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Walking with Today's
Global Migrants

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COVER: PAUL JEFFREY

A girl lines up jerry cans in the early morning in the Rhino Refugee Camp in northern Uganda. Because water pumps in the camp are solar-powered, water can only be obtained during daylight hours, so people line up cans overnight. As of April 2017, the camp held almost 87,000 refugees from South Sudan, and more people were arriving daily. Global Ministries' Global Health unit supports work to improve access to safe drinking water in the camp.



WALKING WITH TODAY'S GLOBAL MIGRANTS



Dominique Anid and other staff of International Orthodox Christian Charities unload food for families in a settlement of Syrian refugees in Minyara, a village in the Akkar district of northern Lebanon. Lebanon hosts some 1.5 million refugees from Syria, but allows no large camps, so refugees have moved into poor neighborhoods or established small informal settlements in border areas. A member of the ACT Alliance and frequent partner agency with UMCOR, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) provides a variety of support for families in this settlement, including food prepared in a community kitchen.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

- 6 WALKING WITH OUR NEIGHBORS: THE CHURCH'S CALL TO ACCOMPANIMENT**
by Christie R. House
- 8 ENGAGEMENT WITH MIGRANTS, REFUGEES, AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN EUROPE**
by Nicodemus Doe
- 11 A DIVERSE PEOPLE, SHARING CHRIST'S LOVE AND SERVING THE COMMUNITY: BLANCHARDSTOWN METHODIST CHURCH**
by Albert Abbo Wakili
- 14 FULFILLING A PROPHETIC CALL—LIFE IN ABUNDANCE**
by Peter Karanja
- 15 CROSSING PATHS WITH REFUGEES IN GERMANY**
by Taurai Jokonya
- 16 WALKING WITH UNITED METHODISTS AND OTHER CHRISTIANS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**
by Thomas Kemper
- 20 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: WORLD COMMUNION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**
by Michelle Maldonado
- 24 RESOURCES FOR STANDING WITH UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS, MUSLIMS, NEIGHBORS, AND STRANGERS**
Lyda Pierce and the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry
- 26 MIGRATION, MISSION, AND THE GREAT GLOBAL FAMILY**
by Jim Perdue
- 28 EVERYDAY MIGRATION STORIES AND THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE**
by Amanda Cherry
- 30 MENDING SHATTERED DREAMS AND DIGNITY IN EL SALVADOR**
by Nayara Alves Gervásio
- 31 LIFE ON THE BORDER—EL FARO CHURCH**
by Venancio Reyes Pacheco
- 32 TREAT THEM AS YOUR NATIVE BORN**
by Emily Kvalheim
- 34 BUILDING A VIBRANT NATIONAL IMMIGRANT JUSTICE MINISTRY**
by Rob Rutland-Brown, with Wade Munday, Janet Horman, and Dawn Bashara
- 40 THEOLOGY FROM THE MARGINS: A CRY FROM THE TEA BUSHES**
by Jerome Sahabandhu
- 46 WHO TEACHES US THE MOST?**
by Joseph Russ

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 FOUNDATIONAL TO MISSION**
by Christie R. House
- 19 MISSION MEMO**
- 47 FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY: MIGRANTS AND THE GOSPEL**
by Thomas Kemper



From the editor

FOUNDATIONAL TO MISSION

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19 (NRSV)

The above quote from Deuteronomy is quite close to the quote from Exodus 23:9 used on P. 6 for the introduction to this issue. It's also similar to Leviticus 19:33-34. The themes of fairness, kindness, and justice for strangers and aliens in the land are repeated in the Psalms, and in Matthew, and Ephesians, and Hebrews, among other books of the Bible. Remaining open to strangers and people outside a tight ethnic community, being kind to people who are culturally or ethnically different, and judging resident aliens by the same standards and laws available to citizens were tough lessons that had to be oft repeated in scripture. Left on our own, we seem bound to forget these foundational tenets of our faith and of Judeo-Christian community.

Jesus and the disciples did a lot of walking—it was the main mode of transportation for people of their status and station in life. They walked along the Sea of Galilee, up mountains, down valleys, along roads to Capernaum, Gadarenes, Tyre and Sidon, Nazareth, Gennesaret, Jerusalem—Jesus even walked on water. He met all kinds of people in different situations along his way and connected with them as he went. Even after his death and resurrection, he was still meeting and walking with people—on the road to Emmaus. His ministry was, and is, one of accompaniment.

As followers of Jesus, we are also called to accompany people along their life journeys—those we love, those we meet, and those who are sometimes strangers. Through the reach of our connectional United Methodist Church, we can engage in this mission in many ways—welcoming refugees in our own communities; supporting missionaries and congregations who work with migrant populations; helping UMCOR provide grants and service to partnership organizations that work directly with refugee populations; helping those displaced by natural disasters; advocating for reform and justice in our nation's immigration policies. Any one of these avenues is a good place to start a journey of accompaniment.

Christie R. House

SEND US A LETTER OR AN EMAIL MESSAGE

New World Outlook values comments and suggestions from its readers. If you want to share an idea, point out an error, or send a short story, please contact the editor: chouse@umcmmission.org. Your comments may end up on this page in the magazine.



Yves Kinangwa visits a dairy farming community in Adetikopé, near Lomé in Togo. PHOTO: COURTESY YVES KINANGWA

Food, Trade, Climate Change, and Migration by Yves Kinangwa

The Conference on Trade, Migration, and Development to foster regional integration in West Africa, which brings together countries and subregions to exchange ideas on trade, has been an important factor for development.

Church leaders take migration as an enabler of equitable, inclu-



Yves Kinangwa (far right) with staff of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA), in Lomé, Togo, where he served as a Global Mission Fellow advocacy officer for Food and Climate Change.

PHOTO: COURTESY YVES KENANGWA

sive, and sustainable social and economic development that connects and benefits countries of origin, transit, and destination. The conference will create awareness for church leaders on the impacts of migration to the European Union and EU trade policies that counter regional integration in West Africa.

For instance, European milk exports could damage West Africa



A Prokin Orphanage resident in Limete, DRC, who received one of the mattresses from the Reno United Methodist Women in Nevada.
PHOTO: AARON VANDERSOMMERS

Letters from Missionaries

in the same way that chicken exports have done in the past, turning the subregion into a “bargain-bin” for EU products. I conducted research in February 2017 on a dairy farming community at Adetikopé, near Lomé in Togo, to assess local dairy farming. I discovered that the dairy farmers lack human and animal health services, have no market for locally produced products, lack machinery and technology, and suffer from the effects of climate change on their pastures and overall growth in their cattle. Dairy farming, if supported, would contribute substantially to their food security, strengthen local economies, reduce poverty, and create employment for youth. This research contributed to the lobby and advocacy work of the West African Churches’ program against hunger and poverty.

Yves Kinangwa, a Global Mission Fellow International from the DR Congo (Advance #3022102), served with the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA) based in Lomé, Togo. He was an advocacy officer for Food and Climate Change from September 2015 through April 2017.

The Connection by Aaron Vandersommers

This is a story about connections in mission. Recently, we received enough funding from the Reno

United Methodist Women, in Reno, Nevada, to purchase 15 mattresses for the Prokin Orphanage in Limete.

The one thing that stands out about Prokin is the number of older children and teenagers who live there. This is the age that many children drop out of school to work—but here they are attending school, both boys and girls. This makes Prokin a very special place.

I first heard about the Prokin Orphanage through an inquiry from Gail Quigg, the Global Missionary Liaison living in Columbus, Ohio. She had heard about Prokin from a couple in England. I asked Innocent Afful, our United Methodist orphanage expert in Kinshasa, to check it out.

Innocent visited the site and found a well-established program that is supported by the local neighborhood with several sustainable programs. Prokin manufactures soap and filters, and they bag and sell drinking water to help pay expenses and school fees. We were impressed by how well they use what they have.

Innocent, Mary (Vandersommers), and I work alongside everyone at Prokin to help create a healthier place for them to live. Innocent is working with UN Peacekeepers from Ghana to correct the rain drainage problems and remodel a new dining hall. The children will not only be able to sleep on mattresses, they will have bed nets to further protect everyone from contracting Malaria.

So how far are we connected? The neighborhood of Limete, DR Congo, England, Ohio, a UMW in Reno, Nevada, and all the way back to Ghana and Kinshasa. Now that is a connection!

Aaron Vandersommers is a Global Ministries missionary from Ohio (Advance #3022154) serving as the chief operating officer of the Church of Christ in Congo. He is based in Kinshasa in the DR Congo and began his work there in January 2016. His wife, Mary Vandersommers, is also a missionary assigned to the Church of Christ in Congo.



Older teens from the Prokin Orphanage in Limete, DRC, help unload—and test out—new mattresses for their residences.

PHOTO: AARON VANDERSOMMERS

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Walking with our neighbors

The Church's Call to Accompaniment

by Christie R. House

You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

—EXODUS 23:9 NRSV

The Hebrew scriptures contain many references to “strangers,” “sojourners,” and, like the passage from Exodus above, “aliens.” “You know the heart of an alien,” the Israelites are reminded in the Book of Exodus, “for you were aliens in Egypt.” In the Books of Law, Israel took care to spell out how people from outside their communities should be treated, but they also focused on justice and the sharing of resources that come from the bounty of God, a bounty meant for all people.

The theological grounding for Global Ministries’ work with migrants is a biblically based resolution entitled “Global Migration and the Quest for Justice,” revised and readopted by the 2016 General Conference. Lengthy excerpts from this document were published in *New World Outlook’s* September-October issue last year.

“Global migration as a factor in the quest for justice is a major priority of The United Methodist Church as a denomination that is global in its vision, mission, and ministries,” the resolution states. “This concern is rooted in both a biblical mandate for justice and a commitment to the future of the church. Many migrants and potential migrants today are Methodists; some are welcomed in new places, bringing new vigor to old congregations, while others face discrimination and exploitation in new places.”

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which tracks global statistical data on refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced populations, has declared that the world is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record, upwards of 65.3 million in 2015, with 23.3 million of those being refugees. Yet, in 2015, only 107,100 refugees were resettled worldwide.

Challenges and Rewards

At Global Ministries’ board of directors meeting in April, General Secretary Thomas Kemper devoted much of his opening address to the issue of global migration and how United Methodists are responding to the situation. He noted that the challenge to respond to the physical needs of migrants is complemented by the fact that migrants help to spread the Christian gospel. He cited contemporary situations in the Middle East, Canada, and Europe in which Methodist migrants from the Philippines and Africa have started new churches or revitalized existing ones.

Kemper also stressed that migrants, even refugees, beginning in biblical times and into the present, have played a valuable role in the spreading of the Christian gospel and in revitalizing the church. “Methodists from Africa are

enlivening our churches in Germany, Italy, and Ireland,” he said. In this issue of *New World Outlook*, Global Mission Fellows and missionaries working with immigrant populations and congregations in Ireland, Germany, Belgium, El Salvador, Mexico, and the United States have contributed stories about what they are finding among the people of God in their places of assignment.

Just before the April board meeting, Global Ministries hosted two meetings on Global Migration, bringing together members of the United Methodist Immigration Taskforce and representatives from a number of different UMC agencies, as well as representatives from partner organizations, such as Church World Service (CWS), an ecumenical organization that is one of nine registered refugee resettlement operations in the United States, and the National office of Justice For Our Neighbors. Erol Kekic, a staff member of CWS, said that while globally 1.2 million people need resettlement, global capacity exists for resettling only about 15 percent of that number. The average length of stay in a refugee camp today is more than 21 years, he added.

Kekic also said that refugees who resettle with church sponsors are five times more likely to be successful in the integration process than those in other kinds of situations, so CWS tries to find church sponsors for all refugee resettlements it coordinates. The organization is struggling to find enough congregations to step forward and hopes to encourage 200 new United Methodist congregations to sponsor refugees in 2017.

Participants in the meetings also discussed what’s happening in the United States, particularly since the election of a new president and a number of executive orders he signed in his first 100 days of office

that dealt with immigration and enforcement. Bishop Carcaño of the San Francisco Area, who chairs the Immigration Taskforce, said that in her area, parents are being arrested in immigration raids while their children are in school. The children are unaware of what is happening to their parents.

A Call to Migration Ministries

The articles in this issue focus on the different ways the church is moving to accompany migrants and displaced people who end up on the margins of society. As mentioned above, United Methodist missionaries, whose presence in migrant communities is increasing (currently 41 out of 340),

and continuing work with immigrants in the United States and around the world is United Methodist Women. The national office currently produces resources in multiple languages addressing immigrant needs and concerns, and it sponsors mission studies that focus on education and personal transformation for participants. A section of United Methodist Women’s website is devoted to global migration resources and content at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/immigration.

Global Ministries administers four racial/ethnic ministry plans that reach across international borders in church development and service—Asian American language groups, Korean ministries, Hispanic/Latino



Rob Rutland-Brown, executive director of the National Justice For Our Neighbors, addresses members of the global migration gathering held at the General Board of Global Ministries’ offices in Atlanta, Georgia. PHOTO: CYNTHIA MACK

have contributed most of the stories.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), founded 77 years ago specifically to address the global refugee situation created by World War II, continues to answer the call to ministry with refugees and other migrants displaced by natural disasters, wars, and persecution. In the last five years, it has allocated \$5 million to projects assisting refugees from the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Another agency with historic

ministries, and Pacific Islanders. Resources collected and provided by National Plan for Hispanic/Latino missionaries can be found on pp. 24-25.

Another section of this issue focuses on the work of Justice For Our Neighbors, an UMCOR-founded, now separately incorporated, program providing free legal assistance to migrants in the United States.

Christie R. House is the editor of New World Outlook magazine.

Engagement With Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers in Europe

by Nicodemus Doe



Carefully watched by police, refugees and migrants wait to walk through the Hungarian town of Hegyeshalom on their way to the border where they will cross into Austria. Hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants flowed through Hungary in 2015 on their way from Syria, Iraq, and other countries to western Europe.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is an ecumenical organization that serves the churches in their commitment to promote the vision of an inclusive community through advocating for an adequate policy for migrants, refugees, and minority groups at European and national levels. In the fulfilment of this mandate, it is responding to the message of the Bible, which insists on the dignity of every human being, and to the understanding of unity as devoid of any distinction between strangers and natives.

