

# Leader's Guide:

## *Immigration and the Bible*

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United  
Methodist  
Women

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# Introduction

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*Immigration and the Bible: A Guide to Radical Welcome* has been written to provide a faith-based guide for building hospitable communities of radical welcome for all people. It is hoped that this study of immigration and the Bible will be both a spiritual and informational journey for you and all participants in the study sessions. The sessions offer material and guidance for using the Bible to increase study participants' understanding of their spiritual connection to all of God's people and to develop radically inclusive hospitality at personal and congregational levels. The text is an informational journey, and our spirituality grows out of our responding to our world as it impacts our lives and the local, national and global communities.

The United States is a nation of immigrants and migrants. Some of our ancestors arrived by choice first through open immigration policies and then by chance as developing immigration policies limited who could enter the country. Others ancestors came to the country against their will as slaves. (Slavery continues today with worldwide human trafficking.)

Immigration is a complex topic. However, it has been the story of humankind throughout history. This study views the Bible as the ultimate immigration handbook written by, for and about immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and victims of human trafficking. It is a book of hope, help, guidance and direction for responding to sisters and brothers across the world.

Personal spirituality has been a foundational part of the lives of people on the move and of the lives of people responding to them. Our religious, social, political, educational and economic conditions are all a part of determining how we respond to strangers or immigrants. In this study, we will look at all aspects of our lives and spirituality as we seek to understand God's will in the human migration experience. We will work to more fully develop our spirituality and a theology of radical welcome. To do so, it is necessary to have accurate information about immigration issues. The aim of the text is to provide basic information on immigration that will enable readers to develop their spiritual responses to immigration. It is hoped that many will choose to become active grass-roots theologians working to build hospitable communities of radical welcome for all.

## Leader's Role

The primary role of the leader will be to facilitate the class so that the participants gain the greatest knowledge and benefit from the study as needed within each unique setting. Immigration is a hot-button topic. In all probability, the participants in each gathering will bring with them a wealth of information. Much of it will be accurate and some of it inaccurate. Your most important role as a facilitator is to welcome, accept and respect all opinions while providing accurate information. This is done by being a voice *of* the class rather than a voice *for* the class and by accepting all thoughts, feelings and ideas as valuable for discussion. It also means not commenting on participants' ideas that either do or do not support your own feelings and beliefs. It is necessary to develop an atmosphere of safety and trust within the class. It is also important to consider that in any classroom situation it is probable that the participants have all of the accumulated knowledge needed on the subject matter for the desired outcome of the class.

As you look to empower the participants to develop a spirituality and theology of radical welcome, it is important to strengthen your own spirituality by remembering to pray for the class before, during and after you teach it.

## Structure of Sessions

Because of the importance of bringing prayer into the educational equation for this study, each session will begin with a time of silence and prayer. During this time, participants will be invited to light a candle, place a stone or pour water as part of their silent prayer. Choose whichever of these you'd like, offer multiple options in each session or mix it up between sessions. Enlist participants to lead the opening prayers of each class. Make certain there is a sufficient supply of the items to be used in your class. Silent prayer time will be followed by an opening devotion. Each session will end with a time of prayer to help the participants frame their study in prayer. Be sure to make copies of the unison prayers in both the opening and closing devotional sessions so that class members can join in the prayer. Plan for each session to last about two hours.

In addition, there will be out-of-class activities to enable the participants to interact with one another as follow-up to the previous session's assignments. These activities will help participants explore their own migration background and develop a deeper understanding of biblical and contemporary migration.

The in-class activities will be individual, small group (no more than seven persons per group) and large, full-class group. This will enable individuals to process thoughts and exercises through more than one medium. The small groups give everyone in the group input in a

short period of time and the larger groups enable all participants to benefit from both large group discussion and summaries of small group discussions. The instructions for the first class session gives guidance in setting ground rules for open, honest and safe class discussions and dialogues.

## **Classroom Setup**

In addition to questions, answers and prayers, the participants will work on expressing themselves through a variety of art forms. They will also be invited to explore their family migration story. In preparation for all classes, read the lessons and assignments thoroughly and have all needed materials available for use in each class. Some items that will be helpful in class are drawing paper, newsprint tablets, markers, watercolors or tempera paint, paintbrushes, markers, pencils, magazines (for collages), journals and construction paper.

The classroom should be a visible reminder of the image of God's people from across the world. Prior to teaching the class, take time to contemplate the migration story, the ethnicity of the people of the Bible and the great variety of people who make up the immigrants in the world. Display in the classroom photos, posters and objects that are inclusive of all God's people. If you are able to contact class participants before the class, ask them to bring photos of their ancestors and items that represent their ethnicity for classroom display and discussion. Local and national newspapers often provide immigration stories. Compiling a notebook of articles and stories will provide helpful additional materials, as will gathering a small lending library of DVDs for students to borrow between class sessions.

Seek to develop a classroom that models a radical, inclusive welcome for all participants. This happens through creating a welcoming atmosphere, having a welcoming and accepting attitude, being a facilitator of information that invites and encourages classroom participation, using a variety of exercises, and paying attention to class and classroom details that provide an open and safe environment for all participants.

Finally, pray that all participants will learn to reflect God's will in their response to immigrants, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in our country and across the world.

# Session 1

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## Chapters 1 and 2

### **Welcome**

Welcome the participants and explain that each session will begin with a time of silence in which participants are invited to offer private prayers in one of three ways: (1) by lighting a candle to signify the light of Christ, (2) by placing a stone to remember that if we are silent “the stones will shout out” Christ’s truth or (3) by pouring a small amount of water into a communal basin, pitcher or fountain to represent the life-giving water of Christ. (Leaders are free to use the same symbol each day or to vary them.)

### **Opening Devotion (10 minutes)**

*Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”*

—John 8:31-32

### **Greeting**

As we begin our study of immigration and the Bible, I invite you in this time of silence to come forward to light a candle/place a stone/or pour water as you offer a silent prayer that the fruits of our study be in accordance with the will of God our Creator, Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit, our teacher and guide.

### **Silent Prayer**

Prayers may be offered in complete silence or while a hymn such as “Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #344) is played quietly.

### **Reading**

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

We the people of God are on a journey. It is a physical journey on earth as living images God, who said in Genesis 1:26, “Let us make humankind in our own image,” and who also said in Matthew 25:40, “Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Wherever we are, whatever we are doing and with whomever we are interacting, we must remember that we are each to the other, without exception, the image of God.

We also share a spiritual journey as we seek to live godly lives and plan and hope for life eternal with all God’s people. Many of us see ourselves as strangers in this world on our way to eternal life in heaven. For this reason we identify with the strangers and include them in our journey. The stranger comes to teach us and give us a priceless gift—the gift of identity.

### **Hymn**

“Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #344)

### **Prayer for Direction (in unison)**

Direct us, O Lord, in all our thoughts, our words, and our deeds. We come seeking to understand the role you would have us play in responding to strangers in our land. We come as followers of the refugee Christ, who at times had no place to lay his head. We come asking you to send the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us. We come, as followers of Christ, seeking to understand, to know, to accept and to respond to the migrants, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in our land. We come giving thanks for the food and security we celebrate in our lives. We seek to follow Christ’s commandment of Love. Be with us we pray. Touch us. Teach us and guide us. Amen.

### **Participant Guidelines (10 minutes)**

Take time to develop ground rules of openness and respect. Discuss that there are many viewpoints as well as fears concerning immigrants and refugees. Explain that dialogue embraces all viewpoints, discussion unpacks them and debate tries to prove one opinion is the right opinion. Explain that the sessions are to include dialogue and discussion but respectfully request that they not be a series of debates. Ask the group to honor, respect and accept all viewpoints. Develop guidelines for inclusive dialogue and discussion. Set a time limit of one to two minutes for answers. Remind the class that it is important that no one monopolize the discussions (and again that discussion and dialogue are not the same as debate). The goal is development of radical welcome, and this includes respecting one another’s opinion and feelings rather than debating one viewpoint against another. Request that participants wait until all other opinions have been given before speaking again.



If participants attempt to monopolize the class, take time to explain to them the importance of giving everyone time to participate.

### **Introduction (20 minutes)**

1. Invite all participants to introduce themselves and state why they are interested in immigration and the Bible and what they hope to gain through this study.
2. Have all participants state succinctly (a) why they feel immigration is a blessing, (b) why they feel immigration is challenge and (c) if they feel there is a culture of hostility or hospitality toward immigrants practiced in their areas. (Record these for display in all sessions.)
3. Ask each member of the class to ask a question about immigration and the Bible that they hope to have answered by the conclusion of the study. (Record these for display as well. As they are answered in course of the sessions, refer back to the question and the answer.)

### **Reading (20 minutes)**

Have the class read the Prologue and Chapter 1 through the section “Creating Hospitable Communities” and as much as possible of Chapter 2 in the time allotted for class reading.

