich man?

Enjoying walled-off life

Jesus doesn't give us any indication that the rich man was a bad man. There is no suggestion that his wealth was ill-gotten. There is no hint that this was a sinful man or a nasty, uncaring person. He was simply wealthy and living his life enjoying the blessings life had brought him. But there was a problem. This man's enjoyment of his life

and blessings didn't extend to those outside his walls, not even the one on his doorstep.

Perhaps the rich man was afraid there wasn't enough blessing to go around? Perhaps the rich man was

afraid of Lazarus, or of what Lazarus might bring into his home: disease, filth, crime? Perhaps the rich man simply thought Lazarus was too unlike him—too

"other" to be concerned about him? Perhaps the rich man's walled-off life made Lazarus and his plight simply invisible?

The truth is we don't know what was going on with the rich man—only that his sin was not noticing or caring about the need God had placed right on his doorstep. He simply did not fully understand that whatever blessings of life he had were given to enable him to be a blessing.

Afraid of the need

Currently, the entire world is captivated by the migrant crises taking place in the Middle East, in Europe, in Africa and, of late, even here in the US. Millions of displaced people are trying to escape warfare, violence, abuse, and poverty. Like Lazarus in Jesus' story, they are being dumped on doorsteps of others, including—maybe—our own. And like the drowning Titanic victims, they will likely see us as a lifeboat, as their only

place of refuge in the frigid sea of despair and dispossession.

Like the rich man in Jesus' story, many of us are not sure we have a place for these refugees in our lives and in our communi-

ties. Many of us will be afraid to reach out, afraid we'll all be pulled under by overwhelming need, like the Titanic survivors in the half-full lifeboats. But

God is the God who helps. And while God doesn't expect any of us to help everyone in need, I know God has blessed us to be a blessing. I know God wants us to care for those who have been—or will be—placed on our doorsteps. I know God always has men and women like the brave officer of Lifeboat #14 who are willing to head right back into the heart of the crisis in order to bless those in need with life! I know God's resources and strength and power are always enough. And I'm thankful for men and women of God who know that too, and who let these truths guide their lives and their actions.

In this issue of *Unfinished* you will read about some of the unfolding drama of the refugee crisis. You will also read stories of faithful men and women who are engaging these refugee populations in the name of and for the sake of Jesus. You will learn of life coming out of tragedy, and hope coming out of despair.

As you consider these stories, I hope you will also consider the choices facing us as the richest nation on earth. Will our carefully constructed walls of security and comfort cause us to miss those whom God has placed on our doorstep, or will we, like the people of Lifeboat #14, find a way to share the gift of life and blessing that we have so graciously received? I believe many will choose well. †

The Rev. Max Wilkins is president and CEO of The Mission Society.

THE PERILS OF HOSPITALITY

Examining our resistances to welcoming the stranger

By Christine D. Pohl

The topic of hospitality is trending in the news. To the masses fleeing their homelands, some countries have shut their doors; others have swung doors wide open. As individuals, we often shut our doors, too. Or we might think we've opened them, mistaking hospitality for entertaining—in perfectly tidy and polished homes. Ethicist Christine Pohl tells that hospitality is not that, and it's not a task to add to our to-do lists. "We would do well to see hospitality as a way of life deeply connected with the gospel," she writes. Here, she addresses our fears by identifying seven perils inherent to opening our lives and hearts to others, particularly to those not like us.



PRACTICING HOSPITALITY INVOLVES A DYING TO SELF;
IT IS A COSTLY PRACTICE.

- Christine Pohl

When we read the Scriptures attentive to themes and expressions of hospitality, we discover that they are everywhere. In our culture, it is easy to overlook the moral and theological significance of hospitality, but a life of hospitality is basic to what it means to be Jesus' disciples. We tend to view hospitality as something nice, pleasant, or tame, yet a biblical understanding of hospitality recognizes that it is filled with both promise and peril.

There is a rich tradition of hospitality in the Scriptures. From the pictures of

them, that hospitality to the stranger and the least one was hospitality to Himself.

The earliest Christians understood the importance of hospitality to the Christian life. They recognized the practical necessity and the divine character of hospitality, even when they struggled with it. It was not always easy, and within the biblical text itself we find the earliest leaders reminding one another and their people of the importance of hospitality—and that in welcoming strangers some had entertained angels without knowing it (Heb.

...a life of hospitality is basic to what it means to be Jesus' disciples

the Israelites as strangers and sojourners called upon to welcome and care for other strangers and sojourners, to the images in the Gospels of Jesus as guest, stranger, and host—practices and themes of hospitality are present.

Hospitality in Scripture

Jesus, the One who had nowhere to stay, no home on earth, is often described as welcoming or hosting crowds, feeding them, and making a place for them on hillsides and lakeshores. Jesus graciously welcomed children, the lost, and the least. In fact, He so identified Himself with

13:2). And they challenged one another not to become grudging in the practice (1 Pet. 4:9) — an early indication that hospitality had its costs, and people could get weary, discouraged, or find themselves taken advantage of.

In the first centuries of the church, we also discover that Christian hospitality was a central witness to the truth of the gospel—it marked the gospel as authentic—that Christians from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds loved and cared for one another, ate together, shared one another's homes and lives, and welcomed strangers.

THE GOD WHO WELCOMES

Hospitality is not optional for Jesus followers. It reenacts God's welcome to us, writes Pohl.

Paul, in Romans 15, reminds the community to welcome one another as Christ had welcomed them. Followers of Jesus are invited into a way of life that is distinctive because of the expectation that our welcome to one another—to strangers, even to enemies—will reflect and reenact God's welcome to us in Christ. Nowhere does Scripture suggest that this life of hospitality is easy or safe, but neither does it suggest that it is optional, or a gift only for a few. It is central to the life of faithful discipleship and it is infused with grace.

The practice of hospitality roots us in some of the most mundane and basic aspects of human existence—it is about food, security, a place to sleep, conversation, and respect. It's about blankets and soup, pots and pans, and long cups of coffee with a troubled person.

It's about refugees who need a new home, new family, and new friends. It's about the homeless woman and her children who need a place to stay until they get on their feet again. It's about the troubled teen who can't communicate with his parents but might just open up to someone

certain kinds of resources and those who might need them. Our lives are more

The practice of hospitality roots us in some of the most mundane and basic aspects of human existence. ...It's about blankets and soup, pots and pans, and long cups of coffee with a troubled person.

exposed, especially when we become friends with people unlike ourselves. If we have substantial resources, it is hard to become good friends with very poor people and still hold onto our excess possessions without being troubled by the differences.

of us are uncertain about embracing it, because we are worried that people will take advantage of us and that some strangers might be troublesome or dangerous—either as guests or hosts. To some extent, there is truth here, and we need to acknowledge the concerns and

not simply to brush them off. We need to find ways of addressing this legitimate concern and also to become willing to live with a level of uncertainty and risk. There is no doubt that we must be attentive to protecting the vulnerable ones for whom we are already responsible. But we can often find creative ways to do that.

Sometimes that involves making hospitality more public while keeping it personal.

Interestingly, people have always thought that it was easier and less dangerous to welcome strangers in previous times than it is in their day. Luther wrote that hospitality was easier for Abraham, because the strangers were less likely to be scoundrels in his day. We find similar sentiments in Calvin and, centuries earlier, in some of the church fathers. I think there are reasons that some risks

Hospitality can force us to live closer to our limits. A robust practice of hospitality, in which we welcome people into our lives regularly and share ourselves (not just our resources), exposes our frailties, our incomplete

sanctification, our unhelpful quirks, and our forms of self-indulgence. Hospitality undoes our attempts to project a certain kind of image, especially if there is a large disconnect between what we say and how we actually live. Vulnerability and self-disclosure are involved. But hospitality also stretches us, as one friend said, to become bigger, more able and practiced at loving.

Practicing hospitality involves a dying to self; it is a costly practice. It is filled with gift, beauty, and grace—and practitioners consistently say they “got more than they gave,” but it is also costly.

Despite countless testimonies that hospitality is a wonderful practice, many

Hospitality undoes our attempts to project a certain kind of image, especially if there is large disconnect between what we say and how we actually live.

are higher in our day. Hospitality is safer in the context of community, but our households are generally more private than homes of the past. But with practice and commitment, we can find ways to reduce the risk and to make hospitality sustainable.

We have to start with God's gracious



else. It's about our elderly neighbor whose children and grandchildren live across the country and who needs someone to be with her as she recovers from surgery.

The threats we perceive

Despite how important hospitality is biblically and historically, Christians today continue to struggle with the practice, often fearful of some of the risks and dangers associated with it. What is endangered when we practice hospitality, and what are we trying to protect?

1. Hospitality can endanger our lives and lifestyles: Hospitality breaks down distance between those with

character and powerful generosity. If we start with the impulse to make room, to welcome the way God does, if we start with grace, we will have a better set of resources to deal with the hard situations where we have to make difficult decisions.

2. Hospitality can endanger our reputation and comfort—especially if by welcoming certain kinds of people, we challenge those in power. If we make a safe place for people that some folks would prefer to exclude or ignore or keep invisible, then the danger can be real.