MISSION STATEMENT, CCME, FOUNDED IN 1964

As a Global Mission Fellow with Global Ministries, I was delighted to embark on two years of mission service in Belgium. The experience is enriching my faith and exposing me to different cultures, faiths, and people and the challenges some of our brothers, sisters, and children face in the context of migration. I am a Safe Passage Project Assistant, doing my part along with partners to witness and accompany the migrant population by advocating with and for their rights. The Safe Passage project is holistic in mission as a response to Europe's unprecedented influx of migrants—and the associated tragedies that have claimed the lives of thousands of men, women, and children.

Safe Passage is a project of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) to respond to the ongoing migration and refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. Thousands have lost their lives in search of protection and security in the past years. The project connects local work in border monitoring with political advocacy for a humane asylum and migration policy.

The work of CCME addresses refugee protection, labor migration, human trafficking, unity in diversity, inclusive communities, migration, and development. CCME actively monitors and speaks out against any form of expulsion, detention, or removal of migrants and asylum seekers (women, men, and children) that would violate such a person's rights. As one of its mandates, CCME is committed to promoting awareness-raising on issues of racism and xenophobia within churches and in society; it monitors the situation of migrants, refugees, and minority ethnic people at local, national, and international levels.

Safe Passage Project

For CCME to realize Safe Passage in practice, we must call on European governments and institutions, such as the European Commission, parliaments, and the Council of Europe, to implement the following modes of Safe Passage.

Maintaining civilian search and rescue operation at sea—This helps save the lives of migrants and asylum seekers attempting to reach Europe on unworthy sea boats.

Guaranteeing access to asylum procedures in the European Union (EU) and decent and adequate reception conditions—Guaranteed access helps deter people who need international protection from opting for smugglers' assistance to enter Europe. Standard hygienic and safe reception environments would lead to better health conditions and encourage other basic social services while asylum seekers await their cases.

Increasing placements for resettlement—A solidarity approach helps relieve the burden from neighboring and low-income countries that host large numbers of refugees.

Issuing humanitarian visas—Such visas help asylum seekers take regular flights, allowing them to travel with dignity to the EU and then start their asylum procedures upon arrival.

Suspending visa requirements for refugees fleeing from areas of war and dictatorship—This, again, would enable refugees to take regular flights and travel safely instead of seeking

out smugglers and taking the dangerous maritime voyage.

Providing more flexible and generous opportunities for family reunification—Offering short duration visits and lifting requirements that make family reunification difficult, costly, and lengthy counteracts the current process, which undermines the integration of asylum seekers who want family members to join them.

Mutually recognizing positive asylum decisions within EU and Schengen member states—If a person's refugee status from one member state can be recognized in another one, integration will be more successful, as all benefits, access to labor markets, and other EU protections would apply. Currently, 26 member states have signed the agreement forged in Schengen, Luxembourg, abolishing passport and all other types of border control at their mutual borders. The Schengen area functions as a single country for international travel purposes, with a common visa policy.

Establishing a fair sharing of responsibility for refugee reception among EU Member States—An EU solidarity aspect that accelerates the processing for asylum claims would help frontline member states, such as Greece and Italy, which host large numbers of asylum seekers.

Learning the CCME Beat

My involvement with CCME as a GMF has motivated me to put my faith into action during and after my service. I like the work and enjoy doing it because it's helping on some level to alleviate human suffering.

Interestingly, I do not work because I know the people we are standing in solidarity with; but rather because of the whole gospel message of Matthew 25:35-40.

I have met lots of interesting people. Some are happy and some frustrated with the circumstances surrounding their daily lives. For instance, during a recent meeting in Brussels, I met with people who share my interest on common topics—such as addressing policy issues (invisible walls/policy barriers) to protect migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers' rights. At these meetings, we drink coffee, laugh, make new friends, and we are housed in a decent building, free to move across borders as many times as we wish, inside and outside Europe, safely.

By contrast, I visited the Netherlands and Greece to attend conferences with CCME executives and other members who provide services to migrants. In the Netherlands, protracted asylum seekers we met there were being assisted by the Protestant Church of Netherlands, which was helping them to integrate and providing other social services, such as languages courses. One of our dinners was prepared by some long-waiting asylum seekers who



A refugee mother helps her daughter put on dry shoes on a beach near Molyvos, on the Greek island of Lesbos, October 2015, after they crossed the Aegean Sea from Turkey in a small overcrowded boat provided by Turkish traffickers to whom the refugees paid huge sums. They were received in Greece by local and international volunteers, then proceeded on their way toward western Europe. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY



Nicodemus Doe, far left, with staff of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) at a meeting in Athens, Greece. PHOTO: COURTESY NICODEMUS DOE



Refugees and migrants study a map in the city park on the Greek island of Chios. The park is full of tents sheltering refugees who crossed the Aegean Sea in small boats from Turkey. They were registered and provided with food and shelter in a reception center built with support from International Orthodox Christian Charities, a member of the ACT Alliance. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

didn't know what their future would look like, or even their case duration. They are not allowed to move outside the country, or even from the city, like other asylum seekers in Europe. During the dinner, we shared our love and joy together by eating with them, listening to some of their stories, and, perhaps, giving them a little hope and comfort.

When I traveled with CCME staff to visit Athens, Greece, we saw people, young and old, literally camped out in reception centers. I asked myself why they should be isolated from society. I observed that in both countries, despite the unpleasant plight

migrants and refugees face, many manage to keep the smile of hope. The support of CCME national members in both countries was visible and making a difference.

Migration and the Church in Europe

I've witnessed some of the hardships and abuses that people caught up in forced migration face on their way to Europe from both African and Middle Eastern countries. These I gathered mostly from stories told by those who made the journey as I attended conferences and seminars in the context of migration, asylum, and the church

in Europe. I've also experienced within the churches an ecumenical working spirit toward migrants and refugees and multiple efforts to welcome them. I have learned to be in solidarity with uprooted people and be in ministry with them, and I've experienced the prophetic role of the church as a social justice advocacy agent.

The European churches here have taught me about holistic migration ministry at the local, national, and international level. Individuals and congregations here are living applied Christian values: actively demonstrating hospitality toward the stranger, while at the same time, supporting advocacy projects like Safe Passage, which aims to change and influence European immigration policy. I'm thankful to God, the global United Methodist Church family, and CCME for providing this cross-cultural mission opportunity. I've received much support and training, which has nurtured my faith to serve and love God and my neighbors. I've learned also to be a good steward for creation to help make the world a better place!

I would like to invite individuals and congregations to join us in mission by praying and being in solidarity with migrants and refugees, those working with them, and countries experiencing war and human rights abuses ("pull factors") that serve as the main drivers for forced migration across Europe.

Nicodemus Doe, from Sinoe County, Liberia (Advance #3022069), holds a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Africa University in Zimbabwe and a master's degree in Religion, Society, and Global Issues from the MF Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo. Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), based in Brussels, Belgium, represents churches and ecumenical groups from 18 countries and collaborates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

A Diverse People, Sharing Christ's Love and Serving the Community

Blanchardstown Methodist Church

by **Albert Abbo Wakili**

“Ireland is a happy and brilliant country,” Ciaran O’Brien told me. He is 21 and studies Astrology at Trinity College in Dublin. He said foreign residents in Ireland encourage an exchange of cultures and open the eyes of the Irish people to the “other.” This was the second time we met for coffee—the first time we met he said, “I am not a religious man,” and he confided in me that he was planning to visit Thailand to see if a Buddhist monk could help him find meaning in life. But today, his story has changed, and he is smiling more. “Albert, you made me a better man. You got me thinking and you made me understand what this religious stuff is all about,” he said. If there is one thing I have learned as a Global Mission Fellow, it is to be open to conversations and listening—and most especially—to give time to those who need it most.

I’ve been serving the Blanchardstown Methodist Church in Ireland for 18 months as the Youth and Children’s Worker, a Global Mission Fellow placement. The slogan for the Blanchardstown Methodist Church gives a vivid description of who we are: “A Diverse People, Sharing Christ’s Love and Serving the Community Together.” Blanchardstown came together in 2008 as an offshoot of the Dublin Central Mission—a church in the center city. Since its formation, people of different nationalities have come to worship with, support, and encourage one another. It has grown into a thriving, community-focused church located in the heart of Tyrrelstown, which is about 14 kilometers (8.7 miles) from Dublin’s center. It serves an area of nearly 100,000 people.

A Community in Flux

The Tyrrelstown area, known as Dublin 15, grew significantly during the 1990s as American technology companies set up shop in the Republic of Ireland, creating a new job market. For the first time in Irish history, thousands of people migrated to Ireland from other countries to look for employment. In the early years of the new century, Ireland gained in wealth. As a result, this period became known as the “Celtic Tiger” years. Thousands of new buildings sprung up across the country.



Albert Wakili at the Blanchardstown Methodist Church in Dublin, Ireland.

PHOTO: COURTESY ALBERT WAKILI



Blanchardstown Methodist Church storefront in Dublin, Ireland.

PHOTO: ALBERT WAKILI

The boom brought rapid change in Irish society—politically, economically, and socially, and a big change in the country's demographic makeup. New immigrants from Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia began to change the racial, ethnic, and religious profile of most communities. Yet, over the same period, levels of participation in church life declined dramatically. Many people in the Republic of Ireland claim to be Roman Catholic, but they do not practice the faith. Scandals involving sexual abuse by priests and the discovery of human remains buried under the site of a former institution for unmarried mothers, run by the Sisters of the Bon Secours in Tuam, Galway, have turned some away from the church.

While aging and shrinking congregations may be a reality in some traditional denominations, this is by no means the full picture. The migration of people from other parts of the world to Ireland has made a significant impact on the church and on Irish Christianity in general. The migrants are eager to share their vibrant faith, resulting in explosive growth. Irish

Methodism has about 50,000 congregants—5,000 in the Republic of Ireland and 45,000 in Northern Ireland, UK. Most members in the Republic of Ireland are not of typical Irish ancestry.

Membership of the Blanchardstown Methodist Church reflects its diverse community, mainly young families with children and teenagers. The church

sponsors Sunday school, a youth group, a discussion group, a Friendship Lunch, and women's and men's groups. It is ably served by a pastor, stewards, and a church council with membership from at least four continents. This models for the community and the nation at large what it means to work, live, and worship together as people from different places around the world.

Multicultural Life

Some in our congregation face tough challenges—finding employment, housing, and a place to learn English. The church is a great resource to help them find their feet. One way we do this is through the Friday Friendship Lunch, a two-hour lunch to which all are welcome. The table is open to all kinds of conversation as we share a bowl of soup and bread together. Friendships are developed through conversation.

On Sundays after worship, we share tea and coffee, chatting about our daily lives and asking about families back home. During the Christmas and Easter seasons we celebrate one another's cultures, sharing food from our various countries. I can try Irish chicken diane, Filipino sinigang, Ghanaian fufu, Indian biryana, Ugandan chapatti, and Polish chocolate all in one meal!

Every Friday evening youth group meets. Our door is open to all young people in the community regardless of their background. We offer biblical teaching and relational ministry in a community-centered



Albert Wakili on an outing with younger members of the youth group of Blanchardstown Methodist Church.

PHOTO: COURTESY ALBERT WAKILI

approach and a safe space for teens to be themselves. I have enjoyed getting to know the teens, playing messy games, and answering questions, such as, “Why am I here?” or “How do I have a relationship with God?” God is doing incredible things through our youth group and I look forward to seeing what God has in store for them.

Sunday morning sessions provide a space where the youth can engage with faith in a contemporary and compelling way. In our discussion group, we look at what the Bible says about important issues, like the migration crises, xenophobia, gender justice—and we always pray for our personal issues and for the world at large. I think it is imperative to teach young people the importance of lifting one another in prayer.

Our Sunday school at Blanchardstown Methodist Church is like a mini United Nations because of its diversity and the thoughtful questions the kids ask. Some weeks ago, Amber, age nine, half Ugandan and half Irish, returned from a visit to Uganda—her first to the African continent. She couldn’t say enough about her experiences, which reminded me of my home in Nigeria. She was happy that I could relate to some of the things she was describing. She then paused and asked me why we can’t all live in peace, and why poverty exists in the world. I have learned not to underestimate the depths of a child’s thinking.

Beyond Blanchardstown

Youth group leaders in the Dublin District plan monthly events to bring youth groups together. We host activities such as—quiz night, barbeque night, bowling night, testimony night—and we invite speakers from the Dublin Central Mission homeless ministry to talk about how our youth can get involved.

My responsibilities as a youth leader also involve taking young people for national events across the border into Northern Ireland. In March,

people to connect with one another, which builds long-lasting friendships.

Our church also partners with Foróige, Ireland’s most successful youth organization, offering youth clubs, projects, and services. Under Foróige, I facilitate two clubs for young people at the community center, urging them to avoid gangs and providing a safe space for them to socialize and develop the ability to manage relationships. Other activities I’m involved in include the Tyrrelstown Residents Association, which represents and promotes the interests of all the residents, and the Alpha Course at St. Mary’s College Senior School, a private Catholic school. The Alpha Course is a series of interactive sessions that explore the basics of the Christian faith. It provides a safe space for people to ask questions and wrestle with doubts without being criticized or condemned.

My experience as a Global Mission Fellow has grown my heart for investing in young people. The conversations I have had with them have brought me closer to God. Please pray for the young people as they live in and engage with a culture that in many ways is hostile toward Christianity.



Three members of the older youth group of Blanchardstown Methodist Church represent the diversity now present in Ireland.

PHOTO: ALBERT WAKILI

we attended the annual Soul Mates Weekend, which is a national event for 9- to 13-year-olds organized by the Irish Youth and Children’s Department of the Methodist Church. Church groups from all over the island convene in Lurgan as a family that opens the Bible, sings songs, and has fun. Likewise, in October annually, Autumn Soul, a national event for 13- to 18-year-olds, considers God and discipleship. One thing I love so much about the Irish Methodist Church is the opportunities it provides for young

Albert Abbo Wakili is a Global Mission Fellow from Taraba State, Nigeria (Advance #3022105), serving as a youth and children’s worker with the Blanchardstown Methodist Church, Dublin, Ireland, one of the newest and most ethnically diverse congregations in Irish Methodism. You can connect with him via Facebook, Albert Wakili.

