24 - 26 September 2020

WHITE PAPERS

Spirit-Driven Solidarity and Action: Experiences from the U.S./Mexico Border
Richard E. Waldrop
Refugee and Asylum Seeker Migration
Richard Munn, B.Ed, M.Div. D.Min
The Unique Gifts and Role of the Church
Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra
Role of the Church in Responding to Migration
Mary B. Campbell, JD
Unlearning Settler Privilege as a Filipina Immigrant
S. Lily Mendoza
Biblical Perspective on Migrants
Kennedy Dhanabalan
Fleeing Homophobia: LGBTI Refugees and the Church, case in East Africa
Joe Bonga
"Arami Oved Avi" ("My Ancestor Was An Alien"): Migration in the Light of Israel's Pastoral Nomad Origins
James W. Perkinson
Migration narratives in the Bible...are complex
Gordon Showell-Rogers
The Ultimate Story of Migration: From Placelessness to Implacement
Brent Hamoud
Play as a liberating space in times of forced migration (A re-reading of Genesis. 21:1-21)
Ruth Alvarado Yparraguirre
"Faith and Displacement": A Socio-Scientific Integral Mission Project of the Church
Guillermo Mejía Castillo

Spirit-Driven Solidarity and Action: Experiences from the U.S./Mexico Border

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The Shalom Project is a small Christian nonprofit which has as one of its pillars the practice of advocacy on behalf of asylum-seekers and refugees along the U.S./Mexico border. As executive director, I offer the following reflections on the nature and context of our recent work with immigrants from Latin America. Our solidarity with immigrants comes from many years of work as Pentecostal missionaries among the people of Latin America and of having lived as "immigrants" in the countries of Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and Ecuador. During our first term of service (1976-1981) in Guatemala in the context of poverty, oppression, institutionalized violence and revolutionary violence we experienced a "conversion to the poor" and a kind of "conscientización" that helped us move beyond our own socio-political conditioning toward a disposition of "co-suffering" with the marginalized and persecuted, mostly indigenous and campesino populations directly impacted by the violence of that time. We believe that this solidarity and action is also the work of the Spirit.

As a result of the internal violent conflicts throughout Central America and the direct interventionist policies of the government of the United States which supported many abusive military officers, including dictators of those years (see School of the Americas Watch), the seeds were sown for the great exodus that has been taking place over the course of the past three decades. Therefore, the U.S. government has direct responsibility for the influx of Central Americans and others (Colombians, Venezuelans) at its southern border with Mexico.

In the best of the Pentecostal tradition this brief account is intended to be a narrative or testimonial approach toward specific efforts to "be" in solidarity in word and deed with asylum-seekers and refugees especially coming to the U.S. from the Northern Triangle of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador), it should be noted that a praxis model of theology has been at the core of our work. All Christian praxis is related in some way to theology and hermeneutics, while all theology should be "lived" or "practiced" theology. In our case, we read Scripture with a special focus on a "preferential option", or God's special love for the poor, including the "stranger", "sojourner", "alien" or "foreigner" among us. In this way of "doing theology" we encounter the face of Jesus and the presence of God revealed in the broken bodies and psyches of our neighbors from the South.

Our work was done at three specific sites along the U.S./Mexico border, those of San Diego/Tijuana, Laredo/Nuevo Laredo and El Paso/Ciudad Juarez. Although these were relatively short-term efforts, the impact and outcomes have been sustained and longer-lasting. These were responses to the recent influx (2018-2019) of Central Americans and the hardships they faced, and continue to face, given the physical and emotional trauma experienced on the journey to the U.S. and the extreme anti-immigrant sentiment and policies implemented by the Trump administration.

Along with our actions of solidarity along the border, we have taken opportunities to speak to the issues surrounding immigration to a variety of audiences. From university classes taught, sermons preached, petitions signed and promoted, and addresses given at public protests and direction actions, our aim has been to take an integral and prophetic approach to the issue. Below are excerpts from earlier public speeches given at four venues

San Diego/Tijuana

Our first experience took place in Tijuana, Mexico, where we visited the El Barretal refugee camp of about 6,000 people. As gestures of goodwill we took supplies such as clothing, water, toys, and personal items to share specifically with families (mostly women and children) who were sleeping on the floor under a large pavilion. Most of these asylum-seekers had traveled by caravan over the course of 2,000 miles from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. As we spoke to them we heard stories of violence, abduction, and gang and drug related threats in the towns and cities from which they came. We also heard about drought and crop failure. We made two additional visits to the camp while we were in Southern California and made contact with several agencies working with them.

Among the asylum seekers we met many folks who were Evangelical believers and members of the Pentecostal churches with which I had been associated during our earlier work in Central America. This included a single Honduran mother and son who directly asked for help in getting to the U.S. She had gone directly to the border crossing several times to formally request asylum but was always turned back. I gave her my business card and promised to help her if she could make it across the wall. She did make it across and was promptly arrested by the Border Patrol who asked if she had a sponsor. The Shalom Project became her sponsor and soon she was brought to Tennessee where she is working to provide support for her family back in Honduras while she awaits the long legal process required of asylum seekers. Subsequently, The Shalom Project sponsored another single mom and child from Honduras who are also living here in Tennessee.

While in San Diego, we also participated in the “Love Knows No Borders” action organized by the American Friends Service Committee. More than 400 demonstrators from many religious traditions called for an end to the detention and deportation of migrants and for the U.S. to welcome the caravan from Central America that had arrived in Tijuana. As a result, 32 of us were arrested as a result of our non-violent civil disobedience at the border wall where we participated in a prayer vigil and protest. We believe that this is also the work of the Spirit.

Laredo/Nuevo Laredo

Our second experience was a five day pilgrimage to Laredo, Texas where we visited migrant shelters in town and across the border in Nuevo Laredo. We held a prayer vigil on the banks of the Rio Grande and had a meal with immigrants being processed at the Mexican Immigration Office in Nuevo Laredo.

At the border crossing footbridge we found a long line of immigrants, mostly women and children, waiting for days as they hoped to be able to present their situations to the U.S. Customs and Border agents. We conversed with many of them and offered water, food, medicine and transportation to nearby shelters. Finally, some of our team members distributed gallons of drinking water at strategic places along the border to assist those who

were traveling through the surrounding desert to reach the U.S. At one point, we were arrested and released by Border Patrol agents and given a warning.

El Paso/Ciudad Juárez

Our most recent experience was with one particular Pentecostal congregation in El Paso, Texas, the Iglesia de Dios El Elyon, led by pastors Maribel and Oswaldo Velásquez. This was in May, 2019, when the infamous "catch and release" policy was being implemented by the U.S. government where thousands of immigrants were being arrested after having crossed into the U.S. and then released into the hands of agencies and churches.

The El Elyon church had volunteered to be one of the officially recognized "hospitality centers" and was receiving approximately 60 refugees each day, assisting them with food, clothing, showers, and contacts with family members who would help them with onward passage to be reunited with loved ones. The church building had been effectively converted into a dormitory, kitchen and bathroom facilities as immigrants streamed through during the course of two to three days. Special worship and prayer services were offered to all and many would come to the front of the church for prayers for healing and strength in typical Latin American Pentecostal style.

During that particular uptick in border crossings, arrests and releases, the El Elyon church helped to receive and process upward of 5,000 asylum seekers for their forward journey. We were able to provide them with some financial assistance and logistical support during our five days during which some 200 asylum seekers were received and sent on their way.

Conclusion

Here, we have briefly described the experience of "Spirit-driven" solidarity and action based upon a Pentecostal and Liberationist reading of Luke 4:18-22.

In this model, "being" with people precedes "doing" for and with people. Solidarity is not charity. It is being sensitive to and led by the Spirit to have and demonstrate compassion--that is to feel in some sense the pain and suffering others are enduring and actively participate in the life-giving and liberating work of the Spirit. All of the above mentioned experiences brought a measure of release and healing to all of us who participated.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me and has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach liberty to the captives and restore sight to the blind, to release the oppressed and announce the acceptable year of God's favor" Luke 4:18-19.

Refugee and Asylum Seeker Migration

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Introduction

From the beginning of time the displacement of people due to hunger, hardship or hostilities is part of our human story. Such people and circumstances are thus intrinsically part of the salvation story.

Abraham, Moses, the people of Israel, Jesus, the early church and many other notables were all refugees. In response scripture is forcefully replete with the admonition to 'care for the alien and foreigner in your midst.' (Leviticus 19)

While displaced people are invariably present somewhere, it is the sheer number of refugees and asylum seekers confronting us in the 21st century that is unparalleled in human history. Well-established international policies are being tested to new limits. Even compassionate Christian responses seem overwhelmed by the magnitude of need.

The evidence seems to suggest that significantly large numbers of refugees will be part of our world for the foreseeable future.

How we respond and form our views is of critical importance.

The arc of scripture can inform the overall policy of a sophisticated international operation, the response of a local community of faith and the compassion of an individual family.

What principles can guide us in response to the magnitude of this human need? What is the message of scripture with regard to refugees and asylum seekers?

Human History

We can begin by realizing that human migration and the presence of displaced people is an ever-present part of the human story, including our ancestors, natural and biblical.

Scholars note 36 references for the people of Israel to care for aliens, frequently joined with the reminder that they also had been aliens in Egypt. The words foreigner, alien, stranger, sojourner or immigrant appear over 100 times in scripture, especially in the OT.

This ethic by the people of Israel is central to their self-awareness. Not only are the key figures of Cain, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, Ruth, David and others at some time aliens in a foreign land, but, an entire people, a nation was in such a predicament. This is essentially unprecedented and happens twice in the national Hebrew story – captivity in Egypt for over 400 years; and, exiled in Babylon for 70 years.

The history of the New Testament reinforces the motif in the most exclamatory way, at the very beginning – Jesus commences his life as a refugee. The human-interest story is powerful as new parents Mary and Joseph and infant baby flee to Egypt to escape the brutality of a despot. The identity with refugee plight is immediate.