### **Small Group Discussion (15 minutes)**

This is a time of dialogue taking place in groups with a maximum of seven persons. Instruct the small groups to give every participant time to respond and have them discuss the following:

1. We have been created in the image of God and are on both a physical and spiritual journey. What role does the stranger in our midst play in that journey, and what role does God play in our individual migration stories?
2. Chapter 1 states that caring for the stranger is a vital part of our spiritual journey and that it is necessary to develop a new theology of radical, inclusive hospitality. How would you define this type of hospitality, and how would you compare and contrast it to the contemporary definition of hospitality?
3. What is the difference between biblical hospitality and contemporary hospitality?
4. Immigration is a hot-button topic for many people. Are we, as a nation, practicing a culture of hospitality toward immigrants or a culture of hostility toward immigrants? How are we acting as a church? As individuals?
5. As a people on a journey we do not travel alone. The text states, “A thorough study of scriptures makes it obvious that our journey is a communal migration story.” Discuss what this means to you as an individual and a group.

### **Individual Activity (5 minutes)**

Have individual class members draw their churches and within them diagram the ethnic diversity of their churches. Then have them draw pictures of themselves and creatively diagram the ethnic diversity of their ancestral heritage and extended family.

### **Small Group Activity (10 minutes)**

Read the following definition of ethnic diversity within unity to the class: An ethnic group can be defined as a group of people sharing a common and distinctive culture, religion, language or the like. Then instruct them to do the following:

1. As a group, draw a bigger church and fill it with all the diverse ethnicities from their individual churches.
2. As a group, draw a person embracing all the ethnicities and extended family ethnicities within their small groups. Which is more diverse, their churches or their groups? What does this say?

### **Small Group Discussion (15 minutes)**

In their small groups, have participants discuss as many of the following questions as time allows. You may choose to focus on the questions that would have the most meaning for your groups. Consider handing out the remaining questions for class members to contemplate on their own at a later time.

1. Is it possible to go and sin no more?
2. What theme runs through scripture as a basis for eternal life?
3. Who has and who has not been created in God's image and as one of God's people? How does the answer impact a theology of radical, inclusive hospitality?
4. What is one way of explaining the teaching to deny ourselves and take up our cross?
5. How do we live out radical, inclusive theology and hospitality?
6. Do you identify yourself as a sinner or a saint? Explain.
7. In Luke 12:15 Jesus cautions, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Does our nation's corporate and individual greed play in our attitudes toward strangers in our land?
8. What three groups does God identify for special care?
9. How does Jesus fit into the migration narrative? Where do you fit into the migration narrative?

10. What is the difference between seeing Christ in the stranger and Christ in you?
11. Martin Luther King Jr. wanted people to accept their redemptive role through embracing five objectives: self-respect, high moral standards, wholehearted work, leadership and nonviolence. Would these five objectives work today in the establishment of a communal church that unites all believers in God's community and uplifts the unifying factors of diversity? If so, how might they be applied to the church?
12. We are all theologians. What steps might we take to more closely follow the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger?
13. Margaret Mead is credited with saying, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has." It is time for all people to claim their redemptive role by working to become an inclusive, hospitable community. What can we do to develop a radical, inclusive, hospitable community for all God's people?
14. What does it mean to live in community with Christ as the center, and how might that impact our ministries with immigrants?

### **Group Covenant (5 minutes)**

Read the following to the class:

The conclusion of Chapter 1 begins by stating, "Jesus was the living proclamation of the Lord's favor. As his disciples we are called to live lives proclaiming the Lord's favor as well. As United Methodists, we are called to have open hearts, open minds and open doors. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing and with whomever we are interacting, we must remember that we are each to the other the image of God." Chapter 2 reminds us, "As disciples of Christ seeking to live lives of service and sacrifice, let us prayerfully consider offering hands of hope that create homes away from home to immigrants seeking new life, new acceptance and a new place in God's all-inclusive community."

As we begin this study on immigration and the Bible, think about how open our hearts, minds and doors are and those of our churches, our families, our friends and our community. There are many answers to this question, and we may or may not all be in agreement. Let us covenant with one another as we study this text to pray, "Change us, God. Change us, according to your divine will."

Before praying the closing prayer, briefly discuss what it means to ask God to change you without giving God any additional directions.

## Hymn

“In Christ There Is No East or West” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #548)

## Closing Prayer (in unison)

In this time of learning and reflection, O God, open our hearts and minds to your presence. Send the Holy Spirit to touch us and teach us to more fully embrace the call Christ has on our lives. As we remember others who travel paths unknown to us, who speak other languages, and are in our land both with and without documents, fill us with your compassion. Enable us to see your face in the face of the stranger, and enable them to see your face and love in our faces. When our paths intersect, may we embrace one another with your love and continue our journey together by praying simply that you change us, God, change us that your will may be done in all things. Amen.

## Assignment for Next Session

Have the class choose to do one or both of the first and second assignments along with the third and fourth for the next class.

1. Using art, poetry, prose, music, lyrics, dance, drama or any other creative medium, create a product that compares or contrasts your migration story to some segment of the biblical migration story. (Have participants bring their completed creation to the next class session.)
2. Make a collage or chart of your family’s immigration story using actual pictures of your family members or photos or pictures that represent your family’s ancestry. (Have participants bring the collage or chart with them for display in the next session.)
3. Read the definitions of key terms relating to this study on immigration and familiarize yourself with these terms. (This list can be found at the end of this guide. Copy this list and provide it to the class.)
4. Read Chapters 3 and 4.
5. Have five volunteer readers take home copies of next session’s immigration skit to practice reading.

## Session 2

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# Chapters 3 and 4

### **Pre-class Activity**

Pass out the worksheet “Defining Immigration Terminology” (found at the end of this guide). Instruct participants to complete the worksheet by consulting with others, without looking at the answers provided to them at the end of the previous session.

### **Opening Devotion (10 minutes)**

*Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.*

—Genesis 12:1

### **Greeting**

As we continue our study of immigration and the Bible, I invite you in this time of silence to come forward to light a candle/place a stone/or pour water as you offer a silent prayer that the fruits of our study be in accordance with the will of God our Creator, Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit, our teacher and guide.

### **Silent Prayer**

Prayers may be offered in complete silence or while a hymn such as “By the Babylonian Rivers” (*The Faith We Sing* #2217) is played quietly.

### **Reading**

Psalm 137 (adapted): By the Waters of the Rio Grande

By the waters of the Rio Grande, there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our guitars, for there the border patrol asked us for songs and the vigilantes asked for laughter, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? By the waters we weep and we remember. We remember Mexico and El Salvador. We remember Honduras and Darfur. We remember Colombia and Bosnia. We remember Cuba and Haiti. We remember China and Romania. By the waters we remember. On the willows we hung up our guitars. We hung up our hopes. We hung up our homes, our land, our

dreams. We hung up our poverty, our hunger, our thirst. We hung up our friends, our traditions, our culture. We hung up our family ties, our food, our language. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? We sing only the song of the homeless, the unemployed, the laments of hunger and thirst, of death and destruction, the songs of the songless, the hungry, the thirsty, the songs of the lonely, the songs of the dying. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

## Hymn

"By the Babylonian Rivers" (*The Faith We Sing* #2217)

## Prayer for Direction (in unison)

God of refuge, you have been with our ancestors as they traveled to this land to build a new life. Through them, we have found our home here and in you. Help us to open ourselves to the strangers among us: the immigrants, the refugees, the migrants and the asylum seekers. Help us to be truly grateful that our physical needs are met and be willing to share with those in need. Open our hearts and minds as we seek your will in responding to the strangers in this land, and remind us that once we too were strangers in this land. Change us, O God. Please change us according to your will. Amen.

## Opening Activity (5 minutes)

Allow time for participants to share with their neighbors on their right their collage/story/picture assignment from the previous lesson. During break, they will be invited to post them on the newsprint on the wall.

## Small Group Activity (10 minutes)

Divide participants into groups of no more than seven per group. Have the class use the information in Chapters 3 and 4 along with their pool of biblical knowledge to complete the following tasks:

1. Develop an outline of the biblical migration story in the Hebrew Bible.
2. List biblical passages on treatment of strangers/sojourners/foreigners/aliens.

## Large Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Call everyone back together. Have each group present a part of their biblical migration story, with each group building on the next to complete the story. Concentrate on narratives that describe caring for the strangers in the Hebrew Bible. Once every group has shared, discuss the following questions:

1. How do you understand the concept that God migrates with the people?
2. What are the three groups in the Hebrew Bible that are repeatedly named as recipients of biblical hospitality?
3. What is the biblical mandate found in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament on welcoming the stranger?
4. How are you and/or your church community responding to that mandate?
5. How might you more fully respond?