Hospitality can also endanger our experience of privilege, though in other ways it can reinforce it. Transforma-

...our hospitality will always be imperfect, incomplete, even when it points toward God's love and hospitality.

tive hospitality requires a willingness to acknowledge our own neediness; we have to be careful not to insist on always being the one with the resources, in control. Many of us also need to learn the role of guest at times. We need to help people see how important it is to allow others to be hosts and to honor the resources they have to share. This is a challenge for middle class, well-educated Christians, who often need to be reminded that resources should not and do not flow only in one direction.

3. Hospitality can endanger our control over resources: If we open our door, we can be overwhelmed. People respond to a sense of welcome, and they can come in an increasing stream. I think sometimes we are afraid to even imagine doing significant hospitality because we worry about limited resources—money, time, energy, space. We're afraid there won't be enough, or that we can't do it well enough. Resources are not infinitely expandable, though there are a host of wonderful stories about how God sup-

plies. But finding rhythms of welcome and rest—times for a family to be open to others, and times reserved just for themselves— is important. Hospitality by definition is gracious and generous, open handed, and it is very hard to think about closing the door, or limiting the practice. And yet this is also necessary. Edith Schaeffer, co-founder of L'Abri and a very wise practitioner of hospitality, has reminded us that it is not sinful to be finite. There are limits, but God does supply in amazing ways. It does mean, however, that our hospitality will always be imperfect, incomplete, even when it points toward God's love and hospitality.

4. Hospitality can endanger our plans and our time: In our task-oriented culture, opportunities to provide hospitality often come to us as interruptions. If we begin to orient our lives toward offering welcome, it will disrupt our emphasis on efficiency and measurable results. We will have to prioritize differently and see hospitality as way of life, rather than as a task that we pile on top of already-overburdened schedules.

5. Hospitality can endanger a cherished way of life: Hospitality is complexly connected to "bounded communities." In other words, it depends on communities with a rich sense of identity, a shared way of life, history, values, and practices into which people want to be invited. But as we welcome people who are different, identities are changed, and not just those of the guests. The community itself is changed, often in small ways, sometimes major. Figuring out what parts of identity and community are crucial to preserve, and which parts can properly be reshaped can be a huge

WHY MUST WE WELCOME STRANGERS?

Dr. Pohl tells why the Bible instructs that hospitality is not just for our family and friends.

An important feature of most early understandings of hospitality is that it was to be directed to strangers. The Greek word, *philoxenia*, one of several that is used for hospitality in the New Testament, actually has love of strangers in the word itself (*phileo*, *xenos*).

It's not that welcoming family and friends was not valued, but what was distinctive for Christians is that the kindness and welcome usually reserved for friends and family is extended outward, especially to strangers in need.

As Lactantius wrote in the early fourth century, nature and human relations required that persons do good to relatives, neighbors or even friends, "but he who does it to a stranger and an unknown person, he truly is worthy of praise, because he was led to do it by kindness only" (*Divine Institutes*).

challenge. Negotiating those questions involves an element of danger and risk. Communities can be undone by closing in on themselves and keeping others out, and they can be undone by welcoming anybody and everybody without asking for any conformity or shared commitments. Hospitality depends on and yet pushes outward our communal boundaries and identity.

6. Hospitality can challenge certain cultural values and assumptions:

When the larger society disregards or dishonors certain persons, our acts of welcome and respect are potent alternative statements. When we welcome people into our lives or when we open the door to someone different than ourselves, we establish new relationships and connections, and this is especially noticed when it is with people who the world says aren't worth very much. In these cases, in welcoming "the least," hos-

pitality is an act of resistance and defiance. Several things happen when someone is welcomed, especially if the larger society prefers that they remain invisible or

Communities can be undone by closing in on themselves and keeping others out, and they can be undone by welcoming anybody and everybody without asking for any conformity or shared commitments.

hidden. When they are welcomed, how they feel about themselves is changed, because self-assessment is tied to what others think of us. But such welcome is also a witness to the larger community, who is then challenged to reconsider its own attitudes and assumptions. Hospitality allows people who are overlooked and undervalued to be seen and noticed, and it allows their gifts to be recognized and appreciated.

The most vulnerable people in the world—whether homeless, or refugees, or people with grave disabilities, or children

from broken families—are those who are outside of every relationship. For these, every relationship has failed them; they are people without a place. What a difference it might make if we were more intentional about giving each person a place of respect and value—not just a handout or a social program, but a home and a place to contribute, to share their gifts.

7. Hospitality can be easily distorted, used for ambitious gain:

Our acts of hospitality do not necessarily diminish our temptations to power, greed, and ambition. Hospitality may allow such temptations to be expressed more subtly, but acts of welcome can be a useful avenue to these things. (In fact, that's what corrupted it in the past and why it so often degenerates into ambitious entertaining.) Because hospitality is effective in forging social relationships, because it is such a profound aspect of human connection, it is a powerful

Recommended for your small group study



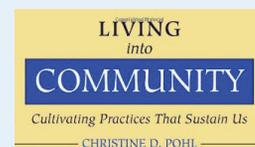
Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition by Christine D. Pohl, Ph.D.

(William B. Eerdmans, publisher) "Although hospitality was central to Christian identity and practice in earlier centuries, our generation knows little about its life-giving character. *Making Room* revisits the Christian foundations of welcoming strangers and explores the necessity, difficulty, and blessing of hospitality today. ...[T]his book shows how understanding the key features of hospitality can better equip us to faithfully carry out the practical call of the gospel."

—Amazon review

"Casual readers beware: *Making Room* is guaranteed to challenge even the most complacent Christian. You are not likely to walk away from this book unchanged."—*Books and Culture*

Also consider for your small group Pohl's 2012 release **Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us**. (William B. Eerdmans, publisher). Writes author and theologian Marva J. Dawn, "Every Christian should read this provocative book! Pohl thoroughly delineates the interlocking relationships and dangerous deformities of practices that could deepen our communities but often destroy them. This volume is pertinent to our families, churches, even places of work."



“WELCOME IS ONE OF THE SIGNS THAT A COMMUNITY IS ALIVE. TO INVITE OTHERS TO LIVE WITH US IS A SIGN THAT WE AREN’T AFRAID, THAT WE HAVE A TREASURE OF TRUTH AND OF PEACE TO SHARE.”

-JEAN VANIER, COMMUNITY AND GROWTH

vehicle for accomplishing one’s purposes. And so it can be distorted by temptations, especially to ambition. And here, the danger is on the side of the host—that hosts will misuse hospitality.

Every historic period has had its temptations to seek advantage in offering hospitality, and ours is no different. We have our own versions of ambitious hospitality—the entertaining we see in the business world, or the carefully planned dinner parties calculated to impress the selected important guests.

In the church, the instrumental orientation sometimes gets reframed as a question of stewardship. And so we ask: Well, what will it accomplish? Is hospitality effective? What are the results?

Hospitality is rich with blessing, but such benefits come as gifts. Today, if churches engage hospitality substantially, there is a tendency to turn it into a strategy, a means to another end. We are extremely goal oriented, so hospitality quickly becomes the latest evangelism approach, or the new strategy for church growth. Of course, hospitality can be very effective, but if it is only a strategy, it is also very short lived.

When we use hospitality instrumentally, it loses its mysterious dimension, and hospitality as a way of life is undermined. There are few contexts better for sharing the gospel than a setting of warm wel-

come, and people will come to a church that is welcoming. But when we use our



If we expect to find God present in our practices of hospitality...we will open our hearts and our doors to others with anticipation and gratitude.

occasional hospitality as a tool, we distort it, and the people we welcome quickly recognize that they are being used. And the cynicism about the church’s interest in them becomes palpable; they feel as if they are victims of a marketing strategy or project.

Certainly, when we open our lives, homes, churches, and communities to others and make room for them in a place that is precious to us, it involves tasks and risks. But hospitality is so much more than a series of tasks or a set of risks. We would do better to understand it as a way of life deeply connected to the gospel and rich with grace, blessing, and mystery.

If we can be persuaded that making a place for others is also life-giving for us, then we will look at the tasks and dangers differently. If we expect to find God present in our practices of hospitality, if we expect to find ourselves on holy ground, we will open our hearts and our doors to others with anticipation and gratitude. †

Christine D. Pohl, Ph.D., is associate provost and professor of Christian social ethics at Asbury Theological Seminary. Among her ministries, she has served in resettlement work with refugees.

This article is an excerpt and an adaptation by the author from a presentation given in

March 2010 at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, the Carl F. H. Henry Center, Scripture and Ministry Series. Used by permission. Some material appeared originally in the author’s book Making Room (William B. Eerdmans, publisher).



offering the

Welcome of God

THE SIMPLE AND EXTRAORDINARY
WAYS MISSION SOCIETY MISSIONARIES
ARE CARING FOR REFUGEES



We probably share the same dilemma. We hear radio reports about the unfolding refugee story, and our hearts sink or shut down. For most of us, compassion fatigue—and maybe fear—are constant companions. It's not that we don't care, but we hardly know what to do. Christine Pohl speaks of this quandary: "A steady exposure to distant human need that is beyond our personal response can gradually inoculate us against particular action."