Not only baby Jesus; but, an infant church. Refugee dynamics are continued as the fledgling New Testament church scatters during Judean and Roman persecution. The latter includes Aquila and Priscilla fleeing Emperor Claudius and the apostle John banished to the Mediterranean island of Patmos.

A final reinforcement comes with the identification of other people as 'aliens and strangers in the world.' (1 Peter 2) – the people of God, the church. Our identity is in Christ, our nationhood in Him. The image is simultaneously comforting and affirming, uncertain and fluid.

This is the journey of faith. It sometimes encounters hardship.

Hunger and Horrors

Relocation due to hunger comes early in Genesis. Abraham and family come from the Bedouin wilderness culture of the Ancient Near East and as such are especially susceptible to the stresses of periodic famine. During these times, like many counterparts, they travel to fertile Egypt to alleviate their suffering. (Genesis 12) The brothers of Joseph, who was exiled and is now powerful in Egypt, repeat the same pattern. (Genesis 42)

Another human-interest story prompted by famine is found in the book of Ruth. It is the willing generosity of property owner Boaz to the needy refugee Ruth that redeems the plight and secures the lineage of David. Boaz exemplifies kindness to the refugee; Ruth exemplifies the resourcefulness of the refugee. (Ruth 2)

In addition to the primal search for nourishment, many people are forced to leave their homeland against their will. Once again, the Bible contains such examples.

Joseph is sold by his jealous brothers into slavery and demonstrates remarkable fortitude and survival skills by thriving in Egypt. So much so that he is unrecognized by his brothers when they stand before him asking for food.

Daniel is deported from his homeland to Babylon. He exemplifies both cultural assimilation and principled conviction. (Daniel 1)

Additionally, the cruelties of war and invasion mean that deportees are uprooted en masse as recorded in the Assyrian ransacking of Jerusalem. (2 Kings) Archeologists have unearthed evidence of major people movements from this Biblical time.

Moses and David represent another group, escapees, people for innumerable reasons who find themselves in an alien culture, endangered and disempowered, who have to begin life over again.

These examples from scripture replicate primary causes for refugees today. Hunger, horrors, deportees and escapees are included a thousand times in the refugee stories of our day and age.

Resilience, ingenuity, resourcefulness, heroism, agony and adaptation form the refugee fabric. A sure agent of healing in that regard is the hospitality of the host people. It is desperately needed.

Hospitality and Healing

There is a fascinating contrast between the Egyptian Pharaoh of Genesis (Gensis 47) who welcomes and hosts the refugee Joseph and the Pharaoh of Exodus (Exodus 1) who confronts and dismisses the refugee Moses. The former benefits from the skills of the refugee; the latter sees the refugee people as a threat to national security and oppresses them. One prospers, the other perishes.

It is abundantly clear that the people of God are exhorted to welcome and serve refugees. The fundamental provision of hospitality to the stranger is not only a high Bedouin cultural value, it expresses a Kingdom ethic.

Abraham lavishly hosts 3 'strangers' (Genesis 18), care is extended to Elisha by the Shunammite couple (2 Kings 4) and the poor widow of Zarephath self-sacrifices as she feeds Elijah (1 Kings 17).

In the New Testament a clear practice of hospitality continues. Jesus is often pictured in someone's house for a meal, most notably Zacchaeus and the house of a Pharisee. We also see the hospitality ethic in the naturally spontaneous invitation of the 2 disciples to their unrecognized travelling companion on the road to Emmaus to 'stay with us.' (Luke 25)

Jesus also uses the hospitality of a foreigner – a shunned Samaritan – for one of his most beloved parables and teaching regarding neighborliness. (LK 10) The point is acerbic for the original Jewish audience as the Samaritan stands in contrast to the home religious leaders who offer no hospitality to the invalid traveler.

Some of this is also present when Jesus commends the one 'foreigner' out of 10 lepers who returns to give thanks for his healing. (Luke 17) The message is profound – foreigners are included in the family of God and may even exceed the host nationality in their devotion and piety.

There is evidence this is so today. Not only are many refugees today in their predicament specifically because of their Christian faith – but, there are examples of non-Christian refugees coming to faith in Christ as a response to generous Christian hospitality and advocacy. In the first scenario, hospitality for the persecuted church is one basic way to stand in solidarity with Christian brothers and sisters, the persecuted Christ.

Conclusion

Migrations are a longstanding means by which the Christian church has expanded; at the very least enlivened and stimulated. The nations show up on our doorstep. The mission field has crossed our borders and settled into our communities. Can we see the potential, not just the problems?

Extending hospitality begins the process of healing for the agony and bewilderment of the refugee; it also brings healing to the benefactor – 'it is more blessed to give, than to receive.'
We might imagine this applies to hospitable nations, denominations, local congregations and individual families.

The Unique Gifts and Role of the Church

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In the Migrant Crisis in the US

Churches and other ministries have been responding to the needs of migrants since the dawn of the church. Secular groups and broad coalitions also carry out a range of activities to support migrants, including direct services, immigrant immigration, community development and advocacy. However, the Church can contribute a variety of specific gifts to the process. This paper will present an analysis of the unique gifts that Christian leaders and ministries bring to the migration crisis of this era, working off of the "living text" of my experiences in immigrant ministry since 1978 and as a national leader in the engagement of the Church in the struggle for immigrant justice in the US since 2005.

The Power of Moral Authority

In 1980, I was a member of University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley, one of the first churches in the country to join the Central American Sanctuary Movement. When the federal government was denying the asylum applications of Central Americans fleeing civil wars because of the alliance between the US and their governments, congregations' accompaniment of and advocacy for these refugees changed the national debate and helped end US funding of the wars. The willingness of people of faith to risk jail for their Central American brothers and sisters caused other people of faith to question the government position. The willingness to suffer, to take an action that goes against one's obvious self-interest, in order to be true to one's deepest beliefs has moral authority. It challenges those who see themselves as having a similar moral commitment to live it more fully.

Christian faith is realistic about the carnal nature of human beings; we do often act in our self-interest. However, we are not only wise as serpents; we are also innocent as doves. We believe that the Holy Spirit moves through the world enlivening the image of God in every person – and that we can incarnate that Spirit to draw out the best in another. The Sanctuary movement used dove power to change hearts, minds, laws and policies.

In 2006, we started a new sanctuary movement in response to proposed legislation which would have made it a felony to be undocumented or to help or serve an undocumented person. On Ash Wednesday of 2006, the Archbishop of Los Angeles, Cardinal Roger Mahoney, preached a sermon in which he called on Catholics across the country to continue to serve all people, regardless of immigration status, even if they had to go to jail for it. This sermon gave momentum to discussions in churches across the country; by January of 2007, 37 cities throughout the US had sanctuary coalitions that participated in a loose national network. Partially as a result of the advocacy of the faith community, the Sensenbrenner Bill did not pass the Senate or become law. The willingness to suffer for the sake of our deepest values and beliefs had moral authority, which in the end had objective power.

The Exchange of Hope and Passion

Various polls have shown that the majority of Americans respond positively to bipartisan proposals for an immigration system that would be effective, just, logical and humane. However, when these proposals are on the table, the majority of the calls to legislators are negative. Most Americans do not communicate with their legislative representative unless potential legislation would directly impact their lives. Those who call regularly are passionate about the (perceived) negative impact of immigrants on their lives. Immigrants themselves do not call because they lack hope; they know that they are a minority whose needs matter little to most citizens.

The Church is the one institution in our society which is mandated to care passionately about all people. The Church is also called to give hope regardless of circumstance. When the church lives into its identity to the extent that immigrant and non-immigrant believers unite in common mission and intimate solidarity, then we experience the exchange of passion and hope. Non-immigrants experience immigration injustices as happening to "us" and they become passionate about rectifying them while immigrants become hopeful because they have allies and resources. A broad, passionate and hopeful coalition could pass legislation for immigration reform.

I have helped lead three experiments in the exchange of hope and passion through Christian unity which impacted immigrant justice. In Orange County, California in 2007, we brought immigrant and non-immigrant evangelical pastors together to discuss the pastoral crisis of a broken immigration system and pray for each other. Their natural ability to relate to each other's pastoral concerns built trust between them. They confessed their fears to each other and called each other to go beyond their fear to the courageous faith of the cross. We then built a project engaging members of their congregations in joint mission to unaccompanied children and youth in immigration detention. This gave us the opportunity to teach immigration history and the system as well as building deep peer relationships between the volunteers, which resulted in the education and organizing of their church leadership. We ended up creating the Loving the Stranger coalition, which included 13 conservative megachurches whose visits to their conservative legislative representatives changed perspectives and commitments.

In 2011, we were able to build on the Orange County experience on a national level with the creation of the Evangelical Immigration Table – the broadest cross-section of US evangelicals committed to a social justice cause since abolition. The EIT's first public press event in June of 2012 helped to move President Obama to institute DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) two days later. By June of 2013, evangelicals were polling at 72% in support of immigration reform. A new bipartisan immigration reform proposal passed the Senate and had enough votes to pass the House. However, a few conservative legislators prevailed on the Speaker of the House to not allow the legislative proposal to come to the floor for a vote.

Unfortunately, the EIT did not maintain its commitment to the partnership with immigrant believers, which then lessened the depth of support. When unscrupulous politicians began to manipulate fear of the other, Christian support dropped significantly. In December of 2016, we built a new coalition in Southern California called Matthew 25/Mateo 25 which brings immigrant and non-immigrant churches together to respond to the plight of individuals and families facing potential deportation. Matthew 25/Mateo 25 has recently

built the Ecumenical Coalition for Asylum Seekers which incorporates mainline denominations into the work of accompaniment that leads to advocacy. Our model utilizes the particular gifts of "puentes" (bilingual, bicultural millennials.) to enable immigrant and non-immigrant churches to work together well. Matthew 25/Mateo 25 is building the exchange of hope and passion in the midst of the whirlwind.

Accompaniment to Advocacy

In both the sanctuary movement and the multicultural collaboration models described above rely on a particular gift of the church. We do not only work in the policy arena; we address the whole person in the whole family in the whole community. The mission of God is holistic. As a result, we can move people organically from natural compassion which seeks to help the individual in pain to a commitment to broader social justice. Many more people are naturally given to compassion than are naturally moved to advocacy. We have a unique capacity to build a broader movement.

