



mosaic



DISPLACED

FACING HERE AND NOWHERE

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CBM

embracing a broken world
through word & deed

As partners in the Canadian Baptist family we exist to serve the local church in its grassroots mission. Together we impact our communities and beyond through the love of Christ.

“In the midst of fear and xenophobia that has rocked Europe and North America, churches have opened their doors and hearts in unprecedented ways to receive the other and journey with them. And as they have done so, hundreds of ‘strangers’ have become brothers and sisters.”

TERRY TALKS

IN HIS BOOK, *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams*, Benjamin Myers tells a fascinating story. A Scottish theologian, Elisabeth Templeton, asked a group of bishops how they would answer a stranger who, waiting at a bus stop, asks them to explain the trinity in the two minutes before his bus arrived. “I would say, ‘You’ll have to be prepared to miss your bus,’ replied the first bishop. Williams turn was next. ‘I would ask the person where he is going, then accompany him on his journey.’”

Deciding to accompany someone on a journey isn’t always convenient. It can disturb our plans and mess with our get ‘er done mentality. It means we have to give up a little or a lot of our own priorities. And it can be costly, especially when the person we journey with is a stranger, is “the other”. These are the unexpected who show up at our doorstep and disrupt our plans, forcing us to think through some really hard questions.

For the past 15 months since taking on the leadership role at CBM, I have witnessed some great examples of local Canadian Baptist churches which have made costly decisions about journeying with the other. It has been hard for them. And it has taken many forms. Foremost in our minds would be the love and hospitality towards refugees. We have been part of settling more than 150 Syrian and Iraqi families, not to mention many others from various parts of the world. Other churches have extended a hand of fellowship to the *LGBTQ community. Some churches across Canada have been pursuing new relationships with Indigenous peoples in their communities. What I have seen has proven this deep-seated desire and willingness to move out of our comfort zone and “be Christ” to the other.

Our Baptist brothers and sisters in Germany have a great story worth telling. While Canada boasts of receiving more than 25,000 Syrian refugees, Germany now hosts more than one million. In the midst of fear and xenophobia that has rocked Europe and North America, churches have opened their doors and hearts in unprecedented ways to receive the other and journey with them. And as they have done so, hundreds of “strangers” have become brothers and sisters. Reports are that more than 700 Iranian Muslim background refugees have been baptized in the past year, not counting Syrians, Iraqi, Afghan and Pakistani refugees.

*LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning

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mosaic is a community forum of local and global voices united by a shared mission. mosaic will serve as a catalyst to stimulate and encourage passionate discipleship among Canadian Baptists and their partners.



COMMUNION: *At the Resetting the Relationship Conference in Kitchener-Waterloo, we met Goyce Kakegamic, born in Sandy Lake, Ontario. Goyce is one of the leading members of the Woodlands Artists and has had showings at galleries in Europe and North America, including the McMichael Gallery. He is Education Director of the Keewaytinook Okimakanak (Northern Chiefs) and is based in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He is also a Senior Engagement Advisor for Aboriginal Relations for an environmental organization. In addition to common Indigenous themes, his work includes biblical themes of reconciliation and creation. We thank him for his permission to show this original piece, entitled Communion, in mosaic, as we focus on restoring our relationship with our Indigenous brothers and sisters.*

The news in 2016 could make us all very fearful: Brexit, Donald Trump's election, religious violence in India, near collapse of civil society in Venezuela, growing apathy towards climate change, Standing Rock and the Dakota pipeline. It would be so easy for us, as churches, to turn inward into an even tighter circle, in order to protect ourselves and our own. Sadly, throughout generations of Church history, at times of uncertainty we find examples of Christians who have failed to engage the stranger, the other, with love, acceptance and the quest for truth. The reality is that ours is a history far from perfect. However, we must resist fight or flight mentality. We must engage.

As you read this edition of *mosaic*, you will discover how we, as Canadian Baptists, can overcome fear and skepticism and journey with the stranger. And in doing so, we are able to re-present Christ, the Saviour of the world, in new, rich and engaging ways. As you read this issue, ask yourself whom is God calling you to journey with in 2017?



Terry Smith
CBM Executive Director

AN APOLOGY IN THE MAKING

RESETTING THE RELATIONSHIP

by Terry Smith

JUSTICE MURRAY SINCLAIR stated frequently during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) work that *"Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem, it is a Canadian problem. It involves all of us."*

I was recently asked to issue a formal apology on behalf of Canadian Baptist Ministries. This is in response to one of the clarion calls from the TRC – that churches and mission groups engage in recognition, understanding, peer learning and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada. As Christians, we are well aware that apologizing (asking and receiving forgiveness for deeds done or not done) to God and each other is at the heart of the journey to reconciliation. It is something we need to do individually and collectively – and often!

I offered our apology at an Indigenous conference organized by Highland Baptist Church in Kitchener, Ontario, in October 2016. This was a challenging request because of our Congregationalist ecclesiology

#1 KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE: MINE INCLUDED CHIEF AVA HILL OF THE SIX NATIONS OF THE GRAND RIVER.

#2 GORD KING REMINDED ME THAT WE START WITH RECOGNIZING OUR OWN, INDIVIDUAL SHORTCOMINGS.

#3 PASTOR CALLUM JONES STEERED ME IN THIS DIRECTION.

#4 A FRIEND IN MISSISSAUGA ADDED THIS INSIGHT.

#5 GREG ANDERSON, PASTOR IN THE YUKON HELPED ME KNOW OUR HISTORY.

#6 THANKS TO THE STUDENTS AND FACULTY AT ACADIA DIVINITY WHO TAUGHT ME ABOUT SILAS RAND'S WORK!

#7 FIRST NATIONS THEOLOGIAN, CHERYL BEAR, FOUND THIS HARD BUT TRUE.

TODAY, I come humbly to this place, on behalf of Canadian Baptist Ministries. Before we seek to Reset the Relationship, as this conference is named, allow me to apologize before God and to you, our Indigenous brothers and sisters, both personally and collectively. I am mindful that I cannot apologize for others' acts without admitting my own shortcomings. As a community of God's people, we admit that too often we have not been or done what we could or should have to live and act justly. To you, our neighbours, our sisters and brothers who have been hurt, directly or indirectly by our actions and inaction, we ask your forgiveness.

Canadian Baptists have heard the pain and hurt inflicted upon our country's Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge the deep wounds that persist as a consequence of our shared history. As a Church body, our early roots were in a white, Colonial past, from both Europe and America. Attitudes and acts of arrogance, entitlement and greed compelled many who settled here in Canada to assume ownership of lands that were not theirs to take, to occupy territories that were unceded and to formulate and sign treaties which were tilted in their own favour. The trust and goodwill of our Indigenous peoples were further abused when we failed to honour the treaties.

Many of our own church roots emerged from the Anabaptist tradition in Europe. Our forefathers suffered forms of persecution and exclusion in Europe, yet we acted in a similar manner here. We went from being excluded to being the excluders, from the oppressed to the oppressors. We failed to learn from our past and fully embrace the "other" when we arrived here, despite the hospitality that was extended to us.

Although Canadian Baptists were not directly involved in the Residential School system, we failed our Indigenous brothers and sisters by not speaking out against it, when your language, culture, religion and values were being assaulted and harm was being inflicted on your children. We sinned when we were not the voice of the oppressed. We looked the other way when wrong was being done. And when some Baptists, like Silas Rand who lived and worked among the Mi'kmaq from 1843 - 1889, challenged the colonial status quo, our churches silenced them.

