

North Carolina Council of Churches
Strength in Unity, Peace through Justice

Congregational Toolkit

Supporting immigrants and welcoming strangers



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919-828-6501



27 Horne Street, Raleigh, NC 27607



@ncchurches



info@ncchurches.org



www.ncchurches.org



@northcarolinacouncilofchurches



Congregational Toolkit

Supporting immigrants and welcoming strangers

This toolkit is designed to equip faith leaders and congregations with practical resources to respond to the current immigration enforcement landscape. It provides talking points for leaders, worship materials, congregational litany, Scripture references, and actionable steps your community can take to support immigrant neighbors.

You are welcome to use these resources in worship, study, and community action.

Talking Points

Use these talking points to guide conversations within your congregation, community groups, or public forums. They help frame immigration as a moral, human, and communal issue, emphasizing the role of faith in providing care and advocacy.

Faith & Welcoming the Stranger

- The faith tradition emphasizes that people of faith are called to welcome the immigrant/stranger.
- Welcoming immigrants is not just charity but a moral, biblical imperative: it reflects faith values of hospitality, compassion, human dignity.
- The conversation about immigration isn't only about laws or economics - it's about identity, welcome, community, and the sacred in human life.
- Faith leaders have a responsibility to provide safety, care, and advocacy for those impacted by immigration enforcement.
- Sharing stories of immigrant resilience, contributions, and faith can help your community understand the human impact behind policies.

Society, Immigration & Common Misconceptions

- Many common arguments against immigration use myths or incomplete data (e.g., that immigrants take jobs, drain services, come to get welfare)
- Data shows that many immigrants contribute taxes, labor, and consumer activity, often without full access to benefits.



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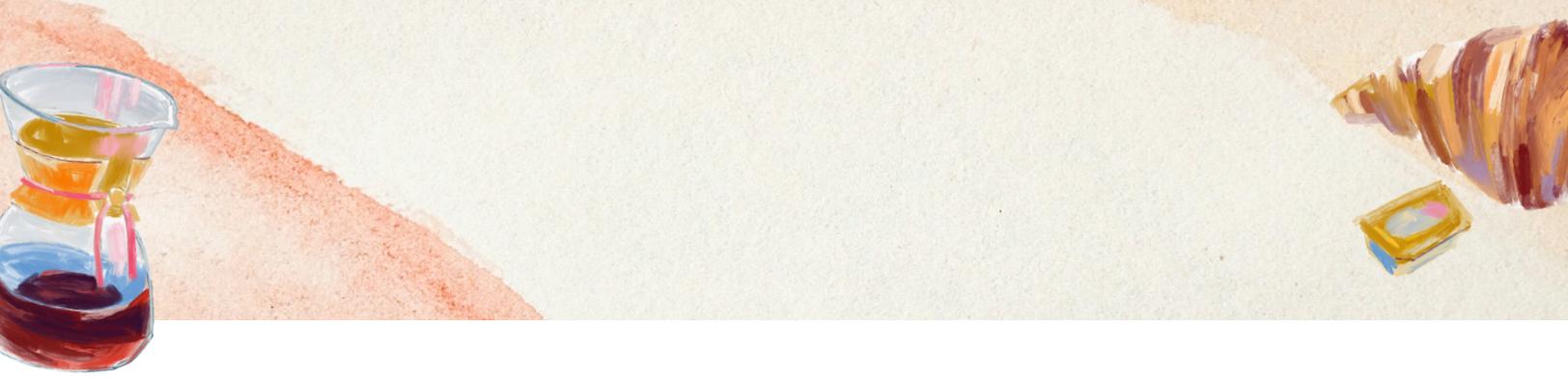
Supporting immigrants and welcoming strangers

Society, Immigration & Common Misconceptions (cont.)

- Undocumented immigrants are by in large ineligible for many public benefits (*welfare, food stamps, Medicaid*) that they are sometimes accused of using.
- Immigrants often fill jobs that are essential but undervalued - labor intensive, dangerous, low-wage - and yet their contribution is foundational to sectors like agriculture, food production, construction, and other services.

Policy and Advocacy Implications

- Faith communities and congregations have a clear role: to inform, to engage in dialogue, to challenge myths, to act for justice.
- Education and accurate information are important tools: providing fact sheets helps congregations move beyond fear or misinformation toward compassionate, informed responses.
- Immigration is not just a legal or political issue; it is an issue rooted in human rights and community.
- Families, children, and entire communities are deeply affected and traumatized by federal enforcement actions.
- Silence allows fear and injustice to grow; leadership creates safety and hope.