Fulfilling a Prophetic Call— Life in Abundance

by Peter Karanja

Because of the high influx of people arriving in Germany from war-torn areas in Africa and the Middle East, the term, *Flüchlingslager*, (“Refugees”), which literally means “people fleeing,” was the German word of the year for 2015, according to the German Language Society. The world is experiencing the highest number of people migrating ever, at a rate never before seen in history. This implies that more suffering is felt as injustices are committed every day to people on the margins. In the midst of this crisis, the church should not stop struggling with the same questions the two religious leaders asked in the story of the Good Samaritan: What will happen to the church if it engages with the refugees who are of different cultural and religious beliefs? And, conversely, what will happen to the homeless, depressed, lonely, uneducated, jobless, fearful, and wounded refugees if the church turns its back on them?

Warsan Shire, a Kenyan-born Somali poet, stated clearly that internally or externally displaced people do not just flee from their motherland for no reason. “No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark. You only run for the border when you see the whole city running as well.”

As a Global Mission Fellow working alongside both old and young refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Albania with the International Migrant Ministries



The Ruferkirche United Methodist Church in Frankfurt, in collaboration with Migrant Ministries, offers German language and music lessons to refugees. They also work hard to help refugees find homes.

PHOTO: PETER KARANJA

in Germany, I am learning about the plight of the migrants who face an uncertain future as they search for housing, learn new ways of living, and practice a new language.

Frankfurt, Germany, is a major destination for refugees and migrants. Much like any other big city, the main challenge for refugees and those who support them is a lack of housing. Because of the complexity of the housing problem, refugees end up living in congested sports halls for long periods of time. The Ruferkirche United Methodist Church in Frankfurt, in collaboration with Migrant Ministries, has taken the step of offering German language and music lessons to the refugees. They also work hard to help refugees find homes.

These actions taken by the church have broadened my understanding of today’s missionaries and how important it is for the church to move out of its walls and fulfill its prophetic call—to promote life in abundance. As John 10:10 describes—Christ came to bring life and life in abundance.

Peter Karanja is one of a group of Global Mission Fellows assigned to International and Migrant Ministries in Germany, a United Methodist outreach to asylum seekers and other migrants. Peter (Advance #3022096), who earned a B.A. in Divinity from Africa University in Zimbabwe, is originally from Kenya. He is an affiliate member of Trinity United Methodist Church in Naivasha, a congregation of the East Africa Annual Conference.

Crossing Paths with Refugees in Germany

by Taurai Jokonya

In January 2017, I had the privilege of attending a leadership conference in Stuttgart, Germany. There, more than 30 Christian leaders, predominantly United Methodist ministers from Europe, gathered to discuss refugees in their churches. It was refreshing to hear amazing stories of how people in Germany are prepared to go out of their way to accommodate our friends whom the world calls refugees.

I met four Zimbabwean ministers who are now based in the United Kingdom, and the Zimbabwean ambassador to Germany was also part of this gathering. I also had the privilege of meeting the bishop-elect for the Germany Central Conference, the Rev. Harald Rückert, when we visited his church in Reutlingen. It was an enriching experience to discuss issues guided by the theme “Things

that keep us apart and unite us.” Sad that the outgoing bishop Rosemary Wenner wasn’t around because she had other commitments in the United States. It would have been great meeting her as well.

Progress for Refugee Friends

A number of our refugee friends have really settled well here. When I first arrived in 2015, these friends didn’t know anything about Germany. Some arrived after I did and we took it upon ourselves to try and make them feel at home and settled. Now, 13 months down the line, I’m glad to have witnessed what the Lord can do. Though two of our friends have not acquired proper documentation, they are now working and living in their own apartments. Some have yet to find their own apartments

and jobs, but there is a lot of positive progress. Three are living in a hotel now, which is much better than the town hall they shared when we first knew them. The process might be painfully slow, but they are definitely getting there.

All of these friends have Muslim backgrounds and when we started meeting, they were skeptical about us because of our Christian faith. But now we can count on them to come and be part of some of our church programs.

While in Germany, my bike was stolen in the Spring. Fortunately, someone had just left another bike by our church in late December, and we didn’t know what to do with it. So soon after mine was stolen, I got the needed approval from my supervisor to start using the abandoned one. The owner never returned for it and the cycling was great in those days!

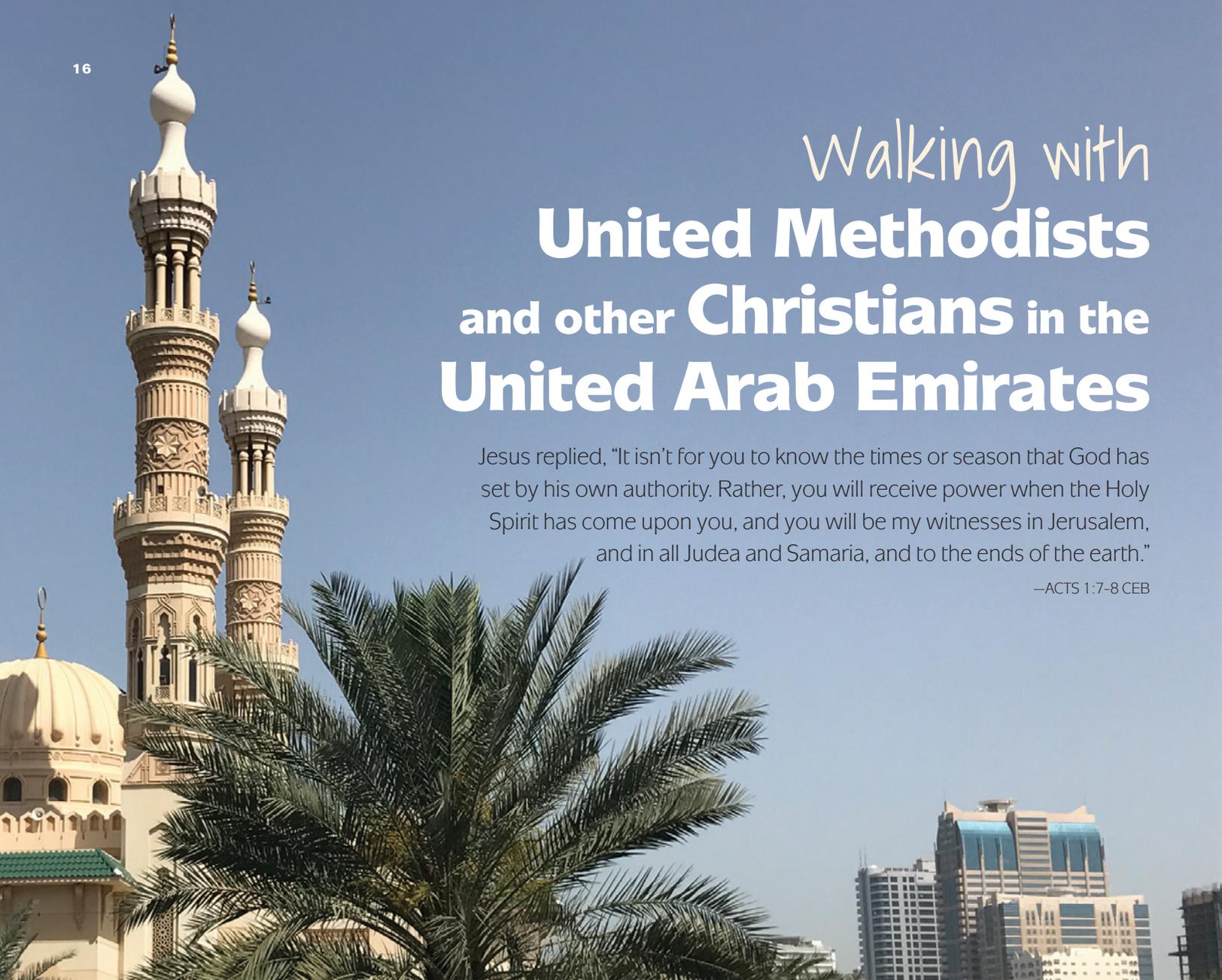
My service in Germany came to an end in June and I am now back home in Zimbabwe. End of service meant traveling to the United States for our end-term debriefing in Atlanta, Georgia. I’m praying for God to reveal plans for my next steps.

Taurai Jokonya (Advance #3022116) was one of a group of Global Mission Fellows assigned to International and Migrant Ministries in Germany, a United Methodist outreach to asylum seekers and other migrants. He is from Harare, Zimbabwe, and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from Africa University.



Taurai Jokonya, second standing from left, meets with refugees who have begun to settle into life in Frankfurt, Germany.

PHOTO: COURTESY TAURAI JOKONYA



Walking with United Methodists and other Christians in the United Arab Emirates

Jesus replied, “It isn’t for you to know the times or season that God has set by his own authority. Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

—ACTS 1:7-8 CEB

PHOTO: THOMAS KEMPER

by Thomas Kemper

Witness to faith in Jesus Christ takes many forms and can be found in unexpected places—such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE). I was there for the 10th anniversary of First United Methodist Church in Dubai, where I joined Bishop Ciriaco Francisco, of the Manila Episcopal Area, and the Rev. Rico Esguerra, superintendent of the Manila District, whose territory includes the UAE.

It was also our pleasure to take part in the first installation of the

leadership team of a new United Methodist congregation, Oasis of Grace, launched last November with a congregation of approximately 50. The vital and vibrant church meets in a hotel in the Muslim country; it is an expression of the devotion of United Methodist migrant workers from the Philippines.

First Church Dubai, Oasis of Grace, and a third congregation we had the chance to visit, Sharjah United Methodist Church, were started by Filipino United Methodists—who come in large numbers to work

in the prosperous, oil-rich kingdoms along the Persian Gulf. As they move throughout the world, immigrants take the church with them.

In the UAE, immigrant Christians can gather for worship, but, by law, Emirati Muslims are not allowed to come to the services or convert to Christianity. There is another United Methodist community in UAE, which I was unable to visit, organized by migrant church members from Zimbabwe.

Though often facing peril, migrants have long played a positive

role in the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ—to the “ends of the earth,” as Acts 1 states. They are a blessing to God’s mission. This is true today not only with respect to those from the Philippines in the Middle East but also with United Methodist migrants from Africa reaching Europe and North America.

Methodist newcomers from Africa are helping to enliven congregations in Germany, Italy, and Ireland and to start new congregations in western Canada.

To a large degree, Methodism is and always has been a migrant movement. Missionaries from New Testament days crossed tremendous boundaries to share the good news.

A Powerful Sense of Community

The UAE is a federation of seven absolute Islamic monarchies. Yet, only about 15 percent of the total population of 9 million can be described as indigenous Emirati citizens, who are required to profess Islam. With some 85 percent of the people being migrant workers, concessions to other religious groups are imperative. The constitution allows limited free expression of religion for immigrants. Of the total population, some 27 percent are Hindu, mostly from India; Christians make up about 10 percent, mostly from various parts of Asia.



Thomas Kemper (center), with (left) Rev. Rico Esguerra, superintendent of the Manila District, and the Rev. Drew Wayne, the priest in charge of St. Martins Anglican Church (right), which hosts 127 different guest congregations at its center. PHOTO: COURTESY THOMAS KEMPER

The two things that most inspired me about my visits with the Filipino United Methodists in the UAE were their powerful sense of community and their dependence on lay leadership. The United Methodist community is family. The First Church anniversary service bulletin spelled it out: “Praising, worshiping, and serving as United Methodist family.” Children are plentiful in the congregations. In true Methodist fashion, serving is important. The “family” has outreach to residents of huge labor camps outside of town, offering legal advice to other migrants and helping those who might be mistreated by employers to find redress.

Most congregations are led by lay pastors who also have regular jobs. The pastor of Sharjah church is an auto mechanic. Oasis of Grace is led by a sales executive. The Filipino churches in the UAE are under the jurisdiction of the episcopal area of Manila. District Superintendent Esguerra visits them on a regular basis.



Members of the newest UMC in Dubai, Oasis of Grace, meet in a hotel room on Friday afternoons.

PHOTO: THOMAS KEMPER



Thomas Kemper poses with staff of the Valiant Clinic in Dubai, administered by Houston Methodist Hospital.

PHOTO: COURTESY THOMAS KEMPER

“Facilitate Christian Services”

My brief trip to the UAE included “Palm Friday.” Since all worship takes place on Friday, the weekly holy day of Islam, Sunday is a work day. Whether Protestant services can be held on Friday depends on whether a congregation can find a space for worship. First Church’s anniversary service was held on a Friday afternoon at the Anglican Holy Trinity Church. I met with Oasis of Grace in the middle of the day at the Cassells Hotel, Al Barsha, and the Sharjah church in the evening at St. Martin’s Anglican.

First Methodist Church Dubai has worshipped in many spaces throughout its 10 years. While some religious groups have regular churches or temples, that is generally not the case for small Protestant fellowships, such as United Methodists. Our congregations borrow or rent space—First Church currently at Holy Trinity Anglican parish and Sharjah at St. Martin’s. Both

Anglican churches are part of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. The Anglican Church has a strong presence in the UAE stemming from British economic interests in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

St. Martin’s is a particularly interesting case study in broad ecumenical space-sharing. The Rev. Drew Wayne, the priest in charge of the Anglican facility, told me that 127 different guest congregations use the center, which has rooms that can accommodate from 50 to 1,000 persons. Rev. Wayne said that the ruling emir told him to “facilitate Christian services,” and he took the mandate seriously. The Anglicans provide only a sound system and a podium. Sharjah United Methodist Church brings and takes away after worship its Christian symbols and equipment. There is no storage area.

Health Connections

The UAE, despite human rights and equity issues arising from its mixture

of religious and secular law, puts a high priority on health services. It has a privatized, yet universal, health insurance system. Health care is free for citizens and insurance is a shared expense for migrant employers and employees. All migrants must be part of the system.

The UAE has reached out to health-care providers from outside the country. The outpatient Valiant Clinic, opened in Dubai last year, is administered by Houston Methodist Hospital. Along with local United Methodist leaders, I visited the state-of-the-art clinic while there. It seems to be one of the very few places where the word “Methodist” is publicly displayed. We received a warm welcome, and yes, the Methodist connection is alive and vibrant and sometimes in very unexpected places.

Thomas Kemper is the general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries.



missionmemo

UM Agencies Focus on Global Migration

The United Methodist Council of Bishops, during its May 2017 meeting, gave support to designating a Sunday later this year for prayers about the global migration crisis and for collecting a special offering to address suffering caused by forced migration. "This is the day for The UMC to act with conviction and courage, giving life to its commitment to be disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," declared a report from the Council of Bishops Immigration Task Force. "How we respond to the immigration crisis at this moment will determine the vitality of the church for generations to come."