We put up walls when we should have opened doors. These practices have created a context wherein Indigenous peoples in this land today experience disproportionate poverty and oppression, the result of which are negative stereotypes, high rates of mental and emotional illness, suicide, violence against women, substance abuse and intergenerational pain. When we should have challenged our churches, institutions and governments to respond to systemic injustices, such as the lack of access to clean water and educational opportunities, we were silent.

and because CBM is only one of many Baptist partners in our national landscape. I couldn't speak on behalf of everyone, but I could give a glimpse into the feelings of regret from the people with whom I shared this concern.

To do so, I solicited advice and guidance from the Executive Ministers of the four Canadian Baptist regional denominations. I also enlisted the wisdom of a small group of friends and colleagues who I consider to be leading-edge thinkers in Canada around our social engagement. This team was made up of author Mark Buchanan, Lois Mitchell and Gordon King.

During the summer of 2016, we surveyed over 250 Canadian Baptist pastors and leaders and received 79 responses. We learned that only 27% of the respondents' churches are involved in Indigenous peoples' ministries and 94% of them have not

discussed the resolutions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a church family.

Finally, in answer to the matter of a national Baptist apology, 91% of the respondents agreed it was necessary, 5% felt it wasn't necessary and 4% were uncertain. In other words, a resounding majority affirmed the need to proceed with this apology. Wording it required careful and prayerful work. The final version integrates the input I received from across our country and contains the wording, direction and intention of the church leaders interviewed, as opposed to one person's voice on behalf of a body of believers.

So, here is my worksheet. I hope it helps you work through the process if God is calling your church to craft its own apology.

We have heard the pain and sadness of the children and grandchildren of those who were affected by the actions and attitudes of the past. In a spirit of humility and weakness, we acknowledge the hurt we have done - when we acted greedily out of self-interest and when we failed to act vocally on behalf of our neighbours, our hosts - our brothers and sisters. For this we are truly sorry. #8

We are grateful to those who served and led the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and affirm the excellent Calls to Action. We renounce the Doctrine of Discovery and Terra Nullius by which European Christians took that which wasn't theirs, sadly in the name of God and the Church. It is untenable, unacceptable and wrong for them to have done so, and we acknowledge our ongoing complicity through our failure to call out and stand against these systemic acts of injustice. We acknowledge that we have benefitted from them and ask your forgiveness. #9, #10

But, today we commit ourselves to journeying on a new path. We want to venture alongside you so that we can learn from you. For many Canadian Baptists, this journey with Indigenous peoples is new. Some are just starting out. For those who are new and weak to the journey, please help us. Others have been on the journey with you for a very long time. Thank you for allowing us to walk with you. #11

Along this pathway, we will call upon our churches to renounce all forms of injustice and discrimination. We shall embolden our churches, schools and institutions to embrace the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous peoples. We will encourage our churches to participate in opportunities for education and the resetting of our relationship. #12

Practically speaking, Canadian Baptist Ministries commits itself to working with local bands to identify and assist Indigenous women and girls at-risk and cooperating with local churches to participate in the healing of broken communities. We recognize that the path ahead will not be easy. Unjust systems are always difficult to dismantle, but we commit ourselves to doing all we can.

We are a people of the Good News - the Gospel - which promises us new life in Jesus' name. In the spirit of mutuality and partnership, we will encourage our churches to acts of repentance, learning and service. By God's grace, together we will seek to do what God desires from us: to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. #13

#8 ALMOST EVERY RESPONDENT ACROSS CANADA SAID THIS.

#9 DO YOUR HOMEWORK - KNOW WHAT THE TRC IS ACTUALLY STATING!

#10 THERE ARE A FEW AMAZING EXCEPTIONS, BUT SADLY, THIS IS THE CASE.

#11 "AN APOLOGY WITHOUT ACTION SOUNDS EMPTY" - FROM KENORA, ON.

#12 I WAS ENCOURAGED IN THIS DIRECTION BY PAUL RACINE, WHO WORKS AMONG THE CREE IN NORTHERN QUEBEC.

#13 MARC BERTRAND, A PASTOR IN WALSH, ON, ADDED THIS REFRESHING END - THE GOOD NEWS!

Terry Smith

Executive Director, Canadian Baptist Ministries

Oct. 21, 2016



A STRANGER KIND OF LOVE

RESPONDING TO THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

by Mark Glanville

“ We are facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. Above all, this is not just a crisis of numbers; it is also a crisis of solidarity. ”

~ Ban Ki Moon, former United Nations Secretary General
(*Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015*)



WE ARE LIVING in an unprecedented period of global displacement - the highest level on record, according to the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) - with over 65 million people around the world who have been forced from home. That's a number almost double Canada's entire population!

Canada has responded to the international crisis by receiving more refugees than in recent years, including resettling more than 34,000 people from Syria. Christian congregations are welcoming newcomers with assistance in housing and transition to a new culture. Christian refugee organizations such as Kinbrace, birthed out of Grandview Calvary Baptist in Vancouver, and Matthew House in Toronto (*see page 24*) are key contributors nationally in refugee support.

At the same time, there are misgivings and concerns within our country. We can be swayed by fear-producing rhetoric - 'We are being swamped by refugees!' 'Some may be terrorists!' We would do well to remember that most refugees are here because they are fleeing persecution, conflict, and possibly death. Most would return to their homeland in a heartbeat, if they could. Refugees are here because they are desperate. They have lost virtually everything and now they are seeking our hospitality. Each one is precious in God's sight - each has a name, a history, and hope for a better future.

So, how does the Bible speak to this present crisis? And what might this mean for worshipping communities today?



“ The “stranger” is someone who is displaced. Strangers have lost their homeland and their kindred. These people lack the resources to survive on their own. ”

THE “STRANGER” IN THE BIBLE

The word that most closely corresponds to our modern notion of “refugee” in the Old Testament is (depending on the translation) *stranger*, *alien*, and *sojourner*. The “stranger” is someone who is displaced. Strangers have lost their homeland and their kindred. These people lack the resources to survive on their own. They are dependent upon the generosity of the Israelites among whom they hope to live. The book of Deuteronomy is especially concerned to protect such displaced people, referring to the stranger no less than 22 times!

An important passage for reflecting on our role in the current refugee crisis can be found in Deuteronomy 10:18-19: *He (God) executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving them food and clothing. Love the stranger, therefore, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

The attentive reader will note that the word “love” is used twice in these verses. God loves those whose lives are threatened by poverty and exclusion – the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger. God’s people are to respond by loving the stranger, remembering that their ancestors were once a people without a homeland.

It is important to grasp the way the theme of love is used in Deuteronomy 10.

1. God loves his people Israel.
2. God loves the stranger that has fled to the communities of Israel.
3. The communities of Israel are to love the stranger.

We learn that the kind of love that God has for his people is also the kind of love that God has for the stranger. In turn, Israel is to offer to the stranger this kind of love. God loves displaced people. This makes sense to us when we remember that the nation of ancient Israel was birthed when Yahweh redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt: God emancipated an enslaved nation. This is our God!

It can be meaningful to explore the meaning of the Hebrew word “love.” There are three important aspects that enable us to go deeper with these verses. First, love signifies a covenant commitment or bond of solidarity. Accordingly, God has had a commitment with those who live as strangers among his people. Second, love is a kinship word. People in the communities of Israel are to welcome the stranger as kin. Third, love is an emotion of the heart. Israel is to feel affection for vulnerable and displaced people that have come to their communities seeking asylum.