Congregational Litany

This responsive litany can be read aloud in worship or during gatherings.

The congregational response is in bold.

Though we have come to this country through many paths, we come together to form webs of support and say to our immigrant neighbors: We will make a place for you.

We will make a place for you.

For all those who traveled the road of uncertainty to enter this land, leaving behind homes without knowing where you would go:

We will make a place for you.

When others try to deny your right to be in this land, threaten to separate your families, and question the birthright of your children:

We will make a place for you.

For those who fled violence and corruption, hunger and poverty, and the degradation of your dignity:

We will make a place for you.

When those who are actually dangerous, because of their disregard for human rights, constitutional rights, and due process, wrongly call you dangerous:

We will make a place for you.

For those who endured hardship and trauma and who lost loved ones along the way in your quest for safety:

We will make a place for you.

When others respond with prejudice and malice because they don't speak your language:

We will make a place for you.

For those who endured corrupt governments and violent power structures to seek respite in a free country:

We will make a place for you.

When those in our power structures try to pass laws threatening the safety of your worship spaces and the security of your spiritual well-being:

We will make a place for you.



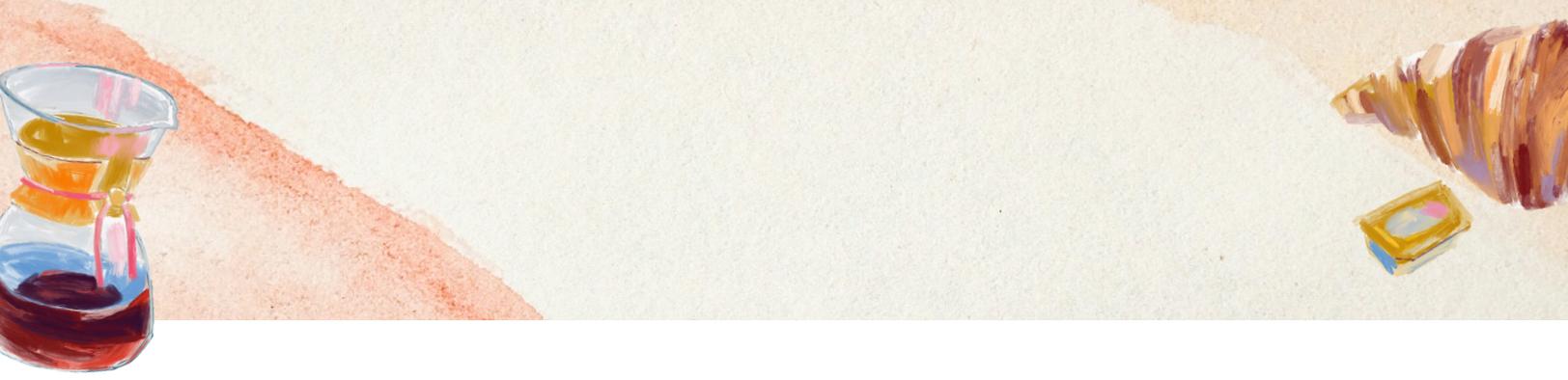
Scripture Lessons

Hospitality and Care

- **Genesis 23:4** – I am a stranger and an alien residing among you; give me property among you for a burying place, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight.
- **Leviticus 19:33-34** – When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. 34 You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.
- **Deuteronomy 10:19** – You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
- **Exodus 22:21** – Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.
- **Exodus 23:9** – You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.
- **Matthew 25:35** – I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
- **Hebrews 13:2** – Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.
- **Romans 12:13** – Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.
- **1 Peter 2:11** – Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to turn away from the fleshly desires that wage war against your soul.
- **Ephesians 2:19** – Consequently, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.