### **Small Group Activity (15 minutes)**

Ask the participants to follow rules of discussions from the first session. Explain that we are not seeking to change one another but rather seeking only to have God work in our lives to change us according to God's will concerning immigration. Have small groups get back together and complete the following task: Make a list of changes in the church since 1950. Make a list of changes in homes since 1950. Compare the lists. Which area has the most changes and why? Compile a list on the ways other cultures are reflected in your church and spiritual life. Compile another list of the ways other cultures are reflected in your day-to-day life and home, work and play. Analyze the reasons for the differences.

### **Large Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

Ask the group the following questions:

1. What would it mean to be a church offering radical, inclusive hospitality?
2. Why does there seem to be a desire to keep the church the way it is? Is there this same desire to keep the rest of our lives the way they are? Why the difference in perspectives?
3. According to the teachings of Jesus, how are we to respond to violence?
4. What would you like your church to look like in 2020?
5. Do you know any Muslims? People of other faiths? Please list them and briefly state what you know about their beliefs.
6. Do you have in mind picture of a Muslim? Hagar had a son to Abraham, as did Sarah. As Abraham's child, if you were drawing a family tree, what would your relationship be to Ishmael and to Isaac?

### **Individual Activity (10 minutes)**

How does being created in the image of God impact your ministry and life? Diagram, draw, write or create a presentation about your being created in the image of God.

## Reading (5 minutes)

Read the following out loud or have the students turn to pages 70-72 in their text and read it silently. Have some copies on hand if you choose to have the class read silently.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) provides aid to people displaced from their homes due to violence, oppression and natural disaster. Although it was thought that the flow of refugees would slow after the end of World War II, this has, unfortunately, not been the case. The millions of refugees across the world make this work all the more necessary, and UMCOR depends on the good, kind and radically inclusive hospitable hearts of United Methodists in the pews to welcome strangers from across the world as part of the resettlement process. Refugee assistance was one of the first and largest areas to which UMCOR provided relief when the committee was first formed. World War II had caused a great influx of refugees fleeing from the war, and the rate never slowed down. Today UMCOR continues to provide refugee aid in crisis areas across the world, working with the Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program network of a variety of denominations and ecumenical agencies and United Methodist churches. Delays resulting from the introduction of new U.S. Homeland Security checks in February 2011 contributed to a significant drop in U.S. refugee admissions in 2011 (fiscal year October 1, 2010–September 30, 2011), with Church World Service resettling 5,322 (down from 7,055 in 2010) toward a U.S. Refugee Admissions Program total of 56,424 (down from 74,654 in 2010).\*

This is close to 10 percent of all refugee arrivals in the United States for the year. However, to get a true grasp on the need for resettlement it is important to look at the worldwide figures. The United Nations estimates that 15.4 million people around the world are uprooted from their countries because of persecution and armed conflict.† Approximately 805,000 of that number are in need of permanent resettlement to a third country. But throughout the world, only about 80,000—less than one percent of the world’s refugees—get the opportunity to be resettled. Many others will spend their lives in refugee camps or as undocumented persons in a country not their own. Across the world thousands of persons have been born and raised in refugee camps with little hope of having a permanent home.‡

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\* Church World Service, “Church World Service Resettles 5,322 Refugees in FY 2011 Toward 56,424 U.S. Refugee Program Total,” October 14, 2011, [www.churchworldservice.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=13211](http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=13211).

† UNHCR, “World Refugee Day: UNHCR Report Finds 80 Percent of World’s Refugees in Developing Countries,” June 20, 2011, [www.unhcr.org/4dfb66ef9.html](http://www.unhcr.org/4dfb66ef9.html).

‡ UNHCR, “UNHCR Urges More Countries to Establish Refugee Resettlement Programmes,” July 5, 2010, [www.unhcr.org/4c31cd236.html](http://www.unhcr.org/4c31cd236.html).



Naomi Madsen, program manager of UMCOR's refugee resettlement ministry, explains that the refugee resettlement is apolitical. It is a ministry that positively impacts both the person involved in the ministry as well as the refugees:

It is a transformational ministry. The transformation doesn't happen so much to the refugees but rather to people who help them to resettle. It is a miracle when someone is resettled and you get to know a life that you could not imagine. That offers a chance to realize that someone you thought was completely other is more like you than you ever dreamed possible. Hearing about refugees is not the same thing as becoming a friend and really getting to know them. It is so easy. All you have to do is be a friend to someone, be a neighbor, and change the world. You can change someone else's life, as well as your own, by simply being a friend.<sup>§</sup>

### **Large Group Discussion (15 minutes)**

Ask the class as a whole the following questions:

1. Has your church resettled a refugee or refugee family? If so, please tell us about this experience.
2. How does refugee status differ from that of migrants and other immigrants?
3. Why is refugee resettlement a ministry of radical, inclusive hospitality?
4. What steps would you take to embrace refugee resettlement as a ministry?
5. What is the difference between a refugee and a migrant? How would a ministry to migrants differ from a ministry to refugees?

### **Reading (5 minutes)**

Read "Maria's Story." Have the students turn to pages 249-252 in their text and read it silently. Have some copies available should participants need them. Following the story, provide the group with an opportunity to share feelings and opinions about Maria's story.

#### **Maria's Story**

*This was written by the Rev. Barb Dinnen of Las Americas Faith Community, Trinity United Methodist Church in Des Moines, Iowa, June 2009. Used with permission.*

Maria died on a Monday night, but the coroner didn't register her death officially until Tuesday morning. He said the official cause of death was exposure, meaning exposure

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<sup>§</sup> From personal communication with Naomi Madsen.

to the heat and cold, sun and drought of the desert that she crossed from Mexico to Arizona. I guess I would say she died of exposure not only to the cruel elements of nature but to cruel, unjust immigration laws, to cold hearts and hot tempers driven by fear of the privileged population believing the “Marias” of the world want to “take from” them.

“Take what?” I wonder. Would they take anything nearly as valuable as your family, the ones you love, the very heart of your being? Maria knew what it was like to be separated from her family. When her mother had fled to the United States from El Salvador during the war years with the hope of finding a job so she could send money back to feed the family, Maria stayed in Usulután, El Salvador, to take care of her grandmother. Maria’s brothers came to the United States at different times for different reasons. When *Abuelita* died, it was Maria’s time to finally reunite with her mother who by that time was a permanent resident.

When Maria crossed the border she was stopped by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials and was given a court date to appear before a judge in Texas. Her family paid the required fees and brought Maria to Iowa. Because Texas was far away and Maria did not have a lawyer to ask how to change the venue, she didn’t appear before a judge, which was an automatic cause for the judge to issue a deportation order.

Around nine years later at seven o’clock in the morning, ICE officials knocked on her mother’s door. Maria, always cheerful and friendly, opened the door and they barged into the house. They had a piece of paper with someone’s name and picture on it. The family knew the name, but the person had never lived in that house and they thought he moved out of state. The ICE agents asked for everyone to show their IDs and then they arrested Maria, her brother, and a family friend. Her brother was released on bond, but Maria was deported in April.

From El Salvador, Maria told her mother she was coming back to the United States. Her mother begged her not to, but Maria made arrangements with a coyote and paid him \$6,500, which provided her a trip and guide through Mexico, mostly in taxis or vans, and then another guide would take her over the border. The group of 21 prepared to walk two nights, all night long. They made it through the first night, but during the second night they were spotted by a helicopter and they hid. Later the helicopter came back and sent agents to capture them. Half of the group was caught, but Maria was one of a small group that followed the coyote and escaped. They regrouped and decided they would wait a day and go another way.

On the day they were to take off, Maria called her mom and told her the story—her fear, the exhaustion, the thirst, the hunger, the bruises and bumps. Her mother heard Maria's deep, profound cough and begged her daughter to turn back, but she did not. As they walked they heard the helicopter overhead and they all dove into the hot, biting sand. The helicopters flew away. Before the day was up Maria became weak. A friend carried Maria in his arms because she could no longer walk. The rest of the group was impatient with him. That evening he knew that she had died. The others in the group said, "Put her down. She's already dead. Put her down so we can get going!"

"No!" he cried. "She is a human being, not an animal. I'm not leaving her here!"

The others took off without them. Maria's friend found shade under a tree, put her under the tree and covered her with a sweater. He walked for two hours trying to find someone to help, anyone, with no luck. He returned to Maria and carried her to the highway, which took the rest of the night. Early in the morning he reached the highway and set her body along the side of the road and went in search of anyone who could help him. He found an immigration station and told them where he had left the body and how they could identify her. His arms were bloody and bruised from carrying Maria through the night. He was exhausted and weak from hunger and thirst. Immigration officials put handcuffs around his bloody wrists and arrested him. After he was processed, he was allowed to call Maria's family to explain what had happened. They say they will always be grateful for her friend's compassion and sacrifice. If he hadn't made such a sacrifice, Maria's body would have been left along the way, unidentifiable, unburied, abandoned to the forces of nature.