Bishop Minerva Carcaño, who chairs the Immigration Taskforce, also asked the bishops to back a special Advance offering for relief efforts. This, she noted, would be in connection with a National Council of Churches and Church World Service effort on global migration called Ecumenical Declaration: Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope.

During Global Ministries' spring Board of Directors meeting, UMCOR directors approved the allocation of more than a half million dollars, some of it from the **Global Refugee/Migration Advance #3022144**, to address US immigration and refugee advocacy work.

On May 20, the Connectional Table, a 59-member international body of clergy and laity that coordinates mission, ministry, and resources at the denominational level, designated \$100,000 of the denomination's contingency funds—with the possibility of an additional \$100,000 next year—to help United Methodists stand with immigrants.

The group joined the denomination's Council of Bishops in backing "A Global Migration Sunday Offering," to raise still more funds, which will directly aid migrants and refugees.

The Connectional Table set the date for the special day of prayer and offering for migrants to be the first Sunday of Advent, which is December 3 in 2017. The collection was timed to occur during the season when Christians remember that even Jesus and his family were at one time refugees crossing borders to escape violence in their home country.

Next Phase Imagine No Malaria

The Board of Directors for the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Global Health unit of Global Ministries approved a grant of \$753,434 for the Zimbabwe Health Board. The grant will fund the fourth Imagine No Malaria (INM) program for Zimbabwe. From now through 2018, health workers will provide education, prevention, and malaria treatments in targeted areas.

As a result of the INM program, access to health care is projected to increase by 85 percent for several high-risk communities. This grant will also sponsor the renovation of the Dindi Rural Health Clinic and latrine facilities at a United Methodist Church referral hospital in Zimbabwe. A total of 8,730 pregnant women, 28,613 children under the age of five, and 177,501 of the public are expected to directly benefit from this grant.

DEATHS—Jean Morgan, retired deaconess who served as a US-2 (1954-56) and as a deaconess for 35 1/2 years in the United States, died September 26, 2016...**Beulah Jones**, retired missionary with more than 39 years of service in India, died January 10, 2017...**Rosalie Johnson**, retired missionary with nearly 32 years of service in Zimbabwe, died January 12, 2017...**Virginia Garrison**, retired missionary with 7 1/2 years of service in Chile, died January 30, 2017...**Wilma Hogg**, retired missionary with nearly four years of service in India, died January 30, 2017...**June Megill**, retired missionary with more than 29 years of service in Brazil, died February 14, 2017...**George Megill**, retired missionary with more than 29 years of service in Brazil, died February 14, 2017...**Ruth Amrein**, retired missionary with 4 years of service in India, died February 16, 2017...**Bok Choi**, retired missionary with four years of service in Russia, died March 7, 2017...**Helene R. Hill**, retired deaconess with more than 36 years of service in the United States, died March 15, 2017...**Esther Jones**, retired US-2 and deaconess with more than 32 years of service in the United States, died April 12, 2017.

Leadership Development

World Communion Scholarship Program

by Michelle Maldonado

The World Communion Scholarship Program supports United Methodist students—and other scholars directly related to Global Ministries mission partners—in pursuit of masters or doctoral studies at universities or seminaries. The program supports students from outside the United States (World Communion International Scholarship) or from communities of color within the United States (World Communion National Scholarship). Candidates are expected to return five years of service to their churches or communities after graduation.

The following three profiles of current World Communion Scholars witness to their strong calling and dedication to ministry. They acknowledge how others have accompanied them on their life's journeys, and how they, in turn, seek to accompany others.

Serving God by Serving God's People

Kenia Guimaraes, a Brazilian Methodist “PK” (Pastor’s Kid) from Rio de Janeiro, grew up serving the church from an early age. Her passion for helping others grew into a career path she is strengthening by pursuing a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree at the French School of Public Health (EHESP) in Paris, France. She is currently an intern with Fiocruz, one of the world’s main public health research institutes, in Rio de Janeiro.

Guimaraes served as an interpreter for missionary groups and volunteered with street children in some of the favelas, or slums, of Rio. Following in her parents’ footsteps, Guimaraes committed to a career path that included social justice and human rights.



Kenia Guimaraes, a Brazilian Methodist from Rio de Janeiro, takes part in a Black Lives Matter demonstration in Paris, France. She is a World Communion Scholar working toward a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree at the French School of Public Health (EHESP). PHOTO: COURTESY KENIA GUIMARAES



World Communion Scholar Kenia Guimaraes attends a humanitarian conference in Berlin in October 2015. She is pursuing a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree at the French School of Public Health (EHESP) in Paris, France.

PHOTO: COURTESY KENIA GUIMARAES

"I moved from Brazil to the United States to attend college and graduate school," said Guimaraes. "I attended Rust College for undergraduate work and Clark Atlanta University for graduate school, both United Methodist schools."

For Guimaraes, being Methodist means practicing Wesleyan traditions and embracing the world as her parish. She got involved in numerous United Methodist organizations throughout her time in the United States, including the United Methodist Student Movement (UMSM) through the General Board of Higher Education (GBHEM); Global Justice Volunteers with the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM); the Young Adult Internship Program at General Board of Church and Society (GBCS); and the Black College Fund Ambassadors. "I was also part of a United Methodist Women's College and University Consultative group," Guimaraes added.

Public health, as Guimaraes explains it, is the science that studies and analyzes the population's health, prevents disease, works to improve quality of life, and promotes healthy living. Guimaraes' work concentrates on global and maternal and child health. She is currently in the process of writing her master's thesis and is conducting research on migration and health.

As she advances in her studies, Guimaraes hopes to collaborate with organizations to advocate and improve the overall quality of health and education for all people, especially in developing countries, where mortality rates are high and life expectancy is low.

"People are escaping wars, terrorism, natural disasters, and famine. When their health systems collapse, they turn to organization such as Action Against Hunger, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the World Health Organization

(WHO), Oxfam, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Doctors without Borders, and many others," said Guimaraes.

Working with immigrants and refugees, especially women and children, is one of her many passions.

"I have been an immigrant in countries that I've lived in, traveled to, and worked in," said Guimaraes. "Because of current global humanitarian crises, the number of immigrants and refugees continues to grow. Women and children, especially, encounter violence along the way."

Guimaraes says she is thankful for the scholarships Global Ministries has awarded her.

For Guimaraes, public health is more than a career path, it's a calling.

"My faith shaped me to become who I am today, leading me to understand the calling to serve God by serving God's people, embracing the need to transform my faith into action," concluded Guimaraes.

Elevating Women

Ayra Indrias was born in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, to a humble family. She is currently a Ph.D. student in Gender Studies at Punjab University in Lahore, Pakistan.

"When I was in seventh or eighth grade, I used to question why I, along with my brown skinned friends, was never selected to perform in our Christmas plays," said Indrias.

According to Indrias, her teacher said that fair-skinned students were given preference for the roles "in order to make the show beautiful."

"This argument never sat well with me," admitted Indrias. "I felt it was insulting and I used to cry and ask my mother to insist on a role for me."

When Indrias was in ninth grade, her mother died of cancer. “My siblings and I began to see more of our father’s conservative mindset,” Indrias noted. This only strengthened her resolve to confront his ideology. As she grew, Indrias could see, beyond the eyes of a child, the injustices women endured.

“In my own family I felt uncomfortable, and I think that unrest urged me to speak out against a patriarchal ideology that sees women only as daughters, mothers, and wives,” she said.

Indrias’ father wanted her to become a teacher at an all-women’s school. Although she and her father didn’t see eye to eye politically, she is thankful that he helped her and her siblings through school, paying their college fees and taking care of the household expenses.

Before enrolling as a Ph.D. student, Indrias completed two masters’ degrees in International Relations and Public Policy and Governance. Prior to her masters, she studied Applied Psychology and Mathematics. She later decided to switch to an education track to increase her chances of finding a job, becoming financially independent, and having a life of her own.

Indrias works with the Lahore Diocese Church of Pakistan teaching Women’s Studies and Peace Building at Lahore’s oldest women’s college, Kinnaird College for Women. She serves as a board member for the Christian Study Center in Rawalpindi and contributes to its theological journal. She noted: “This center provides an intellectual space to deliberate and discuss the challenges and constraints that Christians, as a religious minority within their communities, are facing. It promotes peaceful co-existence among communities.”

In addition to her work with religious minorities, Indrias raises funds for women’s welfare development



Ayra Indrias from Rawalpindi, Pakistan, currently a Ph.D. student in Gender Studies at Punjab University in Lahore, Pakistan, gives a workshop on International Women’s Day, March 2017. PHOTO: COURTESY AYRA INDIAS

projects. “I strongly believe in gender equality and I express this through participation in women’s movements in Pakistan to transform legislation, cultural norms, and traditions that sanction oppression against women,” said Indrias.

“I raise funds for women’s welfare projects and that made me quite acceptable to the church institution,” said Indrias. “However, the hierarchal and patriarchal order of church-run institutions depress me at times.” Yet, Indrias reminds herself that some church-run institutes and organizations, like United Methodist Women, help to develop and fulfill her objective of improving the status and role of women in Pakistan.

While her three siblings all married and had children, Indrias remained single, “which further disturbs acquaintances,” she admitted. “I myself witnessed and suffered the repercussions of questioning the status quo of a patriarchal social environment that allows little space for women to have a life of their own. I have seen how women are treated as second class citizens. I believe in constructing a society where gender is not an excuse to keep people from exercising their due rights on planet earth.”

Indrias strongly believes that economic independence is one of the most important steps to empower women. She has been working in various skill-training projects that help women learn how to generate their own income, elevate their status, and strengthen their position in society.

My Life Is a Miracle and Testimony

Julieth Gudo is a Ph.D. student in Commercial Law and research assistant at the University of Cape Town in Cape Town, South Africa. The hardships she experienced and endured throughout her life motivated her to pursue higher education to fight government corruption, empower nonprofit organizations, and encourage other young people who share her experiences.

Originally from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, Gudo lost both her parents when she was only seven. She moved in with relatives, but they gave up on her by the time she reached 12. Because she had no money to pay school fees, Gudo dropped out. She searched for work, but no one would employ her.

"I remember my life changing from a good life to the most painful life," explained Gudo.

At 12, Gudo decided to cross the border from Zimbabwe to South Africa in search of a better life and a more promising future. While trying to cross the border illegally, she was robbed and assaulted.

Upon reaching South Africa, Gudo was welcomed by an orphanage founded by the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa. Even with few resources, the denomination opened the orphanage because an increasing number of unaccompanied children were roaming the streets looking for food and shelter.

Years later, with the assistance of several nonprofit organizations, Gudo enrolled in a local high school.

"As a foreign child and a refugee, it was very difficult to enroll because of my lack of papers," said Gudo. Ultimately, she succeeded and resumed her education.

After completing high school, Save the Children UK (SCUK) paid Gudo's registration fees for a local university. With SCUK's financial aid and her earnings from student jobs at the university, Gudo paid for her first two years of college. In her third year, Gudo applied for a United Methodist scholarship. "Receiving that scholarship was the best miracle that happened in my life," said Gudo. "I still clearly remember the day I received the letter. I did not sleep that night with joy. My life changed that day. I thank God for this blessing."



Julieth Gudo, a World Communion Scholar from Zimbabwe, is a Ph.D. student in Commercial Law and research assistant at the University of Cape Town in Cape Town, South Africa.

PHOTO: COURTESY JULIETH GUDO

Gudo went on to complete a Bachelor of Laws Degree and a Master in Commercial Law. She is currently enrolled as a Ph.D. student in Commercial Law with a focus in the role of law and nonprofit organizations in the governance of government-owned enterprises.

Gudo explained that her degree's focus "critically explains the relationship between civil society organizations and the government."

While growing up in the orphanage in South Africa, Gudo began realizing that many other citizens of Zimbabwe had left the country because of a poor performing government.

"I also realized that the people of Zimbabwe had lost hope in their own country," said Gudo. "I concluded that perhaps it was time for nonprofits

to challenge the government as representatives of the people."

To this day, Gudo gives back to her orphanage and community by volunteering with children and teaching them about the law and their rights.

"When I decided to go to South Africa from Zimbabwe as a last resort, without proper documents, the challenges I met on the way made me realize just how God can be so kind in our lives," said Gudo. "I think my life is a miracle, a testimony that, if shared with young people in the same situation, could change their lives forever."

Gudo would like to start an organization made up of young people who have, like her, overcome some of the worst challenges imaginable. "Together we will go into children's homes, refugee centers, and poor rural areas to talk with orphaned children and other young people about life in general and how to deal with challenges," said Gudo. "They need people who understand what it is like to live in an orphanage, to be a refugee, or to come from a very disadvantaged background. I want them to know that they are not defined by their current situations or their backgrounds. They are individuals who can achieve anything and break through barriers."

Michelle Maldonado, a native of the Florida Annual Conference, is a World Communion National Scholar dedicated to the work of church communications as a means of outreach to Hispanic/Latino millennials and other young people. She plans to attend Drew University to study for a D.Min. degree.

World Communion Scholarships can be supported through the Advance, project #982161.

Resources for Standing With Undocumented Immigrants, Muslims, Neighbors, and Strangers

The foreigner residing among you
must be treated as your native-born.

Love them as yourself,
for you were foreigners in Egypt.
I am the Lord your God.

LEVITICUS 19:34, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

All the Law has been fulfilled in a single statement:

Love your neighbor as yourself.

GALATIANS 5:14, COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE



Young people from Ellensburg, Washington, including Claudia Amaya (center, red sweater), 15, and Daisy Conteras (right, red and white striped sweater), 17, participate in a demonstration outside the US federal court in Yakima, Washington, to express support for people arrested in an immigration sweep in Ellensburg. Churches in Ellensburg, a university town east of the Cascade Mountains, formed the nucleus of a local group organized to support the affected families. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

The following resources are provided as tools and as encouragement to help us love one another, love our neighbors, and love the stranger. We do so in response to God's call and joyfully knowing that, in these acts of love and accompaniment, we may meet Christ or perhaps be surprised by angels. (Matthew 25:35-36, Hebrews 13:2).

Please note that nothing here serves as a substitute for the legal representation of an attorney regarding specific situations and the law.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Knowing legal rights that are granted within the United States will allow all of us to better stand for one another's rights in the process of seeking safety for all. It is particularly useful for immigrants without residency documents to know that they still have certain rights and how to avail themselves of them.

Single page Know Your Rights handouts are available for download from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in a number of languages.