We need to think of the practical implications. The teaching of Deuteronomy was to be put into practice on the local family farm. In ancient times, strangers might be exploited as cheap labour or even enslaved. Deuteronomy 10:18-19 offers an alternative model for responding to displaced people. The stranger is to be loved. This means a sacred commitment to their well-being and acceptance. Families within Israel were to treat the stranger as kindred, enfolding displaced people into the extended family. And, Israelites were to feel compassion and affection for the stranger. As we have seen, this model is grounded in the reality of God’s love both for Israel and for the stranger.

“ The stranger is to be loved. This means a sacred commitment to their well-being and acceptance. Families within Israel were to treat the stranger as kindred, enfolding displaced people into the extended family. ”

WHAT MIGHT THIS MEAN FOR WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES TODAY?

Jesus taught that when his people welcomed the stranger they were welcoming him (Mt. 25:35). The Spirit of God invites worshipping communities today to live out this counter story within the context of other narratives of suspicion and fear. It takes energy and a deep commitment to live out the biblical model of a community that welcomes the stranger. Communities of Christ followers are invited into the joy of offering solidarity, kinship, and affection to people who have been displaced.

Here are five practical ways in which worshipping communities can live and act in covenant love for refugees.

First, churches can support refugees. Asylum-seekers arrive in Canada having experienced tremendous loss. Christ followers can offer newcomers the gift of friendship and a sense of family. It is a precious gift of time, to just be there for the person. Many churches are sponsoring refugees. This involves assuming the responsibility for settling and supporting refugees, including a financial commitment, and building new relationships of trust and affection. We recall that for most refugees, life in Canada is full of deep loneliness and a sense of not belonging.

Second, we can work toward relationships of mutuality. We can learn from our new neighbours - lessons about generosity, resilience, grief, and courage in facing danger. As we welcome refugees, we too are transformed through these friendships.

Third, we can help other Canadians move through their fears towards welcoming the refugee. We can find ways to invite our friends, family and acquaintances into these new relationships so that they too can meet the stranger as a person. We can also help them understand the process refugees go through – the rigorous security checks that are in place, far beyond the routine checking that regular visitors to Canada undergo. For while we certainly want to guard against terrorism, we shouldn't penalize those arriving who are often victims themselves of terrorism. The Canadian Council for Refugees (ccrweb.ca) has helpful information.

Fourth, churches that sponsor or support refugees need to manage their expectations. We should realize, for example, that our new friends may not end up joining our church, even if they are Christians. Some will take longer than others to embrace Canada as their new home. We cannot predict or control what their lives in Canada will look like. We are simply responsible to offer our friendship and to provide some stepping stones for newcomers.

Fifth, congregations may consider advocating at a political level in regard to decisions that impact on refugee resettlement in Canada. Advocacy can take various shapes. Some pastors have addressed Canadian refugee policy in their preaching. My own church held a service of lament over harsh Canadian refugee legislation. Some churches have written bulk letters to their local Members of Parliament. One pressing area for advocacy is the need for speedy family reunification. Years of separation can cause massive emotional wounds on family members who are separated from loved ones.

Christ invites each of us to soften the boundaries of our life in order to let other people come into our world. As we do, we can expect to be transformed in unexpected ways. **m**

5 PRACTICAL WAYS TO LIVE AND ACT IN COVENANT LOVE FOR REFUGEES

1. Churches can support refugees.
2. We can work toward relationships of mutuality.
3. We can help other Canadians move through their fears towards welcoming the refugee.
4. Churches that sponsor or support refugees need to manage their expectations.
5. Congregations may consider advocating at a political level in regard to decisions that impact on refugee resettlement in Canada.



MARK GLANVILLE is a pastor-scholar who ministers at Grandview Calvary Church, Vancouver, and is teaching faculty at the Missional Training Center, Phoenix (missionaltraining.org). Mark defended his PhD in Old Testament on the 'stranger' in Deuteronomy. Mark and his wife Erin are currently writing a book to equip churches who seek to support refugees. Mark speaks and writes on Old Testament ethics and mission. His previous career was as a jazz pianist in Sydney, Australia.

HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

A CHURCH BECOMES A REFUGE IN WAR

by Erica Kenny, *CBM Global Field Staff in Kenya*. She and husband Aaron serve as *Africa Team Leaders*.

THE WAR IN SOUTH SUDAN has displaced five million people - most are living in refugee camps along the borders of South Sudan and in the neighbouring countries of Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya.

Recently I had the opportunity to sit down with members of the Faith Evangelical Baptist Church (FEBAC), CBM's partner in South Sudan. Each of the people I met had fled their country at different times and for different reasons, but common to all was their hope for a better future.

“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help.”

~ Ecclesiastes 4:9-10



For some refugees, the journey from their home in South Sudan to the safety of a refugee camp like Kakuma, in Northern Kenya, can take almost a year as they travel by foot from village to village seeking a safe path out of the conflict.

James fled his village at night with 50 other boys. This was in 2004, during the fighting that led to the independence of South Sudan. The journey was a difficult one as they struggled with hunger and thirst. Some were wounded in the escape. Only 39 of the boys survived.

Teresa also left South Sudan during conflict, but her journey began in June 2014 during the current civil war. Travelling on foot with her four-year-old

son, Teresa did not know if they would make it out, but she knew she had to try. “It was unsafe to even go outside my home. People were dying like animals.”

Teresa made it to Kenya, but many of her family members were not as fortunate. Just weeks ago, a group of 22 of her relatives were attacked as they ran for the border. As Teresa shared their story, her pastor, Rev. Deng, passed me his phone with pictures too terrible to describe. “They had heard that soldiers were coming, and decided that they needed to reach a safer location quickly. But as they left, they were ambushed.” As I looked at the images, I saw a little girl standing among her slain family. “Everyone was killed except for a two-year-old girl named Abuk,” shared Rev. Deng. “She was later found by the government forces, wailing next to her mother’s body.”

The trauma and pain of fleeing a conflict zone has touched the lives of every member of the FEBAC church. James and Teresa are deeply thankful for God’s hand in bringing them out of the war, but they also share how they face new struggles in Kenya.

James lived in a refugee camp for 10 years, sleeping in a church compound with 39 other boys. There was little food, no access to education, and it was brutally hot. “I was losing hope,” shared James. “What am I to do here?”

Throughout this decade of waiting, the church became James’ life and in 2014, he was selected by his pastor to serve as an evangelist at their Nairobi church in the settlement of Saika. James left the camp for his new home on the edge of Nairobi.

Teresa had hoped for a better life in Kenya. As a woman, her only opportunity for education in South Sudan was to learn some Arabic. Coming to Kenya, she dreamt of finally receiving an education. She wants to become a teacher so that one day she can return to South Sudan and teach her people. So far, neither she nor her son have been able to afford school fees. Teresa speaks no English or Kiswahili and so it is nearly impossible for her to find work in Kenya. Her struggle to protect and provide for her son continues.

For James and Teresa, their faith and the community of their local church has become their foundation for life. “If any one receives anything,” says Rev. Deng, “they share it with those in need.”