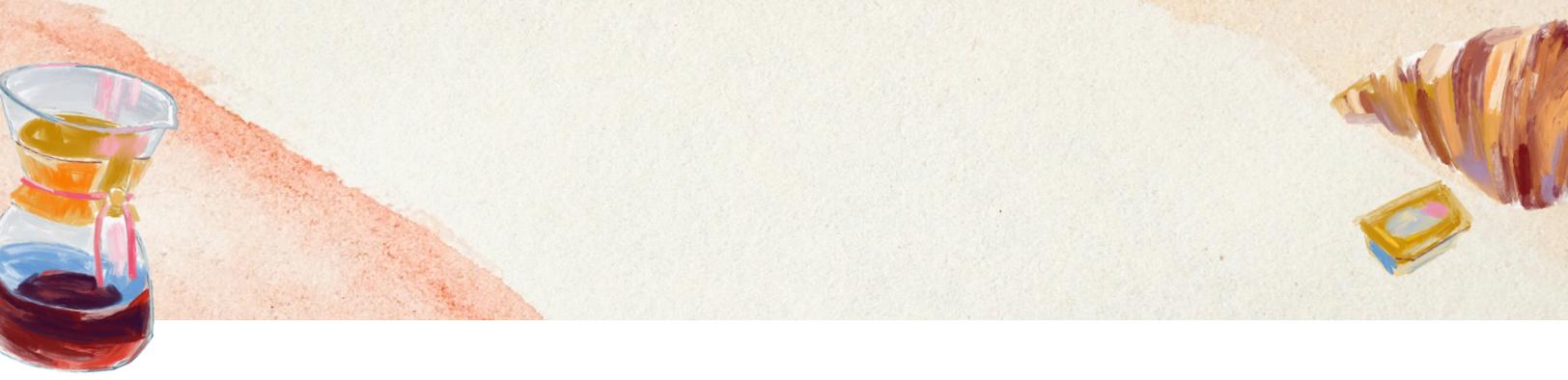
Love and Moral Responsibility

- **Luke 10:27** – You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.
- **Matthew 5:43-44** – You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy'. But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.
- **Romans 13:8** – Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
- **Romans 13:10** – Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
- **Colossians 3:11** – In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.



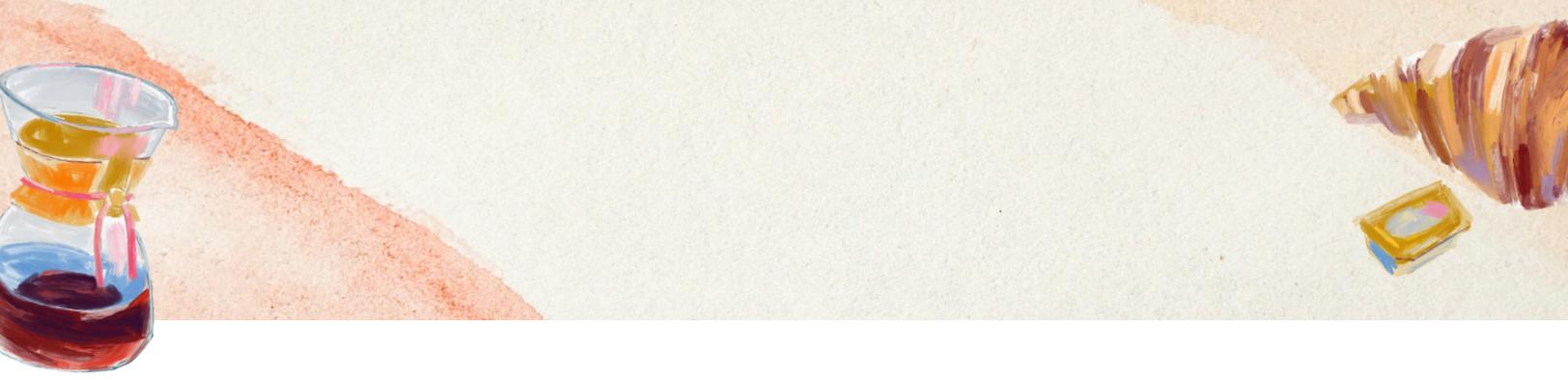
Justice and Advocacy

- **Deuteronomy 27:19** – ‘Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.’ Then all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’
- **1 Chronicles 16:19-22** – When they were few in number, of little account, and strangers in the land, wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, saying, ‘Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm.’
- **Job 29:15-17** – I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I championed the cause of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous, and made them drop their prey from their teeth.
- **Psalms 146:9** – The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
- **Jeremiah 7:5-7** – For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.
- **Ezekiel 47:22** – You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.
- **Malachi 3:5** – I will come against you with judgment. I will be a swift witness against... those who defraud laborers of their wages, or of the widow and the fatherless, or of the foreigner who works for them— and do not honor me... says the LORD Almighty.
- **Exodus 23:9** (repeated) – Do not oppress a foreigner; remember how it feels to be one.
- **Zechariah 7:9-10** – Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.
- **Acts 10:34** – Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.