Role of the Church in Responding to Migration

Mary B. Campbell, JD
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In June, 2015, a small group of ELCA staff were visiting shelters and other programs for migrants in Mexico to learn more about what was happening to unaccompanied children on the journey. At each visit, we heard staff recount the tough work that they were attempting to do to protect lives and the human rights of migrants and invariably heard the same question, "Where are the churches? Why are they so silent in the face of this incredible crisis of suffering?"

We heard the heart-wrenching account of several young men who had banded together for safety and traveled from El Salvador and Guatemala to find safe living conditions in the US where all had relatives. During the journey they were joined by a young man from Honduras traveling alone. First robbed of their money and phones, although accompanied by someone who said he knew the route and would bring them to safety, they quickly found themselves prisoners in a gang house where they were instructed to call relatives and request ransom money in order to be released. Fortunately for this group of young men, a unit of the Mexican police had been investigating this house for kidnapping and before the young men were forced to call relatives and request money for their release, the police entered the house and rescued them. They were transferred to a safe house run by the Scalabrini Order where it took some time for them to recover. As they finished recounting their story, one of them asked how can you help us? The director of the house reiterated that same question. In spite of or perhaps even because of what they had experienced in Mexico, each of these young men was committed to continuing the migrant journey to the United States to find safety with relatives despite their eligibility for a humanitarian visa from Mexico as victims of crime there. While we didn't have a large network of committed churches and synods at that time, we gave them each a card with a number to call once they reached the US with the offer to connect them with churches who could accompany them as they started new lives.

Where is the church? Why is the church so silent? These haunting questions motivated our small group to look at the long-standing relationships we had with churches in Central America and Mexico, consult with them about the work that they were doing with either potential migrants or others who had already made the journey and had been deported or returned as well as the work they dreamed of doing. We talked with them about what they thought we needed to do as the ELCA in the US. The result was a 26 page strategy called AMMPARO - Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities - a holistic, whole church response in which work takes place in countries of origin, countries of transit, destination countries and countries of return.

This strategy was adopted by the Churchwide Assembly in 2016. While the number of overall migrants coming to the US may be down, since then the number of particularly families seeking protection at the US southern border has continued to increase every year. AMMPARO has enabled all expressions of the church to work together under one umbrella to welcome people fleeing violence and poverty. Additionally, it has brought together companions and partners from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and the U.S. to educate, advocate, and respond to these emerging humanitarian issues.

Additional key elements of the AMMPARO strategy are implemented with three key components which constitute a systemic, interrelated and interdependent approach; the components cannot be separated or implemented in a segregated or linear manner:

Accompaniment: by engaging in God's mission of restoration and reconciliation through accompaniment, we work to serve our neighbors and share the good news and equip ourselves and our partners for our call to be part of God's Mission.

Awareness building: accompanying companion churches and organizations in sustained efforts to educate people and raise church and public awareness about migration in the Latin American context, through public awareness and theological discernment, from the perspective and identity of the churches and faith communities we accompany.

Advocacy: accompanying the defense of human rights, advocating fair and policies towards vulnerable migrants, children and women, and men.

The activities that are implemented include PARO: protection, advocacy, representation and opportunities.

Significant changes both inside and outside the ELCA since 2016 that call for the expansion of the AMMPARO strategy. One of the most critical changes has been the global attempt to end the asylum and refugee system as we have known it. Central American, Mexican and U.S. governments have continuously implemented policies that undermine protections for all people fleeing their communities, including children and families. While countries continue to strip people of their rights to seek safety, more and more countries globally continue to have conflicts or natural and human-induced disasters, such as climate change, that force people to leave their homes. In Latin America, Chile, Venezuela, Brazil, Haiti, and Colombia have had significant issues that have caused displacement.

The ELCA has strong companion relationships and partnerships with organizations and Lutheran churches throughout Latin America and the world. These churches are already laboring under the effects of mass migration and forced displacement since for many it has become a core piece of their ministries. AMMPARO has been addressing these root causes of migration, issues children and families face as they transit to places of safety and reach the destination countries since 2014, and this scaling of AMMPARO to the Latin American region will not only strengthen ELCA's advocacy and education work, but it would also respond to a larger calling to serve.

As AMMPARO has implemented with Central American companions and partners, this expanded AMMPARO is envisioned as a space that ensures the expertise and experiences of these churches are included in the ELCA's advocacy and education work. AMMPARO will expand its strategy by acknowledging additional transit and destination countries that exist in Latin America and continue to coordinate with current and new partners to address these root causes and for a just and humane migration system abroad. AMMPARO and the ELCA Advocacy Office will also expand the ELCA's advocacy to ensure there are regional strategies and programs for protection. In the U.S., all expressions of the church can continue to learn about the broader migration issues and continue to act locally.

Since the inception of AMMPARO, the ELCA has also embarked in new directions and made significant decisions regarding immigration issues. In 2019, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CWA) voted to become the first sanctuary church body in North America.

Through AMMPARO, the ELCA is already in relationship with sanctuary congregations and synods that have gone through processes of educating communities, creating resources and organizing to live into their understandings as places of sanctuary. In addition, AMMPARO is working with many other congregations which have become Welcoming Congregations, committed to work on immigration issues. AMMPARO also coordinates and/or collaborates with organizations throughout the country that are part of the new sanctuary movement and have connections to Lutheran churches deeply involved in immigration work.

Organically, AMMPARO already has become an important resource as the church seeks to answer questions about the sanctuary resolution and how to implement it. To continue to do this work effectively, AMMPARO has brought together partners and opened new spaces for conversation, resource creation, and discussion about an integrated vision what sanctuary is. In reciprocity, the AMMPARO network benefits from having sanctuary congregations, synods, welcoming congregations, and sanctuary networks in closer relationships with each other.

Building a network that takes advantage of the far-flung geography of ELCA companions in Latin America and the coverage provided by 9,000 plus congregations in the US plus the ecumenical relationships in all places has increased protection for migrants on the journey.

Unlearning Settler Privilege as a Filipina Immigrant

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"It doesn't matter whether your people were brought here to North America through historic colonization, as far as native peoples are concerned, you are still settlers." This pronouncement from Mohawk indigenous scholar Alfred Taiaiake directed at me, a Filipina immigrant to the United States, in response to a question I had posed to him at a conference, hit me like a ton of bricks.

Settler: "A person who has migrated to an area and established a permanent residence there, often to colonize the area" (Wikipedia). Indeed, the words "settler" and "colonialism" do not ever not go together in the literature. Barker (2012), for example, defines settler colonialism as "a distinct method of colonizing" that involves "the creation and consumption of a whole array of spaces by settler collectives that claim and transform places through the exercise of their sovereign capacity." "Settler," then, in the critical literature, is a bad word, particularly in native circles, connoting entitlement, acts of dispossession, oppression, land theft, and displacement of the place's original population by the newly-arrived occupant(s). The term reeks of unlawful usurpation or takeover, of forcible supplantation of the original and rightful occupants of a given land by newcomers. That I, a Filipina from a "Third World" country, would then be labeled a "settler" was not only puzzling, but dis-orienting and disconcerting, to say the least. After all, how could I, a colonized person myself, carrying in my body my people's historic colonization from 350 years of Spanish and half a century of US rule, in many ways an unwitting exile compelled to migrate by forces beyond my control, be accused of such?

It is this question that is engaged here as a live issue among decolonizing diaspora Filipinos in North America, many of whom, like myself, share a Christian formation, but wanting to have a different quality of presence in the places they have been brought to inhabit by life's circumstances. The story that will be tracked here is both autobiographical and migratory, a multi-layered and complex wrestling with the shadows of history as well as the existential question facing us all today: climate change. As head of a movement grappling simultaneously with diasporic Filipinos' place in a deeply racist mainstream North American culture, on the one hand, and, on the other, with the need to re-ground ourselves in a different self-understanding and purpose as a people descended from indigenous ancestors, I outline here my thoughts and learnings as, perchance, a possible contribution to the question of how migrant communities might help reshape our theologies toward a more liberatory path.

To give a brief overview of my story, I had come to the United States with eyes already wide open, or so I thought. Born in a town in the Philippines only a 30-minute-ride away from what used to be the US Clark Air Base in Angeles City (then the largest military installation outside of the US), I was raised Methodist Protestant, a pastor's kid, born again in college, became a leader in the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, eventually joining a group of progressive Christian thinkers to found the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture where I served on the Board for a number of years.

Needless to say, my faith was my anchoring foundation, grounding me in a deep sense of God's justice and salvific work in the world and inspiring me to devote the best years of my life to evangelism (particularly among the intelligentsia), bearing witness to a contextually- and culturally-relevant incarnational telling of the gospel of Christ. Yet underneath my passionate witnessing was a lingering malaise that made absolutely no sense in light of the wholeness promised to all true believers—a constant feeling of being "weighed and found wanting" that no amount of preaching of God's unconditional love could assuage.

I would find a key to that mysterious malaise in my first-time encounter with the lifeways, cultures, and artistic creations of our indigenous peoples (i.e., those least-penetrated by missionizing and modern education) in a graduate seminar in the humanities taught by an ethnomusicology professor at the University of the Philippines, titled, "The Image of the Filipino in the Arts." The experience shook me to the core—one that I would refer to in my writing as akin to C. S. Lewis's own experience of being "surprised by joy" (only sparked by a different sort of revelation) or of "falling in love"—a deep psychic and emotional healing that comes from recognizing one's self for the first time as in fact belonging to these beautiful, vibrant peoples that, for once, were not being talked about as "primitive," "backward," or "pagan," in need of tutelage into the ways of "proper humanity" through modern education and Christianization. That awakening was like a door beckoning into an unknown (forbidden?) world, as far as my Christian worldview was concerned. What to make of these "unreached" native peoples who, though not knowing or not having embraced the name "Christ" nonetheless produce such beauty? Could a Christian like myself have anything to learn from their manners (courtesy, honoring, concern for all beings not just human, compassion, deep interconnection, and always, an asking for permission) and their artistic creations (with wild, vibrant colors, intricate weaving designs, dream-bestowed ritual ceremonies, eloquent speech, rhythmic dances, musical instruments whose sounds reach deep into the soul, etc.)?