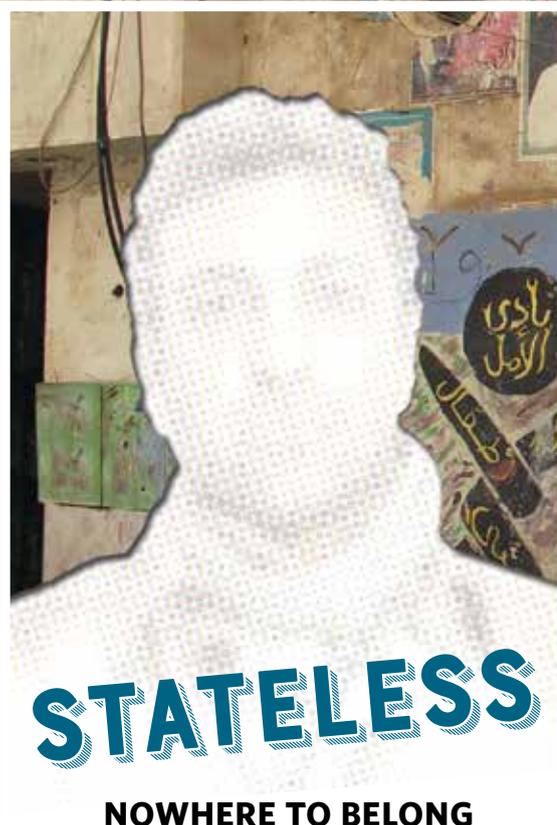
This experience of dividing ones resources is often seen in traditional African families, but for the refugees of FEBAC, the church has become their family. It is only natural for them to share what little they have with the entire church. They embrace one another’s needs and rely on each other because they realize that they are stronger together. 

New friends, new hope for South Sudanese refugee youth at CBM’s Kamp Tumaini held last summer in Saika, Kenya. Teams of youth from Canadian Baptist churches were also thrilled to participate.

[FAR LEFT] James and Erica at a Kamp Tumaini service in Saika.



Last summer, Teresa and James [pictured left] were part of the Kamp Tumaini program of CBM and FEBAC in Saika. It was a time to sing, play, and pray as the participants came together to learn how to improve their nutrition with locally available produce and to share about their faith. “I was encouraged,” said Teresa with a smile. “It was a miracle,” said James. “A miracle how God brought these people all the way from Canada to be with us. Knowing that these churches are praying for us; that they want to help our people. It gives us hope.”



NOWHERE TO BELONG

by Brent Hamoud

“Nationality is a universal human right of immense implication; it is essentially a right that allows us access to a host of other rights. Those that do not have it... face countless obstacles and the psychological trauma of being in this world while not belonging anywhere.”



CITIZENSHIP IS OFTEN taken for granted as something every person receives at birth. However, millions of stateless individuals around the world possess no form of citizenship. For different reasons they were never granted official membership to any nation-state. This is a serious problem because we live in a global system of nation-states and citizenship is necessary to establish the nationality that gives each person a legal place in this world. Nationality is a universal human right of immense implication; it is essentially a right that allows us access to a host of other rights. Those that do not have it are effectively “rights-less.” They face countless obstacles and the psychological trauma of being in this world while not belonging anywhere.

Statelessness presents many legal, social and political challenges, and within it is a theological dilemma that demands attention. It is a tragically overlooked dimension of the displacement crisis occurring in our world today.

It’s estimated that there are more than 15 million stateless individuals in the world today, including over 4 million stateless Palestinians. Individuals can become stateless when states discriminate against particular people groups by denying nationality, when gender discrimination in laws prevent women passing citizenship, or when births and marriages are unregistered. The greatest cause of statelessness, however, is inheritance as a stateless generation gives birth to a stateless generation.

“The greatest cause of statelessness, however, is inheritance as a stateless generation gives birth to a stateless generation.”

It is not difficult to grasp the implications of statelessness. We only need to think of everything we do and every experience we have that requires some form of official identification. All of these are either impossible or extremely complicated for the stateless. This includes:

- Attending school and university
- Gaining legal employment
- Travelling across and within borders
- Accessing health care
- Banking
- Renting, owning or inheriting property
- Legally marrying and registering children

From the cradle to the grave, statelessness impacts all areas of life. In the absence of rights the stateless face heightened risk of human trafficking, sexual and labor exploitation, unlawful detention and many other human rights violations.

When we look at the present day displacement crisis in the Middle East we see emerging threats of statelessness. Over 300,000 Syrian children have been born in displacement since 2011, and staggering high numbers of these births remain unregistered. These children lack proper documentation therefore their current and future legal existence is compromised. If the cases are not remedied, countless lives risk futures of statelessness.¹

Not only is statelessness a violation of international human rights, it contradicts God's intention for creation. In scripture we read how God created places and created all people to be rooted securely in land, society, and community. It is something we call in theological terms *implacement*, the very idea that our humanity is tied to having a place and being rooted in where we are. This is why everyone everywhere desires to be at home somewhere in this world.

Whereas humanity is made by God for implacement, sin has caused displacement,

the uprooting and denial of place. Displacement effectively dehumanizes its victims and this exclusion from humanity is a paralyzing sting of statelessness. The stateless truly live a very real type of displacement. They seemingly do not belong anywhere in this world and are often considered “nobody” people.

Though this is how the world may see the stateless, it should never be the view of the Church. She must foremost see *imago dei*; the truth that all stateless individuals bear God's very image. Though they lack national status, they have a human status that entitles them to every amount of worth and value. The stateless belong to God and they certainly belong in this world. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize that political citizenship, though very important, is limited. It can never deliver promises of human wholeness and security. Our hope is in the truth declared by the Apostle Paul: “Our citizenship is in heaven.”

Knowing that true belonging, true citizenship, is found only in God's heavenly kingdom is good news to all, but how much more of a comfort it is to those who will pass through this world knowing no other citizenship than their heavenly citizenship. Stateless followers of Christ have insight into this mystery of the kingdom in ways that “citizens” do not, and the Church would do well to listen to the prophetic voices of the stateless.

The Church needs to embark on a ministry of citizenship that recognizes the full picture of citizenship. If one gains an earthly citizenship but has not heavenly citizenship, then one has gained very little. Yet if one gains heavenly citizenship but has not an earthly citizenship then one misses out on much. The Church must therefore be concerned with the two hands of citizenship: membership in our global political community and membership in God's kingdom. It is essentially a dual citizenship, citizens of earth and citizens of heaven, and it is the cry of millions around the world. 

[FAR LEFT] The Palestinian refugee situation presents an exceptional case of chronic statelessness. Lebanon hosts an estimated 450,000 Palestinian refugees. Most reside in 12 official refugee camp areas, such as this one, which have become increasingly hazardous due to high population densities, deteriorating infrastructure, and restrictions on implementing development.



BRENT HAMOUD is one of the first four graduates from the Master of Religion in Middle Eastern and North African Studies at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Lebanon. Brent, an American who grew up in Minnesota, has spent the last nine years living in Lebanon and serving at Dar el Awlad (Kids Alive Lebanon), a ministry that serves at-risk children. Brent's father comes from a Bedouin tribe that spans territories in Lebanon and Syria, and spent part of his childhood at the boys' home where Brent now serves. For more reflections visit his blog nostatelessamongyou.wordpress.com

¹ For more information about this urgent crisis see the 2016 report by the Institute of Statelessness and Inclusion and the Norwegian Refugee Council entitled “Understanding Statelessness in the Syrian Refugee Context.”



MY PEOPLE HAVE NO HOMELAND

THE STORY OF SHADRACK MUTABAZI

by Gordon King

PHOTOS: Caroline Wintoniw

Pastor Shadrack Mutabazi meets me over dinner. Our friendship began in 2012 when I first attended a service of Shalom Christian Fellowship – a church he started in Winnipeg. Over the past four years I have been riveted by pieces of Shadrack’s story. Tonight Shadrack has agreed to give me the larger narrative for *mosaic*. At one point he pauses, reflects, and then tells me that his people, the Banyamulenge, have no homeland.