<https://www.aclu.org/feature/know-your-rights-discrimination-against-immigrants-and-muslims?redirect=feature/know-your-rights-immigration#immigration>

Excellent videos are provided by CHIRLA, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, and provide good training material for anyone at risk, their families, and allies. They are based on real life experience and are multiethnic.

- **America, I too** in English: <https://youtu.be/GA1AY5-ZIOw> (20 min)
- **América, Yo También** in Español: <https://youtu.be/-IUWPEnsq9Q> (20 min)
- **Conozca Sus Derechos**: <https://youtu.be/fsPvsczF6QU> (Español) (11 min)

Wallet cards, Right to Remain Silent Bilingual English and Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Korean, Somali, or Farsi:

<https://www.nilc.org/issues/immigration-enforcement/everyone-has-certain-basic-rights/>

EMERGENCY PREPARATION

The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is charged by the current administration to detain and deport large numbers of undocumented immigrants. Yet, as a church, we find that too many of those threatened with detention and deportation are good neighbors with families to support. The resources below are means to help reduce the number of families torn apart by such ICE actions and to work with others in seeking to keep families, especially children and youth, safe.

Immigrant Safety Plan for Youth and Children, a packet to help families who face potential detention or deportation of parents with children (with or without status).

- **English** <https://www.nwirp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Immigration-Safety-Plan-for-Children-and-Youth.pdf>
- **Spanish** <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/533dcf7ce4b0f92a7a64292e/t/587f60deb3db2b428f6cd6f5/1484742893657/ImmigrationSafetyPlanforYouthandChildren+1-13-16+-+Español+FINAL.pdf>

- **Somali** https://static1.squarespace.com/static/533dcf7ce4b0f92a7a64292e/t/589e21e017bffce58d071ea0/1486758384992/ImmigrationSafetyPlanforYouthandChildren+2-3-17+-+Somali_final.pdf

Find and meet with an immigration attorney. If you or a loved one are at risk of detention by ICE, meet now with an immigration attorney and carry that attorney's phone number with you at all times if you are at risk of detention. Churches doing significant work with undocumented immigrants should also know an immigration attorney they can contact. Find an attorney:

<https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory/>

Organizing a rapid response network. An example of organizing a coordinated rapid response to ICE Raids by a network of people can be seen in The New Sanctuary Movement in Philadelphia, Sanctuary in the Streets:

<http://sanctuaryphiladelphia.org/1962-2/>

Rapid Response Toolkit for Faith Communities and Allies: How to organize, create networks, and roles that may be helpful in the moment of a raid by ICE:

www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org

Build/Join Coalitions. You cannot do this well alone, not as an individual person and not as a church. Look for a coalition or a network.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-adhEslpQtQRXJIMVVwbEF1a0k/view>

Countering Discrimination against Muslims

Anti-Muslim Discrimination videos and wallet cards from the ACLU available in English, Arabic, Farsi, Bahasa, and Urdu <https://www.aclu.org/feature/know-your-rights-discrimination-against-immigrants-and-muslims?redirect=feature/know-your-rights-immigration#immigration>

Provided by Lyda Pierce (Advance #09542Z) and the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry.

LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Sanctuary Movement
<http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org>
Immigration Raids Rapid Response: For Faith Allies Petition on Sanctuary

- Links to other Sanctuary Churches
- Vigil Resources
- Reports of specific cases
- Many resources for churches

United Methodist Women: Global Migration and Immigration Rights
A large number of materials and links to resource United Methodist Women (and others) in loving the immigrant and the refugee. United Methodist Women have often led the church in welcoming

refugees and immigrants as well as advocating for their rights. <http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/immigration>

Church World Service: Protect, Welcome, Restore Hope
Excellent materials, especially regarding refugees
<https://greateras1.org/act/protect-welcome-and-restore-hope/>

Interfaith Immigration Coalition
<http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/supportrefugees/>

United We Dream
www.unitedwedream.org
Organization of young Dreamers and information on DACA

- Know Your Rights
- Raids response number
- Advocacy work for dreamers

Justice for Our Neighbors
www.njfon.org
United Methodists organizing legal support for immigrants

National Immigration Law Center
<https://www.nilc.org/get-involved/community-education-resources/know-your-rights/othimmen/>

National Day Laborer Organizing Network
English: <http://www.ndlon.org/en/>
Spanish: <http://www.ndlon.org/es/>

- Migrant Rights
- Great posters, videos, and other resources

US Government information on immigration enforcement and churches (as well as other "sensitive" locations)
US Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement

- FAQs regarding "sensitive locations" including churches

<https://www.ice.gov/ero/enforcement/sensitive-loc>



Migration, Mission, and the **Great** **Global Family**

by Jim Perdue

The Hebrew prophets forecasted that a savior would come one day and his name would be “God is with us.” Centuries later, on the early disciples’ walk to Emmaus, they discovered that sometimes the other, especially a poor migrant, turns out to be a fresh new revelation of “God with us.”

One day, Abraham and Sarah were sitting in their tent. It was the hottest part of the day, a time when one should not get caught out in the sun. As they looked out, they saw three strangers walking in the distance, apparently unable to find shelter. So, Abraham got up and went out to get them. He and Sarah brought them into the shade of their home to rest; they shared water, food, and relaxing conversation. Often, this is how migration ministry begins.

Later, Abraham and Sarah would receive a marvelous gift from those

migrants, but in the meanwhile, the three needed a place to recover from the demands of their journey, to relax “at home” for a while. When working with migrants, often the church goes out into the sun to get them—and then, for a while, it welcomes them and treats them as its own family. In God’s eyes, they always were family.

Migration Matrix

To migrate is to move from one area of the world to another to live and work. There are approximately 250 million migrants crossing borders and living elsewhere in today’s

world. Millions of those are from or in the United States, Mexico, and Central America; others from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia also pass through these countries en route to the United States.

Global Ministries works with four categories of migrants, each with its own needs and rights. If you are exiting your homeland, you are an emigrant. Before people are forced by circumstance to emigrate, we work with our partners in Mexico and Central America to protect their right to stay in their home country in safety, security, and prosperity. This

Above: Maria Natividad Granados, a Methodist woman in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, serves food to Cuban immigrants in that city’s Plaza Benito Juarez on March 3, 2017. Hundreds of Cubans are stuck in the border city, caught in limbo by the elimination in January of the infamous “wet foot, dry foot” policy of the United States. Many of the city’s churches have become temporary shelters for the immigrants. PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

means addressing the causes of emigration, such as destitute economies, rampant poverty, wars, and widespread violence.

Second, if you are coming to live in a country other than your own, you are an immigrant. Immigrants have the right to be welcomed, included, and have access to the umbrella of rights within the receiving country. Immigration ministry within the United States is coordinated by our denomination's Interagency Migration Task Force; but we also work directly with partners throughout Mexico that help immigrants there be welcomed and accepted, receive humane treatment as needed, and have access to legal rights and protections.

Third, if you are crossing one country en route to live and work in another, you are a transmigrant. Transmigrants have the right to pass securely, receive humanitarian assistance, and be protected from harm. We work with partner agencies throughout Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras to protect the lives and rights of transmigrants.

Fourth, if you are legally obliged by your arrival country to return to your place of origin, you are a deportee. Each year, at least a quarter of a million deportees are returned from the United States to Mexico and Central America, most to Mexico. Another 100,000 more are deported each year from Mexico to Central American countries. This places a heavy strain on those weak or poor countries.

Deportees have the right to return to their home country, be welcomed, and receive assistance to reconnect with their culture. Again, we defer to the Interagency Immigration Task Force in work with those who are imprisoned or are in process of deportation in the United States, but we also work with partner agencies in Mexico and Central America to protect the lives and rights of deportees and help them readapt in their home countries.

Throughout the world, people are beginning to express more fear of and hatred toward immigrants. They assume that migrants "choose" to enter other countries. However, most migrants are involuntary, people in desperate straits forced to leave their home countries for reasons of economic survival, personal safety, natural and human-made disasters, or to return to their home country as deportees. For the sake of survival, the only real decision these migrants make is when they will migrate.

Accompaniment

Why and How We Are in Mission

Global Ministries focuses its migration mission on the most vulnerable people in each category above. These include the destitute, poor, indigenous persons, women, children, and persons of non-heterosexual orientation.

Our strategic approach to participating in this, God's mission, is to forge mission partnerships with ecumenical, civil society, educational, and some governmental agencies locally throughout the migration corridor. This allows us to accompany, or to conduct our mission in company with, the migrants themselves. People have always traveled in company for mutual protection and companionship. This makes the journey safer and more bearable for each traveler.

The Hebrew prophets forecasted that a savior would come one day, and his name would be "God is with us." Centuries later, on the early disciples' walk to Emmaus, they discovered that sometimes the other, especially a poor migrant, turns out to be a fresh new revelation of "God with us." Those who work with migrants discover this each day.

Migrant Accompaniment "On the Ground"

Our mission is to walk with our mission partners in Mexico and Latin America and together to walk with migrants in local areas, treating them as integral links in the development of the



Honduran men deported from the United States arrive at a church-run center in the San Pedro Sula airport. The migrants were flown to the airport aboard a US government flight, then bussed to a remote section of the airport where the Catholic Church operates a Center for Attention to Returned Migrants.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

region and as people of integrity—with fundamental rights and access to protection under national laws, international laws, and regional agreements.

Apart from the United Methodist Mission in Honduras, there are no United Methodist churches in Mexico or Central America; however, we have many dependable ways to forge and work with partners to leverage our mission resources and

follow our unique calling as The United Methodist Church.

First, we already have mission personnel located in ministries within Mexico and Central America. They help us find our way around, and some of them are also working to address the root causes of migration from the areas where they now live and work.

Second, we have excellent working relations with ecumenical partners and autonomous Methodist churches in Mexico and Central America. Our ecumenical partners, especially Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Anglicans, have been involved in migration mission for decades. Our Methodist partners have a much younger but growing migration mission. They are stepping up to mission with those deciding to emigrate, those who are transmigrating, those deciding to immigrate to Mexico instead of risking crossing into the United States, and those being deported daily from Mexico and the United States.

Our work with Methodist and ecumenical partners in the region is a fast-growing and dynamic task, as we watch the Holy Spirit move among our sisters and brothers in

mission with migrants, and as we begin to accompany them. Churches are everywhere in the migration corridor, and they are critical to our mission with people deciding to migrate, their families that are left behind, and those being deported back into local communities but with no supporting “family” for the transition.

Third, we are developing and coordinating a network or partners among

- local and national civil society organizations throughout Mexico and Central America,
- international nongovernmental human rights and humanitarian aid organizations whose missions match our own;
- rights and relief organizations related to the United Nations;
- regional international rights organizations;
- some governmental relief agencies, such as USAID; and
- a select number of Central American and Mexican universities and Mexican postgraduate research colleges that are studying the causes of migration and treatment of migrants. They are developing creative programs to address the causes of migration and the rights of those who migrate.

Fourth, we work in partnership with other departments of Global Ministries, as well as with ecumenical partners and partner agencies within the United States and Europe. These partners place Mission Volunteers, Global Mission Fellows, US-2s, and global missionaries with us and our partners as our way of accompanying them in the strategic development of mission with migrants at the local level throughout the region.

Finally, we look to annual conferences, local churches, and mission organizations, like the United Methodist Women, to encourage called and qualified candidates to apply for mission assignments with our migration mission or that of our mission partners. You can find more information on the Global Ministries’ website, especially the page for Generation Transformation. In the articles that follow, you will also discover both gripping stories and ways that you can learn more about the region, its possibilities, and its needs.

The Rev. James Perdue, who is based in Arizona (Advance #150298), serves as a Global Ministries’ Missionary for Migration in Central America and Mexico.

Everyday Migration Stories and the Church’s Response

by Amanda Cherry

Mexico is a country full of different types of migration: out migration, in migration, through migration, return migration, internal migration, and seasonal migration. These migrations are so ubiquitous

that examples of them often show up in my everyday life in Mexico City, whether or not I’m looking for them. Taxi drivers hear my accent and tell me that they, too, used to live in my home country, the United States.

Reaching Out to Migrants

The work of the Methodist Church of Mexico—Iglesia Metodista de México A.R. (IMMAR)—is to determine how to respond to these different migration flows. The church

has already organized a variety of responses. Pastors all over the country accompany Mexican migrants and their families on a daily basis. In the north, the IMMAR partners with several organizations that help international migrants who end up for a time in their communities—some attempting to cross into the United States and some returning as a result of deportation.

Here in Central and Southern Mexico, where I am based, there are several initiatives to support migrants in transit on their way north. Mostly from the Northern Triangle of Central America—Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, traditionally, migrants have ridden on top of the cargo trains, nicknamed *la Bestia* (“the beast”), that run in different routes from the southern border to the northern one. Lately, migrants walk on more of the journey (or take local transportation) because of: increased police enforcement measures; train company security tactics (including faster train speeds and private security officers who carry guns and won’t let migrants get on); and Mexican cartels, local gangs, and misguided individuals increasing violent attacks.

However, many still follow the train tracks, using them as a map. Several Methodist churches located along the route of *la Bestia* developed ministries to meet the needs of these migrants. Churches in Apizaco, Tlaxcala, and Salamanca in Guanajuato supply food to migrants along the train tracks. The Methodist church in Celaya, Guanajuato, supports a shelter for migrants, providing food and clothes. The church in Apaxco, in the State of Mexico, opens the doors of the church and offers migrants dinner and breakfast, a place to sleep and shower, toiletries, and clothes.

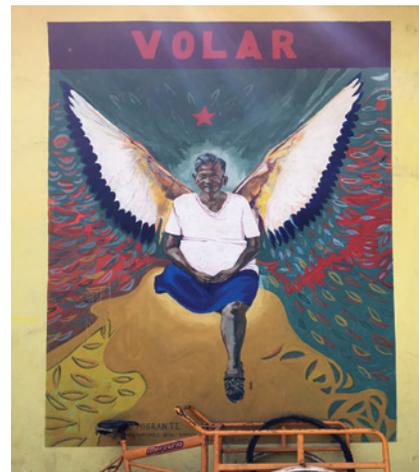


Amanda Cherry (far left) with several students from the Seminario Metodista “Dr. Gonzalo Báez Camargo” by the old train station next to the Methodist church in Apaxco.

PHOTO: JORGE HUERTA

A mural in a migrant shelter in Tapachula, Chiapas.