But if you are a Mission Society ministry partner, you are taking action. You help make possible ministries among refugees in several countries. For example, in a city in Canada, Syrian-born Mission Society missionaries greet their fellow countrymen who have fled Syria, connecting

them with each other, offering them English lessons and basic helps. Touched by the kindness of Christ, some of these refugees are now closer to Jesus and are telling others. (See page 22.)

In the pages that follow, you will learn stories of a few of the world's displaced people and how some Mission Society missionaries are serving them. As you read, know that you are helping offer to others the love God has offered to you.

"Hospitality is not first a duty and responsibility; it is first a response of love and gratitude for God's love and welcome to us."—Christine Pohl



Being with them

UNEXPLAINABLE GENEROSITY

Refugees usually possess miserably little. So from where does all their bounty come? This missionary couple witnesses the poorest and loneliest who never stop sharing.

If there were one word to best describe our new friends here in Arabia, it would be hospitable. I thought I knew all about hospitality, having thrown lots of dinner parties and entertained many guests over the years. But Arabs give new meaning to the word.

When I had the opportunity to spend time in homes with people and their families, I assumed they were hospitable because they had the resources to be hospitable. But recently I started spending more and more time in the homes of Syrian refugees, and I stand corrected. It doesn't matter if you have money or lots to share, or if your world has been shattered by war, death, pain, and loss, hospitality is expected.

I think I have gained at least five pounds because of the practice of hospitality in my new world. There is always a cup of tea or coffee to be shared, and I have yet to visit a home where something, even if ever so small, is not offered to the guest.

Centuries of welcoming strangers

And it's not just the food. The host is always most welcoming. There is never a rush to get to some other task, and there is always time for more—more tea, more coffee, and more conversation.

Part of this over-the-top hospitality is rooted in the Bedouin culture. The Arab peoples were mostly nomadic traders, traveling long distances between tribal lands, or they were farmers and ranchers settling on the land. When

you greeted travelers into your territory, you needed to treat them well, so that when you enter theirs they would reciprocate. This idea is also found in the religious teaching. It is a great dishonor not to show your home as welcoming, peaceful, and a place of plenty for all guests.

During the week, our clinic's medical staff makes follow-up home visits to some of the families. On a recent visit we forgot which doorbell to ring and found ourselves at the door of a family we had visited before. They directed us to the correct floor upstairs. While being 'served' by the family upstairs, we heard from them that the other family wanted to see us downstairs after we finished there. You guessed it. They had time to prepare a spread for us that rivaled the first. We know now it is just best if you don't eat before going on home visits.

When we think of hospitality, we are reminded of how much time Jesus spent in communion over meals, sharing life with many who welcomed Him into their homes. It's no surprise that, on the night before His death, Jesus spent time with His disciples around the table.

During these times of sharing food and drink, we are building a foundation of relationship.

Replacing what they lost

During these times of sharing food and drink, we are building a foundation of relationship. It starts with casual conversation on the general issues: How are you? What is the news? How is the family? Where are you from? How much do you pay in rent? It seems as if there are no questions too personal.



Knowing what we know now, we realize that what refugees may need the most is relationship over something as simple as a cup of tea. They want to spend lots of time, consistent time, just being together. This seems to help just a little to replace the

Being together helps just a little to replace the lifestyle they lost in their land where they enjoyed regular time with family and friends.

lifestyle they lost in their land where they enjoyed regular time with family and friends.

As Syrian refugees arrive in the US, they will appreciate a peaceful place to live and work, but I think more than anything, they will treasure the time that they get to spend with people. It's pretty simple—just time with people. “Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” —Romans 12:13 (NLT)

OFFERING THE WELCOME OF GOD

This couple serves in discipleship and healthcare ministries to the under-reached and the displaced in the Arab world. You can offer welcome by making a donation to the Middle East Refugee Crisis. Your gift will go directly to Mission Society missionaries assisting refugees. Visit themissionsociety.org/partners-and-projects/details/middle-east-refugee-crisis.

REFUGEES WE KNOW



TELLING OF THEIR NEW FRIENDS, MISSIONARIES CONFRONT SOME CULTURAL STEREOTYPES.

I have learned that refugees are like us. They love their children and treasure family. They long for peace and detest the insane acts of terrorists like ISIS. I have never met a Muslim extremist like we see on TV.

When I spend time in the home of refugees, they often show me pictures of what their life used to be. They owned homes and beautiful plots of land where they farmed and made a living. They had weddings and parties and spent time with their families.

For these Syrian refugees, all of that now has been stripped away. They have no homes to return to. They have seen family members killed and their schools and shops destroyed.

I often hesitate to even ask my new friends about their former lives because I feel like it may bring up so many bad memories. Recently, though, as I was talking with three women, I asked them about their lives and what they did with their time now. Their response was, “Mostly, we sit and cry.”



Caring for them

NIGHTS CAN BE SCARY

Migrants struggle to make a fresh start among strangers in a land they would never have chosen for themselves. So often nightmares torment the children. How will they ever feel safe again? For one family, the answer came in a most remarkable way, tells this missionary, who is unnamed for security reasons.

I met Fathi in March at a Mother's Day program put on for the Syrian refugees. As a teacher, I appreciated being there, watching this local church run a function for hundreds of precious children who had just come through hell—leaving nearly everything behind to trek 200 miles to their precarious new future in the desert.

Towards the front of the room, I spotted him, a small 10-year-old clutching the hands of his sister and a small neighbor. Evidently, these two were his responsibility, and he worked hard to keep them safely near him. I inched my way across the room and pulled him into my craft group and helped keep his small charges from getting away from him.

Later, over boxed lunches, Fathi introduced me to his mom, Ranim. She grabbed my hand and begged for help. I was terrified, thinking of my lack of Arabic and resources and the idea of helping in ways that, I thought, might eventually be hurtful. But I had to figure it out.

Basic care

God is good. In the next week, He had connected me with a network of people who knew exactly what to do. Within two weeks, we were visiting Ranim in her home—an unfinished concrete slab for which she and her husband paid \$300 a month, an outrageous amount for a building just being built. Her husband, Omar, was buried in felt UN blankets on the floor. Suffering from stomach cancer, he was unresponsive to our presence. But Ranim was surprisingly resilient. She had set up a salon for women's haircuts in her home, seeing her scissors as her one asset. Our friend from the church set up a doctor's appointment for Omar, and we brought them mattress pads and thicker blankets.



PHOTO BY JEDEDIAH SMITH
GENESIS PHOTOS

"Jesus shows Himself over and over as Truth, as Life, as The Way to little children clinging to the hands of their little brothers and sisters," writes this missionary.

**Pseudonym and stock photo are used for security reasons.*



Over the next few weeks, we saw a marked improvement in Omar who was sitting up the next time we saw him, having received medicine to numb the pain. Ranim remained vigilant in improving her surroundings, sewing the felt UN blankets into coverings for the mattresses to keep them nice. We continued to bring basic food items, diapers for the baby, and small necessary supplies. As we saw improvements in their basic needs, the conversations began to change.

Miraculous peace

They loved hearing stories about Jesus, and over time Fathi and his little sister began memorizing them. One of their favorites was when Jesus calmed the storm. With motions they would repeat the story of Jesus falling asleep in the boat.

One afternoon I came with a box of food supplies, and Ranim shared about Fathi’s nightmares that had been constant since they moved away from their home. He was terrified that they were still unsafe and that their new house would be bombed.

He had woken again in the night, and Ranim said to him, “Why are you afraid? Tell me the story again.”

And Fathi told her, “When Jesus got into the boat, His disciples followed him. And a great storm arose on the sea so that the boat was being swamped by the waves, but Jesus was asleep.

“And His disciples went and woke Him, saying, ‘Save us, Lord; we are perishing.’

“And He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?’ Then He rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

“And the men marveled, saying, ‘What sort of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him?’” Ranim told me, “Now when Fathi can’t sleep, we pray and ask Jesus to calm our fears.”

The love we offered in His name gave us permission to introduce Jesus to those who we now called friends.

Growing kingdom

We have seen the kingdom grow and expand in the last four years as refugees have poured over our borders. The work started as extending a helping hand in the name of Jesus. The love we offered in His name gave us permission to introduce Jesus to those who we now called friends. Jesus Himself is the good news. He shows Himself over and over

as Truth, as Life, as The Way to little boys clinging tightly to the hands of their little brothers and sisters, to families ravaged by war, to those who have the privilege of coming alongside with a cup of cold water.

OFFERING THE WELCOME OF GOD

More than four million of the five million Syrians who have fled their country have been received into neighboring Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, reports Jim Ramsay (page 32). In this region, this missionary serves as an educator and ministers to refugees by providing basic helps, welcome, and friendship.



Listening to them

GENTLENESS AMID HARDSHIP

Writing from a refugee camp in Europe, missionaries Charlie and Miki Chastain tell of witnessing shattering lives—and the power of soul-to-soul connection amid suffering.