BORN BANYAMULENGE

Shadrack’s story is embedded in the larger narrative of the Banyamulenge people. His ancestors relocated from Rwanda to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the late 1800s. The Banyamulenge were part of the larger Tutsi ethnic group located in the current countries of Rwanda and Burundi. Their movement was motivated by dissent with the Rwandan monarchy. They settled into an isolated mountainous area. From the outset the Banyamulenge were considered to be outsiders that occupied the land of other people. They were never at home in the DRC.

Shadrack’s grandfather was one of the first Banyamulenge to embrace the Christian faith. As a result, he was excluded from his community and went to live with the Bafulero ethnic group where he was welcomed and worked as a catechist. Shadrack still marvels that his grandfather’s traditional enemies acted as his protectors in a time of danger. Later, his grandfather married an orphan and was accepted back into the community where he continued to witness about his faith. Shadrack’s father and mother carried on this tradition as leaders in the Christian movement among the Banyamulenge people. Shadrack is their first child.

The Banyamulenge lived under constant threats. On one occasion a paramilitary group from the Bembe tribe searched for Shadrack’s father. His life was saved by a Bembe pastor who protected him. Once again, Shadrack makes me note that someone regarded as an enemy acted as a friend. This is an important theme in his life and faith.

There were no secondary schools in some Banyamulenge areas so parents made arrangements for selected children to board with Bembe families. Shadrack began Grade 11 in a village named Mboko. He secretly learned the indigenous language of the village as a protective measure. One day he overheard the plan to kill the Banyamulenge students. Shadrack confronted his host family, speaking their traditional language. With shame, they told him that he and his fellow Banyamulenge students must leave the village before dark. They managed to safely leave and eventually return to their community.

In 1989, after his marriage to Miriam, Shadrack started two rural schools for Banyamulenge students. He also served as a lay pastor in this region. Dangers for the Banyamulenge increased after the Rwandan genocide in the spring of 1994. Interahamwe genocidaires joined with Bembe “Mai-Mai” gangs (community-based militia groups) to conduct raids for cattle and to kill community members. In September, when it was apparent that Shadrack’s life was in danger, his father advised him to flee to Rwanda. Miriam’s life was threatened after Shadrack left and she was forced to walk to Rwanda to join her husband.

“As a pastor, he continued to proclaim the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation of people from different ethnic groups.”

RWANDA (1994-2005)

Rwanda was in chaos in 1994. Bodies remained unburied at genocide sites. Survivors were traumatized. Tutsis that had been exiled were returning home. The Hutu population that remained in Rwanda lived in fear of retribution. Interahamwe troops, now located in refugee camps in the DRC, regularly crossed the border to continue ethnic killings.

The Banyamulenge refugees struggled for acceptance in Rwanda. Congolese people had called them Rwandans. Now in Rwanda they were called Congolese. They felt marginalized in the Great Lakes area of Africa, like poor cousins that can never find their place at the table. Shadrack was able to study theology and eventually became a regional pastor in the Presbyterian Church. His assignments were in border areas where other Rwandan colleagues refused to serve. In one area, where there were approximately 10,000 church members, Shadrack worked for reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis. Due to the dangers of his ministry, Shadrack left Miriam and the children in Kigali (the capital city) where life was more secure. Shadrack was kidnapped twice and on six occasions was confronted by armed Interahamwe. His life was saved by his clerical collar, a fast motorcycle, and God's grace. Shadrack raises his trousers in the restaurant to show me wounds on his legs.

In 2005, Shadrack slipped across the border into the DRC to test the waters in his country of origin. People warned him of the orchestrated massacres of Banyamulenge within the widespread violence of the region. The hotel in which he lodged was attacked. After several hours in hiding, a United Nations official rescued Shadrack and escorted him back to Rwanda. He and his family felt unsafe and unwelcome in the entire Great Lakes area. They fled to Uganda. On the way, their infant son died. Miriam carried his body for over a day so that he could be buried with dignity.

UGANDA (2005-2010)

In Uganda, Shadrack and his family were recognized by the UN as refugees. Once again they struggled to build a life in a new country where they still felt insecure and feared for the future. At that time, as now, Uganda was overwhelmed by refugees from the Great Lakes area of Africa, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

Shadrack remained true to his calling. He planted a church for uprooted people named Shalom Christian Outreach Church. The congregation grew. As a pastor, he continued to proclaim the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation of people from different ethnic groups. UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) representatives and the Ugandan police approached him, asking for his cooperation in dealing with a widespread refugee scam. Many people wanting a ticket out of Africa claimed to be Banyamulenge because it was widely recognized that this ethnic group was targeted for persecution. Corrupt officials were bribed to produce fraudulent documents. With Shadrack's assistance, in one week over 3,000 people were forcefully returned to their nations because they had lied about their ethnicity. Shadrack became a target for retribution. As a result, UNHCR officials ensured that he and his family could move to Canada.

“Several times a year Shadrack brings together Africans and Canadians of different backgrounds to reflect on themes of forgiveness and reconciliation.”

CANADA 2010-PRESENT

For Shadrack, the transition to Canada in the winter of 2010 had its hardships and its joys. He makes me laugh when he tells about the time he got lost walking in Winnipeg in February. Getting progressively colder and more desperate, he ran towards a man he saw heading to the door of a home. “You can call the police,” Shadrack told him. “But please let me in. I am going to die.” The surprised man let Shadrack into his home, made tea, and then helped him find his way back to his own place.

Laughter turns to tears, however, when Shadrack shares about financial hardships and difficulties with employment. He was a prominent Christian leader in Africa. In Canada, he was unknown. He was also surprised and hurt by the ethnic divisions among African refugees in Winnipeg. They had brought the suspicions and hatreds of their homelands with them to Canada. He started Shalom Christian Fellowship in Winnipeg with the vision of a congregation that practiced the graces of reconciliation. He was hurt when some Banyamulenge left Shalom because they wanted an exclusive ethnic church for their people. Shadrack repeated to me again the truth he had learned long ago: My enemy can become my friend. In 2014, Shalom Christian Fellowship became an official church plant of the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada. Shadrack is deeply appreciative of the support and friendship within the Canadian Baptist network.

I am amazed at Shadrack’s contribution to the Christian faith in Winnipeg. He saw the desire for theological education among immigrant pastors and lay leaders from African countries, but they lacked funds and time to take courses at theological institutions. Some had never completed high school. Thanks to the assistance of Carey Theological College and the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, over 20 African immigrants gather each Saturday to study the Bible, church history, and pastoral theology. The credentials from Carey have allowed some pastors to find ministry positions in Canadian churches. Several times a year Shadrack brings together Africans and Canadians of different backgrounds to reflect on themes of forgiveness and reconciliation. He is now being asked to travel to different places in Canada and the USA to give his testimony about healing the wounds of the past.

I hope that my friend Shadrack and his family find a permanent homeland in Canada. The journey has been long and difficult. I am inspired by his faith in God and his confidence that enemies can become friends. He once asked a bishop, “Which is more important – the water of baptism or the blood of ethnicity?” The bishop’s answer was the blood of ethnicity. Shadrack dedicates his ministry to proving that the bishop was wrong. 



GORDON KING serves as CBM’s Resource Specialist. He recently published *Seed Falling on Good Soil: Rooting Our Lives in the Parables of Jesus*.

SIGNS OF WELCOME

CHURCH-SPONSORED REFUGEE ASSISTANCE

by Paul Carline
 Director of Intercultural
 Ministries, Canadian Baptists
 of Atlantic Canada

Never
 underestimate
 the Church.

“Let’s bring 100 refugee families to Canada!”