PHOTO: AMANDA CHERRY



A Call to Migrant Ministries

My role is to integrate into work that is already happening in my region and to see how I can support, encourage, or help grow these ministries. That has meant getting to know not only the existing migrant ministries of the IMMAR but also other migrant programs and ministries in the area and academics or professionals who study migration or advocate for migrants. In visiting churches, I offer a theological grounding for work they are already doing or are in the process of forming.

I also provide logistical support when needed, such as helping to secure funds, thinking about how to structure the ministry, and researching the context. One of my favorite

parts of my job is teaching classes on migration and theology in the Methodist seminary Gonzalo Báez Camargo. I offer current and future pastors new readings, ideas, and ministry tools to complement their own experiences with migration and ministries with migrants.

Amanda Cherry is a Global Mission Fellow serving for two years as a migration ministry coordinator with the Methodist Church of Mexico, based in Apaxco. Originally from Louisville, Kentucky, Cherry (Advance #3022198) has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish from Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, and a Master of Divinity degree from Boston University.

Mending Shattered Dreams and Dignity in El Salvador

by **Nayara Alves Gervásio**

I was drawn to the Global Mission Fellow program because it focuses on seeking social justice for those who lack it. We cannot demonstrate God's love for people without serving the people. To demonstrate God's love for people is to help them feel loved and cared for by God, to restore their dignity and their rights as human beings, even in an unjust system. This is the work I have been assigned to with the migrant ministry of the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod in El Salvador.

My work in San Salvador focuses on two main issues: preventing migration—mainly with children and adolescents—and emergency assistance for those who have returned or been deported. As I learn about the history of this country and some of its communities, I understand the many reasons Salvadorans migrate. El Salvador's poverty, its lack of infrastructure, basic sanitation, and access to education, and its unemployment are devastating. In addition, a network of gangs forms a parallel power to the government in the country. These problems force many families to emigrate or to send out their children to find the "American dream."

Working on the prevention side, our ministry offers workshops for community leaders, pastors, police, and health-care workers to help them alert families about the risks, implications, and dangers of emigrating in an "irregular" manner. In 2017, we launched an education campaign called "Migration Is Not the Solution." Learning about immigration laws in the United States, the types of visas, and information on



A staff worker with Lutheran World Relief teaches accounting and business skills in a village in El Salvador to help returning or deported Salvadorans establish small, sustainable family businesses. PHOTO: NAYARA GERVÁSIO

asylum or refugee requests increases awareness and understanding. It includes real statistics on immigration cases in the US and seeks to dispel some of the illusions people have about migrating.

The other side of work with our ministry is to provide emergency assistance to families who are forced to move—threatened by gangs, either by extortion or by attempts to recruit their children. We help these families find a place to live somewhere else in the country.

People returning to El Salvador find few employment opportunities, so the ministry helps them set up small entrepreneurial projects. Even though many have little education, they have skills and abilities, often in agriculture or small business. We help them establish small,

sustainable family businesses such as agriculture, fishing, repair shops, retail clothing or food, or even beauty salons, for example. Many people return to the country without hope, their dreams shattered on the journey. These projects help them sustain their families and thereby rebuild their dignity as citizens. I see more than just charity in this work, I see justice. I see families prospering.

Nayara Alves Gervásio, from Ribeirão das Neves, Brazil (Advance #3022222), serves as an assistant in migrant pastoral work with the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod in El Salvador. She graduated from Izabela Hendrix Methodist University in Belo Horizonte with a degree in administration and an emphasis on entrepreneurship. This article was translated from Portuguese by Donald D. Reasoner.

Life on the Border—El Faro Church

by Venancio Reyes Pacheco

In 2016, I was accepted as a Global Mission Fellow to serve in Tijuana, Mexico, as a mission coordinator for the *El Faro* (“Lighthouse”) frontier ministries, a project of the Methodist Church of Mexico. I began working for the first time with deportees and other migration issues. At first, being in a place very different from home

because they have lived all their lives in the United States. Often, they are depressed and traumatized by deportation, and many find escape from their situation by losing themselves in alcohol or drugs. The program is primarily focused on helping them reintegrate into Mexican society.

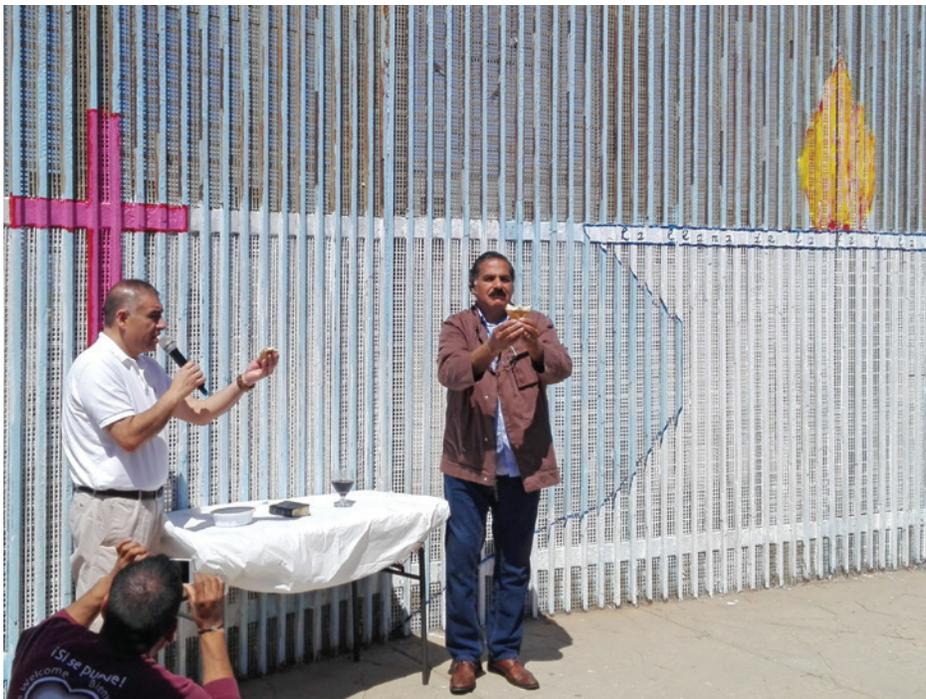
We start with an interview at the

and eventually move into a place of their own. In all these activities, we accompany them with spiritual support and work with them through devotionals and Bible studies.

The other part of my job is with the *El Faro* church on the border each Sunday, when a pastor comes “from the other side,” as the Mexicans

refer to those coming from the US. We organize a binational worship service at Friendship Park, where families from both sides get together to see their loved ones. We give a message of hope and faith, serve communion, and offer food for those who arrive hungry. While they eat, we share God’s word with them.

Raúl Gonzalez, from Tijuana, joined our program after he was deported from the US and his life hit rock bottom. He’d served time in jail and had turned to drugs. All he needed was a push to get back up. The program helped him each step of the way. Now he works at the call center, has moved to his own apartment, and is active in the border church, becoming a witness for others. His is one of many success stories.



El Faro (“Lighthouse”) frontier ministries, a project of the Methodist Church of Mexico, conducts a communion service at the wall, the border between Tijuana, Mexico, and San Diego, California.

PHOTO: VENANCIO REYES

and learning about a different culture was hard. But with the help of God and all those around me, I adapted quickly.

My work in Tijuana is divided into two main activities. The first is a program called Assistance Integrating Deportees (AID), created to deal with the issues Tijuana faces in receiving deportees, many of whom do not feel themselves to be Mexican

El Faro church and an antidrug examination. Then they are brought to our center where they receive psychological therapy to help reduce their longing to return to the US. If they want to stay in Tijuana, the second step is to help them obtain official documents. Since many left Mexico as young children, they have no proper documentation. Finally, we help them find employment so they can earn money

Venancio Junior Reyes Pacheco, from Barranquilla, Colombia (Advance #3022245), serves as a Global Mission Fellow with the Methodist Church of Mexico in Tijuana. Reyes holds a bachelor’s degree in languages from Atlantic University (Universidad Del Atlántico) in Barranquilla. This article was translated from Spanish by Donald D. Reasoner.

Treat Them as Your Native Born

by Emily Kvalheim

At South Florida Justice For Our Neighbors, I have been receiving more and more desperate phone calls from people who are deeply afraid. So many people in Miami-Dade County need free immigration legal assistance, but every nonprofit in the area is overbooked and unable to accept most new cases on a long-term basis.

These desperate calls were a result of three immigration-related

executive orders signed by the new president of the United States, Donald Trump. I am by no means an expert, but the executive orders essentially called for the completion of a southern border wall, the end of federal funding to sanctuary cities, put all 11 million undocumented people in the United States at greater risk for deportation, and banned immigrants from seven Muslim countries.

To make matters worse, in January, Mayor Gimenez of Miami announced that “Miami-Dade County would not fight the President’s [sanctuary city] order, which demands local law enforcement work with federal immigration officials when it comes to turning over illegal immigrants when they have been arrested.” (Arrested, but not necessarily convicted.) Miami-Dade commissioners upheld this decision in February this year.

Migrant workers in the fields of south Florida.

PHOTO: COURTESY SOUTH FLORIDA JFON



No Legal Remedies

Almost everyone, it seems, is afraid of something, either for oneself or for another loved one: the US Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, repercussions for driving without a license (something that is out of reach for undocumented immigrants living in Florida), racial profiling, rough treatment by ICE officers, calling the police to report a crime or in situations of domestic violence (for fear of deportation), deportation, facing the nightmares fled in home countries.

As part of Friends of Miami-Dade Detainees' volunteer program, I recently visited a couple of immigrants who were being detained inside the Krome Service Processing Center. During that visit, I learned that we were seeing the first Cubans being detained as a result of President Obama's decision in January 2017 to end the "Wet Foot, Dry Foot" policy.

In February 2017, I read an article by the Associated Press that said 680 Cubans had already been returned home since the end of that policy. Maybe "Wet Foot, Dry Foot" was only put into place all those years ago to make Cuba look bad. Maybe it was unfair to allow Cubans to become Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) after a year, while people from many other immigrant groups struggle and, as a whole, often have no legal remedies in the United States, at least from what I've seen. But, both as an American and as a Christian, I find myself growing increasingly frustrated whenever we make it more difficult for immigrants to come to the United States.

From a Place of Love

As an American, I remember that my great-grandfather immigrated to the United States illegally from Norway. I remember that we live on land stolen



Emily Kvalheim meets with a Haitian client at the South Florida JFON office.

PHOTO: COURTESY SOUTH FLORIDA JFON

from many indigenous peoples. I remember that I did absolutely nothing to become an American. There is no "American culture." There is no national language. There is no government-sanctioned religious persecution. There is only the American dream, community, and a hope for a better tomorrow. And that, to me, makes America great. Our diversity makes America great. Immigrants make America great. We will forever be stronger together, and keeping people out or holding people back will only lead to a less bright future for us all. We must choose to lead from a place of love together and not from a place of fear alone.

As a Christian, I believe that the Bible is pretty clear that we should welcome the stranger and the refugee: "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you

were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19:34)

It has been such a blessing to work with our clients as we navigate the immigration system together. They have taught me so much about life and about resilience. I hope everyone who reads this has a similar opportunity to learn from immigrants in her community. And who knows? Maybe if you take a risk and show hospitality to a stranger, you may even end up entertaining angels without realizing it.

Emily Kvalheim (Advance #3022060) served as a Global Mission Fellow US-2 from 2015 to July 2017 with the South Florida Justice for Our Neighbors agency in Miami-Dade County, Florida. Originally from Westerville, Ohio, she earned a B. A. degree in Political Science and International Studies from American University in Washington, DC.

Building a Vibrant National Immigrant Justice Ministry

by Rob Rutland-Brown

Currently, more than 40 million foreign-born individuals reside in the United States and many of them need legal assistance with their immigration status (Pew Research Center, September 2015 report). Without status, immigrants are often vulnerable, with a greater likelihood of danger to their physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

National Justice For Our Neighbors (NJFON) is committed to ensuring that immigrants receive high-quality immigration legal services so they can work in the United States lawfully, stay together as families, and remain safely and permanently in the United States. We create a welcoming atmosphere for clients and provide opportunities for meaningful interaction between volunteers and their immigrant neighbors.

NJFON serves as the backbone for a network of United Methodist immigration sites around the country that together were responsible for nearly 4,000 family reunifications in 2016, handling 10,577 immigration cases

in total—up from 7,860 the year before—on a budget of \$700,000 from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

The network grew out of UMCOR's long commitment to refugees and immigrants. Since UMCOR's founding in 1940, refugee ministry has been at the heart of its work, guided by Judeo-Christian values of hospitality to the stranger. UMCOR established Justice For Our Neighbors in 1999. Since that time, Justice For Our Neighbors has grown to a network of 17 sites.

The National Office

The role of NJFON is to oversee and offer guidance to the JFON network, a national alliance of independently operated nonprofit sites. These sites collectively operate more than 40 legal clinics (locations where groups of client intakes are held) staffed by approximately 35 immigration attorneys and hundreds of volunteers. NJFON also engages in advocacy for immigrant rights and offers education to communities of faith and the public.

NJFON's primary strategic goals are to ensure sustainability among its sites and strengthen their capacity to serve more low-income immigrant clients.

We have seen that where JFON clinics or other immigration representation is available, immigrants have better outcomes in their cases in the US courts. Unaccompanied migrant children who are represented in court are five times more likely to be able to stay in the United States than those who have no representation. Individuals seeking asylum are three times more likely to win their case if they have an attorney.

The stories that follow come from JFON network members around the country. They represent just a few of the families and individuals who have found hope and help in JFON clinics, many of which are found in United Methodist churches that have committed to the work of justice for their neighbors.

Rob Rutland-Brown is the executive director for National Justice for Our Neighbors in Springfield, Virginia.



JFON Imperial Valley founding board members (left to right): Tomas Oliva, Ann Featherstone, Amber S. Lawless, Kelly Klingbeil Smith, (with Assembly member Eduardo Garcia), Diana Moreno-Inman, Martha Garcia, Pastor Ron Griffen.

PHOTO: IMPERIAL VALLEY JFON

California

JFON on the Border: Imperial Valley Celebrates Its First Clinic

provided by JFON Imperial Valley

It was meant to be a desert. Modern irrigation, however, turned the valley into the second-largest agricultural area in California. An aerial view shows a vast expanse of light and dark green checkerboards; 80 percent of our nation's salad greens come from these fields. Take a closer look, however, and see the weather-beaten faces of men and women, their bodies bent and stooped as they move through the neat furrows. These are our immigrant neighbors who make all that lettuce possible.