While missionaries Charlie and Miki Chastain were making plans to attend The Mission Society gathering in Albania last fall, news of the refugee crisis in Europe began to make headlines. “Miki and I felt very strongly that we needed to do something to help,” remembers Charlie. “We decided, instead of flying, to drive from Estonia to Albania, because that route basically goes straight through the heart of all the refugee migration heading toward Western Europe.” The Chastains loaded up their mini-van and drove the roughly 3,700 miles to Albania and back. Donations from individuals and churches from eight countries provided the funds for Charlie and Miki to purchase blankets, clothes, food, and heaters to distribute.

Since that time, the Chastains have become increasingly involved with the refugee crisis in Europe. They’ve watched as national borders in Europe open and then close again. They’ve sat with refugees in camps who “find themselves stuck in a sort of limbo, with no place to live, no way to make money, are crowded alongside thousands of other refugee families, and now, are unable to leave at all.”

“It’s one thing to watch the crisis unfold on our television and computer screens, where we can stay comfortably detached, even apathetic,” observes Charlie. “But it’s a whole other thing to sit in the tents with the refugees. And it’s just that experience that the Chastains hope to offer other Christian leaders.” Here, Charlie explains.

“They never wanted to leave”

A night spent volunteering in a refugee camp breaks through apathy and emotional barriers we put up. When you look into the eyes of these individuals and hear their stories, it becomes abundantly clear that these men, women, and children are not that different from us.

The majority of these refugees never wanted to leave their home countries at all. They grieve not only the loss of their loved ones and homes, but also the loss of life as they have always known it. The destruction of their communities results also in the loss of their identities, their purpose, and

the normalcy of their days spent being productive, paying bills, raising children, socializing with neighbors, and enjoying family meals around their kitchen tables.

We were surprised to learn that many refugees, particularly those who have witnessed the effects of American bombs, are quite fearful of Americans. We met

one Syrian man who had been forced to serve as a medic with the Syrian military for several months before he decided to leave his home with his wife and three children in order to seek safety in Europe. In those months while serving as a medic, he had witnessed firsthand incredible devastation throughout Syrian communities—the result of bombing raids.

They grieve not only the loss of their loved ones and homes, but also the loss of life as they have always known it.

On their first night in Presevo

On the night this man and his family arrived in the refugee transit camp in Presevo, Serbia, I had an opportunity to sit with him for a few minutes, and to hear some of his story. After listening to some of the details of what he had seen in Syria, and hearing him explain why he'd grown so fearful of Americans, I said to him, "You know, I am an American."

The man looked up at me in shock, speechless for a moment, until he finally said, "You are an American?" I just nodded. The Syrian father broke down in tears.

Even sitting in the middle of the stuffy, crowded tent of a refugee camp, just one moment of personal, human connection, one instance of shared life, can bring amazing healing, and may help begin to dissolve years of fear, hatred, and misunderstanding in ways that watching television news reports never can.

OFFERING THE WELCOME OF GOD

Missionaries since 2009, Charlie and Miki Chastain and their three children serve in Estonia. Charlie works in the arts, and Miki coordinates a prayer center and leads healing prayer workshops. They also serve among the refugee community in Europe. "One of our primary goals for this year," they write, "is to engage European and American Christian leaders who are willing to come and meet some of these refugee families, to serve them, and to hear their stories. If you would like to learn more about joining the Chastains to minister among refugees in Europe, contact charliechastain@mac.com.



BONHOEFFER ON LISTENING

"The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. ... Christians, especially ministers, so often think they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking. ... [H]e who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either."

-From *Life Together*, by German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Teaching them

NEIGHBOR LOVE

Amid the terrors of war, young men still dream dreams. This refugee, eager for education, escaped bombings, left his homeland, and now finds true neighbors among strangers, including this Mission Society missionary.

Sayid* is a 23-year-old Syrian refugee who lives in the country where Mission Society missionaries Robert and Cindy* serve. Sayid is from Aleppo, where fighting has been heavy. His two sisters were killed in bombings, and two cousins have been missing for more than two years. His family left Aleppo after the bombing of a building that killed 80 people at the university where Sayid was studying. Now he is a student at the English language center where Robert teaches. Here, Robert tells Sayid's story:

Sayid and his mother and older brother (his father had died before the war) fled Syria in 2014 and eventually came to our country. Because they are refugees, they are not allowed to work here. Sayid's brother, a doctor, found a job in another country. Before he left, he took Sayid and his mother to a church and told them, "These people will help us."

Church home

Very few Arab churches here are interested in reaching out to Muslims, but this church is. So Sayid and his mom started going regularly to the church to get food. Eventually, they started attending the church. After several months, Sayid's mother accepted Christ. She still wears her hijab, but underneath she wears a cross necklace. Despite disapproval by neighbors that she (a Muslim) would attend church, she continues to go.

Sayid is very hungry to learn English so he can continue his

studies. A few months ago, I told him that I had noticed how hard he works. I offered to tutor him once a week. He couldn't do that, he said, because he couldn't pay. When I told him he didn't need to pay me, he just looked at me for a minute, very confused.

Neighbors

When I asked what was wrong, he said, "This is very different. In my culture people don't help others without expecting something in return." I saw this as an opportunity, so I told him, "Sayid, you know I am trying to follow the teaching of Jesus and walk the straight path. In my Bible, Jesus tells me that I am

Sayid, you know I am trying to follow the teaching of Jesus and walk the straight path. In my Bible, Jesus tells me that I am supposed to love my neighbor. You are my neighbor.

supposed to love my neighbor. You are my neighbor. I would be glad to help you."

We have been meeting every Wednesday morning to work on his English. Another friend of mine at the center is also meeting with

Sayid, doing a more formal Bible study with him, studying in the Old Testament one week and in the New Testament the next. So Sayid and I take the Bible stories he learns with my friend and practice and discuss them together in English on Wednesday mornings. We pray that Sayid will follow his mom and eventually come to know Jesus as more than just a prophet (which is how Muslims see Him), but as his Lord and Savior.

**Pseudonym and stock photo are used for security reasons.*

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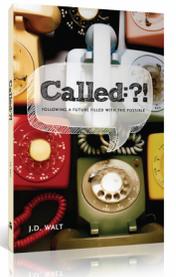
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Waiting for them

ALMOST WITHIN VIEW

Just eight miles from North Africa, Spain is an obvious landing place for refugees. Eager to offer the welcome of God to fleeing families, missionaries Billy and Laurie Drum tell of some surprising truths about life in a country whose door is shut.*

Months ago, missionaries Billy and Laurie Drum were invited to help resettle families into their town. At the time of this writing, however, the country's resettlement process is at a standstill. As the Spanish government drags its feet, the Drums and people of Spain wait to offer welcome, with refugees desperate. In the midst of this agonizing time, Laurie reports here from Spain.

Last October, we were asked by the local government to work with 200 refugee families who would be resettled in our town of Antequera, Spain. (In Spain, no one has access to refugees

...new vetting procedures were implemented which has all but halted the resettlement process.

except through invitation by officials, which only occurs via an officially recognized non-governmental organization, or NGO. We are fortunate that Billy sits on the board of a local NGO and, therefore, was poised to help.)

A handful of the 15,000 who were to be resettled in Spain were expected to arrive by the end of December. But newly implemented vetting procedures all but halted the resettlement process. The backlog of refugees and asylum seekers vying for resettlement in Europe is astounding, and Spain only agreed to take a few.

Spain's government all but refused to take refugees in

REMEMBERING HOW THEY WERE WELCOMED

During this painful wait, the Drums discover something new about the hearts and history of their Spaniard neighbors.

During this crisis, writes Laurie Drum, we have learned that the Spanish population as a whole is very compassionate toward the plight of refugees. In fact, people are working to figure out creative ways to provide entry to refugees. Tired of the red tape, they are trying to take the situation into their own hands.

I have talked with many who remember when they were refugees. They say, "We were cared for. We were taken in. We must return this kindness to humanity." They have not forgotten having to flee a horrible civil

war and a terrible dictator in the 1930s and 40s—a cruel dictatorship that lasted until 1978. I have seen family photos of local families as they fled Spain, heading for France and Morocco.

We recently met a woman who was a baby when her family fled to Morocco, chased by the dictator's army. (Her father was one of the original writers of the Spanish constitution in the early 1930s, which made him a dangerous political figure. He had a price on his head.) After arriving in Morocco, the family then crossed the Atlantic by ship to Mexico, where she lived almost most of her life. So she has lived almost her entire life as a refugee from Spain.



the first place. But petitions and public uprising caused the government to change its decision and agree to accept 15,000 refugees.

Constant change

The situation changes daily. At this point, we are still in a holding pattern. There are talks between European Union (EU) countries that may change some things, but we fear not for the better. It now appears that, instead of resettling refugees in Spain and other EU countries, those countries have decided to attempt to pay other countries to take their share of refugees off their hands. One might conclude that the “least of these” have become bargaining chips.