The provocation of such an unexpected encounter dogged me relentlessly—so much so that in my subsequent sojourn to the "belly of the beast" (driven by a confluence of personal crises) I was compelled to devote much of my scholarly energies to ferreting out and understanding the cultural logic(s) that underpinned what appeared in my Christian worldview to be the default notion that people who live on the land (i.e., Indigenous Peoples, Fourth World peoples) are not fully human until "civilized." I would learn that the civilizing story is one whose career on the planet has wrought far more devastation and violence than any other story that went before. Though now mostly secularized, the story, I would find out, has deep roots in Christian supremacist thinking, as exemplified, for example, in the writings of so-called "liberal" contract theorists (Jamaican philosopher Charles Mills would rather call them "racial contract theorists"), particularly, those of John Locke (1632-1704) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873); as well, in the Doctrine of (Christian) Discovery that sanctioned European nations' takeover of non-Christian lands and that, today, continues to serve as the basis of property laws in the modern era (the Spanish version in the Philippines called the Regalian Doctrine). In particular, the normative understanding in this story of God's purpose for man (gendering intended) as that of "exercising dominion" over the "natural world" and placing it (and all its beings) in service of the glory of God through "rational" use and industry contrasted starkly with native lifeways whose differing view and relation to the natural world dictated a very different ethic.

For me then to understand the charge from Mohawk elder and scholar Alfred Taiaike at the opening of this paper, has required facing into the ways my own consumption of the civilizational narrative as a Filipino Christian migrant—with its relegation of all other alternative visions of human life and well-being—makes me complicit in the settler colonial project that continues to oppress and cause harm to indigenous peoples not only in North America, but around the world. The movement among similarly-minded diasporic Filipinos that I currently lead is thus dedicated to unlearning our inherited settler privilege—as urbanized, educated, upwardly-mobile Christian Filipino immigrants, unwittingly seduced by the allure of the "American Dream" and who now find ourselves living on other native peoples' lands. The question invariably takes us on a long journey, not only in terms of our contemporary stories of migration, but back in the homeland, to the similar ravages of the civilizational narrative on our own remaining indigenous peoples. Thankfully, we find partnership with those inside the Christian tradition itself who are similarly wrestling with the same conundrum of having to face into the Christian legacy of supremacist logic ensconced in the civilizational story and who now strive to retell the Christian story sans domination and supremacy, informed by those whose first "Bible" is not the written word, but the book of creation whose inescapable "speaking" today—through climate change—demands a radically new hearing.

Biblical Perspective on Migrants

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Migration of people in the Bible

The Bible is replete with individual stories of people who were on move. Abraham, Joseph, Joseph's family, Moses, Naomi and Ruth, Esther and Daniel, Amos, Jesus and his family, Paul and Jesus' disciples. It can be noted that some of them moved intentionally, while others moved as a result of war, famine, or problems in their own country.

Conditions of the migrants in the Bible

The scope of forced migration results in trauma, which is psychological, sociological, and environmental.

a. Loss of property, no access to resources

In the book of Ruth, we see that Naomi's family moved from Judah because of famine. Naomi laments, "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty (Ruth 1:21a). Their impoverished need is evident in Ruth's need to glean grain in Boaz's land (Ruth 2: 1-23). Even though the famine is over, the impact of migration hovers over them and they do not have access to the abundance.

b. Loss of security

In the time of migration, the people become vulnerable and specially the women can be exploited and their dignity can be violated. Naomi expresses the concern about the security of her daughter in law. (Ruth 1:9, 2: 22, 3:1). Knowing Ruth's vulnerable situation, Boaz orders his men not to bother her (Ruth 2:9). Lamentations 1: 8 – 10 describe the public shame brought on the woman in the statement that the enemies "have seen her nakedness".

c. Morbidity and mortality

Naomi's spouse and sons died as recorded in Ruth 1: 3 – 5. Though their story is not explained, one can understand the stark reality of what disaster-induced migration could bring about in the life of the people. In Jeremiah 29: 17, 18 the impact of the migration is clearly stated that it will result in plague and increases the morbidity and mortality of the migrants.

d. Loss of family

The death of the husband and son left Naomi and Ruth without any family support. They have to defend themselves. The Lord knows that they need extended support and so He had made a provision of redeemer, if the family goes through crisis (Leviticus 25: 48 – 50).

e. Loss of identity and trauma

The original inhabitants taunt the migrant people. This is a dehumanizing thing to do, which breaks their heart. The trauma they undergo and their feelings during that time are expressed in Psalm 137: 1, 3. The trauma of humiliation leads them also to lose their identity. They become objects of horror, scorn and reproach as was stated in Jeremiah 29: 18. The cry shows the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) they have gone through.

The humiliation by which Zion was looked upon is expressed in Micah 4: 11. The word 'gazed upon' if properly analysed, can be ascertained that it is related to a certain shame and humiliation as well[1]. This notion of being an object of scorn in the eyes of the nations is notable in Ezekiel 22: 4; 36: 15, 30 and also in Daniel 9: 16 and is repeated in Joel 2: 17, 19. Jeremiah 8: 21 expresses that the people were shattered, dejected and seized by desolation. This leads him to say "Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people" (Jeremiah 9: 1).

Teachings on caring for the migrants

From the book of Exodus onwards, God gave Israelites various laws to govern their lives. Among the laws given to them, one command stands out because of the repeat emphasis given by the Lord that is not to mistreat a foreigner or oppress a foreigner (Ex 22: 21; Leviticus 19:33-34; Leviticus 19: 10).

The Lord exhorts his people to share their tithes with the foreigners (Deuteronomy 26: 12). The Psalmist emphasizes in 146: 9, "The Lord watches over the foreigner." Isaiah 58:7 states that God expects His people to provide the poor wanderer with shelter."

The Lord, while exhorting the Israelites to care for the foreigners, He commands them not to do injustice to the foreigners (Deuteronomy 27:19). In Malachi 3:5, the same emphasis was given "So I will come near to you for judgment. ... who ... deprive the foreigners of justice".

Church response to migrants

Care for the migrant people

- The church should work towards providing dignity to the migrants. They are image of God. The image should be respected and honoured.
- The church should meet the physical needs of the people as their economic condition will be pathetic.
- Provide health care by having health camps and access to medical facilities. They may not have health seeking behaviour and need awareness on health issues.
- They need psychosocial support because of the trauma they face/d.
- The church should show love in action, which is not because it feels pity for them, but it is doing justice for them.

Church should be an inclusive community

One of the main problems the migrant people face is security. They are vulnerable to exploitation. The Church should embrace them as part of their own community and provide extended support. The church should even open its building to provide shelter to these people.

Conclusion

[1] Daniel L. Smith-Christopher: "Reading War and Trauma: Suggestions Towards a Social-Psychological Exegesis of Exile and War in Biblical Texts" in Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts (ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright: Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2011), p253.

God, who gave laws to protect even the animals, ensures the poor and oppressed are cared for and created numerous laws with minute details. He recognizes that the worst of the lot would be the people who are migrants/refugees. That's why I believe He emphasized more on caring for the foreigners as they are created in His image. He did not want them to be dehumanized. So, He calls the church to take up His mantle in serving the migrant people. That's a mission the Lord has given to the church and to each individual to accomplish. Let us care and support the migrants who are displaced and fulfil His commandment.

Fleeing Homophobia: LGBTI Refugees and the Church, case in East Africa

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Abstract
According to Article 1-A of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) a refugee is a person with a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of either race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion or a combination of these factors. Over a long period of time, sexual orientation and gender identity have not been considered as relevant persecution grounds. However, over the recent years, thousands of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Intersex (LGBTI) asylum seekers continue to apply for asylum in Europe and other countries considered to be safe haven. This however is cumbered with a myriad of legal, religious, social and economic challenges. Among the legal challenges that remain unaddressed is:

- Whether there is consented efforts to check the relevance of laws in the country of origin criminalising consensual same sex sexual acts or the expression of non-standard sexual or gender identities.
- Whether asylum seekers fleeing homophobia discrimination and attacks can be required to return to their country of origin and be assumed that by concealing their sexual orientation or gender identity they would not provoke violence against them.
- Whether the church is ready to provide safety for those going through the process of sexual discovery and if they would be ready to accept their orientation if different from the default heteronormative of the host nation.

Despite the UNHCR and other development agencies and Human Rights Activists advocating for no one to flee their homes because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, the church still remains behind in efforts to ensure that people who don't subscribe to the default heteronormative narrative are supported and helped spiritually and any other ways necessary. This has partly contributed to many countries in Africa still experiencing the exodus of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Intersex (LGBTI) people fleeing homophobia, that often least to aggressive acts of discrimination, persecution and violence. Those who have not been able to flee are enslaved in fear suffering in silence while others choosing suicide as a way out. This paper seeks to explore migration as a result of Homophobic discriminations and attacks, intersectional issues of migration and how the church should respond to individuals displaced as a result of discrimination and violent attacks due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. It will also probe the credibility of discretion as a way out and how this shapes the theology of the church today.

Introduction
According to the UNHCR, the recent years have seen an increase of LGBTI refugees and asylum seekers. Up to date, 77 countries in the world still criminalizes same sex relations and seven countries punish it with the death penalty.

The church, just like States and other non-state actors occupy a very important position in ensuring that there is adequate protection for the LGBTI while recognizing the unique vulnerability and specific needs that they have. With most of the LGBTI members coming

from countries with laws that criminalise sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or that are discriminatory, their trauma and persecution often starts before they start the journey to seek safety. It is such a big paradox that such countries have the highest number of Christian populations within Sub Saharan Africa.