New Testament Call to Action

- **Matthew 25:40** – Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren you did it to me.
- **Hebrews 13:1-3** - Let mutual love continue. 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.
- **3 John 1:5** – Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the friends, even though they are strangers to you; they have testified to your love before the church. You do well to send them on in a manner worthy of God; for they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting no support from non-believers. Therefore we ought to support such people, so that they may become co-workers with the truth.



Worship Resources

The following resources can be incorporated into worship services or community gatherings. They are designed to inspire reflection, courage, and solidarity with immigrant neighbors.

Suggested Responsive Reading

From Interfaith Worker Justice

We serve a God who directs us to care especially for those most vulnerable in society. Our Scriptures tell us of God's special concern for the "alien" or the "stranger," or as more contemporary translations say—the immigrant.

For the Lord our God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. God defends the cause of the orphan and the widow, and loves the immigrant, giving the immigrant food and clothing. And we are to love those who are immigrants, for God's people were immigrants in Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

We ask God to open our eyes to the struggles of immigrant workers, for we know that:
We must not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether the worker is a resident or immigrant living in our town. We must pay the worker the wages promptly because the worker is poor and counting on it. (Deuteronomy 24:14)

God's desire is that those who build houses may live in them,
And that those who plant may eat. (Isaiah 65:22)

And yet we know this is not possible for many in our midst.

We know of farmworkers who cannot feed their families, construction workers who have no homes, nursing home workers who have no health care, restaurant workers who can not afford a meal in the restaurant.

We know that too many immigrant workers among us are not receiving the fruits of their labor, nor the justice required by the courts.

God charges our judges to hear disputes and judge fairly, whether the case involves citizens or immigrants. (Deuteronomy 1:16)



But our laws do not adequately protect immigrants. Our legal and social service programs exclude many immigrants. Our education programs undervalue immigrant children.

God tells us that the community is to have the same rules for citizens and for immigrants living among us. His is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. Citizens and immigrants shall be the same before the Lord. (Numbers 15:15)

When an immigrant lives in our land,

We will not mistreat him or her. We will treat an immigrant as one of our native born. We will love an immigrant as ourselves, for God's people were once immigrants in Egypt.

(Leviticus 19:33-34)

To those who employ immigrant workers, we lift up God's command:

Do not oppress an immigrant. God's people know how it feels to be immigrants because they were immigrants in Egypt. (Exodus 23: 9)

And a special word to those who employ immigrant farmworkers: Make sure immigrants get a day of rest. (Exodus 23:12) To those who craft our immigration laws and policies, we lift up God's command:

Do not deprive the immigrant or the orphan of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that God's people were slaves in Egypt and the Lord our God redeemed them from there. (Deuteronomy 24:17-18)

To all of us who seek to do God's will, help us to:

Love one another as God has loved us. Help us to treat immigrants with the justice and compassion that God shows to each of us. Amen.

Pastoral Reflection

TEXT: RUTH 1:1-18

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah



and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had considered his people and given them food. So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me." Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "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. Where you die, I will die-- there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

PASTORAL REFLECTION: "LEAVING HOME"

By Rev. Alice Kirkman Kunka, Director, Corazon

Have you ever "left home"? Most of us can relate in some way to the theme of "leaving home," perhaps to go away to school, enter the work force or to start a home of our own. Some people leave not only their home, but their home country. Some leave their homeland in search of a better life, or perhaps even for survival. As we hear the story of Naomi and Ruth, we learn that a famine in Judah has caused Naomi to leave the home of her birth to live in Moab, a country foreign to her. We can imagine that Naomi must have felt the hardship of learning to live in a new culture, learning a different language, and feeling like an outsider.