Much of the work in this valley is agricultural and, therefore, seasonal. Unemployment hovers at 20 percent, among the highest in the nation. Most of the inhabitants—80 percent—are Hispanic, some families living here for generations, even before it was part of the United States.

The town of El Centro—the home of First United Methodist Church and Imperial Valley JFON—is the county seat.

First UMC El Centro, led by Pastor Ron Griffen, is a busy, active church whose members strive to make a significant difference in the lives of people around them. “Your better life awaits,” is the promise you find on their website. “You don’t have to watch others change humanity; you were born to do this, too.”

Kelly Smith is the site attorney. She was volunteering her services, part time, for the church’s occasional immigration legal clinics when she first heard about National Justice for Our Neighbors. It was almost a moment of divine revelation: NJFON provides exactly what Smith and Pastor Griffen needed if their clinic was

going to expand and grow. They began the process of joining the JFON family.

The community was abuzz with excitement and enthusiasm about this new endeavor. Nowhere was a JFON site more desperately needed.

The launch of the newest JFON site—and the only one in close proximity to the Mexican border—was a great success. Their first volunteer training attracted 12 people and more are signing up to attend the next training. Three local attorneys also volunteered their legal services.

Three other UMC churches in the area are interested in holding immigration legal clinics. Pastor Griffen says part of Imperial Valley JFON’s eventual goal is to open more clinics, going everywhere and anywhere people need immigration legal services.

Founded in 2016, JFON Imperial Valley is the newest JFON site in the United States.

Southeastern Michigan

Bringing Lina Home

by JFON Southeastern Michigan

As an interpreter for the US forces in Afghanistan, Nazim took precautions to shield his wife and two young children from the violence he encountered almost daily from the Taliban. He knew he had an important job to do and he wanted to help his country.

The threats and attacks increased, however, and Nazim’s home and family became targets too. Fearing for their lives, Nazim applied for the Special Immigrant Visa available to Afghans and Iraqis who provide crucial aid to the US Armed Forces.

These visas take several months to process; in the interim Nazim's wife became pregnant. Soon the family welcomed a baby daughter and named her Lina. But because she hadn't been born yet, her name was not on their original visa documents. They received permission to emigrate to the United States just as the Taliban made the family's continued existence in Afghanistan untenable. It was a matter of life or death—but they could not take their infant daughter with them. In the end, they had to leave Lina behind in the care of her uncle and grandmother, vowing to return for her as soon as possible.

Once in the United States, the family immediately began the process of getting a visa for Lina to come to southern Michigan. Unfortunately, the accredited representative (not an attorney) who filed their forms created unnecessary red tape and delays. Weeks turned into months, and months became a year. Meanwhile, Lina's uncle and grandmother were now in the Taliban's sights as Nazim's closest relatives. They were forced to move for their own—and Lina's—safety.



JFON Southeastern Michigan volunteer immigration attorney, Virginia Norkevicius, with Lina in the United States.

PHOTO: JFON SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN

The First United Methodist Church of Blissfield, Michigan, became involved in the case and directed the family to JFON Southeastern Michigan. Their file landed on the desk of volunteer immigration attorney, Virginia Norkevicius.

With 20 years of experience in immigration law and as a former JFON employee, Norkevicius dedicates one day a week to JFON clients. She was surprised by the tangle of Lina's case and the precious time that had been wasted. She contacted the embassy in Kabul and began the process again.

Meanwhile, the church started a GoFundMe campaign to send Lina's mom back to Afghanistan to visit her daughter. Lina had her interview at the US Embassy in Kabul in June 2016. She was approved several months later.

"I cried when we got the word," admits Norkevicius. "To bring families together is a wonderful thing." Lina arrived in Michigan on November 7, 2016, after being separated from her parents and siblings for more than two years.

Nazim, profoundly moved by the care and expertise his JFON attorneys gave to Lina's case, came by a JFON clinic to express his gratitude to the entire JFON staff. "Thank you," he said, his eyes brimming with unshed tears. "Thank you for bringing Lina home."

Begun in 2010, Justice For Our Neighbors in Southeastern Michigan (JFON-SEMI) is a small, grassroots, volunteer driven organization that provides high quality, free legal services to immigrants and refugees.

Tennessee Inherit the Kingdom

by Wade Munday

We take time to celebrate the victories as we work on behalf of immigrants and refugees—like when one of the attorneys at Tennessee Justice for Our Neighbors presents a Green Card to someone who has endured extraordinary hardship and displayed equally extraordinary courage.

We must also acknowledge the losses—a hostile political climate, threatening emails, limited funding. However, we are reassured that our actions are just and our work is worthwhile because of this simple acknowledgement from Jesus:

"Come, you who will receive good things from my Father. Inherit the



Rocío received her Green Card in 2015 with the help of JFON Tennessee after helping law enforcement successfully prosecute criminals who terrorized undocumented families in her neighborhood.

PHOTO: MIKE DUBOSE

kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.” (Matthew 25: 34-36, CEB)

Immigrants and refugees are the most vulnerable people in the world. They have no political power and therefore few defenders within our government. Immigrants’ and refugees’ lack of political agency results in lives of struggle—starvation, exile, illness, and unjust detention. Our clients arrive at Tennessee Justice for Our Neighbors in search of an advocate and defender, even when they’ve done nothing wrong.

In order to protect this most vulnerable group of people, those with political voice must speak up for the persecuted and threatened parts of humankind. Yet, our immigration laws are subject to the interest of voters who have never interacted with our immigration system and understandably never had much reason to learn about the process. We must treat every person with kindness and dignity, but we must also hold a preference for immigrants and refugees. They are the embodiment of Jesus in our midst; they are hungry and seeking nourishment. They are thirsty and seeking refreshment. They are strangers seeking hospitality. They are imprisoned and seeking freedom. They are Christ among us.

God promises that we will “inherit the Kingdom of God.” That doesn’t mean the struggle in the here and now will be easy. We will receive more hate mail. Our closest friends and family will be puzzled by what we do. With every refugee who is resettled safely in the United States,

and with every immigrant who receives a Green Card after years of struggle, there is the realization that justice does eventually come. Our challenge is to increase access to this kind of justice. It is God’s justice according to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Wade Munday is the executive director of the Tennessee Justice For Our Neighbors in Nashville, Tennessee.

South Florida

The Heart of the Misery

by Janet Horman

South Florida Justice for our Neighbors is an immigration legal aid ministry located just south of Miami in Homestead, Florida. This largely agricultural area is home to Mexican, Haitian, Guatemalan, Salvadoran, Honduran, Cuban, and Nicaraguan immigrant families. Many work in hotels, construction, and farming. Some families arrived decades ago and settled after working for years as migrant workers, moving from location to location with the harvest. Working in the sweltering Floridian heat, they bring winter strawberries, citrus, green beans, Easter orchids, and Christmas poinsettias to the rest of the country.

I often call this the heart of the misery. One of the most painful things we witness is fear in the eyes of children born in the United States who are old enough to understand that their mom and dad are undocumented immigrants. They have been raised and educated in the United States and now fear that their parents could be detained or deported at any time of day or night. You might assume that these parents, like others who come lawfully on a valid visa, could simply “wait their turn in line.” It was not until I was in law school



Team members of JFON South Florida: Emily Kvalheim, Community Relations Coordinator (Global Mission Fellow US-2); Roland Robinson, Attorney; the Rev. Janet Horman, Attorney and Director, UMC Church and Community Worker; Caitlin Kastner, Clinic and Intake Coordinator (Global Mission Fellow US-2). PHOTO: JFON SOUTH FLORIDA

that I began to realize, waiting in line is not a realistic option for many who work in our fields.

A recent client, a grandmother in her 70s who has worked for 12 years at a fast food restaurant, finally obtained her US citizenship. She came to us for help to file a relative petition to bring her daughter in Mexico to the US. If she pays immigration the \$535 fee to fill out the form, it will likely be approved within five to seven months. But the current wait time for her married daughter to apply for a visa to move to the US is 22 years.

“Veintidós años?!” She exclaimed. Sí, 22 years.

In 22 years the mother would be in her mid-90s. If she does not live to see her daughter come, her daughter will have to embark on a separate and difficult process involving a “substitute” petitioner.

Unaccompanied teenagers and children are often put in immigration detention centers at the border before being released, pending immigration court proceedings. Fleeing from poverty, violence, sexual, and other abuse, they are often in need of medical care and counseling once they arrive. A recent preteen client arrived after being repeatedly raped as a young child by an older male relative. We celebrate that she was recently recommended for approval for asylum.

We are thankful that our United Methodist Church community can be a lifesaving presence for those who seek refuge in this country and contribute so much that we take for granted, from harvesting produce to sharing the rich cultural traditions of their home countries.

Janet Horman is a Church and Community Worker (Advance #3022259) and the executive director of the South Florida Justice For Our Neighbors in Miami.

Nebraska

Extending Service to Immigrant Communities

by Dawn Bashara

Omaha, Nebraska, is a dynamic, influential city in the heart of the United States, with several outstanding attractions: the world-class Henry Doorley Zoo, Warren Buffet’s Berkshire Hathaway headquarters, and Justice For Our Neighbors-Nebraska (JFON-NE), to name a few.

JFON-NE’s mission is to welcome immigrants into our community by providing free, high-quality immigration legal services, education, and advocacy. As the largest site in the JFON network, the JFON-NE legal team worked on more than 2,700 cases in 2016 for clients from 47 countries, with an average success rate of 98 percent. Clients received free professional services from 10 full-time, licensed attorneys; six legal staff; two administrative assistants; and three management staff members—all supported by 125 volunteers.

For several years, JFON-NE clients confided that they have additional legal needs beyond immigration legal services, yet they have nowhere to turn for help if they cannot afford a private attorney. Looking forward from our strategic plan, staff members crafted a detailed business plan with forecasts of needs for staff, operations, budget, and funding for three years that was approved by the JFON-NE Board of Directors in March 2016.

The plan includes forming partnerships with immigrant-serving organizations which have clients with legal needs that intersect with immigration law. The three-year partnerships are being launched as pilot programs to determine which are most viable for client impact and organizational sustainability.

These pilots bring additional expertise in the areas of fair working conditions, health care, custody, guardianship, and divorce cases—matters of high importance for employees, children, families, and domestic violence survivors. This holistic approach positions JFON-NE to address the interwoven legal issues that prevent immigrants from fully participating in their communities.

Growth and Sustainability Pilot Programs JFON-NE

Immigrant Worker’s Legal Partnership with Heartland Worker’s Center—added a full-time attorney to assist immigrant workers who



PHOTO: ISTOCK PHOTO/ JULIEF514

have been victims of labor and employment law violations.

Child and Family Law partnership with Completely Kids—adding two attorneys to accept related family law issues interfering with children’s immigration legal strategies.

Immigrant-Focused Medical Legal Partnerships in two local hospitals,

with another pending. An additional attorney will soon be hired to provide immigration legal services for hospital patients.

Impact litigation provides a new channel to change broken immigration laws and save individuals and families from unlawful deportation. National JFON awarded a grant to JFON-NE

to spearhead impact litigation on behalf of the entire JFON network. Such cases could impact countless immigrants by creating positive legal precedent throughout the country.

Dawn Bashara is the communications & development director for Justice For Our Neighbors-Nebraska.

NATIONAL JFON SITES

For more information on Justice For Our Neighbors and to find contact information and addresses for the JFON sites below, please visit the website: <http://njfon.org/>.

Donations for NJFON can be given through the Advance and UMCOR:

National Justice for Our Neighbors (#901285)

California

Imperial Valley JFON, El Centro, California

Florida

South Florida JFON, Homestead, Florida

Northern Illinois (Chicago Area)

Aurora, Chicago, and Rockford, Illinois

Iowa

Cedar Rapids, Columbus Junction, Decorah, Des Moines, Ottumwa, and Storm Lake, Iowa

West Michigan

Traverse City, Grand Rapids, and Holland, Michigan

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Theology from the Margins
**A Cry from the
Tea Bushes**

by Jerome Sahabandhu

Imagine that you are in the most beautiful island on the planet—Sri Lanka—a nation that has a long history and rich cultures, but one that has been devastated by ethnic war for three decades and is now recovering as a reconciled nation. Sri Lanka became an independent nation state in 1948, following autonomy for India, its northern neighbor. The first European power to exercise its influence on Sri Lanka was Portugal in 1505. In 1658, the Dutch displaced the Portuguese from Sri Lanka, and were in turn displaced by the British in 1796. In 1815, the British took possession of the whole island and governed until its independence.

Currently, about 22 million people live in Sri Lanka. Reconstruction, peace, harmony, and coexistence are the words of the people's rediscovered vocabulary. Sri Lanka is famous for its scenic natural beauty—flora, fauna, mountains, reservoirs, temples, beaches—and for its religiosity and hospitality. It's cultural diversity and ancient histories have amazed generations of both admirers and explorers.

Perhaps Ceylon tea is Sri Lanka's most famous icon of all; a variety that has magnetically attracted communities of tea drinkers around the globe, including fans in the United States. In fact, the British used the name "Ceylon" to refer to the country of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is also a country of living world faiths: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Theravada Buddhists are the majority. None could easily bypass the almost religious fervor with which Sri Lankans play and watch the sport of cricket, and Sri Lanka's high literacy rate (92.6 percent) is another point of pride. Yet in the midst of this, the moment a sojourner crosses borders to the margins in Sri Lanka, she can



The Rev. Devadasan Sengan picks tea in the Nuwara Eliya region. He grew up in an estate community and is now a Methodist minister working for the Estate Communities Empowerment Mission, established in 2012 by the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka (ECEM). PHOTO: ESTATE COMMUNITIES EMPOWERMENT MISSION

hear a story of one of the most oppressed, yet resilient, communities on Earth: the estate community. This is a missional invitation to hear the story of the women and men behind your cup of tea.

Tea Bushes Cry With You

Sellamma is a mother of five children who lives in the estate slums of Nuwara Eliya. Two of her children attend a nearby government school and the other three stay at home. She begins her day around 4.30 a.m. preparing Roti, a bread, and Sambal, a chili sauce, for her children and disabled husband before she leaves to pick tea leaves on the estate. She works 12 to 14 hours a day for only 350 rupees, which is less than \$2.50 in US dollars. To receive this payment, Sellamma must pick 15 kilograms (approximately 7 pounds) of tiny tea leaves in a day. A cup of tea at a café in the city of Atlanta costs about \$3.00 US.