Maria's friend feels fortunate. Normally a person caught while returning to the United States after he or she has been deported receives an automatic long-term jail sentence. His lawyers have given him hope that he will be in jail for only a couple of months before they deport him. Because of his heroic and humanitarian efforts, the lawyer hopes they will be lenient with him.

Maria's family knows many, many people who have crossed as Maria did, and they have heard of the hundreds of people who die each year, but they never knew anyone who had died. They were sure it had to be a mistake until they actually saw her body. They couldn't imagine another option except to have her body brought to Iowa; however, they had no idea that the complete cost of the sending and preparing the body and the coffin and burial plot would cost \$17,000. They would have done the same had they known ahead of time, but they continue wondering if there would have been a cheaper way.

## Small Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Have groups answer the following questions:

1. Would you be willing to cross a border to be able to feed your family?
2. How could your church use Psalm 146 as a basis for a ministry to migrants?
3. Why did Pharaoh chase after the Hebrew people? What would be the economic ramifications in Egypt as a result of their leaving? What would happen in the United States if all 10.5 million undocumented persons were deported? How would it affect our economy and our families?
4. How can we sing the Lord in a strange land?

## Small Group Activity (10 minutes)

The five readers assigned last session will present the “Immigration Issues” skit as the class watches. At its conclusion, hold a moment of silence.

### Immigration Issues Skit

*Adapted from a script by Elizabeth Ferris. Used with permission.*

Performers

John: Businessman

Elsa: Asylum seeker

Mary: Traveler

Brenda: Traveler

Announcer

*Performance note:* Actors are encouraged to change their lines so they are comfortable and natural with them.

Scene

The skit is set at a departure gate at the airport nearest the area where the skit is being performed. Two women are sitting on a three-seat bench, with an empty seat between them. (Three chairs will do.) A man and a woman are standing. All look tired.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you for waiting, ladies and gentlemen. Unfortunately, due to bad weather, Flight 117 will be delayed. We expect to begin boarding in 20 minutes. Thank you for your patience.

(John sighs and sits down between the two women, addressing Elsa.)

JOHN: Mind if I sit here? I'm really tired. Meetings really take a lot out of you.

ELSA: Yeah, I know what you mean. Two hours in a meeting takes as much energy as six hours of scrubbing floors or mowing grass—and you usually get fewer results.

JOHN: Boy, isn't that the truth. But it sure is great when it's over and you are finally on your way home, isn't it?

ELSA: Going home *would* be wonderful.

JOHN: You've got another meeting?

ELSA: No, it's not that. You see, I'm an asylee, a refugee. I can't go home.

JOHN: You're an asylee?

ELSA: (Nods.)

JOHN: You sure don't look like you're an asylum seeker.

ELSA: Yeah, sometimes we asylum seekers look like regular people, like "real Americans."

JOHN: Well, I guess I put my foot in my mouth. I'm sorry. It's just that the newspapers are full of stories about how many asylum seekers are sneaking in as terrorists. I mean there was that sheik who bombed the World Trade Center in 1993, and the guys who blew up the Oklahoma City Federal Building in 1995, and then there was 9/11! But you don't look like a terrorist.

ELSA: Oh brother. ... The sheik was not a refugee. The guys who blew up the federal building were U.S. citizens. The 9/11 attacks were carried out by men with temporary visas. Asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants aren't terrorists—they're people who have to leave their countries because of persecution.

JOHN: Like because they were Christians in a country that didn't like Christians?

ELSA: Sometimes, but not always. Asylum seekers not only have to be persecuted, they have to be able to prove that persecution.

JOHN: Like having a note from your dictator? (Chuckling.)

ELSA: (Silence.)

JOHN: I guess I did it again.

ELSA: I have a hard time joking about these things. The U.S. government is making it harder and harder for people to be recognized as asylum seekers and as refugees.

JOHN: That's because so many people are sneaking in as terrorists or being smuggled in on boats or sneaking across the border. You know, just about everyone in the whole world would like to live in the United States.

MARY: We can't take all those people. We've got to look after our own people. How can we let in all those foreigners when we can't even deal with all our own problems?

JOHN: And even with all that, people are still dying to come to the United States.

ELSA: Not everyone wants to come to the United States. Most people—even poor people, even persecuted people—want to stay in their communities with their families. Do you know what it means to leave everything—your relatives, your home, your photographs, your land, the sound of your language on the streets, your parties, your jokes?

JOHN: I know, I know. But you have to admit that a lot of people who come to this country aren't persecuted—they're just coming for jobs, to make a better life for themselves, and they sneak in. They're just swarming in, hundreds of thousands, millions of them.

MARY: And they take our jobs away and have lots of babies. Someday this country will be nothing but immigrants.

ELSA: And where did your parents and grandparents come from?

MARY: Excuse me, I need to use the ladies room.

(Brenda sits in Mary's seat, pulls out some papers and starts reading.)

JOHN: Well, you made your point. I guess we're all immigrants one way or another.

ELSA: You're right about one thing: People are confused about refugees, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants, legal immigrants and migrants, and now it's getting even more confusing with stories of smugglers and terrorists. This is leading to a backlash against foreigners, even people who look like foreigners, at least to those who view Americans as white English speakers.

JOHN: Look, I already apologized for saying that you don't look like a refugee.

ELSA: That's not the point—there's so much misinformation out there. People are getting all riled up about hordes of foreigners coming in, and that just isn't true. Why if you look at the figures—

JOHN: (Interrupting) I'm sorry, but I just can't take any more numbers. One side uses one set of numbers and the other side uses another set of numbers. I just can't make sense of it anymore. The point is that more foreigners are coming and they're staying and bringing their families and putting a drain on our resources.

ELSA: They don't all stay.

JOHN: Well, maybe a few move on—go to Canada where there's not so much crime or go home when they've made enough money.

ELSA: Actually about one-third of those who come move on or go home.

JOHN: And where did you get that figure?

ELSA: The U.S. Department of Justice.

JOHN: But you have to admit that we're losing control of our borders. Here we are the most powerful country in the world and we can't stop people from coming in, disregarding our laws. We need more border patrols, helicopters, fences, drone planes, stadium lights, high-powered rifles ...

ELSA: Perhaps tanks and landmines?

JOHN: Well, I don't know about landmines, but tanks wouldn't be a bad idea.

ELSA: Say we could keep all illegal immigrants out, how would you feel knowing that some of the people you stopped from coming in were refugees or asylum seekers? How would you feel knowing that some of those people will be persecuted, tortured, killed?

BRENDA: (Puts down her papers and joins the conversation.) I don't think you need tanks. Congress is talking about other ways to keep most people out while letting those who are really persecuted stay.

JOHN: Yeah, that's what I mean. We could still be a generous and open country but send back the ones we don't want—I mean the ones who wouldn't really suffer back home.

BRENDA: A lot of people come with forged passports or no identification at all, so it's almost impossible to check out their story. Those people we could send back with a clear conscience. We have that expedited removal law that sends them straight back right from this very airport.

ELSA: You mean like turning away Jews escaping Nazi Germany because their passports were forged? Or sending Muslim women back because their religion teaches them to not speak to men they don't know?

BRENDA: It's not the same thing.

ELSA: It isn't? One of my co-workers from Iran has a terrible story of persecution and torture. He spent years in jail and saw family members killed. There was no way he could get a legal passport, not from the government who was persecuting him.

BRENDA: How did he get out?

ELSA: He walked to Turkey. Then when he couldn't survive there, he walked into Greece, across minefields, and then got a fake passport and flew to the United States.

BRENDA: Aha! That's not our problem. He should have been sent back to Greece and they should have dealt with him, not us. If an asylum seeker has passed through a safe country then we should send him or her back there and let that government decide.



ELSA: But then Greece would send him back to Turkey and Turkey could send him back to Iran. No country is safe for everyone. And he had cousins here to help him get started.

BRENDA: But at least you'll agree that those people who are obviously not refugees should be sent back.

(Mary comes back, obviously agitated.)

MARY: There's a woman in the bathroom who's crying and crying. She was speaking Spanish and was hard to understand, but her husband was killed by men with guns.

BRENDA: Where is she from?

MARY: She wouldn't say. She didn't have a passport. But she was raped and they beat her until she was unconscious and she doesn't know where her children are. And she's crying so much she doesn't make much sense.

BRENDA: How did she get here?

MARY: She got to Mexico and then somehow got some money and bought a plane ticket.

ELSA: How old is she?

MARY: About 20—she's very scared and all alone.

JOHN: What did you say to her?

MARY: She calmed down for a few minutes and asked me to translate a piece of paper for her. It said, "I want to apply for political asylum. I'm afraid to go home." I don't know what will happen to her. Even after what I said about looking after our own and too many foreigners coming to this country, she deserves a chance.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you for waiting, ladies and gentlemen. Flight 117 is now ready for boarding.