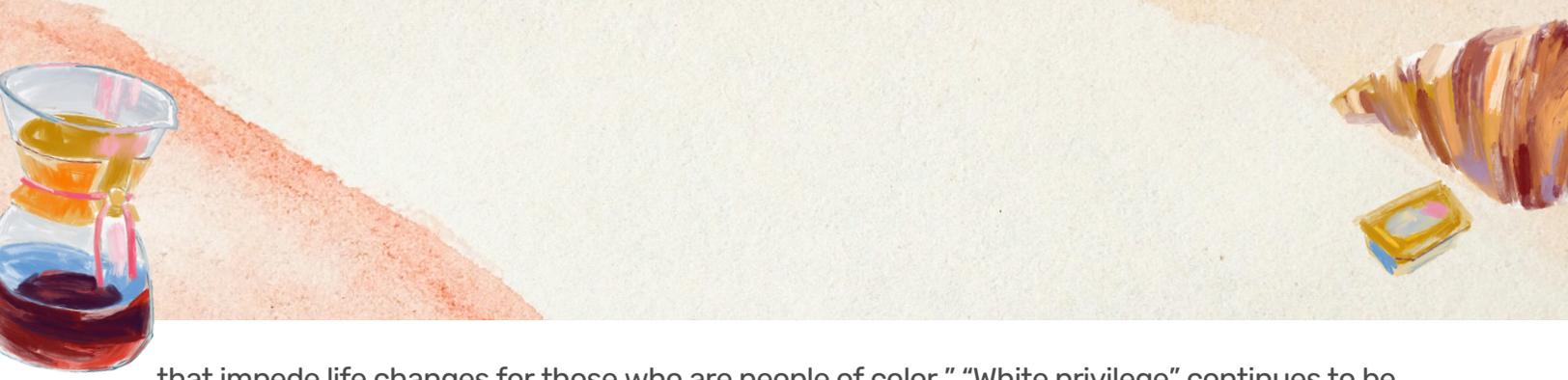
Over the years of living in this new land, Naomi's two sons take Moabite wives, Orpah and Ruth. With the death of Naomi's husband and ten years later the loss of her two sons as well, there must have seemed no reason to remain in this foreign land. So as Naomi prepares to make the trek back to her homeland, we can imagine her surprise when her daughter-in-law Ruth implores her to allow her to return with Naomi to Judah, even though Ruth is a Moabite, an ethnic group hated by those who thought of themselves as "people of God." Something about the God Naomi worshipped has captivated Ruth, and she is willing to give up her homeland to come to this new country, a place where she could well face rejection and be labeled a foreigner.

These two courageous women, each with her own circumstance, become strangers in a strange land. However, in Naomi's homeland, the legislation of the Torah governed the treatment of foreigners. Immigrants were categorized along with widows and orphans, those who had no right to own land, and thus had no livelihood. These marginalized groups depended upon the generosity and concern of those who did have the means of production. The law required farmers to be less than one-hundredpercent efficient in their harvesting, leaving part of the crops in the field and thus allowing immigrants, widows and orphans a means for survival.

Not only did the law give foreigners a way to survive with some measure of dignity, it commanded the people of Israel to treat immigrants living in their midst as some of their own "native-born," admonishing them to "love them as yourself," and reminding them that they, too, were once foreigners in Egypt (Leviticus 19:34). Exodus 22:21-22 echoes this reminder of the time when all of Israel were sojourners in Egypt, forbidding any mistreatment or oppression of sojourners. Even though Ruth was not a native-born "citizen" of this adopted land, she was to be afforded certain protections under the law that ensured her survival.

Stories such as the one of Naomi and Ruth challenge us to consider how "aliens" are treated in these United States, the country whose Liberty Bell proudly displays the text, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10).

Recently I attended a day-long sensitivity training workshop. It was an excellent event, reflecting on what it means to be sensitive to differences in gender, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation and race. One of the topics was "white privilege," which has been defined by Dr. Peggy McIntosh of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women as "unearned advantages - privileges that ease life and progress for those who are white Americans, and