I wish I could write about how we are currently ministering to refugees in Antequera. People here are ready to help. Refugees are in need. I'm sure that God's heart is sad. People whom He loves are standing at the door, and we cannot open it. With our hands tied, we wait and pray for solutions.

**Spain's position toward refugees may have changed by the time of publication.*

OFFERING THE WELCOME OF GOD

After serving in Peru for five years, Laurie and Billy Drum now offer the welcome of God among the already-existing immigrant population in Spain, while working alongside the local Spanish church. The Drums—both certified teachers, trainers, coaches, and counselors—also serve other cross-cultural witnesses through membercare and leadership development.

REFUGEES' PASSAGE TO SPAIN



“Spain is the southern-most border of European nations,” notes missionary Laurie Drum. “We are a country of first entry. Most immigrants and refugees coming to us from West African nations cross the Mediterranean from Morocco. Those from Syria and Middle Eastern countries, come by trekking across North Africa and crossing the tiny eight-mile stretch of sea at The Strait of Gibraltar.”



Connecting them

REFUGEE CRISIS LINKS HEARTS

Between December 2015 and April 2016, more than 26,000 Syrian refugees arrived in Canada. The government's openness is met with both praise and concern. Among the new arrivals, Syrian-born Mission Society missionaries minister—connecting refugees to each another and to the Truth of Jesus.

Nearly 1,000 Syrian refugees settled in a major Canadian city by early 2016. Originally from Syria, Adnan and Amena* help refugees in various ways. “We are laying the foundation in our relationship with them. It takes time to win their attention and confidence in us, but it is worth it for the gospel’s sake.”

Adnan and Amena teach English to refugees and helped form a Syrian-Canadian Family Association to provide a place for Syrians to meet each other for shared activities.

In addition, this couple teaches a course to equip Christians to share the gospel with non-believers. “We want Canadian believers to know how to respond to refugees in their community with love and practical help,” said Amena.

As this couple brings Syrians together, conversations over meals turn to issues of faith. Adnan tells, “A non-Christian Syrian couple called and invited us to their house. We only met them once two months earlier. During the two-hour visit we were able to share with them about our faith as we enjoyed the delicious Syrian snacks and sweets they had prepared. They later told us that they would like to meet with us and with a few other Syrian couples.

“The Bible study group that we started has been studying John 14 and the booklet I have written, ‘Do You Know?’ A

sixth couple has joined the group. God has been working in the lives of these Arab couples. Five persons (including ourselves) out of 12 are believers in Jesus. The discussions are hot and loud, and the friendship among the couples is stronger now—two qualities of Arab meetings!

“Please pray that we will be light to all of these new friends, and that Matthew 5:16 will be fulfilled among them.”

**Pseudonyms are used for security reasons.*

We are laying the foundation in our relationship with them. It takes time to win their attention and confidence in us, but it is worth it for the gospel’s sake.

OFFERING THE WELCOME OF GOD

As 1,000 Syrian refugees move into to their Canadian city, this Syrian couple connects them with one another. Friendships are being formed and the displaced are learning about a God who knows and welcomes them. Recently, the Bible study of this couple grew unexpectedly to 15 people, including seven Syrian couples and one man who is waiting for his wife to come from Syria. Writes Adman, “There is growth in the faith of these couples as we study the Bible week after week. One couple began to talk with their non-Christian friends about Christ.”



Blessed are the desperate

How to pray for those who seek refuge



PHOTO BY STEVE EVANS/GENESIS PHOTOS

God calls His people to pray for those who are outcasts, who are fugitives, who seek refuge.

The word *refugee* evokes more emotion in our nation than ever before. It is a word that is dividing friends, families, and even the body of Christ. But no matter our feelings or fears, our political views, or personal preferences, Scripture is clear. God calls His people to pray for those who are outcasts, who are fugitives, who seek refuge. And He gives us some direction in Scripture about how to do that.

We may not immediately consider using what we call “The Beatitudes” in Matthew 5 as a prayer guide for refugees. But it’s in those words of Jesus that we find not only instruction for prayer, but medicine for our heart con-

dition towards those who we classify as “not us.”

In the Beatitudes and the sermon that follows, Jesus tells we will be

In the Beatitudes, we find medicine for our heart condition towards those who we classify as “not us.”

blessed, not by attempting to defend what is “ours,” but by humbly using our power and resources in service to the weak and desperate. I hardly dare to think of what God might do if those of us who are called by His Name would:

- Mourn with refugees who have lost everything
- Be merciful to those who have been oppressed
- Be peacemakers, holding out our hand across barriers so that those who are far from Jesus might be brought near
- Risk being ridiculed, rejected, or even persecuted by those who disagree or who don’t understand love for this kind of stranger.

At the end of His invitation to be blessed, Jesus declares, “I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. ...If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?...And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others?”

Even the pagans, Jesus reminds us, care for their own people. But those of us who follow Jesus and believe in His promises can have courage to bless refugees in word, deed, and in prayer, trusting that, in return, we will be blessed and that God will be glorified. †

Becky Stephen is The Mission Society’s senior director of field ministry.

Other
scriptures
to guide our
prayers

- Pray to be able to love refugees in heart and in deed: *Deut. 10:16-19; Lev. 19:33-34*
- Pray that they would be treated fairly by God’s people: *Deut. 27:19; Lev. 19:33-36; Zech. 7:9-10*
- Pray for mercy on those in danger and for the glory of God to be revealed: *Ps. 57*
- Pray for a glimpse of God for those who love righteousness: *Ps. 11:4-7*
- Pray for God’s people to be generous to them: *Deut. 14:28-29; Matt. 25:34-40*
- Pray as if it were you: *Ps. 31*

Following World War II, the United States admitted thousands of displaced Europeans, which led to the Displaced Persons Act of 1948. “The number of refugees accepted by the US, which is set annually by the president, reached a peak of 142,000 during the Balkan wars in 1993,” reports *The Wall Street Journal*. “This fiscal year, the US plans to accept 85,000, including 10,000 Syrians.” How can you invest in the lives of refugees here at home? Here is how some Mission Society friends have done it.

H O M E F O R T H E E X I L E S



How ‘the strangers’ became family

This Atlanta couple tells the agonies and rewards of inviting refugees into their lives

“I can’t even remember my original motivation for going to our church’s outreach ministry in Clarkston, Georgia (a “welcoming community” for refugees) 5 1/2 years ago, other than feeling a need to force myself into outreach and be ‘others’ focused,” writes T.R. Dreyer. “The Clarkston ministry seemed to be something our children and I could do together – connecting with the refugee kids and their parents.”

After a few months, just as T.R. was wondering if he should continue in that ministry, “a Burmese family entered our lives,” he says.

The Dreyers would learn that this family, who had been in the US for eight months, had been granted visas to receive treatment for their child’s heart defect.



“The children call us ‘Mr. and Mrs. T.R.’ and Abdu has taken to calling me ‘my sister,’ and T.R. ‘my brother,’” writes Shirsten Dreyer. “It’s a simple thing, but it brings us such joy. ... We have come to love this family.”

So “many of our initial interactions entailed helping them navigate ER visits, watching the children while the parents took a child to the doctor,” tells Shirsten Dreyer.

It hasn’t been easy—at times, it has been agonizing. “Helping them learn how to navigate the social services, education, and medical systems and not get taken in by profiteers, of which there are many, sometimes feels like running in circles,” tells Shirsten. “Over the years, we have had to learn to step back from jumping in to immediately provide help every time a crisis arises, as we once did. Finding that balance has been a very difficult, emotional process that I often feel completely inadequate to navigate.

“We have become like their surrogate parents,” she tells, “encouraging them, providing a listening ear, celebrating birthdays, answering distress calls in the middle of the night, having the family, who is Muslim, to our church and our home.”

God allowed me to be a life jacket to someone who was oftentimes desperately gasping for air.

But the Dreyers have not only offered hospitality, they have received it. “We have been guests in their home many times over the past five years. The welcome we receive from them is like royal treatment. ... The children call us ‘Mr. and Mrs. T.R.’ And Abdu has taken to calling me ‘my sister,’ and T.R., ‘my brother.’ It’s a simple thing, but it brings us such joy. ... We have come to love this family.”

“If nothing else,” writes T.R., “God allowed me to be a life jacket to someone who was oftentimes desperately gasping for air. My most special times with the young father, Abdu, are spent going to the Father with him at Abdu’s own request. He has taught me to pray now, not to wait.

“How special it was to be there for the birth of Abdu’s third child. We have had the privilege of walking through highs and lows with this family, including tremendous medical difficulties, and the honor of praying for one of the children’s surgeries. I pray God keeps them in our lives for a long time.”

'This café saved my life'

Established by a Mission Society missionary, Café Clarkston has been serving up hope for refugees since 2008



"Despite their many needs, refugees have much to offer as well," says Café Clarkston founder Adam Hoyt. "The furnace of suffering has produced in many a deep resolve and an enviable work ethic. They have faced death and hardship and rarely sweat the small stuff. They are resourceful and relational; they could teach American professionals a thing or two about 'networking.'"

Just east of Atlanta lies the small town of Clarkston, Georgia (pop. 8,000), home to an increasing number of refugees from around the world. Currently, almost 32% of the city population is foreign born.