MARY: It doesn't feel right to just leave her there in the bathroom. Maybe I should go find a police officer or something.

BRENDA: Don't worry. Someone will turn her in, and since she's an asylum seeker she'll get sent to one of our detention centers. At least she'll get food there and if she's lucky one of those pro bono attorneys will help her with her case. There's nothing much you can do.

MARY: (Not moving) Oh, I just don't know.

ELSA: (To John) Better get your bags, sir. It's time for you to go home.

### **Closing Prayer (in unison)**

*Read prayer following a moment of silence at end of reading.*

Creator God, across the ages you have blessed and protected people on the move. We come to you seeking guidance as we explore scripture and seek to welcome sisters and brothers from across the globe. Help us to open our hearts, minds, homes and churches to strangers in our communities. Remind us that just as Christ welcomed everyone he met, we are to do likewise. Please give wisdom and courage to those who make and enforce immigration laws. Be with us as we continue to study immigration issues and change us, we pray. Change us that your will be done as we seek to offer radical, inclusive hospitality to whomever you bring into our lives. Amen.

### **Assignment for Next Session**

Have the class complete the following assignments:

1. Take time to meditate on the closing skit. Decide whom you most identify with.
2. Journal about the action you feel Christ would call for in response to the situation presented, or write your own psalm or rewrite one of the Psalms to reflect a contemporary immigration story or viewpoint. (You will be invited to share writing with the group next session but will not be required to do so.)
3. Read Chapters 5 and 6.

## Session 3

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# Chapters 5 and 6

### **Pre-class Activity**

Have class members find one or two partners and discuss the relationship of immigration, the Middle Passage, slavery, indentured servanthood and trafficking. This can be done by contrasting the terms and discussing the treatment of present day undocumented immigrants with the historic treatment of slaves and indentured servants. You might also want to discuss how trafficking is part of the contemporary immigration story.

### **Opening Devotion (10 minutes)**

*Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.*

—Ruth 1:16

### **Greeting**

As we continue our study of immigration and the Bible, I invite you in this time of silence to come forward to light a candle/place a stone/or pour water as you offer a silent prayer that the fruits of our study be in accordance with the will of God our Creator, Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit, our teacher and guide.

### **Silent Prayer**

Prayers may be offered in complete silence or while a hymn such as “Sanctuary” (*The Faith We Sing* #2164) or “Here I Am, Lord” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #593) is played quietly.

### **Reading**

Many migrants leave their loved ones to seek employment and send money (known as remittances) home to support their families. Some of us wonder how anyone can leave his or her children and migrate to another land for work. In our culture, it is almost unthinkable, but if we were living in rural poverty in a developing country and making one dollar a day (or less), we would begin to understand the drive to migrate. Moving

to the nearest developed country would make a great deal of sense. The options are to migrate or watch children and loved ones starve.

In very poor countries it is not uncommon for a mother to have to decide which child she feeds and which child she lets starve. During 2011, as famine spread over the Horn of Africa, we watched story after story of families walking for days to a refugee camp seeking medical aid and food. National news showed us a mother with a two-year-old child who weighed seven pounds and others carrying emaciated children who were dying in their arms. Stories were told of leaving children and family members to die under trees or shrubs as the family moved on to seek help for the living. Migrants walk for food, for life, for work, and in hope of finding radical, inclusive, hospitable people who will recognize their humanity and give them a chance at new life.

Deuteronomy 24:19-21 instructs us,

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

## Hymn

“Sanctuary” (*The Faith We Sing* #2164)

or “Here I Am, Lord” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #593)

## Prayer for Direction (in unison)

God of refuge, you have traveled with us throughout the ages. You are walking with us in our darkest moments and crying with the trafficked, enslaved, oppressed and marginalized. We come to you today asking that you change and open our hearts, our minds and our doors to sisters and brothers who throughout the ages have been victimized. We give you thanks for scriptures that guide us and for Christ who came to us as a migrant and refugee and offered us salvation. We give you thanks for the Holy Spirit who moves with us as we migrate physically, emotionally and intellectually to new lands that you have prepared for us. As we continue this study, we ask that you change us according to your divine will to be the hands and feet of Christ in our world as we seek to offer hospitality to

strangers, remembering that to them we are the stranger. Change us, O Lord.  
Change us, we pray. Amen.

### **Touching Base (10 minutes)**

1. Give participants time to sit in silence and to meditate on the reading and prayer for this session.
2. Invite participants to read from their journals reflecting on the skit that closed the second session.
3. Ask members of the group if they are continuing to use the “Change me” prayer and if they have noticed any changes in their thoughts, feelings, actions, attitudes, desires, etc.

### **Large Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

Have the group answer the following questions, making certain that everyone has an opportunity to participate in the discussion:

1. Consider the stories of Ruth and Naomi (from the book of Ruth). Are similar situations happening today? Explain and describe.
2. How would you differentiate between Ruth’s actions that result in her marriage to Boaz and those of a modern-day migrant who seeks a partner to bring stability to her life?
3. How would migrants be treated in the United States if we followed the Hebrew Bible teachings of Ruth and Deuteronomy?
4. Do you think it is fair to refuse to legalize a spouse of a U.S. citizen because that person came into the country without documents?
5. In the book of Esther, Esther was told perhaps she was married to the King for “such a time as this.” Her presence resulted in a greater good for her people. Do you believe God places us in situations for “such a time as this?” If so, give examples. (Please keep in mind that “such a time as this” may have been an interaction with a much smaller part of God’s creation than Esther impacted.)

### **Small Group Discussion (15 minutes)**

Have participants break into groups of no more than seven and discuss the following questions:

1. Where have you been placed by God and what are you called to do?
2. Is it true that everyone wants to come to the United States? Explain your answer.

3. Do you know of any trafficking situations in your town, state or country? Describe them.
4. Have you ever fasted? In Isaiah 58:6-10, God speaks about the desired type of fasting. How could it be incorporated into your personal and corporate faith practices?
5. If you had to make the choice, which child or family member would you let starve? Keep in mind that if *you* choose to starve all will starve as you are the provider.
6. Do you agree that there is a Christian myth of superiority?
7. Keeping in mind that many undocumented persons are living in indentured servitude or worse, how did and do Christians justify slavery and indentured servitude?

### **Individual Activity (5 minutes)**

Have participants begin to create or plan a work that shows how their lives are tied up in a global identity. Have them draw or write or create a collage of their identity, listing languages, customs, traditions, pastimes, food, music, styles, décor and dress that are important to them and as many ethnic groups they touch or who touch them that make them who they are today. They may discuss their thoughts and plans with others. Have the class finish the project for homework.

### **Large Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

Have session participants respond to the following statements. List their answers.

1. Immigration is a hot-button issue for many of us—our friends, our families, our church and our communities. List the issues. Why is it a hot-button issue?
2. Based on the Hebrew Bible, how should we respond to immigrants in the land? Aim your responses to items on the “hot-button issue” chart.

### **Small Group Activity (15 minutes)**

In their small groups, ask the class to consider the idea of developing a prayer ministry using seniors and persons who are physically disabled to undergird and support the ministries of the church and the needs of the people of their communities, including documented and undocumented immigrants. Have them come up with ways people with opposing viewpoints can pray in one accord on any topic. They should give the ministry a name and a focus and explain how they would go about developing this ministry.

## **Large Group Discussion (15 minutes)**

1. Have the groups briefly share their ideas. Invite them to take the ideas home with them and institute the ministry in their home churches.
2. Together outline Jesus' life until he began to call his disciples. Be certain to indicate how the areas of his life made him part of the migration narrative of the Bible. (For example, Jesus was born in a makeshift shelter, as are many migrant babies across the world.)

## **Small Group Discussion (15 minutes)**

Have the class once again gather into small groups of no more than seven. Discuss the following questions:

1. Have you left life as you know it to follow Christ like the disciples who left their nets and their father? If not, do you know someone who has? If so, please share that story.
2. Referring to the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), discuss how it might be used to develop a response to and ministry for day laborers.
3. The text suggests that Jesus may have been the person beaten in the parable of the Good Samaritan. How does this interpretation impact your understanding of the parable?
4. How is the Lord's Table an example of radical, inclusive hospitality?
5. How does praying as a community rather than an individual change the tone of prayer?
6. Theologically, we are migrants on this earth looking for the city that is to come. In Hebrews 13:16 we are told, "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." How does this statement impact our relationship and ministry with immigrants?
7. Jesus did not have the papers of a Roman citizen at the time of his crucifixion. Does this knowledge in any way alter your perception of "undocumented" people in our world? Why or why not?
8. How is our response to the uprooted persons of the world tied to our relationship with Christ?
9. What ministries might your local church develop or expand to show radical, inclusive hospitality to strangers?

## Reading (15 minutes)

Assign different class members to read different parts. Have the class read in unison the parts labeled “Congregation.”