Considering that our three Anglophone Canadian Baptist regions only sponsored one or two families a year each, this goal, inspired by the Syrian refugee crisis and encouraged by Canadian Baptist Ministries, seemed irrational. 18 months later we had sponsored over 150 families!

Churches worked with their communities. Churches worked with other churches! Churches volunteered with government-assisted refugees. Churches were the hands, feet and words of Christ. Churches and families were changed.

It’s been more about worship than service. It’s reminded us of how God, in Christ, sponsored us at such great cost. It’s also been hard. It does cost and (like us with God) people sometimes find it hard to trust love and show appreciation.

However, not all refugees to Canada are private or government sponsored. Nearly half ask for asylum upon arrival at our borders. Asylum seekers have no sponsors and often no one to welcome or assist them. They are some of our nation’s most vulnerable people. Here are some opportunities to engage:

- Directly sponsor refugees we know who don’t have access to government resettlement tracks
- Help families be reunited with their relatives
- Support ministry to claimants
- Volunteer with newcomers
- Ask God to show us other marginalized people – overlooked neighbours.

We can’t let this end. Such ministry won’t always be popular, but the church must be a prophetic window to the Kingdom of God, giving a glimpse of the community he creates, bringing his teachings to bear on society. We are the Body of Christ – his physical presence on earth – agents of transformation. *Never underestimate the Church. God is within her.* 

A Syrian family receives a warm welcome to Canada by their host, Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church.



Minister of Immigration,
Refugees and Citizenship



Ministre de l'immigration,
des Réfugiés et de la Citoyenneté

Greetings from the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

I am pleased to have this opportunity to extend my warmest greetings to the readers of *mosaic*, and to commend the Canadian Baptist community for their ongoing and significant work in support of the Syrian resettlement project.

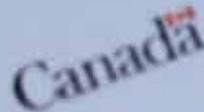
Since November 4, 2015, Canada has welcomed more than 34,000 Syrian refugees. This is an extraordinary achievement, which could not have been possible without the overwhelming generosity of Canadians like you. Canadian Baptists are themselves responsible for the sponsorship of more than 70 families—upwards of 200 people in total—with more yet to come.

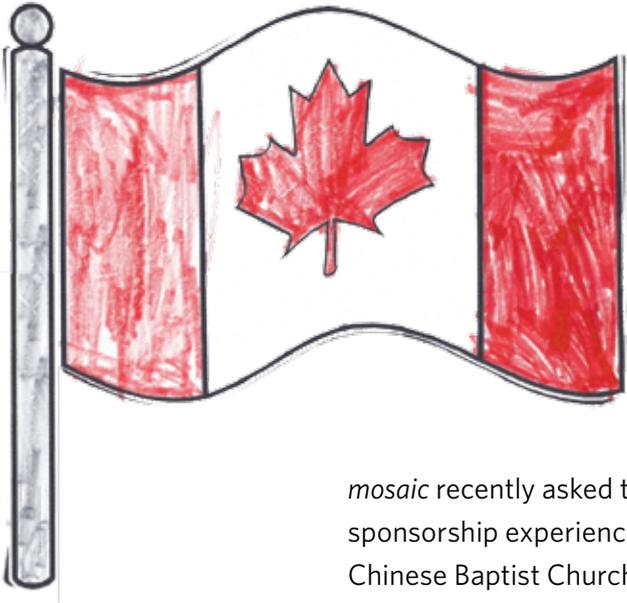
Your commitment to helping those displaced by the ongoing conflicts in Syria and the region is a wonderful example of how Canadians are continuing our most cherished humanitarian traditions. By helping refugees begin a new life here in Canada, you ensure that we uphold our international obligations and, at the same time, build stronger communities and fulfil the promise of Canada—the most welcoming nation in the world.

I would like to express Canada's gratitude to you for the important work that you are doing, and I wish you the greatest of success in your future endeavours.

Sincerely,

The Honourable John McCallum, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship





WelcomeRefugees

mosaic recently asked three churches from across the country to share their refugee sponsorship experience - RiverCross Church in Saint John, New Brunswick; Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church (SCBC) in Ontario; and First Baptist Church in Dauphin, Manitoba.

MOSAIC: HOW HAS BEEN THE EXPERIENCE OF YOUR CHURCH IN SPONSORING/WELCOMING REFUGEES TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

RIVERCROSS: We sponsored four families – each has a “welcome team” working alongside of them. Three of the families were from Syria. One has children with significant physical disabilities; in another, the parents have recently separated and we are working that through.

The first family was a widow and her six kids from Tajikistan. They were very wealthy but on the wrong side of the Russian-backed government. Her husband was murdered in front of her and some of the children. They were immediately lifted from the country and brought to Canada. Three weeks later, she realized she was pregnant with her sixth. She never had to personally cook or clean, grocery shop, or put the kids to bed – she had servants to do all this. So a couple of “saints” in our church went over five nights a week and taught her how to do all these things.

At the height of the Syrian refugee crisis, when new families were arriving every day in Saint John, they were all staying in the same hotel. A group from our church who provides a meal each week in an underprivileged neighbourhood decided they would like to also provide a weekly meal for the refugees at the hotel. This gave our church family time to sit and have a meal with the newcomers.

SCBC: In the first month after the family came to Canada, it was a whirlwind of appointments to get the family settled in. We were glad to have a lot of support in our church from the get go, but there was still a lot of coordination required to give the congregation opportunities to interact with the family. Through the challenges of finding a place to live, as well helping the family become comfortable with their new neighbourhood, we have been blessed to have memories of spending time with each other as regular people. Members of all ages were able to step up and spend time with the family, each bringing their unique skill set and personalities to the mix.

MOSAIC: WHAT SURPRISED YOU THE MOST IN THE PROCESS? EITHER A CHALLENGE OR UNEXPECTED BLESSING, OR BOTH.

FB DAUPHIN: How did we miss doing this for so long? It was just last year that we tiptoed into this ministry feeling inadequate, over our heads, pretty much terrified. And our lives are changed. This little family from the other side of the world has become so dear, so precious to us.

Another surprise was how this venture would bring the larger church community together. Our church was only able to participate at the level we did because of the generosity of our sister Baptist churches across the province. We also teamed with a Catholic and United church and each brought a family to our town. The three families are a tremendous support to each other and the three churches continue to work closely as new challenges present themselves.

SCBC: When we first talked about sponsorship, we thought it was just a settlement project - that we were going to welcome and settle this family who has seen so much horror and hardship. The unexpected blessing is that they have become our friends and family who we visit, share messages on social media, check up on how the kids are doing in school, have meals together... enjoy family road trips to Niagara Falls and the Santa Claus parade.

MOSAIC: WHAT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT THING TO DEAL WITH FOR MEMBERS OF YOUR CHURCH? AND FOR THE REFUGEE FAMILY?

RIVERCROSS: Some members of our church had to battle some of the fear-mongering that was happening – fears that some of these people might be terrorists, or bad for the country, or were going to take our jobs or be a drain on our system. Saint John is going through its own season of economic depression so we have many people here needing help. In response to this, we did a four-week teaching series entitled “Refuge: is there hope when it all falls apart?” People needed to hear something hopeful, honest and biblical.

The most difficult thing is to watch our Syrian families grieve all they left behind. We tend to think they are happy to leave Syria and come to Canada. But they loved their country and are very proud of their country, despite the war. They are grieving family members killed or left behind and they have no idea where they are or if they are alive. One of our families had a child die in an explosion and dad was injured quite badly and is now in a wheelchair. You feel bad for them when all they hear in the news about Syria is the war – they see their country as so much bigger than the war.