Adam Hoyt moved with his wife, Mary, and their family to live and minister in Clarkston as Mission Society missionaries in 2006. He says, "Just as is true of new missionaries on the field, refugees need help doing all the things that 'natives' can take for granted: learning English, finding jobs, making doctor appointments, even separating important notices from the junk mail. (I can't count the times a refugee has brought me a stack of weekend advertisements, and asked, 'Did I really win a new car?')"

Priorities for most refugees upon relocating to Clarkston are learning English and finding employment.

Making connections

The need to connect refugees with jobs is what inspired Adam Hoyt to establish Café Clarkston. Opened in 2008 as both an internet café and a training center, Café Clarkston, a ministry of Friends of Refugees (friendsofrefugees.com) and

affiliated with Clarkston International Bible Church, offers English-language learners a place to begin their job search. Hoyt realized the need for such a center shortly after moving to Clarkston, initially helping neighbors with honing English skills and filling out job applications.

At Café Clarkston, refugees gain needed computer and literacy skills. They learn to craft their resumes and fill out job applications. They are connected with available job opportunities and are taught culturally appropriate ways to handle job interviews and work relationships in the US. And they are also given a place to connect with others, both socially and professionally.

Hoyt emphasizes, "It is people connections that ultimately help you get a job." The Café works with local staffing agencies to help fill primarily unskilled and semi-skilled positions in such areas as production and manufacturing, one year filling an amazing 175 open positions. Hoyt attributes much of the success of job retention among refugees to personal and cultural characteristics that emphasize work ethic, company loyalty, and the priority of caring for family outside of work.

Easing transitions

John is among the refugees who found work through Café Clarkston. A refugee from Sudan, he escaped the war, and came to the US after a long trek through a refugee camp and stints in other countries. In his homeland he had worked with his parents and brothers, tending garden. Now in the US, John says, "I struggled to get a job. Café helped me get a job in landscaping. This café saved my life."

For refugees, the struggles of starting a new life in a foreign land are often compounded by the forced loss of position, status, home, family, and community. Café Clarkston is one place dedicated to easing the difficult transition by providing friends who walk alongside new arrivals as they begin again.

--by Betsy Phillips who served for 20 years in Latin America with The Mission Society and World Gospel Mission. Betsy now serves with her husband on The Mission Society's Global Resource Team.

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The Mission Society and Asbury Theological Seminary sign Global Partnership

Asbury Theological Seminary inducted The Mission Society into its Global Partner Program at an event on November 10-11, 2015 in Orlando, Florida.

Asbury's Global Partner Program includes organizations, educational institutions, non-profits, and church networks from around the world. The goal of the program is that these partners serve as resources for one another. Institutions involved might regularly have faculty lecture at partner schools, share library resources, have students engage in cross-cultural ministry experiences, and come together for conferences.

As Global Partners, The Mission Society plans to invite Asbury faculty to participate in international training events, as well as to provide expertise on curricula used in Mission Society training and church mobilization programs. Together, The Mission Society and Asbury will explore ways to connect Asbury's church-planting program with Mission Society missionaries involved in church planting around the world.

Mission Society President Max Wilkins was present for the signing in Orlando. "We are so blessed to deepen and formalize the partnership which has long existed between Asbury Theological Seminary and The Mission Society," he said. "As The Mission Society seeks to join Jesus in His mission, especially among the least-reached peoples, we are also committed to Asbury's mission of spreading scriptural holiness throughout the world. We will work closely with Asbury to both train and deploy the women and men God is calling to join this mission. This agreement marks an exciting new frontier for both organizations, and we look forward to ongoing fruitfulness in mission together."

The Mission Society moves to expand diversity

In an effort to create and accelerate diversity initiatives

throughout The Mission Society, Romal Tune has been hired as senior advisor to the president on the issue of minority. Romal is a sought-after speaker and author of the award-winning book, *God's Graffiti: Inspiring Stories for Teens*.

Having grown up in poverty, Romal is well-acquainted with violence and the challenges of inner-city life. Overcoming adversities, he graduated with honors from Howard University and Duke Divinity School to become a communicator, community strategist, and inclusion consultant.

"The Mission Society and our board have been aware of the sparsity of ethnic minority participation in the global mission force for some time," says President Max Wilkins. "We believe that bringing Romal on board will help The Mission Society become a fully diverse and inclusive organization, whose mission force, staff, and board reflect the overall diversity of the kingdom of God."

The Mission Society signs GC2 statement

The Mission Society's Dr. Duane Brown, senior director of church ministry; and Steve Wilson, senior director of international mobilization, attended the GC2 Summit on the refugee crisis on December 17, 2015. The Summit sought to bring together Christian leaders from around the country and affirm local churches and Christian non-profits as they reach out to refugees entering the US.

"For many Christians and churches in the US, there is a large gap between awareness and action regarding the refugee crisis. Some people really want to help, but do not know how," said Wilson.

At the Summit, Christian leaders drafted a statement that was then signed by attendees. The Mission Society's president and CEO, the Rev. Max Wilkins, signed the statement as well, committing The Mission Society to help refugees adjust to life in the US.

Several Mission Society missionaries are on the front lines



From left to right: Asbury Theological Seminary President Timothy Tennent and The Mission Society President Max Wilkins; Romal Tune; attendees of Costa Rica Regional Gathering Costa Rica; the Rev. Carolyn Moore teaches at Regional Gathering; Michael Agwanda, honored for the 10th anniversary of “Life for Children Ministry.” Founded by Agwanda in his homeland, Kenya, Life for Children has made 1000 micro-loans to women entrepreneurs. It provides assistance for 246 children each day and daily feeds 100-150 street children while spreading the gospel.

of the crisis and have worked directly with refugees in Europe. The Mission Society staff members have formed a team to help resettle a refugee family in the Atlanta area.

The Summit hosted a telecast, during which leading evangelical speakers working with refugees gave practical advice to attendees regarding how to assist refugees in their communities and internationally. Speakers included Rich Stearns, president of World Vision; Stephan Bauman, president of World Relief; Bill Hybels, founder and senior pastor of Willowcreek Community Church; Ed Stetzer, president of Lifeway Research; and Jenny Yang, vice president of advocacy and policy for World Relief.

Part of the GC2 Summit statement read: “Moments like these are when Christians cannot remain silent and still. In light of this crisis, we commit ourselves and our churches to actively care for and minister to global refugees with mercy and compassion, both here and abroad, based on God’s compelling concern for all people in need and especially refugees.”

For more information about the GC2 Summit, visit gc2summit.com/statement.

Missionaries from 14 countries gather in Costa Rica; testify to deep renewal

“Growth, as illustrated in Ephesians 4:15-16, is both communal and individual.” With those words, Jim Ramsay, vice president for mission ministries, welcomed 94 attendees to The Mission Society’s “Americas Regional Gathering.” A retreat and conference center seven kilometers outside San José, Costa Rica provided the setting for five days of worship, study, prayer, and community for Mission Society staff, missionaries, and guests representing 14 countries and a diversity of ministries.

The week’s theme of FORM—that we are all constantly being formed into the image of Christ as well as being used to form others—was demonstrated through the gathering’s five-fold purpose. First, it allowed missionaries scattered across the Americas

to reconnect with peers, staff, and the larger Mission Society community. Second, it provided professional development opportunities with teaching on ministry skills and missiological practices in sessions. Pre-gathering workshops as well as breakout sessions on discipleship, church leadership, marriage, parenting, the implications of incarnation, hosting visitors, contingency preparation, and Sabbath-keeping were also offered.

Third, personal development was met through times of teaching, corporate Bible study, worship, preaching, and spiritual formation. The book of Ephesians served as a foundation for inductive Bible study facilitated by Jim Ramsay and for preaching by the Rev. Carolyn Moore, pastor of Mosaic Church in Augusta, Georgia.

Though not a retreat, another goal of this working gathering was to provide a time of intentional rest and renewal for cross-cultural workers. Representatives of Equipping Lydia (a ministry based at Asbury Theological Seminary, equipping-lydia.org) were present for spiritual formation and teaching on Sabbath renewal. Professionals and member-care personnel were available for times of processing, counseling, encouragement, and prayer.

The final goal of this biannual gathering was that of supporting missionary families by providing a program for missionary kids. MK Member Care Coordinators Vicki Decker and Shawn Ramsay (along with volunteers, including a team from Pierce Chapel United Methodist Church in Midland, Georgia) dedicated time and space to assist MKs in processing their shared experiences, connecting with one another, and establishing their identity in Christ.

All who participated in the week’s events left with a renewed sense of purpose and vision, inspired by President Max Wilkins’ charge to first and foremost make disciples. Several testified to God’s work in their lives during the week through experiencing His healing power, finding deep refreshment, and receiving a newly tender heart.

Find your place

Cross-cultural ministry opportunities are available now



India

Bring your administrative or finance training and join a team of social entrepreneurs in India.

Work with two couples to develop a business that provides jobs and economic opportunities. In an impoverished Muslim area, build relationships that open the door for communicating the gospel.