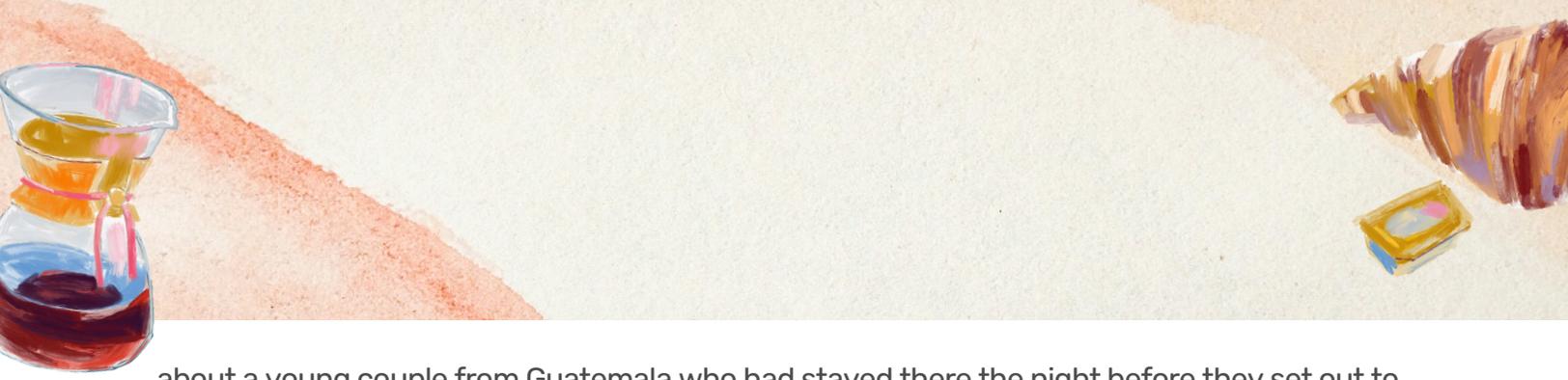
that impede life changes for those who are people of color.” “White privilege” continues to be a very important and necessary reflection. It was during our discussion about “white privilege” that I came to think about another privilege that was not included in our workshop, but perhaps should have been: “U.S. citizenship privilege”.

Working on a daily basis with many Latinos who are in North Carolina without documentation, I have become more and more aware of the privileges granted to U.S. citizens. Because many people categorize undocumented immigrants as lawbreakers who have entered the U.S. illegally, it somehow makes it “okay” to discriminate against them. After all, why don’t they just stay in their own country? Like Naomi who left her homeland because of famine, many are forced from their native country for economic survival. Even so, why do they enter illegally? Can’t they just go get the proper documentation and enter legally?

What many of us fail to realize is how unjust U.S. immigration laws are, and how in many cases it is impossible for those who want to come to the U.S. to enter legally. Except for individuals who enter as farm workers under the H2A program, it is very difficult for an immigrant with less than a college degree to be granted a work visa. As U.S. citizens, our experience of going to a foreign country is very different. We think nothing of crossing the border to visit Tijuana, Mexico, for a day of shopping and sightseeing, but Mexican citizens must qualify economically to obtain even a tourist visa to enter the U.S., and there are a great many who do not qualify.

Over the last few years, I have attended several gatherings of undocumented Latinos who volunteered to share their heart-wrenching stories of hardship in crossing the border to enter the U.S. I have asked myself, “What would compel me to risk my life, crossing a barren desert for days without food or water to enter the U.S.?” As I have learned more about the hopeless economic situation that many come from, I have concluded that I would do the same for my family given similar circumstances. But the risk is high: an estimated 2,500 people have died crossing the border since the early 1990s. No one knows the exact number; only God knows.

A few years ago I participated in a program called “Borderlinks” which is based in Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales in the state of Sonora, Mexico. On the Mexico side of the border, we spent the night in a shelter for those who were about to brave the hot, dry Sonoran desert to cross into the U.S., without documents, of course. I will never forget the statistics listed on the walls there which recorded the number of people who had died crossing into the desert. We followed the trail that many had taken and noted evidence of their crossing through clothing and plastic water bottles strewn in the desert. One woman who worked in the shelter told us