FB DAUPHIN: The language barrier was the most difficult part for us. We were thankful that we found a translator to meet the families at the airport with us, but we quickly realized how hard this was going to be without him. How would we explain the myriad of details about their housing, banking, schools, strange food labels and English classes?

We longed to find out what our family really thought and no amount of translating seemed to make those early conversations easy. We were so worried about offending them and about their comfort and they were so concerned about being a burden that we wore the translator out with niceties.

MOSAIC: WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

RIVERCROSS: There are lots of cultural mistakes we made because we were not familiar with Arab and Muslim cultures. These provided some funny but also awkward moments. For example, we did not know anything about Eid, the 30-day Muslim fast... bad time to bring over food; allowing a guest to go through a door first; bringing gifts for eldest family members; customs around greeting members of the opposite sex, etc.

We would have gotten involved sooner – and almost missed out on this opportunity. The first family (from Tajikistan) we sponsored had a lot of needs, was really struggling in Canada and was not happy to be here. It was not looking like an easy assignment, and would require specific volunteers. It would have been easy to say no. We would have missed out on an incredible opportunity.

FB DAUPHIN: Because our church team was small we could efficiently address needs that arose. More opinions could have made that work harder. The downside of the small team was the heavy workload for the few and now we wish more people could have been part of this amazing experience. We are still trying to provide opportunities for our Syrian families and our churches to interact. All three churches recently voted to try to sponsor some of our family’s close relatives - that gives us another chance to involve more people.

“The most difficult thing is to watch our Syrian families grieve all they left behind. We tend to think they are happy to leave Syria and come to Canada. But they loved their country and are very proud of their country, despite the war.”

[TOP] A family outing to Niagara Falls with members of Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church and their sponsored family. **[BOTTOM]** New friendships, new family at RiverCross Church.





MOSAIC: WHAT WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING TO COME OUT OF THIS EXPERIENCE? AND SOME OF THE THINGS YOU LEARNED FROM EACH OTHER?

Sharing a family meal: Members of First Baptist Church in Dauphin with their sponsored family.

SCBC: Sometimes we focus too much on our differences rather than our similarities... what has bonded us is our common love. The father in the family we sponsored took his family out of a war torn country, carrying his mobility-impaired son on his back over borders and eventually to Canada to give his kids a better life. That's something all parents can understand and appreciate. We have learned so much from him about sacrifice and love; it challenges us to do the same.

RIVERCROSS: One of the most beautiful things to come out of this experience was to see a family that arrived in Canada broken - mentally, physically, and spiritually - start to heal, trust others and feel safe. The first family arrived in Canada just weeks following the death of their husband and father. We have not only helped them to mourn and get adjusted to life in Canada, but we have also become like parents and grandparents to the children. The mom trusts us to take the children on outings, and we are able to contribute to their educational, fitness and recreational experiences. It is like having an adopted family, and they love and appreciate us as their own.

Friendship. If we are honest, we had stereotypes about them, and they had stereotypes about us (Westerners/Middle Easterners/Christians/Muslims). These evaporated over time and now we are friends. We anticipated helping them for a season and then winding things down, but the reality is, we have become friends and now get together on a regular basis, not because we have to, but because we want to. We shared something incredible together and it fused a friendship.

“ If we are honest, we had stereotypes about them, and they had stereotypes about us... These evaporated over time and now we are friends. ”

MOSAIC: HOW CAN A CHURCH BE MORE WELCOMING TO REFUGEES? WHAT WOULD BE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WOULD GIVE?

FB DAUPHIN: Don't wait. Find out who sponsors refugees in your area and get in on it. This is the Kingdom of God in action.

SCBC: The most important thing is to educate the congregation, and give the church plenty of time to ask questions, and then address their concerns before the family arrives. While we were in the application stage, we heard a lot of concerns about security screening, and we assured them that the family has been fully screened. Now that we have started spending time with the family, our church couldn't be more welcoming.

If you have any reservations about sponsorship, please take the time to visit refugee families already in Canada, and don't be afraid of the language and cultural barriers... the language of love is universal. God will always show a way when we love our neighbours.

RIVERCROSS: Once these folks arrive in Canada, they are no longer refugees. They are now Canadians. Syrian Canadians. We have had to catch ourselves talking about “the refugee family”, when in reality that is not a fair way to keep referring to them. No one wants to be solely identified with the worst experience of their life.

As the Church, we need to open our hearts and minds to the world around us. We must not only see the pain and despair from afar, but we must do something about it in our own part of the world. The opportunity to welcome and work with refugees offers lifetime benefits and friendships and witness. We are able to see into their world, learn from them, enjoy their culture, and help them embrace their new culture they are finding themselves part of. The Church has a responsibility, but also an opportunity, to rediscover its mission and rekindle the kind of love that Jesus would have us show to our neighbours.

Editor's Note: We wish to express our thanks to these three churches and the many others who have shared their experiences with us. 

BEING THE GOSPEL

REFUGEES WELCOMED BY BAPTIST CHURCHES IN EUROPE

by Helle Liht

DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS, Europe has been shaken by a flow of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa crossing its borders and trying to find shelter from the long-lasting military conflicts and economic crises that have ruined their societies. There are about 1.5 million people who have applied for asylum in Europe for the first time (in the second half of 2015 and first half of 2016), with Germany being the most desired country.

Yet Europe has failed to speak with one voice and act in solidarity with the refugees and one another. There are several reasons for this, some quite understandable – a fear of Islam that has been fed by the terrorist attacks in several European cities, past history of immigration especially in the small post-Soviet countries, growing nationalist movements, so-called ‘poor’ economic situations, and others. As a result, more and more borders have been closed, fences have been built, and political agreements have been made to keep many refugees out.

For many Europeans, the refugee “others” are perceived as a threat and cause of crisis. Yet there are also many civil society organizations - and churches - that boldly witness to the opposite.

Early 2016, the European Baptist Federation’s member bodies came together for a conference that was shaped around the theme *Welcoming the Stranger: Live the Gospel, Share the Gospel, Be the Gospel*. The stories shared came from across Europe and were truly prophetic. They testified that where refugees were welcomed and given a possibility to participate in the life of a local church community, they became a source of blessing. Encountering the other – someone from a different culture, tradition and religion – has caused many churches to re-visit their understanding of God’s Kingdom, to go back to the life and teaching of Jesus, and in this way to renew their commitment to be his followers in word and deed.

HERE IS A STORY FROM FINLAND

When you live in this Nordic country, you need to know how to ski! So the refugees who found shelter in Finland asked the local Baptist church members in Oravais to teach them how to ski, both cross-country and downhill. The lady who went to practice skiing with them was very good at cross-country skiing, but didn’t know how to ski downhill. Yet the group was enthusiastic, so they tried together. Of course they fell together, got up, and fell again. We don’t know if they ever learned to ski downhill. Yet they learned something about how to trust and support each other and certainly how to laugh together. And in this trusting and mutually enriching relationship the Gospel has been shared and received. Oravais Baptist Church, which was a decreasing community, is now growing rapidly, and 90% of their regular congregation are people who have found a home in Finland during this refugee crisis.

Encountering the other is no doubt challenging. Yet in building relationships where love has conquered fear and people open their lives to receive the gift of the other, God’s Kingdom is being revealed. 



[ABOVE] A first ski lesson for refugees in Finland by members of Oravais Baptist Church. **[LEFT]** **HELLE LIHT** is Assistant General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation (EBF). She is one of the members of an international working group that coordinates the EBF’s response to the migration/refugee situation. Visit www.ebf.org.