The passage of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act in December 2013 saw an overflow of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Ugandans seeking safety and asylum in various countries. The UNHCR and other service providers in Kenya indicated at least 400 LGBTI sought safety in Kenya between January 2014 and February 2015 with an overwhelming majority identified as being in their late teens or early twenties and identified as gay. Despite the Act being an obvious motivating factor, other factors such as reported threats and incidents of violence, blackmail, media 'outings', loss of employment, and expulsion from school. There was a wide belief that the Anti-Homosexuality Act required citizens to turn in suspected LGBT individuals which led to pre-emptive family rejections, evictions and reports to the police. This exposed the LGBTI people to disproportionate levels of arbitrary detention, police abuse, violence and extrajudicial killings by both State and non-State actors. At the same time, as a result of the threat of the law's clause that outlawed 'promotion' of homosexuality, many organisations that provided services to the LGBTI community suspended their services or scaled back their programs. This was indeed an opportunity for the church to rise up to the occasion and buffer the emotional, psychological and spiritual confusion these individuals were going through. There was a rise in abuse in medical settings, including forced sterilisations and so-called 'conversion therapies'. The church was perceived instead to be in support of the Act making it harder for Christians to offer the much-needed support and help and in return they became a threat. The Church both at the point of origin and transit as well as host countries have done little to aid in the treacherous and unfortunate journey that many LGBTI refugees who continue to face prejudice and violent experience.

Kenya which has been the closest safe haven for LGBTI from its neighbouring East African countries often restricts refugees to the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps where more threats and deaths are experienced by refugees. Along with 32 other African countries, Kenya considers homosexuality illegal and punishable with a penalty of 14 years in prison. However, it recognizes the right to asylum of those persecuted for their sexual orientation or gender identity. The question remains whether the Church in the refugee camps where such migrants are restricted to have the capacity to understand and support people with non-confirmative sexual orientations. The Churches in the refugee camps must be supported with necessary training to help them understand displaced individuals fleeing homophobia and given the technical skills to offer alternative spiritual, psychosocial and health support.

The Push and Pull factors of Homophobia and Refugees

It is absurd that the emergence of anti-homosexuality politics in Africa is often explained with reference to religion. Given the dominance of Christianity in many of the countries in which homophobia seems on the rise, there seems to be a big gap on the responsiveness of the church on issues LGBTI, in fact churches to a large extent has been seen as fuelling the repression of African LGBT people. Evidently speaking, Ugandan evangelical pastors actively campaigned for the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. This has been like fodder to the political leaders in these contexts who often use explicitly religious arguments against homosexuality,

denouncing it not only as “un-African” but also “un-biblical” and “un-Christian” making it very hard for the Church to explicitly come out and offer any form of support to such individuals both at country of origin and host country. At one time in Zambia, the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon was even described as an agent of the devil after he called upon the country to recognise the human rights of the sexual minorities.

Religion through the church has been seen as a single institution that fuel homophobia in Africa and continues to be present a challenge on LGBTI people’s acceptance in their communities and societies. With most countries in Africa either being over 80% Christian or Muslim, religion remains one of the spaces that needs to be empowered on the human rights of sexual minorities. Conversely, religious leaders, faith based organisations and Christians in general can change this narrative and become a source of African LGBTI identity, community and activism. The church can promote the identity of inclusivity and acceptance of the non-conformative since the foundations of grace is built upon the undeserving and unmerited favour from God giving an unconditional invitation to partake of eternal life despite works of weakness. The church can play a vital role of promoting a continent of diversity all the way from the tribes, cultures to sexual non-confirmative and act as the single voice of hope and comfort to sexual minorities.

Cumbered with a youth bulge that portends a time bomb that is ready to affect the social normatives, the African Church is at a crossroads and must clearly take a position as far as sexual rights are concerned. The median age for Africa stands at 19.4 years old with countries like Uganda having a median age of 15 years old. What used to be a popular notion among African theologians that Africans are “notoriously religious”, is being challenged by an increasing number of young population who are highly learned and interconnected with the rest of the free world through the internet and are confronted by other alternatives like religious synchronism, atheism, and religious apathy. This is evident by the mass exodus of young people from church or rather an increasing number of passive following of young people. Where the church used to be the safe place to run to when one was experiencing sexual crises, it is no longer. Today the youth are increasingly creating safe spaces among themselves through peer to peer support systems made possible through the internet and social media which if not well guided by good theology might ruin the basic foundation of their faith. The church is becoming an institution to subscribe to for marriage, baptism, burials and other societally accepted ordinances but little is expected from it as far as solving the sexual rights abuses is concerned, this can and should change.

The complex Paradox: opportunity or threat

Since Africa mostly think about the world and seeks its political perception through religion, the church has a critical role to play in order to help sort the discrimination and violent acts against sexual minorities and bring a stop towards individuals fleeing their homes as a result of homophobia. The good news is that the Church still occupies a relevant part of most Africans, this means that the church must be equipped with relevant skills and attitude as well as capacity to deal with this ever increasing yet confusing issue of sexual minorities. It is good news that many individuals in Africa still testify of an ongoing religious commitment, an active participation in faith communities, and/or a relentless faith in God. This provides a complex environment in with the LGBTI negotiate their sexuality and faith, and often exploring ways of reconciling the two, for instance through narratively claiming the love of

God, the idea of being created in the image of God, or the inclusive and welcoming ministry of Jesus Christ

Through prayer and preaching, worship and pastoral support, but also through sport and recreation activities as well as advocacy and community activism, the church and other faith based organisations are able to provide an important social and spiritual home for its sexual minorities and in the end provide a home for them. Most LGBTI Christians have come up to start alternatives for their members which can be detrimental to the integrity of true theology and only the church can come through and correct this.

The Church: a source of hope for all

It is crucial that the church ensures that a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and/or sex characteristics is enough to push an individual to migrate hence should help avert that hatred against the LGBTI community.

The church should take measures to address the violations faced by LGBTI refugees and asylum-seekers, including through incorporating LGBTI-sensitive measures into their programming. It should be able to train its members in sensitive and culturally appropriate training on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. That members of their congregation who are fleeing homophobia attacks and discrimination should be assessed with sensitivity of the protection needs of LGBTI persons and using interviewing and assessing techniques that respect the dignity and privacy of persons seeking refuge and that are determined in an objective and sensitive manner, not on the basis of stereotyping or cultural bias. The church must make additional efforts to ensure that those providing protection and assistance to refugee communities in the church have the knowledge and training to prevent and respond to such incidences and avoid exclusion.

“Arami Oved Avi” (“My Ancestor Was An Alien”): Migration in the Light of Israel’s Pastoral Nomad Origins

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The biblical tradition begins in migration. Abram is told—as of first import—leave Ur of the Chaldees! Or more accurately, he is told to follow suit on his father’s example, but actually carry it out fully. Terah had taken family, including son Abe, out of Ur and headed for Canaan, but detoured into Haran on the plains of the middle Tigris—merchant outpost between Antioch and Nineveh and chief home of the moon god Sin—and settled there. It is only with Abram that the intention of the father is finally realized. Indeed, the biblical story as tale of a peculiar people begins with this depth-auguring demand: “leave kindred and country and house and go where I will show (Gen 11:31-12:1). And Abram does. As will Moses after him, when the nomad crew of patriarchs and matriarchs ends up incarcerated in Egypt’s “slave kitchen,” building storage cities for grain for Pharaoh’s “food as weapon” policies. All of which is to say—the biblical tradition in inception is a lived critique of the ways of city and settlement, coerced cultivation and slave production of surplus. The conviction will be enshrined in Israel’s primal confession (Dt 26:5), renewed periodically even after the tribal confederation itself settles in Canaan-land: “arami oved avi,” a “wandering Aramean was my father,” in the literal Hebrew, or generalized out of patriarchy as “my ancestor was an alien.” And here lies a host of conundrums and confusions that the paper to follow will seek to unknot and clarify.

For the sake of the Global Forum on Migration conference, the effort here will focus on delineating a framework within which to think involuntary displacement in concert with a “big view” of history and our species’ tenure on the planet, as that wide angle lens opens up perspective on the biblical witness. “Migration” references, at first blush, an entire range of experience—peoples pushed out of context, off of land, away from their cultural home, cut off from economic support, alienated from ecological familiarity. But it is especially this latter feature of migrational displacement that shall exercise the greatest broad-brush concern here. Climate crisis is the watchword of virtually every reflective enterprise today—or at least, should be, from this writer’s point of view. The situation is: “emergency.” The time is apocalypse now.

For much of the biosphere the collapse is not future but quotidian. Yes, our species still enjoys sectors of wealth and power—concentrated in the Global North, but also distributed among elite sectors of the Global South—momentary prosperity and comfort. But deep malaise troubles sleep and consciousness alike—depression grows, suicide rates elevate, social media offers but thin respite in narcissistic “self-fetishism” and display, while dread grows, and rancor arms its anger with AKs and Glocks. And for increasing numbers, forced displacement is intensifying—whether from immediate effects of climate upheaval or mediated consequences of neo-liberal corporate belligerence, gang violence, and governmental neglect or warfare. But it is the atmosphere and water that are emerging as the main actors, the big voices of the hour—in typhoons and sea rise, flood and wildfire—shouting in overwhelming rage or going aloof and silent in withdrawal. And they ask, insisting on their own language of motion and nuance, what is a human? And where is home for such a planetary denizen? What, for such a creature, is legitimate “placement”?

The biblical tradition offers hint, if not outright revelation. The paper will coordinate reports from geologic assertion and indigenous wisdom to underscore biblical polemic and conjuration. Half a billion years of "trophic homeostasis" between species (a few large-bodied predators eating many smaller-bodied prey) in most planetary ecosystems prophesies ominously for our own species' hyper-escalation out of such scale relations since the advent of agriculture 10,000 years ago. We are due a significant adjustment—likely in the form of massive die-off to re-right the planetary ship. We do not like to hear such. Meanwhile indigenous savvy (the globe over) counsels—against urban accumulation and rapacious extraction—eco-reciprocity and gift-economy sustainability as the coefficients of durability and harmony. And scraped free of monarchical disinformation, the biblical text itself remembers such an earth-based lifestyle of peace-making mutuality. It is a "peace" first of all anchored in appropriate land-relations.