### **Welcoming the Strangers: Refugees, Migrants, Asylum Seekers**

Refugees are people who have been forced to cross international borders because they fear being persecuted because of their race, ethnicity, religion, membership in a particular social group, or political affiliation. In the United States, refugees must be identified as refugees in a country other than their country of origin and then interviewed and cleared for admission to the U.S. resettlement program. Less than 1 percent of the world’s refugees are ever permanently resettled. An asylum seeker fears the same type of persecution as refugees but asks for asylum on arriving in a safe country. Migrants are forced to leave their homes seeking gainful employment to support their families or themselves. The following message demonstrates how our biblical ancestors would be welcome under current immigration law.

FIRST READER: Romans 13:1-5: Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience.

ADAM: Our names are Adam and Eve. We disobeyed our Creator and were sent into exile to till and live off the land.

EVE: We can’t go home. Will you welcome us?

CONGREGATION: Do you have documents giving you permission to be here? The United States welcomes only persons with proper travel documents. If you don’t have permission to be here, we cannot welcome you. We are sorry, but you must go.

NOAH: My name is Noah. There was a great flood! Only my family and the animals—two of each kind—survived. Our home is gone. Please take us in.



CONGREGATION: Natural disasters need to be dealt with where they happened. We can't take everyone in. You are migrants. Sorry, go somewhere else. Our laws do not provide a place for you.

ABRAHAM: God told us to leave our homes and to travel to this the place God has shown us.

SARAH: Will you give us a home?

CONGREGATION: People who hear voices are not wanted here. You would drain our medical system. We would have to pay for your health care. Sorry, the United States is selective about who can come to our country.

JACOB: I am Jacob. My older brother has threatened to kill me. I can't go home. Please take me in.

CONGREGATION: We have our own family problems. Domestic violence is not grounds for admittance. Our laws will not grant you sanctuary. Sorry, go home and work it out with your brother.

JOSEPH: I am Joseph. My brothers sold me into slavery. I was brought to the United States to work. Please help me.

CONGREGATION: Slavery is against the law. We don't have slaves in the United States. You must have the proper documents to work here. You have no legal right to be here. Sorry, you will be sent home.

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS: We are Joseph's brothers. There is famine in our land. We have no food to eat. Will you feed us and give us a home?

CONGREGATION: Famine and starvation are not grounds for admission to the United States. You would eat our food and take our jobs. Sorry, our county's laws will not let you stay here. You must return to your home country and see if you can find a legal way to get here.

MOSES: My name is Moses. I killed an Egyptian who was mistreating my people. I had to flee. Please, please protect me.

**CONGREGATION:** You are a criminal alien. There are laws against people like you. The United States doesn't give asylum to criminals. Sorry, you will be sent back. We have enough of our own criminals.

**AARON:** I am Aaron, spokesperson for the nation of Israel. We are workers, good brick-makers, carpenters, and farmworkers. We are strong and willing workers. We are looking for the Promised Land. We are seeking permission to enter. My people are waiting on the other side of the fence, and we can harvest your crops and build your houses.

**CONGREGATION:** You are migrants! You had jobs in your country; you just didn't like the working conditions and you think you can get better pay here. Sorry, we need our jobs for our people. You are undocumented. You will have to stay on the other side of the border.

**RUTH:** I am Ruth. My husband died, and I followed my mother-in-law to her country, the United States. Naomi is my only family. Please help me.

**CONGREGATION:** Naomi is welcome. She is a citizen, but you have no legal right to be here—you are not her daughter. We are sorry that your husband died, but you will have to leave. We don't want you harvesting our crops and taking our benefits.

**ESTHER:** I am Esther. I have been trafficked and was brought here to be used for a high official's sexual pleasure. Please help me.

**CONGREGATION:** You have no right to be here. Trafficked people are not allowed in this country. We are a moral people who are subject to the governing authorities. They will put you in prison until we can deport you. You weren't persecuted—you were just kidnapped. Your country should protect you. Sorry, but you will have to go home.

**JOSEPH:** I am Joseph. This is my wife, Mary, and our son, Jesus. We have had to flee our country because the king is killing all the boys under two years of age.

**MARY:** We fled in the middle of the night. We have nothing, and we have no identification. Will you give us work and sanctuary and asylum?

**CONGREGATION:** We are willing to help you, but there are laws that have to be followed. Our law states that if you enter without documents, you have to seek

asylum from prison. Joseph, you will go to one prison. Mary, you will go to another, and Jesus, you will go to a third (until we find foster care for you, that is). We are sorry, but that's the law.

SAMARITAN: Please help me. I'm from Samaria and I'm not documented. I saw a man, a United States citizen, being robbed. I stopped to help him. The police came, and when they asked for identification, I ran. I just tried to help. Please help me. My wife is a U.S. citizen and our children will starve if I can't work.

CONGREGATION: Laws have to be followed. You have no right to be here. Our government will send you back. We are sorry, but you will have to leave the United States. Since your wife is a U.S. citizen, she and the children can stay here without you or leave and go with you.

JESUS: They call me Jesus. I come begging for help for my 12 friends. When we got off the plane, we asked for asylum. My friends were being persecuted in our homeland for following me. But the U.S. government officials didn't believe us. Everyone but me is in expedited removal; they are all being sent back. I managed to slip away and came here to this church to ask for help.

CONGREGATION: The United States has laws to keep out terrorists. You are one of a group of 13 Middle Eastern men we've heard about. You meet in rented rooms, you go into the mountains for private meetings, no one knows where you get your money, and you travel by boat and meet with strangers. You are trying to organize the poor and the oppressed. You could very well be a terrorist. Expedited removal will make certain you can't harm us. We are sorry, but you and the 12 other men will have to leave. It's the law.

SECOND READER: Romans 12:9-13: Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

THIRD READER: Romans 13:8: Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

JESUS: Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:34-40)

## **Closing Prayer (in unison)**

### **Creed for Immigrants**

We believe in almighty God, who guided God’s people in exile and in exodus, the God of Joseph in Egypt and of Daniel in Babylon, the God of foreigners and immigrants. We believe in Jesus Christ a displaced Galilean, who was born away from his people and his home, who had to flee the country with his parents when his life was in danger, and who upon returning to his own country had to suffer the oppression of the tyrant Pontius Pilate, the servant of a foreign power. He was persecuted, beaten, tortured, and finally accused and condemned to death unjustly. But on the third day, this scorned Jesus rose from the dead, not as a foreigner but to offer us citizenship in heaven.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the eternal immigrant from God’s Kin-dom among us, who speaks all languages, lives in all countries, and reunites all races. We believe that the church is the secure home for all foreigners and believers who constitute it; it speaks the same language and has the same purpose. We believe that the communion of saints begins when we accept the diversity of the saints. We believe in forgiveness, which makes us all equal, and in reconciliation, which identifies us more than does race, language or nationality. We believe that in the Resurrection, God will unite us as one people in which all are distinct and all are alike at the same time. We believe in the eternal life beyond this world, where no one will be an immigrant but all will be citizens of God’s Kin-dom that has no end. Amen.

## **Assignment for Next Session**

Have the class read Chapters 7 and 8 and complete their global identity project they began in the individual activity from this session.

## Session 4

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# Chapters 7 and 8

### **Pre-class Activity**

Have class members post their global identity collages on the class walls or tables provided for the display and take time to view the collages.

### **Opening Devotion (10 minutes)**

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.*

—Hebrews 13:2-4

### **Greeting**

As we begin this last session in our study of immigration and the Bible, I invite you in this time of silence to come forward to light a candle/place a stone/or pour water as you offer a silent prayer that the fruits of our study be in accordance with the will of God our Creator, Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit, our teacher and guide.

### **Silent Prayer**

Prayers may be offered in complete silence or while a hymn such as “Jesus’ Hands Were Kind Hands” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #273) is played quietly.

### **Reading**

Jasmine’s Story

*From “Jasmine’s Story: ICE Tears Apart Family” by Jasmine Franco for the General Board of Church and Society, August 6, 2010 ([www.umc-gbcs.org](http://www.umc-gbcs.org)). Reprinted with permission.*

My name is Jasmine Franco. I am 18 years old. I was born in Chicago, but my parents are from Guatemala. This summer I graduated from Huron High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I felt very proud of myself for graduating because I am the first person in my

immediate family to graduate from high school. And when I start at Washtenaw Community College in the fall, I will be the first in my family to attend college.

Before I get into more, I want to ask you a question: How would you feel if you were separated from your family and forced to live by yourself? And how would you feel if at age 17 you had to support yourself? This happened to me.

On November 22, 2008, my family was going out to eat at my mother's favorite restaurant, La Fuente in Ypsilanti. We were heading out when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents pushed our front door open. They came into our house without asking permission. They yelled at us to get down on the floor. When they saw my mother, they searched her and then told us to sit down.