IT TAKES

Courage

BEHIND HER BEAUTIFUL SMILE, LIES A PAINFUL REFUGEE JOURNEY. THIS IS HER STORY.

by **Laurena Zondo**
PHOTOS: Johnny C.Y. Lam

A Photo Essay

With just a small suitcase in hand, a young girl arrives all alone on Canada's doorstep. It's the final stop on the refugee highway for thousands of people each year - including unaccompanied youth like Elisée - fleeing conflict or persecution in their homeland and seeking asylum. But Canada has nothing in place to welcome or assist refugees who arrive without prior government approval. There is no one to greet them. They have no support in place and idea where to go or what to do next.



Elisée is one of the fortunate ones. An airport security guard recognizes her plight and gives her the number of Matthew House - a community of three homes in Toronto that provide shelter for newly-arrived refugee claimants.

Many refugees end up spending their first night on the street or in a homeless shelter - susceptible to becoming abused or re-traumatized. In the weeks and months ahead, they also face an arduous, legal process; they struggle with loneliness, trauma, and fears of deportation. Less than half are successful in their claim to stay in Canada.



Elisée calls Matthew House and they scramble to find her accommodation. All of their rooms are full. The only space available is a sofa in the basement where she can stay until a bed opens up. Elisée is grateful for a place to call home. It's been a long journey. She has been on the move for most of her young life, changing cities, changing countries - fleeing with her family to Burundi, Tanzania, and other neighbouring nations whenever war or violence broke out near them in the Democratic Republic of Congo. "My parents tried to protect us, all their children, as best they could... to take our minds away from seeing people dying in the road."

Eventually her parents decide that the family needs to move to Canada, a place they consider safe and peaceful. But at the moment they can only manage to send one child. Elisée is chosen. "I hated the idea of leaving my family... leaving people you love and trust the most... coming here all alone. It was really scary, but I had to do it; there wasn't another choice."



Matthew House staff and volunteers provide a warm welcome, love and care. They shop for groceries, cook meals, take refugees to medical appointments, outings to the park, and help with all of the paperwork, interviews, job and housing searches that are all part of the refugee claim and settlement process. They even hold mock hearings to help refugees like Elisée prepare for the day they will stand in front of a judge who will determine the course of their life - will they be allowed to stay in Canada or be returned to their homeland? It's a nerve-wrecking process for anyone to have to go through.

Former occupants of Matthew House often return to visit and volunteer to help those who are newly-arriving. Helton, once a refugee claimant himself who stayed at Matthew House, now works on staff, helping with the settlement process. He understands what refugee claimants go through; all of the fears and anxieties.

Elisée is still haunted by what she witnessed growing up in the Congo. "You can walk outside and find a dead body; imagine, at a young age, seeing stuff like that... see our neighbours, our closest friends being killed... words cannot even explain; it's just so horrible."

She was encouraged to go to counselling, to help heal these emotional wounds and trauma. "I remember asking myself could I be able again to smile, but see, today I smile." Three years later, Elisée is able to now talk about her experience. "I still see the picture in my mind, but I don't feel it heavy in my soul like I used to... I was able to talk about it, and cry. They tell me that it's okay, you can cry, scream. It's part of the process of releasing the negative image of things you kept in."





Near the end of our meeting, Elisée sees a news headline on the TV in the living room: 32 people killed in the Congo. "It's too much to see... Every time I see something I wonder if my family is okay." She recently lost contact with her family for about two weeks. "I was seeing this image of people being killed and wondering where's my family, trying to call friends, asking friends on Facebook to go and see if they're alive... after two weeks my mom called and said 'don't worry, we're safe, everything is okay.' But nothing is okay in the Congo because there's still people dying, being killed, people fighting for their life."

She looks down and twists the beads on one of her bracelets – a secret gift from her mom that she now wears all the time. "It symbolizes peace and equality. My mom somehow flipped it into my pocket [without my knowing]... when I found it I broke into tears, just remembering seeing my mom and everyone in my family wearing it... bracelets are very meaningful in my culture, it's how you know you belong."



Elisée is currently in Grade 12 and plans to go to university. "My dream, my goal, is to study civil engineering." She also hopes that one day more of her family in the Congo will be able to join her in Canada.

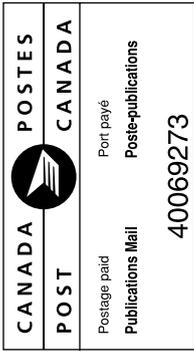


DIGNITY NOT DETENTION

Some refugee claimants face detention – a condition similar to being imprisoned – until their case can be heard and decided. In 2015, Matthew House hosted an international delegation as part of a round table consultation on the topic of "Alternatives to Detention," convened by the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency). They later learned that delegates were impressed with the level of care, dignity and respect offered, and see Matthew House as the "ideal model of refugee reception to which all nations should aspire."

Since opening in 1998, Matthew House has assisted over 1,400 refugee claimants from 93 different nations. It grew out of the vision of its Founding Director, Anne Woolger [pictured below], who saw the specialized needs of refugees seeking asylum while working at a city-run shelter in Toronto. With the support of her Canadian Baptist family, Anne started Matthew House to provide refugees with a Christian-based, warm welcome in a home-like setting. It has inspired the opening of similar refugee shelters across Canada and the United States. Learn more at www.matthewhouse.ca 





grassroots heroes

FIELD OF DREAMS

This past September, eight kids and seven parents from Lorne Park Baptist Church in Mississauga headed west to spend four days with the members of Brownfield Baptist Church in Alberta, their Canadian Foodgrains Bank growing project partner. For these urban families, the trip was an opportunity to teach their kids about food production and sow seeds of compassion in their hearts for hungry people.

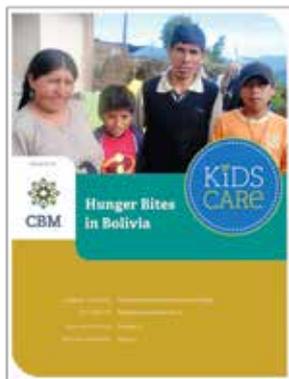
These seeds were planted over 30 years ago, by Art Cole and Clayton Richardson, two Baptist farmers from Brownfield who began the project as a way to enable Canadian grain farmers to share their harvests with those in need around the world. In 1983, this project led to the establishment of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a 15 member agency organization (including CBM) with the goal of ending global hunger. Today, farmers in the Brownfield/Coronation community continue to cultivate the "Lord's field" each year, carrying on the tradition of feeding the hungry.

Nine years ago, the congregation at Lorne Park entered into partnership with the project by committing to raise the funds required for the rental of the 300 acre field each year. Since then, these two churches, along with Westview Baptist Church in Calgary who pays for the fertilizer costs, have shared the burdens and the joys of this project together. Says Jordan Webber, the Coordinator of the project, "Having partners like Lorne Park and Westview is an amazing blessing to this grow project. We love that it is a project we can accomplish together as urban and rural churches. Having partners allows us to send more funds to where they will make a difference."

For the kids from Lorne Park, all of whom had never been to Alberta, the visit was a real highlight. Says 10-year-old Alison about the trip, "It was an interesting experience and I enjoyed meeting the people from Brownfield who we work on this project with."

A week after the Lorne Park visit, 12 combines, nine semi-trucks, one grain cart and many community volunteers helped harvest 391 tons of wheat, which after being matched by the Government of Canada, equals \$400,000 of food assistance for Syrian refugee families in Lebanon this year. A satisfying end to another fruitful year of collaboration.

Canadian Baptist Ministries
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