Shalom requires jubilee release of every kind of hoard with insistent regularity (every seven days, the seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost, the seventh month, the Sabbath Year, and the Generational Jubilation following the seventh such shmita liberation). And this comprehensive suite of ritual practice, memorializing constant re-distribution, finds its "sabbatical root" in pre-Israelite nomad practice among the sands of Sinai, learning, as its most primal post-slavery lesson (Exod 16; 31:12-17), eco-provision in the form of nutritious aphid defecation known as "manna," collected today by Arab Bedouin (where it falls to the ground from the insects' rear-ends as they eat the leaves of tamarisk trees) and called "man" (likely the Arabic cognate of Hebrew "manna"). It is a carbohydrate that can be baked up into honey loaves for transport and consumption. Even the desert provides, if one is schooled by the land to "see" and adapt to its wild gifts of sustenance!

Yes, Israel began as migratory...but not coerced. Abram left Haran by choice. Moses indeed fled as O. G. with price-on-head, but led his kin 40 years later on voluntary walkout into wilderness deprograming and re-schooling. Unlearning empire meant re-learning the land, "educated" by herd animals on walk-about in a given eco-niche. Pastoral nomad exit from nation-state coagulations of oppression is definitive of our species' attempts to retreat from self-destruction. (And it is interesting in this regard that Jesus at one point will style himself—against the stereotypes of shepherds as thieves—as "good shepherds" acting against the Jewish elites and Roman overlords as the real robbers of his time; Jh 10:1-18.) Going feral from the city with one's herds is thus far the only successful "recovery behavior" we have yet managed, the first instance of a "social movement" trying to draw back from the cliff's edge of urbanized self-destruction. How such a displacement from all the presuppositions of city settlement might inform our grappling with contemporary "migration" as a cataclysmic problem in our time will be the exact task of reflection this paper seeks to provoke. How think about refugees—from corporate takeover of land for palm oil plantations or mining, from financial foreclosure, from war, from drought or sea rise—in light of this baseline? Hospitality is the short run concern; "rights' in legal forums an on-going challenge. But finally it is the question of how to re-imagine, on a planet of 7.6 billion, a lifestyle that does not create displacement of many for the sake of an oligarchic few and their middle class "wanna bes," in the first place?

There is much in the bible that offers food for thought on the topic. Not just Abram leaving Haran, but Jacob leaving the clan to secure a wife from Laban; Joseph and extended family

traipsing to Egypt as guest workers; ex-slaves (as mentioned above) re-learning the Negev as nomad herders on the way to Canaan; peasants exiting Canaanite city-state systems on the Mediterranean seaboard to the interior highlands to ally as covenant partners with the nomadic ex-slaves entering from south in forming the new people-hood called "Israel"; conquered elites force-marched to Assyria and later Babylon, in the "Exile;" then returning from such captivity to reclaim former lands in collaboration with colonizing foreign powers (Persia, Greece, Rome) continuing to oppress the 'am haaretz ("people of the land") left behind. But here, we will limit our biblical focus to the movements of John and Jesus, as community organizations of internally displaced persons, seeking to recover the ancient notion of living lightly on the land, not as "settlers," but "guests" in the most radical sense possible.

Jesus, for instance, was twice displaced as a child—in flight to Egypt with Joseph and Mary from Herod's paranoia and slaughter of Bethlehem youngsters early and then, on return to Palestine, deviating north to Nazareth from the birth-town, when the old man is warned by dream that successor-ruler Archelaus will be as ruthless as Herod had been (Mt 2:13-23). But the evictions would not stop even in his public life as an adult. We are told, further, on hearing of John's arrest, he "withdrew to Galilee" from unspecified terrain (presumably south), then "left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of [migrant-populated] Zebulun and Naphtali"—from which he will again be displaced by disinformation and threat, and compelled to live on the road, going from village to village, playing hide and seek with the authorities hell-bent on arresting him, seeking sanctuary again and again east of the Jordan, outside Herod Antipas's jurisdiction, until his final confrontation; Mt 4:12-13; Jh 3:22-24; 10:40; Mk 6:31; 7:24-30; 8:11-13; etc.). And his movement will be especially populated by "fisherfolk"—many of whom had been peasant small farmers trapped in debt and foreclosed, losing ancestral lands and gravitating to the Galilee Sea as itinerants to making a living from fishing, even while that enterprise was being industrialized for export under Herod. And they will typically be gathered "in the wild," away from settled society, and to be taught of wild seed (like mustard) and fed, along with domesticated grain, wild fish (Mk 4:26-32; 6:31-44; 7:31-8:10; etc.).

It is quite possible thus to read the gospels as accounts of a social movement of the displaced (featuring first John the Baptist and then Jesus of Nazareth), moving towards a more indigenous notion of tenancy, "dwelling" on and in a wild landscape that they do not own but occupy as "received Holy Gift" demanding respect and mutuality in return—the great and ultimate provision of the Wild Holy One, everywhere on the planet offered to human denizens who actually understand their limitations and obligations, whose Presence is discerned not just in human form, but as Dove, Water, Storm, Vine, Seed, Stone, Soil, etc. This witness throws down a gauntlet of sorts. The whole planet is "Holy Land" in each of its local variations, and does not belong to us as owners for re-making however we please, but as a wondrous Mystery demanding care and reciprocity. We can too easily think of migration as a "problem" whose remedy is "settlement" in a mode of agriculturally-based sovereignty, land ownership and exploitation, urban expansion and industrial development. The big problem this paper will push is precisely "settlement" itself as a form of extractive displacement that cannot be sustained, in its vision and practice of coercive re-engineering, as the remedy for the apocalypse of migrant displacement we currently face. And thus a real conundrum: how do you think "migration" in the face of this irresistible injunction the globe itself is throwing down by way of climate crisis?

Migration narratives in the Bible...are complex

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Adam and Eve were forcibly displaced from the Garden (Genesis 3:23-24). Much later, God's Ancient People were carried into exile because of idolatry and social injustices.

In the New Testament, Jesus 'migrated' from heaven (John 1:14) and was then (temporarily) forcibly displaced as an infant by corrupt and violent political leadership (Matthew 2:13-23).

The Christian church was born among temporary residents (Acts 2:5-12), was scattered across the known world by persecution and grew further because of that persecution (Acts 8:1 and following).

In the book of Acts, all the individual and household stories that Luke chose to tell about conversions to Christ were out of their cultural contexts: Saul (of Tarsus, on the road to Damascus Acts 9); Cornelius and his household (Acts 10); Lydia of Thyatira and her household (Acts 16); the Roman gaoler and his household (Acts 16). And Luke wrote about Priscilla and Aquila (from Pontus, displaced from Rome, then living in Corinth: Acts 18)

Some now argue that the recent migration of some Jewish people to the Middle East is a major fulfilment of prophecy. Meanwhile, Palestinian Christians (and many others) believe that the ultimate fulfilment of those prophecies is in the Ultimate Migration Narrative (to the New Heavens and the New Earth).

Separately, one part of one verse about God's sovereignty (in Paul's sermon in Athens Acts 17:26) has been abused to justify apartheid and is perhaps in the minds of Christians most resistant to their countries receiving refugees.

This much is clear: the Genesis narratives, the judgement of God on His Ancient People (for their idolatry and social injustice) the story of the incarnation and the growth of the Christian church all demonstrate that biblical migration narratives are central to salvation history. Migration is closely entwined with the purposes of God in a needy world.

Individuals in the stories are often victims and their stories (and contemporary migration stories) should be read through the lens of Jesus' words in John 9:1-3. But mass migration and the forcible displacement of millions also raise big questions about underlying structural sin.

The following questions might also be worth pondering:

1. Is there a link between biblical migration narratives and the Bible's teaching on hospitality?

- The Garden of Eden is a picture of God's gracious hospitality and unstinting generosity. The God who does not need anybody or anything (Acts 17:25!) makes a

beautiful space that reflects His creativity and chooses to create people, made in His image, to inhabit that space and themselves celebrate life (Genesis 1:26-31).

- The invitation to all people everywhere to join the Family of God is perhaps the clearest sign of God's gracious and generous hospitality (Ezekiel 18:23, John 1:12, Acts 2:39, Romans 9:8, Galatians 4:4-9, 1 Peter 1:23, 2 Peter 3:9 etc.)

    - The Living God even adopts His enemies (Romans 5:10, 8:15), migrating sinners into His Family
    - Communion (the Lord's Supper) is a constant reminder of the hospitality and generosity of God

- Joseph, Mary and Jesus are generously received into Egypt (making a living from carpentry?) during their time there (Matthew 2:14-15)

- The New Testament specifically commands hospitality (Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9, 3 John 1:8)

2. Should Old Testament lessons about the commitment of the exiled People of Israel to their host societies be applied to contemporary public policy about receiving refugees (e.g. in permitting work)?

    - Jeremiah's letter (Jeremiah 29) strongly emphasises that the forcibly displaced Children of Israel should serve their host nation
    - Daniel and his contemporaries show ways in which they did that

3. Are our churches (and societies) benefitting from the special contributions of followers of Jesus who have migrated or been forcibly displaced, as salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16) and as temples of the Holy Spirit?

4. Are there lessons to learn about migration from the Bible's teaching about the Final State?

The Son of God migrated from heaven, becoming Jesus the Christ (John 1:14). After the resurrection, He returned to heaven in His resurrection body (Luke 24:50-51). One day He will migrate back to earth (Acts 1:9-11).

This current world will one day be judged (e.g. Matthew 10:15, 11:20-24, 12:36, Luke 11:29-32, Hebrew 9:27). But then what? There will be new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17-25, 66:22-24, 2 Peter 3:1-14, Revelation 21).

Has our focus on details around Christ's return caused us to lose sight of the final state (the migration of the whole creation), with its massive implications for the everyday lives of everybody alive today?

Should we focus more on the continuity between this world and the next (and not only on the discontinuity, Revelation 21:4)?