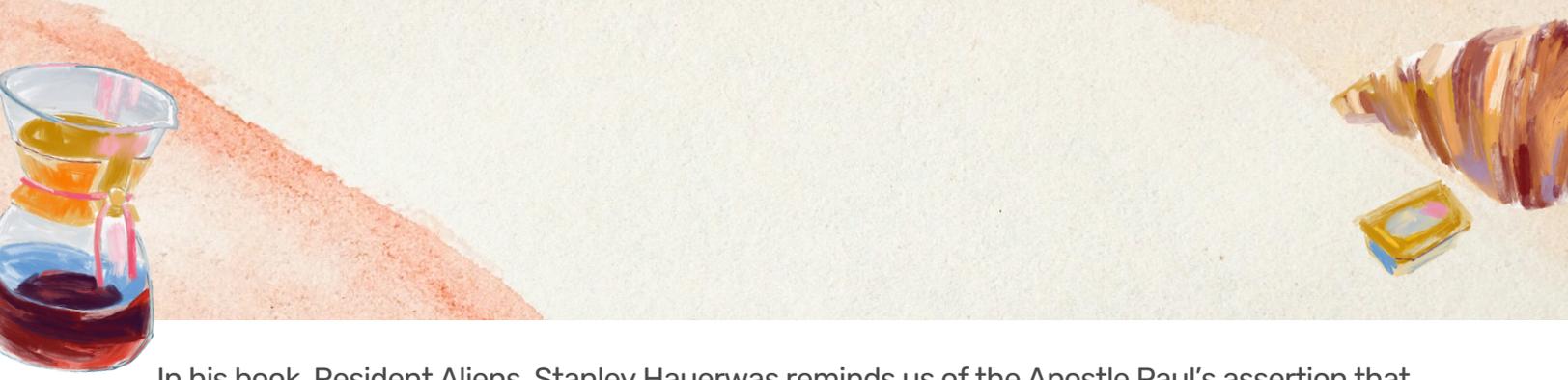


about a young couple from Guatemala who had stayed there the night before they set out to cross. They had a newborn baby with them. She pleaded with them not to make the treacherous journey, but despite her warnings, they left the next morning. A few days later, the couple was back at the center, just the two of them, having been arrested by the border patrol in the U.S. and returned to Mexico. The worker asked them where their baby was. "Lost," they said. The desert had proven too inhospitable an environment for such a young infant—a tragic sacrifice made by a young couple in exchange for their hope for a new beginning in a strange new land.

I have been guilty of taking my U.S. citizenship privilege for granted. What about you? What does it mean to have the privilege of U.S. citizenship? Here are a few benefits to consider:

1. If I want to get a driver's license, it's a simple matter of bringing along my birth certificate, Social Security card and insurance information and taking the test. There's no need to worry about whether I have the proper documents to get a driver's license.
2. If I apply for a job, I do not have to worry about what to write under "Social Security Number."
3. When Social Security and Medicare are taken out of my paycheck, I have a reasonable hope that someday either I or my dependents will receive the benefit of those taxes.
4. I can go in any bank and set up a checking account.
5. If a police officer pulls me over, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my immigration status.
6. I am not worried on a daily basis about being "discovered" and being deported along with my family.
7. I can be reasonably sure that if I need legal or medical advice or help, my citizenship status will not be a consideration.
8. I can apply for a passport that will allow me to travel back and forth to most countries in the world.
9. I can vote and consider running for political office.
10. I or a member of my family can apply for scholarship aid to institutions of higher education and expect to compete on level ground with other U.S. citizens.

When we reflect on the issue of immigration and the existence of borders between countries, it is good to recall that when seen from outer space, the earth does not reveal any borders. Borders are humanmade creations that separate people who are governed by different governments. God's world has no borders. God does not create "illegal" people. The human condition has created these barriers to the shalom that God intends for creation.



In his book, *Resident Aliens*, Stanley Hauerwas reminds us of the Apostle Paul's assertion that Christians are a colony of heaven, and as such, are "resident aliens" in this world. As "resident aliens" we have something in common with people of Israel who were once aliens in Egypt. We have something in common with Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus who fled the wrath of King Herod and were aliens in Egypt for a time. We have something in common with Ruth and Naomi. And we have something in common with the eleven million undocumented immigrants in the United States.



Take Action

- **Speak boldly:** Use worship services or public gatherings to proclaim the importance of welcoming and protecting immigrants.
- **Assess Your Community's Needs:** Identify the specific needs and concerns of immigrants in your local area.
- **Build Partnerships:** Collaborate with other faith communities, organizations, and individuals to maximize your impact.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up-to-date on the latest developments in immigration policy and enforcement.
- **Pray for Guidance:** Seek God's wisdom and discernment as you navigate this complex issue.

Additional Resources

REPORTING HOTLINES:

- **RALEIGH & WAKE COUNTY**
 - Radar Safe: 1-800-559-8714
- **CHARLOTTE**
 - Carolina Migrant Network: 704-740-7737
- **OTHER N.C. (NOT WAKE COUNTY OR CHARLOTTE)**
 - Siembra: 336-543-0353
- **PROVIDE SALUTE INFO:**
 - Size: Number of agents or vehicles
 - Activity: What the agents are doing
 - Location: Specific address/intersection
 - Uniform: What the agents are wearing
 - Time: Date and time of incident
 - Equipment: Any vehicles, weapons, or tools
- [Resources for Immigrant Communities & Allies](#)
- [Carolina Migrant Network Immigrant Rights Digital Toolkit](#)