Ghana

Join Ghanaian evangelists in Western and Northern Ghana reaching oral

learners through storying the Bible.



Ecuador

Join a team working among unreached peoples in remote

Ecuador. Help plant a church that expresses the culture of the people in their unique style of worship.

Middle East

Join a newly forming team that is developing a start-up medical clinic among a refugee population in the Middle East. Must be able to communicate in Arabic.

CoLab: A two-year, apprenticeship experience

In two years, you will integrate culture and language learning with hands-on experience to create a collaborative project that will contribute to your team's long-term goals. #CoLab is a unique way for growing leaders to join Jesus in His mission. For more information, see page 17.



CoLab - South Africa

Join a couple in South Africa who serve among

a diverse population, working in youth ministry, elementary education, and micro-finance. Dive into South Africa with this unique #CoLab opportunity.



CoLab - Spain

Work on a multicultural team planting churches in an unreached region

of Spain with CoLab. Join a local church developing cell groups and discipling new believers and seekers.

They are on their way!

Joey and Kerry Davidson – Liberia

(October 2015)

After seven months of training in Cape Town, the Davidsons and their youngest daughter now serve in marketplace ministry within the tourism and hospitality industries. Their vision is to see God transform the lives of young adults and their communities.

Mark & Kenzi Fogleman – Kenya

(December 2015)

The Foglemans and their daughter are partnering with a local family of God in Kenya to share the good news of Christ. They do this through modeling a life of discipleship, empowering communities to love and serve orphans in Jesus' Name, and providing clean, sustainable water so that villagers can live healthy, strengthened lives.

Unnamed missionary family – India

(December 2015)

This family been called to use their skills, vocations, and passions to serve the people of India. They display God's love to women living in oppression by sharing the gospel and offering discipleship and life-skills training. They also minister through his work in an Indian office.

Earthquake hits Ecuador; Mission Society workers report in

More than 650 people are confirmed dead from the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the coastal region of Ecuador. Mission Society missionaries Graham and Sharon Nichols and Tim and Daina Datwyler serve in Ecuador and felt the intense quake. Both couples are unharmed, and are working to help victims in their area. A donation of any amount will help these missionaries deliver much-needed aid to their neighbors. To donate, go to TheMissionSociety.org/give and enter "Nichols-Earthquake help" in the "Partner/Project Name" field in the "Give to a Partner or Project" box.

The Mission Society hires new staff members to expand ministry goals

The Mission Society recently filled several new positions at our headquarters in Norcross, Georgia. We are grateful for these new colleagues and look forward to seeing how God will use them among us for the building for God's kingdom through this ministry.



Jonathan Duncan joins the communications department as creative content coordinator. A graduate of the University of Georgia, he earned his Master of Fine Arts degree in media design from Full Sail University.

For five years, he served at the University of Georgia Wesley Foundation in several capacities, including as associate director of media production, and was the communications director for First United Methodist Church of Decatur, Georgia. In his new role, Jonathan serves as a graphic designer for print and online presence and oversees and produces video and other needed media.



Dr. Dean Osuch joins the church ministry department as director of partner development. Dean earned his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees with a missions/evangelism focus from Columbia

International University. He served as a missionary in Africa for one year, and for the past 18 years, he has served among congregations in the States, helping them catch a vision for outreach and evangelism, locally and internationally. In his new role, Dean recruits churches for long-term partnerships with The Mission Society through providing training and coaching in ministry outreach.



Sarah Parham joins the field ministry department after having recently graduated from Asbury Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree. While at Asbury, she served as the associate director for the Wesley Foundation at the University

of Kentucky. Sarah begins in June. In her new role, she will offer her administrative skills to serve missionaries, as well as to support the senior director of field ministry and the efforts of the department.

HONORING THOSE WHO HAVE MADE AN IMPACT ON US

Each of us is indebted to loved ones who invested in us. Some gave their lives protecting our freedom. Some lived their lives as a Gospel witness to us. Some made our lives fuller and richer just being a part of ours.

We invite you to honor the life or memory of those individuals with a gift to The Mission Society in memory or honor of those loved ones. Your gift will make sure the gospel they shared with us continues to be carried to the least reached and to the ends of the earth. You may make your gift honoring the life or memory of your loved one at TheMissionSociety.org/give, or contact us at **800.478.8963**.

Also, if you would like information about including The Mission Society in your estate planning, we would love to talk with you. Please contact cpickett@themissionsociety.org or give us a call **800.478.8963**.



God's heart or our fear

Let Scripture guide our view of refugees



According to UNHCR, last year, 51% of refugees were under 18 years old. "We are to seek the heart of God in the midst of this unfolding story," writes Jim Ramsay. If you don't know what to do about the refugee situation, or have decided to do nothing, consider what the Scripture says.

PHOTO BY JEDEDIAH SMITH/GENESIS PHOTOS

The issue of refugees has been a part of human history across the ages and around the globe. People are displaced as refugees sometimes as the result of natural disasters, but sadly often as a result of situations created by humans. The war in Syria and the instability in the countries of that region have caused a spike in refugees that is putting the entire world to the test. Nearly five million Syrians have fled their nation. Over four million of those are now refugees in the three nations of Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. In fact, one in five people in Lebanon are Syrian refugees! That is 20 percent of its population. By contrast, if you take all the refugees resettled in the USA since 1980, they comprise about one half of one percent of our population. So while the photos and news stories

One should expect to see at least as much searching of the scriptures to determine our response as we see in other areas of social concern.

may prick our hearts, for most people in North America, the issues are distant from us, and our engagement risks remain at a hypothetical level.

What the Scripture says

As Christians, we are to seek the heart of God in the midst of this unfolding story. One should expect to see at least as much searching of the scriptures to determine our response as we see in other areas of social concern. Ironically, much of the response from Christians regarding the issue of refugees makes no reference to the scriptures. Actually, there are a multitude of scriptures related to hospitality and how to treat the sojourner. We find this issue is the very center of the making of God's covenant with the people of Israel. When Moses is instructed to build the

Ark of the Covenant in Deuteronomy 10, we read these words: "[B]e no longer stubborn. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 10:16-20, ESV). Loving the sojourner was to be a mark of God's people—a reflection of God's own heart.

In addition to statements in Scripture about God's heart for the sojourner, one can find very harsh language as well. Often when divine judgement was meted out in the Old Testament, a lack of justice for those in need was one of the reasons given. Consider the warning in Ezekiel: "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were

We can be fearful

“When it comes to helping refugees, Protestant churches and their pastors are often separated by faith and fear,” reports *Christianity Today* (posted 2/29/16). “Most pastors say Christians should lend a hand to refugees and foreigners. . . . But pastors also say their churches are twice as likely to fear refugees as they are to help them, according to a new survey from LifeWay Research.” World Vision and World Relief sponsored a phone survey of 1,000 Protestant senior pastors. The finding also showed we hardly know what to do: “Many pastors have not discussed or heard about ways to help refugees locally (72%) or overseas (63%).”

arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49, ESV). In the New Testament, one of the most striking statements of judgement by Jesus comes in Matthew 25 when separating the sheep from the goats. The reasons for their acceptance into their inheritance were, among other things, because “I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me. . . .” (Matthew 25:35-36, NIV). A few verses later, the absence of these actions is given as the reason for eternal judgement. God takes very seriously what our attitude is toward refugees.

What the Scripture doesn't say

In the many examples of God's heart and mandate of care for the refugee, one thing is absent. There is no mention of our concern for the refugee being based on our convenience or our gain in any way.

So what can we make of this? First, we are not to exploit the sojourners' vulnerable condition. The Christian is to be at the forefront of defending their integrity,

value, and rights.

Second, the primacy God places on care for the refugee also suggests that, while wisdom is called for, demonstrating His heart for sojourners must ultimately supersede our concerns for safety—and very well may require our sacrifice. (In the current debate, how often do we hear the need for a guarantee of safety as an excuse for ignoring God's mandates? How often do we hear “Is it safe?” rather than “Who is my neighbor?”)

Loving the sojourner was to be a mark of God's people—a reflection of God's own Heart.

Third, the primacy God places on care for the refugee also means that our motive must not be to “make them Christians.” At first blush, that may seem anti-evangelical. Yet in all the biblical examples, the motivation for welcoming the stranger is simply to reflect the nature of God, not to provide for an evangelistic opportunity. One of the accusations sometimes leveled at faith-based aid organizations is that help is contingent upon conversion. If we are to reflect God's heart, however, such conditions must not be placed on our response.

Having said that, as God's people

demonstrate the heart of God through outreach and hospitality, there is no doubt that others experience His love and are drawn to Him; doors to hearts are opened. Our motive for offering hospitality to the sojourner, however, must be simply to demonstrate the heart of God without utilitarian or manipulative intent. Opportunities for appropriately sharing our faith will come naturally.