As NT Wright puts it 'The point (in the resurrection of Jesus) was... for the life of heaven to arrive on earth. Jesus taught his followers to pray: "Thy kingdom come on earth as in heaven."' (Time magazine, 16th December 2019)

People didn't immediately recognise Jesus after His resurrection, but then they did, recognising the marks in His hands and side (Luke 24, John 20:10). He was different, but somehow in His 'old' body (1 Corinthians 15-35-57).

Jesus' resurrection (the first fruits: 1 Corinthians 15:20-23) demonstrates continuity with the new creation, in which the very best of every culture will be represented (Revelation 21:24 & 26).

As the New Testament puts it: 'since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives' (2 Peter 3:11 cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58).

- We should care about our personal walk with Jesus.
- We should care about God's creation (because there is mysterious continuity between this world and the final state).
- We should be deeply concerned about social justice (a huge theme in Scripture) including root causes of forcible displacement and mass migration, as well as about evangelism and church growth.

In short: should our pilgrim status perhaps be the defining migration narrative in our lives?

The Ultimate Story of Migration: From Placelessness to Emplacement

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Human history is effectively a story of movement. People in every era have joined in a drama of departing old places and seeking life in new locales. In other words, everyone exists somewhere because people at one point moved there from somewhere else. This narrative is a complex anthology spanning promising tales of new beginnings in hopeful frontiers and nightmarish flights from impending danger and death. Whether undertaken on good terms or bad terms, human migration as a phenomenon has intensified in the globalizing conditions of the 21st Century. The impact of human flow across borders generates questions about the fabric and durability of our current global system of nation-states. As emotionally charged debates rage in public, private, and political spheres, hundreds of millions of lives remain entangled in precarious existences on the fringes of society– both figuratively and literally. Migration consists of many faces- the willing immigrant, the pressed economic migrant, the forcibly displaced refugee, the in-limbo asylum seeker, and the excluded stateless- but all cases share one underlying issue: a problem of place.

Place is a core element of the human experience; every person desires a secure turf to set roots and make a home in this world. This earnest need is conveyed in the theological concept of emplacement, the idea that our very knowledge of existence is tied to a sense of being placed somewhere. Places are, simply put, part of who we are. Implacement is vividly pronounced in God's formative act of creation. The Bible begins with the establishment of a physical world fashioned out of nothingness and crafted so that all things are made to belong in their places. This truth is evident in Eden where humanity is molded from the dust of the ground and placed (even planted) within a garden. Ever since, our nature has been drawn to dwell in places drenched with memory and meaning. To be human is to belong somewhere, but sin has devastated all of this; the consequences are utterly dehumanizing.

The fall delivered the exact antithesis of emplacement as humanity was expelled from the garden and forced to migrate into a cruel and hostile world. Henceforth, displacement has haunted us. Uprooting forces threaten to undermine the human experience at every turn, and there is truly no limit to the ways in which people can be thrust from their places and ejected out of their homes. Some are forced to migrate against their will while others will themselves to migrate away from deathly forces. Regardless of the reasonings, the result is a similar undermining of life. Even so, the human-spirit has proven relentless in the face of such volatile circumstances. There is no limit to the lengths people will go to satisfy their need for habitation as they strive towards places of security, dignity and hope. Millions attest to this daily determination, and one cannot help but be inspired.

Clearly, the significance of place and the severity of placelessness permeates our faith tradition. The Biblical narrative is, among many things, an epic exploration of the human condition of displacement. Accounts stretch throughout scripture of individuals and

communities on the move as they flee dangers, weather wonderings and endure exile.[2] Even the hopeful calling of Abraham, marked by a promise of nation and land, required an era of sojourn and struggle. Only centuries later did God's people actualize their aspirations for a place, and even there the experience was marked by constant threat, disappointment and eventual landlessness. Everything changed with Christ. The incarnation, God's migration from heaven to earth to journey with humanity, ushered in a kingdom that transforms our understanding of all things, including place. The dimensions of our physical world now mingle with the divine; the entire world is "promised land" where God dwells with his people and invites the placeless to a homeland that can never be lost. Place is truly at the heart of God's ultimate vision of salvation. As tragic as placelessness may be, even more glorious is the triumph of emplacement. This will be the final act of all creation! The condition of the migrant, refugee and stateless is temporary, but the hope of a new heaven and new earth is eternal. Biblical faith can effectively be framed as a gospel of place; place lost, place promised, place transformed, and place redeemed. In a world where millions are held captive by the unrelenting sting of displacement, this is truly Good News.

It is puzzling how scripture and tradition can be so steeped in the truth of implacement while faith communities remain so often aloof, even hostile, to the plight of the displaced. Even good-intentioned efforts of compassion can overlook the deeper issues of migration. We easily recognize material needs, but do we appreciate the core need for place and belonging? We may be ready to receive the vulnerable within our borders, but are we willing to welcome them into the vulnerability of our own places? How significant are statuses, rights and opportunities if someone cannot shake the feeling that she does not belong? It is certainly not a simple matter, but if we draw from our own need for belonging then we can begin to empathize with, and respond to, the men, women and children suffering a lack of belonging. Applying such a lens helps us to see that migrants are just like everyone else: people who desire a place to call home. Those who dare to practice true hospitality by opening their places to the placeless demonstrate a genuine gospel of the kingdom. This is happening in countless ways across quiet corners of our world, and it gives us hope that the story of migration is not ultimately a story of defeat, but a grace-filled journey to God. As the hymnist declares:

> 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
> And grace will lead me home.

[2] Examples are abundant, including Cain, Noah, Haggar and Ishmael, Jacob and his family, Joseph, Moses and the Hebrews, Naomi and Ruth, David, Elijah, the Israelites in Babylonian exile, Jesus with Mary and Joseph in Egypt, and the scattering of early Christ-followers.

Play as a Liberating Space in Times of Forced Migration (A re-reading of Genesis. 21:1-21)

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Context

Between 2017 and 2019, Venezuelan migration in Peru increased over 400% and this figure is expected to continue rising.[3] Almost 900,000 people have entered Peru to date, although unofficially the number is known to be closer to 1,200,000. Our country holds the second largest population of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, a migration that has overwhelmed us as a nation. Before 2018, there was an 'open doors' policy for Venezuelans. This has been changing, and now they are required to request a humanitarian visa. Unfortunately, policies of promotion and protection of rights are still viewed as a problem of control rather than as a social phenomenon.

When we approach children and adolescents to learn about their migration experiences, we perceive that they have had little support from their family or from society. They were not consulted about the journey, about where they would travel or for how long, etc. Many of them do not yet understand the enormous effort they have made as a family to reach Peru. Analysts call this a social impact.[4]

This situation challenges us to find creative ways that will allow migrant children and adolescents to integrate in the country, or city, that has received them.

Approaching the text

Chapters 12-25 of Genesis are known as the 'Abraham cycle,' and Abraham was the head of the paternal household of a migrant family. Out of these chapters, only eight highlight the image of women and children. Genesis 21:1-21 speaks of 'the protection of Ishmael, a rejected boy.'[5]

In the first paragraph of this story (vv. 1-8), we observe the birth of Isaac and the joy that his arrival brought to the family, especially to his mother, who laughs (Tsaw-khak[6]), and the entire paternal household laughs with her. In the second paragraph of the story (verses 9-11), we find Ishmael and Isaac, the patriarch's two sons, playing (Tsaw-khak[7]) freely.

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[3] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/73724.pdf World Food Programme - *Migración Venezolanos en Perú* (*Venezuelan Migration in Peru)*. January 2020.

[4] 'In the case of boys and girls, the psychosocial impact is linked to their willingness to embark on the migratory project. Likewise, adolescents are in a stage of life in which identification with peer groups is fundamental. However, migration implies breaking with prior ties and the need to rebuild these bonds in the receiving community, which is made difficult by the discrimination situation in schools.' https://idehpucp.pucp.edu.pe/lista_publicaciones/resumen-ejecutivo-estudio-sobre-el-perfil-socio-economico-de-la-poblacion-venezolana-y-sus-comunidades-de-acogida-una-mirada-hacia-la-inclusion/ IDEHPUP. Page 16

[5] Schwantes, Milton. *Estos son los descendientes de Teraj (These are the descendents of Terah)*. RIBLA No. 23 San José, Costa Rica. 1996. Page. 43.

[6] ***Tsaw-khak.*** In verse 6, this word is translated as *laugh* in all versions. However, it could also be translated as *play, joke, enjoy,* or *mock.*

[7] ***Tsaw-khak.*** This is the same word as in verse 6; however, in verse 9 it is translated as *playing* in some versions, while in others it is translated as *mocking*.

Sarah sees (raw-aw[8]) the boys; she pays attention to the act of playing. She sees children who carry on in a free and spontaneous way, without social prejudices, children who creatively build their own world. However, the text tells us that she interprets this relationship as dangerous to her son's future. That is why she asks Abraham to cast Ishmael away from the house, along with his mother, so that he will not share an inheritance with her own son (v. 10b). In other words, Sarah's motivation is related to the inheritance. Their play has shown her that the two brothers get along; and there is thus a possibility of thinking that in the end, Abraham might choose to grant his inheritance to his firstborn. That would ultimately be in accordance with the law: Ishmael is the eldest and is a legitimate son. Abraham is distressed by this situation.

In the centre of the structure (vv. 12-13), the narrator shows us how God guarantees the fulfilment of his promise both to Isaac and to Ishmael. On the one hand, Ishmael is expelled from the paternal household. From being the father's legitimate son, he becomes a common boy and ultimately reaches the condition of a servant, while Isaac's inheritance is affirmed as the son of the patriarch. On the other hand, though, the text affirms that Ishmael will be the legitimate son 'of the servant.' Since during this time, the maternal household did not exist, we could say that God is proposing an alternative community, where children without fathers and without a roof over their heads—like Ishmael—may be protected so they can grow to be healthy and become a 'great nation,' as was promised in Genesis 16.