They showed us their badges that said ICE. As soon as I saw the word ICE I started crying. I knew what was going to happen to my mother. The agents asked my mother for her papers, but she was terrified and confused. She didn't know what to say to them. So she ran to the room and got the papers of my 12-year-old sister, Jennifer, and me, hoping they would feel sorry for her and let her go. The agents were not sorry for anyone, though. My mother had been in the United States for 19 years. She is a hardworking woman and the best mother. Unfortunately, I am now away from her.

I used to visit her every Thursday at the Calhoun County Jail's immigration holding facilities. While she was there, my mother lost so much weight. Almost every day she found flies in her food and wouldn't eat it. My father would give me money to put in her account so she could order food that was sealed, such as soups and chips.

My mother also faced discrimination by a jailer. It got to the point that when we sent my mother photos the jailer ripped them off the walls and cut them up in my mother's face. The jailer would throw them on the floor and then tell my mother to pick them up. My mother was really upset.

My mother is now in Guatemala, away from me, because she got deported. She was deported on January 21, 2009, the day after my birthday. I couldn't even say good-bye to her and give her a hug.

I still had my father and sister until February 2, 2009. My father was certain he would get caught too. So he decided to leave. I went with him to the airport. It was really sad watching him and my sister go away, knowing that we most likely will never be together again.

My dad was really sad, torn apart that he had to leave his 17-year-old daughter in this country by herself. He did not want to go and leave me. I can still remember him walking, looking back every 20 seconds or so. I couldn't stop crying. It was the worst moment in my life: now I had just lost my father and sister, too.

After my dad left I had to live by myself. I went to school and worked at my mother's former job for a cleaning company. It was very difficult. I got home from work around 11:30 at night, and then I had to do my homework to be ready for school the next day. I would always be really tired. But I knew education is important to succeed in this country. I want to be a pediatrician. For that I have to go to school and work hard. Many times I sat in my room crying. I asked, "Why God? Why did this happen to me? I haven't done anything wrong to deserve this."

In April 2009, I heard about this wonderful person named Melanie Carey, pastor at First United Methodist Church in Ypsilanti. I got in touch with her. She supported me in any way possible. The church helped me financially in driving to school and many other things. When the congregation heard about my frequent weekends going without food, a group set up a weekly rotation to provide groceries. When I ultimately lost the cleaning job, a member found me a clerical position at a cemetery.

This church and many other people from a parenting small group helped me get a flight to Guatemala to visit my parents. I went to see them one year after our big tragedy. We spent Christmas and New Year's together.

The First United Methodist Church in Ypsilanti was a big help for me. I really appreciate the members' help. Without their support I wouldn't be able to share my story. When Melanie and her husband realized how much I missed my own family, they took me into their home for my senior year. This stable family life produced positive results. I worked fewer hours, studied more, and improved my grades, which had begun to fall markedly.

Before I met Melanie, I had a very difficult time. There would be days that I wouldn't eat because I had no money. But since I found this church, which I have joined, I have been able to do so many things, such as graduate from high school and be published in a national magazine (*New World Outlook*). I had the opportunity to do these things because the members of First United Methodist Church helped me so much.

It makes a big difference to have people there for you who are willing to help. Without all of them, I would've been just another student who dropped out of school to support herself. I thank them so much for their help. Melanie says it takes a village to raise a kid, and I found such a village here.

Their support has changed my life for good. I actually have a future. I hosted a graduation open house and invited everyone at the church to attend. I graduated because of my church family. I have been truly blessed by God, who put all of them in my way.

Faith is the only thing I had. And my faith helped me face all the challenges that I have encountered. I am so grateful that God put all of these people in my way. I am so thankful. I hope we can help other families not to get separated like my family did.

## Hymn

“Jesus’ Hands Were Kind Hands” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #273)

## Prayer for Direction (in unison)

Open our eyes that they may see the deepest needs of men and women. Move our hands that they may feed the hungry. Touch our hearts that it may bring warmth to the despairing. Teach us generosity that welcomes strangers. Let us share our possessions to clothe the naked. Give us the care that strengthens the sick. Make us share in the quest to set the prisoners free. In sharing our anxiety and our love, our poverty, and our prosperity, we partake of your divine presence. Amen. (*Source: Canaan Banana, Zimbabwe. With All God's People: The New Ecumenical Prayer Cycle* [Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989], 344).

## Touching Base (10 minutes)

1. Give participants time to sit in silence and meditate on the reading and prayer for this session. Then invite brief comments or responses to Jasmine's story.
2. Invite participants to share ideas they are beginning to formulate concerning possible ministry with or reactions to immigrants in their areas.



## Large Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Ask the group as a whole the following questions:

1. How is the Trinity an example of inclusivity?
2. How do communities model a triune relationship?
3. How can we build radical, inclusive, hospitable communities?
4. How does communion make us blood relatives?
5. What is God's mandate in the Hebrew Bible and how would Christ ask us to respond?
6. How would imagining Jesus as Love rather than Lord affect your relationships?
7. David Kirk said, "Hospitality becomes for the Christian community a way of being the sacrament of God's love in the world."\* Do you agree? Please explain.

## Individual Activity (10 minutes)

Jasmine's story happens hundreds or perhaps thousands of times each week in the United States and around the world. Write a letter to a child whose mother has been deported and explain why it had to happen, how you feel about it, and your hopes and prayers for the coming years, or write a letter to an immigration detainee who has never committed a crime but is detained because her work visa expired and she remained in the United States in order to send money home to feed her family. (You will be given an opportunity to share your thoughts if you would like to do so.)

## Small Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Have participants gather together in groups of no more than seven and have those who would like to share their letters do so. Once this is completed, have them discuss the following questions:

1. What are your feelings about families being separated because of immigration status?
2. What steps can a church take to develop a program of radical, inclusive hospitality toward immigrants?
3. Does your church hosts a Justice for Our Neighbors ministry? If not, do you feel this would be a good ministry for your local church and why?
4. What types of ministries with uprooted people could local churches develop?

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\* David Kirk, "Hospitality: Essence of Eastern Christian Lifestyle," *Diakonia* 16, no. 2 (1981): 112.

## Reading (2 minutes)

Galatians 3:28 states, “There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” Until we are all—each and every one of us—free to be exactly the person God has created us to be, none of us are free. As long as there is one person who cannot walk the streets with his or her head held high and feel the sunshine on his or her face, none of us can truly walk with our heads held high.

As radical, inclusive, hospitable disciples and theologians, we see immigrants, migrants and refugees, the people of Appalachia, Rwanda, Haiti, inner cities, Central America, Pakistan, the Gulf Coast, Sudan (both North and South), to name only a few, as modern-day Christ’s crucified and consecrate our lives to work to stop the crucifixions. We seek to become the servants and peacemakers, bringing the light and life of Jesus Christ to resurrect a dying world.

This vocational call to community is the fruit of justification and sanctification. It is leaving the church community while remaining a part of the church community, to go into the world and work and get our hands dirty.

## Large Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Discuss the following questions as a large group:

1. Is becoming politically active a way to “get our hands dirty”? Where does social and political activism fit into the concept of radical, inclusive hospitality?
2. United Methodist Women members have identified detention of immigrants as a key area of concern and have become advocates for detention reform. What are their key areas of concern on this issue?
3. Do you believe we are called as followers of Christ to advocate for immigration reform and reform of the detention of immigrants? Explain your answer.

Following these three questions, brainstorm ways to become immigration advocates. List answers on newsprint in words or phrases without commenting on answers. Then ask for one or two summaries of suggestions for ministries that might be developed in local churches.

### **Individual Activity (5 minutes)**

In no more than two sentences for each, respond to the following questions taking both sides of the issue (for example, two sentences explaining why God's authority is primary and two sentences explaining why human's authority is primary, etc.). Be prepared to share your statements with the group.

1. Whose authority is primary? God's or human's? How does your answer impact your life?
2. Do you believe all authority comes from God? Why or why not?
3. Which do you follow the most? God's law or human's law?
4. Eugene Peterson writes in *The Message* that "all governments are under God. Insofar as there is peace and order. It's God's order." Do you agree?
5. Are all laws good laws?
6. Is there a responsibility to speak out if human's laws are in opposition to God's laws? If so, how is that to be done?

### **Large Group Discussion (5 minutes)**

Invite as many people as time allows sharing their reflections on authority. Then move to the discussion on immigration law:

1. What generalizations can you make about the history of U.S. immigration law?
2. Have the laws been written to favor one or more particular groups?
3. How have the laws changed over the past 50 years?

### **Small Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

Have the class break into their small groups and discuss the following questions:

1. What U.S. immigration laws are surprising to you?
2. What is the difference between an immigration detainee and an inmate in a regular prison or jail?
3. Do the immigration laws follow God's laws? Explain.
4. If you could write one new immigration law, what would it be?