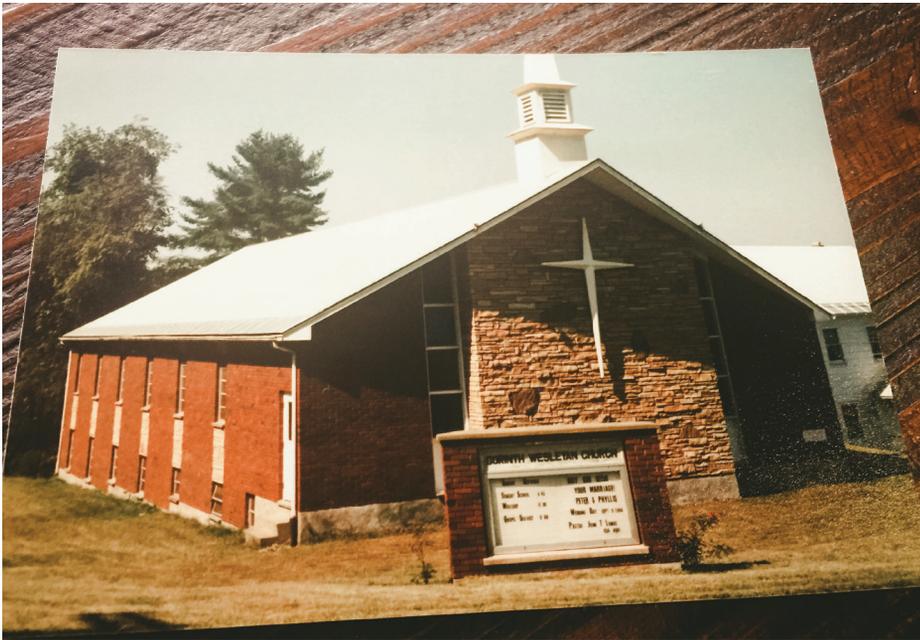
While there is unimaginable suffering and pain in this current crisis of refugees, we also know from the Bible and from history how God has often moved in the midst of refugee situations for His purposes. How God's people respond matters not only to the physical and emotional needs of the refugee, but our response also matters in how faithfully we are living into our identity as His people. As individuals and as communities of faith, let us make sure we are siding with the sheep and not cowering in fear with the goats. †

Jim Ramsay is The Mission Society's vice president for mission ministries.



A story of intervention

How my home church served a refugee family



In December of 1978, the pastor of Corinth Wesleyan Church of Corinth, New York, took a bold initiative to adopt a displaced family. The consequences would be significant, so opposition and fear may have erupted. But instead something else happened in the church—and in the whole community.

As a church leader, researcher, and consultant, I am privileged to help a variety of churches build capacity and expand their mission outreach. I've met many Jesus-followers whose language of love is compassionate service. Still, something as huge as the refugee crisis immobilizes most congregations and individuals.

But it doesn't have to be that way! Here I share the story about how my home church served a refugee family in hopes that more churches are activated and equipped to do the same.

The pastor's vision

In December 1978, during the Indochina Refugee Crisis, God moved on the heart of our pastor, the Rev. Richard Bennett, to lead our church, The Corinth Wesleyan Church, of Corinth, New York, to adopt and resettle a displaced family

living in Vietnam.

When Corinth church members decided to welcome strangers, they didn't expect them to arrive a few days before Christmas. But the church took it in stride. "It was the peak of the boat crisis. It happened quickly, and our family had to adjust our plans for Christmas. It was stressful but exciting," explains the Rev. Bennett.

Like Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus, no room could be found for the refugee family on such short notice. So Pastor Bennett, his wife, and their five children housed the family in their small parsonage for Christmas through late winter the following year, 1979. "This was a courageous step of faith for our church, and for the Bennetts—to open an already bursting home to four more people," shares Sharon Miller, an active member of the

church. Joining Jesus sometimes requires faith to step out on a limb.

The community's response

Instead of standing in opposition or living in fear, the church and surrounding community rallied behind Pastor Bennett's vision, supplying food and clothing in those early days. "There wasn't a lot of opposition. I don't remember any. This family became our friends. We loved them," shares Mrs. Carol Ralph, a member of the church, who also purchased Christmas gifts for the family. A vacant home on Eggleston Street owned by a church family eventually opened so the newcomers to town had a place to live. Church folks and community folks united to furnish the house. A local employer provided a full-time job for the father.

Learning from history

In 1975, after communist governments were established in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, an estimated three million of these countries' citizens would flee their homelands over the next 25 years. Most of them would be resettled in North America and Europe. This tragic world event would give congregations—like one in Corinth, New York—an opportunity to live out their faith.



The church members encountered many challenges to communicating with their Vietnamese-speaking newcomers. Fortunately, the congregants were able to partner with a representative of World Relief living nearby who was fluent in Vietnamese and served as an interpreter for the family. It wasn't long until the children learned enough English to interpret for their parents. "They were well accepted into our community as a whole, and in the schools," shares Sharon Miller. "The community went out of their way and the family settled into Corinth." The new family even began entertaining church families for meals at their home.

The church held a deep spiritual burden for the family. The family attended church regularly and participated in the life of the church as they were able. The parents' inability to speak or comprehend English continued to be a barrier, but the church continued to love them. Some in the church had faith in the God of Acts 2 at the day of Pentecost, trusting that when the message of Jesus' love would be proclaimed in the power of the Spirit, the new family would un-

derstand it in their own language. Carol Ralph explains, "We prayed, 'God speak to them in their own language so they understand what Pastor Bennett is saying.' And we knew, if nothing else, they understood the language of love."

What we learned

Churches today who desire to reach out to refugees can learn from my home church:

- 1 *A leader's vision for ministry is only as powerful as the people who support it.*
- 2 *Fear of the unknown should never be allowed to nullify what we do know—that refugees and displaced persons are needy, and we can do something to help them.*
- 3 *The language of love can break through any language barrier.*
- 4 *Healthy partnerships (between the church and community) are essential to joining Jesus in His mission and often help to mitigate risks.*

I celebrate that my church took a risk and adopted this family. The church likely didn't do everything right, but no manual or playbook existed to prepare them for this pioneering effort. After several years in Corinth, the Vietnamese family relocated to the city of Philadelphia. Even though the church eventually lost contact with this family, the church families are forever grateful for the opportunity to have shared Christ's love and to have been a beacon of hope to this needy family. †

The Mission Society's church ministry department offers training and mentoring for churches. Please contact us by email at cm@themissionsociety.org, or call us at 678.542.9046, and we can discuss your church's needs.

Duane Brown is The Mission Society's senior director of church ministry. For 12 years, he served as a church pastor and holds a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Asbury Theological Seminary.



Check out The Mission Society's newest resource

How to help in today's refugee situation? Consider first becoming informed. "The Church's Response to the Refugee Crisis" is a MissioCast interview with The Mission Society's Duane Brown and Jim Ramsay. Use it as a discussion starter for your small group. Check it out at: themissionsociety.org/churches/resources-and-training.

MissioCasts are new webcasts, podcasts, and interactive, livestream events hosted by The Mission Society's Church Ministry Team. Join us for our next MissioCast!



Sometimes we serve shame

A surprising truth about hospitality



Visiting with family and friends is central to the Afghan culture. Hospitality is considered a sign of family honor and so should be readily accepted.

Have our attempts to be hospitable toward others kept others from expressing their own hospitality toward us?

An Afghan friend of mine was living in an area where I had the opportunity to do some teaching. At the last minute, I asked if my host and I could drop by.

Unexpected reaction

When we arrived just hours later, we were welcomed by a table filled with an assortment of treats and teas. It was quite an impressive spread. I apologized for the short notice, feeling like I may have been intruding on her space and plans. Her response struck me. “Back in my country people make spontaneous visits. I miss that. Here in America everything is so scheduled. People don’t just come over to visit.”

She went on to tell me about a family of refugees who wanted to end their relationship with an American because the American had unknowingly brought shame .

As she spoke, I could feel her loneliness. And I realized that paying my friend a visit, we were allowing her to express the hospitality that was deeply embedded in her culture. I ate my fair share of snacks and had a cup of tea that morning. She seemed to be delighted with my munching.

Smothering generosity

In preparing this article, I called my friend. When I recounted the details of that morning, she said she could feel the emotions all over again. “Yes,” she said. “For two years people gave to me, but no one ever visited my home.” She went on to tell me about a family of refugees who wanted to end their relationship with an American because the American had unknowingly brought shame from what was perceived to be a

smothering generosity. “Americans like to give, but too much giving can ruin the relationship.”

As hosts receiving “the stranger,” we often envision a one-way transaction in which we do all the welcoming and giving. While this may be where we start—and it is a great place to start—it is important that we don’t end there. Our giving should always preserve dignity. We should allow those we serve to also give to us if they choose. Our receiving well can help refugees and immigrants feel more welcomed into a foreign place.

As you serve, consider receiving. It’s quite a countercultural act—one that can make us feel uncomfortable. But by our receiving, we participate in the dynamic of reciprocity that is common to many parts of the world. It can help our immigrant friends feel more at home. †

Richard Coleman is *The Mission Society’s* senior director of mobilization and candidacy.

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CoLab is a two-year term for growing leaders, ages 22-35. Find your place at www.themissionsociety.org/go