Sellamma's daughter, Selvi, was in 7th grade when she wrote this poem for her teacher:

All About My Mother

Amma, Amma you are great,

May Lord Shiva give you shakthi (strength)

I always wonder at and admire your tears

Do not worry, tea bushes cry with you

You love them, they hear your cry and share your tears

Nandri (thank you) tea bushes for your tears

Sharing with my Amma

Selvi's poetic words disturb us, but here emerges "a cry from tea bushes"—a theology and mission from the margins. This is an invitation to listen, with theological humility, to the voice and struggles, hopes and dreams of plantation/estate communities in Sri Lanka, the most marginalized communities on this island nation. They are hard working women and child laborers at the very bottom of the estate social pyramid, the margins outside the margins.

The estate community's historic roots trace back to India. Tea pickers



were brought to Sri Lanka as bonded laborers by British colonists to work on coffee and tea plantations during the 19th century. While coffee failed in Sri Lanka, the tea industry has evolved into a successful million-dollar business today. The people who work on the estates speak Tamil, are of South Indian origin, and represent about five percent of the Sri Lankan population. Socio-analytically speaking, we could borrow a term from India and call them “Sri Lankan Dalits,” a people at the very bottom of the caste hierarchy. This vibrant yet most oppressed community has lived on these plantations to the present day, keeping their distinct culture alive while playing a significant part in the Sri Lankan economy. Their dislocated existence and their cry for dignity is mostly unknown and unheard. The tears of their lamentations are the tears of pain, hurt, weariness, and struggle. But they are also the tears for survival, dignity, love, and justice. This is the “Cry from the Tea Bushes,” a bitter truth resulting from colonial commerce and trade. Their fight for compensation and reparation has not yet been successful.

Learning from the Margins

The Center for Mission Innovation, which is a new unit of the Global

Ministries, has expressed a commitment to listen to and learn from emerging theologies and theologies from the margins around the globe. I was invited to share some reflections on theologies from the margins in Sri Lanka, my motherland.

One of my colleagues, Devadasan Sengan, grew up in an estate community and is now a Methodist minister working for the Estate Communities Empowerment Mission, established in 2012 by the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka (ECEM). I was part of the initial process that shaped this ministry in the Methodist Church. Devadasan is developing a practical mission model of empowerment rooted in the tenets of asset-based community development. Let me share some of his theological insights.

The Rev. Devadasan Sengan first submitted this short reflection at my request, which was presented to a group of theological students at the Candler School of Theology at Global Ministries headquarters in Atlanta. “We are the forgotten people of Sri Lanka,” Devadasan began. “While the rest of the world enjoys our high-quality tea, my own people are given only the dust of tea. Teas produced by estate workers are very tasty, but their very lives in the line-houses leave a taste of bitterness.”

Tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world next to water, and can be found in nearly 80 percent of all US households. It is the only beverage commonly served hot or iced, anytime, anywhere, for any occasion. On any given day, over 158 million Americans drink tea. (<http://www.teausa.com/14655/tea-fact-sheet>)

“I see the image of God in my people and in their communities,” Devadasan continued. “In the creation of humankind, God created everyone equally and in God’s image. The very first human being created by God was a laborer (Gen 2:15). The laborer is the grower, gatherer, and producer upon whom everybody else depends. But a laborer’s life has always been very hard. Many people mutter that hard labor is the first step in the development of humankind, but however hard the laborer’s work, the laborer has not been recognized. Laborers rarely reach an adequate and decent standard of living.”

Estate communities live in horrendous conditions of housing, sanitation, and poverty; there is a high dropout rate of children after primary school, health-care facilities are inferior, laborers are exposed to pesticides, and women and children suffer from a lack of welfare and poor

wages. Mental health may also be a matter of concern for many working in the tea plantations.

Davadasan concluded: “A laborer sacrifices her life and struggles constantly for her daily needs. His or her struggle should bring holistic liberation as well as a change in lifestyle and a standard of life for the better.”

The estate communities in Sri Lanka are still struggling to meet their daily needs even in the modern days of technology, computers, and weapons. The estate people have been longing to be a free, dignified, and respected community. They have been praying to gods and goddesses for their liberation and justice. As a follower of Jesus, I pray that the God of liberation and life bestows compassion (*Karuna*) upon the estate people in Sri Lanka and liberates them and all other plantation workers around the world, especially those on tea, coffee, and rubber estates. But our response should not be limited to prayers. Our hands and hearts too should move and contribute to the liberation of the forgotten people of Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

Devedasan finished his reflection powerfully by making a theological and social appeal to the tea drinking community: “Remember behind your cup of tea there is the spirit, the sweat, and the blood of my community. The community behind your tea, the estate peoples—they wait for their story to be heard and for consumers to change their ways. While you drink tea, join with the God of life, hearing their cry, a ‘Cry from the Tea Bushes.’ Our spiritual gift is our brokenness—broken spirits, broken minds, and broken bodies. Because we are broken, we dream.”

Telling tea drinkers to think of the struggling communities behind their cups and bottles of tea is a theological task. Advocacy for ethical tea



Line houses in the estate community slum, typical for workers on the tea estates.

PHOTO: ESTATE COMMUNITIES EMPOWERMENT MISSION

production, fair trade, quality assurance of labor, and social responsibility for the estate communities are a few of the prophetic challenges.

Devadasan mentioned in an interview: “What we need to do is to create possibilities to empower leadership within the estate communities and to educate young girls and boys. The church is called to the ministry of empowerment, to be an incarnated community among these forgotten people.”

It is encouraging that the ecumenical study document “Together Towards Life,” released in 2013 by the World Council of Churches, affirms the church’s call to learn from the margins: “People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the center, is out of view.

People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles; people in positions of power have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions.”

Sellamma, Sellamma,

You are great! But I do not want you to be always in the margins.

You are the power of agency in changing the margins.

In solidarity with you—Sellamma,

As I share the cry from the tea bushes.

Jerome Sahabandhu, from Sri Lanka, serves as the Theologian in Residence at the Mission Theology Desk, General Board of Global Ministries, Atlanta.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- **How does this experience from the margins—“The Cry from the Tea Bushes”—challenge you and your local church’s ministry and mission?**
- **What can we do to change the situation of the estate communities around the world for the better?**
- **What do we hear the Spirit saying to our social and ecclesial locations through the “Cry from the Tea Bushes?”**

SOFA and BioFoods

Alternatives to Plantation Tea

Equal Exchange

There are alternatives to buying tea from plantations. In Sri Lanka, the Small Organic Farmers' Association (SOFA) sells tea in the United States through Equal Exchange, an alternative trade organization and partner in UMCOR's fair trade project.

SOFA was founded in 1993 with the vision to establish a prosperous community of smallholding farmers living in harmony with the environment. It has grown to include more than 1,600 members who farm almost 6,000 acres of land organically, growing a diversity of foods and cash crops including cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and vanilla. Their most important crop is tea, of which they produce about 175 tons a year.



Equal Exchange worker Deepak Khandelwal tests tea varieties in the James Valley Organic Tea Factory, Small Organic Farmers' Association (SOFA), Sri Lanka. PHOTO: PHYLLIS ROBINSON

SOFA partners with Bio Foods, a Sri Lankan company whose mission is to provide market access to small farmers so that they can stay on the land, provide strong livelihoods for their families, and maintain healthy and vibrant communities. BioFoods is the processor and packer for all of SOFA's teas.

The Dominant Tea Culture

Small farmer cooperatives are rare in the tea industry, which was built on the colonial plantation system, a vast, monocultural cultivation, processing, and trading infrastructure so deeply rooted

Solidarity with Small Farmers

that it remains largely unchanged today. Like the other imperial plantation crops—sugar, cotton, or tobacco—tea plantations depend on cheap labor. In a feudal manner, tea growers imported whole families to work, live, and be dependent on their plantations. Descendants of these families are still there, working the same estates.

Considering the dominance of this system, it is surprising that Equal Exchange has been able to find democratic farmer cooperatives to trade with. Even in the Fair Trade world, most of the certified fair trade tea on supermarket shelves comes from plantations. Equal Exchange, however, has been seeking out the pioneers who are finding models to transform the plantation system into democratically



Members of the Small Organic Farmers' Association (SOFA) pose with Deepak Khandelwal and Phyllis Robinson of Equal Exchange in Sri Lanka. PHOTO: COURTESY EQUAL EXCHANGE

organized cooperatives. Some are cooperatives of small holders banding together to process and sell their crops, like SOFA, the Fair Trade Alliance of Kerala, India, or the Wuppertal Rooibos Cooperative in South Africa. Another alternative is the Potong Tea Garden in Darjeeling, India, where the workers on an abandoned plantation bought the land and farm it collectively.

United Methodists can find the tea produced by these pioneers on Equal Exchange's online store: shop.equalexchange.coop/tea, and learn more about their struggles at <https://equalexchange.coop/blog/building-democracy-in-tea>.

Equal Exchange and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) have partnered since 2002 to offer United Methodists fair-trade alternatives through the UMCOR Coffee Program.



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Who Teaches Us the Most?

by Joseph Russ

“**T**hey have no electricity... Wow.”
That’s what one of our visitors said after visiting the community of *30 de Abril* (“30th of April”) in El Salvador. It’s true, the residents have no electricity in their homes, which are primarily composed of sheet metal and tarps bolted to bamboo. They have no running water, and even the well water is severely contaminated. The only high school is miles away across the highway, a dangerous journey in a country with the most car accidents per capita. Yet these homes are on land they fought hard for, and they are proud to have won the land in a struggle with the local government.

Several years ago, a massive flood displaced dozens of families, leaving them homeless and with no other options. They pleaded for access to land from the local government, but they were met with silence. Without homes, they squatted in a sugarcane field, constructing shanties out of whatever they could find.

As the years went on, they began to organize as a community. They advocated for their right to safety and land, and finally, on April 30th, 2015, they negotiated their rights to the space with the local government. It was a struggle, but the success and satisfaction of this accomplishment is commemorated in the very name of the community. While they may not have many amenities, they have something invaluable: the skills to organize and advocate for their rights.

The next challenge is the struggle for clean water. Currently, the well water is undrinkable because of contamination from nearby farms and the toxic chemicals they use, such as pesticides and herbicides. The community board continues to organize the citizens to lobby their government for access to clean water, but the fight continues. Their strength, perseverance, and organizing skills are inspiring, and they have a lot to teach all of us.



Joseph Russ in El Salvador
PHOTO: COURTESY JOSEPH RUSS

The visitor mentioned above came to learn from them. He wasn’t a tourist or a philanthropist who came to save the people of El Salvador, but a participant in a seminar on human rights and community development. This seminar, hosted by the nongovernmental organization Cristosal, was an opportunity for US citizens to learn about the community’s advocacy for their rights. It’s not an opportunity to marvel at the poverty and destitution before them, nor is it a chance to solve the problems. Here, participants learn from people doing amazing grassroots organizing under extremely difficult circumstances.

When the participants say “Wow,” they are marveling at the accomplishments the community has achieved. They are amazed at how, without things we consider so basic, people continue to fight and win. They are inspired. They realize they have much to learn. This is the power of the human rights approach to Christian mission. It honors the true work of Jesus Christ in our world: a ministry and mission by the marginalized for the marginalized.

Joseph Russ is a Global Mission Fellow from El Segundo, California (Advance #3022225), serving with Foundation Cristosal in El Salvador.

From the General Secretary

by Thomas Kemper



The Global Mission Fellows class of 2015-2017—with many of the authors for this issue, including: Albert Wakili, Nicodemus Doe, Peter Karanja, Taurai Jokonya, and Yves Kanangwa.

PHOTO: CYNTHIA MACK

Migrants and the Gospel

The Bible is filled with migrants—peoples on the move, such as these few examples from the Old Testament:

- Hebrew wanderers looking for home in the days of Abraham
- The Jacob tribe, victims of drought in Canaan, seeking food in Egypt
- Judeans exiled to Babylon in the days of Jeremiah; their descendants returning to Jerusalem in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah

And a few examples from the New Testament:

- The Holy family finding refuge in Egypt
- The Apostle Paul traversing the eastern Mediterranean to preach the good news of Jesus Christ, initially going to places where dispersed Jews had established communities
- Other disciples fanning out across the East—as far as India, southern Europe, and North Africa—with the gospel.

Scholar Dana Robert points out that those first itinerant, migratory, and boundary-crossing New Testament preachers, who were or became bicultural, are greatly responsible for Christianity becoming a worldwide faith. Migrants carried the Word. (*Christian Mission. How Christianity became a World Religion*, by Dana Robert.)

Migration involves challenges, injustices, and hazards but can also be a blessing. The church has a responsibility to respond to the physical and emotional needs of the displaced, and it can recognize and utilize the value of mobility.

Migrants from England, including Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, played major roles in evangelization and Methodist church growth in colonial America and the young United States. German immigrants to America encountered in Pennsylvania the Evangelical branch of the Evangelical United Brethren heritage of United Methodism and took this Wesleyan movement back to their homeland in the early 19th century. My own ancestors were part of that community. A similar pattern was followed in the late 20th century

when refugees from Vietnam came to the US, were introduced to United Methodism, and went back to their country of origin as missionaries, helping to plant and water what is today a flourishing indigenous United Methodist Church.

Global Ministries recently commissioned a missionary for ministry among migrants from Zimbabwe who have settled in western Canada, placed in collaboration with the United Church of Canada. United Methodist lay and clergy migrants from various parts of Africa are today helping to revitalize Methodist congregations in Italy, Austria, Germany, and Ireland, while also providing services to other migrants in those areas.

Among our missionaries and short-term (two-year) Global Mission Fellows there are at this moment 41 from many parts of the world ministering among migrants in many lands: from the Philippines in Taiwan, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Germany, from Brazil or China in the United States, and from Mexico, Colombia, and the United States along the US-Mexican border. There is an intense sense of “from everywhere to everywhere” in our ministries with migrants.

A vital example of migrants serving the gospel at present is in the United Arab Emirates, a coalition of Muslim monarchies along the Persian Gulf. United Methodist congregations have been organized over the last 10 years by migrant workers from the Philippines and now also from Zimbabwe (see story P. 16).

The annals of faith and mission past, present, and future are filled with accounts of migrants who can confess with St. Paul in Philippians 1:12: “I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel.”

Thomas G. Kemper
General Secretary
General Board of Global Ministries



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