In the following paragraph (vv. 14-16), we see how the mother and child leave the house that was once their own, the place where he grew up, developed, and learned his first words and traditions. Now they have only bread and a skin of water for the journey. They travelled across the desert and, logically, ran out of provisions. The mother not only ran out of food, but also ran out of hope. In her eyes, it was a matter of waiting for death to arrive. She placed the boy in a place where he might possibly survive, and then went off so that she would not see him die. However, this was not the end for the boy. In the entire process, no one had said anything to him. He went from playing to being cast away and disinherited, and all the while, nobody had explained to him why. Was it because he played? Having once been the son of the patriarch, was he now destined to die? No, he did not want that, he did not agree, and so he managed to do the one thing he could: CRY very loudly. The word that translates into this verb speaks of a voice like thunder. Apparently, many would be able to hear it, but he was in the desert, and there was no one there to hear.

The last paragraph (vv. 17-21) says that God did hear the boy, and his messenger appeared. He approached the mother, reminded her of the promise, and reminded her also that the boy needed affection in that moment. He opened her eyes to see other possibilities of life and thus enabled her to go on.

Concluding thoughts

Migration affects all people, but it especially affects children and adolescents, who hardly ever receive explanations about what is happening around them. Due to the pressures of their new life, there is also little time to accompany their distress. When children and adolescents express themselves (and they know how to do so), adults do not understand

[8] ***Raw-aw.*** This is translated as *to* see, literally or figuratively. It is also translated as *contemplate, consider, discern, discover, look, pay attention,* and *distinguish*.

them. The point is that we, the adults (fathers, mothers, relatives, or even the messengers), are called to listen to and interpret those 'voices.' However, in order to do that we need to be in tune with God's desire. Adults are called to run to their aid, perhaps creating an alternative community where children and adolescents who are migrating may keep growing and where they can play again. There is a good probability that in that space, they may find the other children and adolescents. What do you say?

Appendix - **Some liberating proposals**
(The experience of Paz y Esperanza in San Juan de Lurigancho, Lima, Peru)

Peru has experienced internal migration due to the years of political violence suffered in the country; because of this, many people suffered discrimination. Now, the presence of Venezuelan migrants has caused a resurgence of this situation, producing xenophobia and more discrimination. All of this affects children and adolescents, and this can be clearly observed in schools. There, it is the adults—teachers and personnel—who discriminate directly or indirectly. Children and adolescents feel withdrawn and become distrustful because they do not know what to do. Some discriminate because that is what they learn at home, and this comes from both sides. We thus thought it important to promote the integration of Peruvian and Venezuelan children and adolescents, first showing them that we are all migrants, so that condition should unite, and not divide, us. We also encourage them to play in mixed groups of boys and girls from 7 to 16 years old, Peruvians and Venezuelans, in the hope that they will find spaces of trust, creativity, and initiative. At the same time, we motivate the adults to reflect and change their attitude towards coexistence. Here are some examples:

Towelvolley seeks to coordinate and plan strategies in teams, while the ball goes from one side of the net to the other. The children and adolescents must learn to communicate. The ball comes to all of them, but only one of them can touch it and, before that, he or she must ask for it. On the other side, the children are in mixed pairs, joined by a towel. They must learn to communicate in order to reach the ball, keep it in the towel, and pass it on to the other side. In the process, they motivate each other to accomplish the challenge.

The Modified World seeks to promote teamwork and integration. The groups are mixed, and nobody should be left out. A token is thrown on the world marked on the floor. They jump in unison to collect the token and return, all the while holding hands and taking care to not step on the lines. They must learn to delegate roles in the team and respect them, regardless of their age.

The Paz y Esperanza team is composed of men and women, boys and girls, Peruvians and Venezuelans.

"Faith and Displacement": A Socio-Scientific Integral Mission Project of the Church

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Introduction

The tragedy of forced displacement occurs when migration takes place within a territory under the formal sovereignty of a State. In Colombia the government's "Unidad de Victimas" office reports that between 1985 and 2019 there were 7,580,241 persons in a situation of displacement (PSD) (15.7% of the population). The research project, "Integral Missiology and the Flourishing of Persons in Situations of Displacement in Colombia" (www.feydesplazamiento.org/) carried out by the Fundación Universidad Seminario Bíblico de Colombia (FUSBC) and sponsored by the Templeton World Charity Foundation, arose from our increasing sense of moral and spiritual obligation to respond to this humanitarian catastrophe.[9] The question we wanted to answer is: How can a renewed theology of integral mission, enriched by empirical socio-scientific analysis, serve to mobilize local evangelical churches to foment the holistic human development (spiritual, social, psychological and economic) of people who find themselves in situations of displacement in Colombia?

Integral Mission and Participative Investigative Action

Our approach posits direct cooperation, without interference, between theology and other academic disciplines, as well as between the church and other social sectors. Our framework is that of integral mission, understood as the orientation of Christian mission that, when it affirms the reign of God over all his creation, results in the mobilization of Christians towards the orthopraxis which flows out of orthodoxy and carries with it the imperative of fomenting the integral development of human beings in their physical, spiritual, psychological and social dimensions.[10]

We attempted to flesh out this theological framework recognizing the need to overlap with the social sciences. We applied an investigative methodology known as Participatory Action Research (IAP in Spanish) developed by Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda and Brazilian Adult Educator Paulo Freire, which emphasizes that socio-scientific scholarship does not merely seek to understand social phenomena but also creates, implements and tests interventions designed to reduce suffering and injustice.[11] Central to this methodology is the involvement of the populations often considered to be the "object" of the research, as

[9] The first three-year stage was concluded in June 2019. In January 2020, we began a second period, also planned for three years, which includes a micro-curricular review and initiatives to expand the impact of this project to sixty churches in Colombia, partly through a Diploma program designed to create a ministry that can accompany people in situations of displacement towards their integral development.

[10] See C. René Padilla, *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) and *Bases bíblicas de la misión: perspectivas latinoamericanas* (Buenos Aires: Kairós, 1998).

[11] Orlando Fals Borda, "Orígenes universales y retos actuales de la IAP", *Análisis político* 38 (1999); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary ed., trad. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum International, 2000).

active participants in the investigative process and in the creation and implementation of the interventions—until optimization of the intervention is achieved.

Our project presupposes that the theory of integral missiology can be enriched through IAP, since both theories 1) emphasize the need to deal with concrete social problems, 2) incorporate local people who are not "experts" as active participants, and 3) are rooted in the Latin American cultural context. In addition, both are explicitly committed, not just to arriving at an accurate (theological or sociological) description of a particular situation, but also to the active transformation of such concrete situations within society, resolving them in favor of the marginalized and oppressed.

Emphasis on the participation of the community

The IAP emphasizes community participation and therefore our project is, decidedly and intentionally, committed to learning from the PSD´s. The first stage (bibliographical research, fieldwork, materials production, course outlines and test cases) was carried out by a group of twenty-five researchers (theologians and social scientists, as well as academics and professionals in relevant fields), divided into six teams (Missiology, Pedagogy, Sociology, Economics, Psychology and Public Sector Interaction). The intervention took place in six pilot communities selected using the criteria of geographical diversity (different regions), a combination of urban centers and rural areas, as well as diversity in terms of evangelical denominations, to name a few specific criteria.

A preliminary inter-disciplinary investigation was carried out, gathering knowledge and learning from one another. We also emphasized the participation of co-researchers and had the privilege of benefitting from the volunteer labour of two people (on average) from each pilot community—one of them being a church leader with experience in accompanying PSD´s, and the other, a person who had actually suffered forced displacement. We decided not to limit ourselves to formulating intellectual explanations but to also highlight the wise and creative voices of people who are actually suffering this humanitarian catastrophe and, together with them, identify viable and sustainable strategies for thriving.

For example, the Public Sector Interaction Team obtained transcripts of thirty-seven individual interviews and of discussions among seven focus groups. Prior to using the information, the participating PSDs signed the 'Informed Consent Form' required by the protocol of the FUSBC Ethics Committee. Some of what we learned from the PSDs include:

1. the existence of the enormous need and opportunity for churches to collaborate with government organizations, especially given the State´s very limited capacity to deal with this humanitarian catastrophe, to the point where Constitutional Court declared the situation as 'a state of unconstitutional affairs'[12]

[12] This humanitarian catastrophe requires the special attention of the State and this has been recognized by the Executive and the Congress of Colombia with the promulgation of Laws 387 of 1997 on Comprehensive Attention to the Displaced Population; 975 of 2005 on Justice and Peace; and 1448 of 2011 on Victims and Land Restitution. The Constitutional Court has also recognized the priority of the special attention the State should give to the displaced, with Sentence T-025 of 2004 in which it declared "the existence of an unconstitutional state of affairs in the situation of the displaced population due to the lack of agreement between the seriousness of the affectation of the constitutionally recognized rights ... on the one hand, and the volume of resources effectively destined to ensure the effective enjoyment of such rights and the institutional capacity

2. that forgiveness can be a community experience and can have political implications
3. that the church, at times, is inclined to re-victimize and reinforce the status of ´victim´ of PSDs
4. that there are individuals who have successfully transitioned from victims to political agents, passing through "thick and thin" to obtain government resources.

Conclusion

As a result of combining integral missiology with the IAP, we have generated not only academic publications, but also nineteen sets of pedagogical materials, including instruction booklets for professionals and curricular content for the PSDs, based on serious research and sensitivity to local contexts. These materials seek to mobilize church communities and PSDs in a joint process of stimulating long-term recovery and the flourishing of PSDs. These materials were presented in the six pilot communities, where both professionals and participating PSDs evaluated their impact. Their evaluations will orient the review of the micro-curriculum that will be part of the second stage in which we aspire to expand the scope of “Faith and Displacement” to sixty faith communities in six cities.

The design of the materials incorporates a wide range of educational strategies such as videos, games, dialogues, artistic creations, spiritual reflections, application of practical skills, songs, puzzles, dramatizations and sports. The materials address many and varied topics such as overcoming trauma, skills for seeking formal employment, as well as a number of other subjects.

to implement the corresponding constitutional and legal mandates, on the other hand." The Court maintains the pressure on the Executive to compensate the constitutional rights of the displaced”, while it reiterates that "The State does not have the capacity to attend to all victims at the same time" (Office of the President). This situation prolongs the victimization of those who are displaced and exposes them to the deepening of their impoverishment.