### **Large Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

Come back together as a large group, and if possible sit in a circle. Have an informal conversation about participants' present feelings about immigrants and what effect the sessions have had on their opinions and feelings. Each person should have an opportunity to speak once before anyone speaks for a second time.

## **Closing Worship (25 minutes)**

Involve as many participants as possible in the final worship.

### **Call to Worship**

LEADER: How do we know when God is with us?

PEOPLE: There will be times when we are led where we did not plan to go. There will be times when we will encounter people we did not plan to meet. There will be times when Christ knocks on the doors to our hearts in the guise of a stranger. There will be times when we change in ways we never expected.

ALL: Let us come to this time of worship to open ourselves to God and to change and thus begin our journey.

### **Prayer (in unison)**

God of migrants, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, God of the stranger, you have saved us from all that has threatened us since the beginning of our days. We are strangers who have found our home in you. Help us to open ourselves to those who come to our land seeking freedom. Save our sisters and brothers as we strive to be their sanctuary and offer them radical, inclusive hospitality in the days ahead. Send the Holy Spirit to guide us in the direction you would have us go. Enable us to be your hands and feet and heart and mind in the world. In the name of Jesus, who was himself a refugee, we pray. Amen.

### **Scripture Reading**

First reader: Leviticus 19:33-34

Second reader: Hebrews 13:1-3

Third reader: Contemporary version of the Good Samaritan

#### The Good Samaritan and the Strangers

A small country was caught between an extended war between two powerful countries. The citizens of the country were divided in their support of the warring nations. When one country withdrew, their supporters were targeted for persecution and imprisonment by the supporters of the victorious government. Many feared that they might be killed. Their homes were destroyed, family members were mistreated and many lost their jobs.

Although they loved their homeland, they had no choice but to flee for their safety. Some could prove they were political, social or religious refugees. Others were considered economic migrants and unwelcomed in the country to which they fled. They were undocumented.

The governor of one country said they were taking the jobs of its citizens and collecting welfare (even though it was impossible to get welfare without documents). The legislators passed laws to have everyone without documents deported. They even insisted that the schools report any children who might have undocumented parents. Another governor saw what was happening and took time to study the issue, saying, "We'll help, even though we have similar problems."

This country had faith-based organizations that assisted immigrants, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These organizations began asking their members to demonstrate their faith by sponsoring refugees, providing legal clinics for immigrants, opening migrant welcome centers, advocating for immigration reform and legalization, and building radical, hospitable, faith-based communities.

A very large, beautiful, financially secure church with a large congregation and many programs for its members was asked to help. They responded, "Oh, we're too busy getting ready for our one hundredth anniversary. Maybe next year we'll think about it if there are still refugees." But a very small congregation struggling to keep itself financially stable heard about the need for refugee housing and offered to help, and some other congregations quickly offered assistance. One of these congregations didn't even have their own building, another had just completed a building project, and another had just raised money for a major denominational appeal, but they said they would do whatever was necessary to help.

Which of these governors and congregations proved to be a neighbor to these families? (Source: Adapted from an original version by Quentin Goodrich based on Luke 10:25-37, published in the newsletter of the Florida Council of Churches, March 1981.)

### **Response to Gospel and Lighting of Candles**

In place of a sermon, have each person in the group meditate on the scriptures. Invite each person, when they are ready to do so, to light a candle and give a very brief response to their experience in studying immigrants and refugees and their plans for working to build an inclusive, hospitable community in their church and/or community.

## Hymn

“Let There be Peace on Earth” (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #431)

## Time of Silence

## Reading

Assign a reader as leader and divide the class in half, having one half read “Group 1” and the other read “Group 2.”

### The Last Story

LEADER: And so the time comes when all the people of the earth can bring their gifts to the fire and look into one another’s faces unafraid. See us come from every direction from the four quarters of the earth. See the lines that stretch to the horizon, the procession, the gifts borne. See us feed the fire. Feel the earth’s life renewed. And the circle is complete again and the medicine wheel is formed anew and the knowledge within each one of us made whole.

GROUP 1: We say we remember a time when we were free. We say that we are free, still, and always. And the pain we feel is that of labor. And the cries we hear are those of birth.

GROUP 2: Go to the stream, kneel down, drink the sweet water. As you can anywhere water runs in this world. For it runs clean. And breathe the clear air, and know that there was a time when the waters and the very air itself were poisoned and the people died.

**ALL: We remember that time.**

GROUP 1: Look around the circle, look at our faces. Each one is different, each special. And we so love the hue of our different skins, and the carved planes of our faces, and our beautiful hair, like moss, like water. But there was a time when people feared one another and hated what they saw in different eyes.

**ALL: We remember that time.**

GROUP 2: And look up into the sky, see the stars, see the moon. Know that there is nothing in the sky to threaten or harm you. But there was a time when we were all targets, and we didn’t know from one day to the next when bombs might come, whether we would have a world to leave to you.

**ALL: We remember that time.**

LEADER: Look at the old ones. See the power in those old eyes and frail, cupped hands. Breathe it in. Know it is your own power, too. You are one of them. They live in you as you in them and you marvel at them. How did they survive? How did they stand it? They wait. You realize they are waiting for you and you wonder what it is they want you to do. And you think maybe they want you to ask them something, so you say, "Tell me, old ones, how did you do it? How did you change our world?" And they smile. Listen. Hear what they say to you.

GROUP 1: We struggled.

GROUP 2: We held out our hands and touched one another.

GROUP 1: We remembered to laugh.

GROUP 2: We went to endless meetings.

GROUP 1: We said no.

GROUP 2: We put our bodies on the line.

GROUP 1: We said yes.

GROUP 2: We invented. We created.

GROUP 1: We walked straight through our fears.

GROUP 2: We formed the circle.

GROUP 1: We danced.

**ALL: We spoke the truth.**

(Source: Adapted from *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery* by Starhawk [Miriam Simos], San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988. Used by permission, all rights reserved. [www.starhawk.org](http://www.starhawk.org).)

## **Closing Prayer**

The closing prayer is to be led by session facilitator or one of the group members. Rather than a prescribed prayer, use one that sums up the experiences of the group.

## **Benediction**

LEADER: Go now as sojourners in the land, pilgrims passing through.

PEOPLE: We go to accept responsibility for the land we are passing through. We know that we are the voice of the unheard and the hands and feet of Christ our Lord.

LEADER: The community of God is neither here nor there.

PEOPLE: The community of God is among us.

LEADER: Go with God, walk with Christ, be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and as the hands of Christ in this world welcome the strangers in your midst. Amen.



# Defining Immigration Terminology Worksheet

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alien:

asylee:

asylum seeker:

Border Patrol:

DHS:

exile:

expedited removal:

forced migrant:

guest worker:

**immigrant:**

**migrant:**

**refugee:**

**repatriate:**

**resettlement:**

**sanctuary:**

**trafficking:**

**unaccompanied alien minor:**

**undocumented:**

**uprooted:**

# TERMS DEFINED

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**alien:** A person who is not a citizen of the country in which he or she lives.

**asylee:** A person who has been granted permission to stay in a country of which he or she is not a citizen.

**asylum seeker:** A person seeking safety in another country from persecution at home. Asylum is based on a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

**Border Patrol:** A branch of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that polices the borders of the United States. It is concentrated on the border between the United States and Mexico and the United States and Canada and seeks to prevent persons from entering the United States without proper immigration papers.

**DHS:** U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which is in charge of national security, including immigration.

**exile:** To banish a person from his or her country or home.

**expedited removal:** To send people back to their country of origin before admitting them to the country to which they have fled. Officials at U.S. airports may “refuse entry” to a person without giving him or her the opportunity to make a claim for asylum before an immigration judge.

**forced migrant:** A person forced to leave his or her country or home to seek safety, shelter and sustenance.

**guest worker:** A worker in a country with an immigration visa granting permission to work and live in the country for a period of time.

**immigrant:** A person who settles in a country of which he or she is not a native.

**migrant:** A person who leaves a place to seek safety, shelter and sustenance, which includes employment.

**refugee:** A person fleeing his or her country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

**repatriate:** To return a person to his or her country either with the person’s consent or forcibly.

**resettlement:** Moving from a first country of asylum to a second country for permanent relocation when there is no hope of returning home. A person who has resettled in a second country is not eligible for asylum from the first country.

**sanctuary:** A safe place offering refuge.

**trafficking:** Smuggling human beings from one country to another, often for illegal purposes, such as indentured servitude or sexual slavery.

**unaccompanied alien minor:** A child under 18 years of age who enters a country alone or is trafficked into the country. If apprehended, the unaccompanied minor may be detained in federal detention centers before being returned to the home country or being released to a relative or friend.

**undocumented:** A person who enters a country without papers.

**uprooted:** Condition of being forced to leave home for environmental, political, religious, ethnic, social or economic reasons.