

MARCH 2021

ENLIGHTENED

Reflections on the United Methodist Social Principles
by the Young Adult Bible Study of the CCUMC

The United Methodist Church and Immigration

BY ALETA DAM

This month we are focusing our newsletter on the social principle of immigration. The UMC Social Principles states that "We call upon all United Methodist churches to welcome newly arriving migrants in their communities, to love them as we do ourselves, to treat them as one of our native-born, to see in them the presence of the incarnated Jesus, and to show hospitality to the migrants in our midst." The social principles also call us to advocate for civil and human rights of all migrants in the US, denounce xenophobic and racist behavior, call the government to cease the detainment and arrests of undocumented immigrants, and many more. The UMC has many active ministries that are focused on helping immigrants, including the Rapid Response Team, Immigrant Welcoming Communities, the Sanctuary Movement and Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON). To highlight one of these ministries, below is a video about JFON and the incredible work they are doing across the country even in the midst of the global pandemic.



References: <https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/civil-and-human-rights/immigration-to-the-united-states>
<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-the-united-methodist-position-on-immigration-reform>
<https://www.umc.org/en/what-we-believe/umc-topics/social-issues/immigration>

The Journey of Five Million Steps

"Can Arizona JFON help a mother and son reach safety at last?"

**Nogales, Mexico-Arizona border
June 2020**

"The agent was looking at her with suspicion. He was not the first to do so. She had received that look every day of their long journey to the border. It was, she knew, her black skin they mistrusted so much. The looks would turn speculative when she opened her mouth and spoke Spanish. Just like with this man.

"Ay, tu eres cubana," he said, using informal, dismissive speech. She had gotten accustomed to that, too. He thumbed through her papers and then gave her his undivided attention. "So you want to pass through?" he asked her, with a quick glance at Camilo. "You and your little boy."

Damasia instinctively squeezed Camilo's hand. Life on the road had been hardest for him, and he was already so small and thin for his age. Very few people would believe he was almost a teenager. Damasia nodded her head warily, keeping her gaze on the agent's nametag instead of his face. "Tell you what," said the agent. "Come back next week and bring \$10,000 with you. And another ten for your son."



Immigration: Past and Future

BY GAELLE MCCLOUD

The first thought that comes to my mind when I hear the word immigration is a concept that I learned back in the third grade. This is the concept of The United States of America as a melting pot. I remember learning that America is comprised of many immigrants that enrich our country with different customs and cultural beliefs. I remember feeling very curious and excited to learn as much as I could about the history from so many different countries that made up our one United States. My own family on both my maternal and paternal sides is made up of voluntary immigrants who came to America for many of the same reasons that immigrants come today. In order to learn more about my ancestors and what they faced, I interviewed my Mom about the family history. In this article I will share some of what I learned, and how many of the themes are still true today.

I am going to begin with the paternal side of my family. My Memere's father, my Great Grandfather, Jerry Fox was the son of a Scottish father and an Irish mother. They immigrated to the USA in search of economic opportunity, as many people do today. Jerry was grateful for the opportunities that America had provided, and so he joined the military. He served in World War I and was gassed by the Germans, an injury which would affect him later in life. As his descendant I am proud of his sacrifice. When the war was over, Jerry became a successful pharmacist in Lisbon, NH, and so fulfilled the hopes of a better life in America.

To continue with the paternal side of my family, my Grandfather's mother, my Great Grandmother, Laura McCloud nee Fortin was a Catholic French Canadian who immigrated with her parents to Nashua, NH. She spoke only French and had to learn English as a second language, and never spoke it completely fluently. In addition, she struggled to write English. Unfortunately, Laura and her family faced prejudice because they worked in the factories and mills for lesser pay than the Americans. They were also called frogs by the Americans as a derogatory slur. Many immigrants today face the same prejudices, as they perform hard jobs for less pay, and suffer the cruelty of being called ethnic slurs. It's important to be mindful of how we would like to be treated in a new country under difficult circumstances, and adjust our behavior accordingly.

Laura went on to marry Harold McCloud who spoke no French, and so my Grandfather and his brother were raised bilingual. They attended a private French Catholic school where they spoke only French. While Laura was working as a school cafeteria lady, both of her sons went on to college. My Grandfather became an electrical engineer, joined the Air Force, fought in three wars, and retired at the rank of Colonel. His brother, Earl, became a successful doctor. This is another example of first generation Americans taking advantage of the opportunities available and making a contribution to the country. Immigrants today have the same skills and can contribute great things to our country when given the chance.

Now I will share about my ancestors on my maternal side of the family. The Leavis family were French Huguenots in the 17th century in France. The Huguenots were Protestants who were being persecuted and killed for not being Catholic. The aristocratic Leavises fled to England where they became working class rattan weavers, which is a type of basket weaving that we call wicker work. In the 19th century Thomas Leavis was living in Peterborough, England, and had become a successful rattan weaver. He then was asked to immigrate to Wakefield, MA by The Heywood Wakefield Company.

"Damasia recoiled as if he'd struck her. It was the same everywhere she went. She had been extorted by cartel members, coyotes, taxi drivers, ordinary people who seemed to want to help her and then tricked her, and by Mexican police officers and government officials.

Everybody knew that Cuban asylum seekers had family in the U.S., family who were willing to pay money. And everybody wanted their cut.

But she had thought the Americans would be different. This one didn't even bother to make an excuse... "oh, your documents are false" or "oh, you broke the law, so now you must pay." He just blatantly demanded a bribe. This final blow—after 15 months of them—was too much. Damasia felt her last hope sliding away from her. She grasped Camilo tighter, as if he, too, would slip away. "I don't have that kind of money," she mumbled hoarsely. "You don't?" He shrugged. "Well, come back when you do."

With nowhere else to turn, Damasia and Camilo arrived at La Casa, a shelter for asylum seekers in Nogales, Mexico, in July 2020. Run by Cruzando Fronteras, a border ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona, the shelter takes very strict precautions against COVID-19. There are only two staff members; the asylum seekers themselves manage many of the daily operations at the shelter. And any new arrivals must quarantine in separate quarters for a full two weeks. This is how the shelter has managed to stay COVID-free throughout this entire pandemic.

In partnership with the shelter, Arizona JFON staff and volunteer attorneys work with asylum seekers to help them (virtually) prepare their all-important declarations that will accompany their asylum application. "The effects of the trauma they have experienced often make it difficult for them to tell their story," says Executive Director Alba Jaramillo. "So we get them to think about the timeline, the facts of their story, the events that occurred, and the things that aren't going to change."

Please find the rest of the story on the National Justice For Our Neighbors website: <https://njfon.org/2021/02/18/the-journey-of-five-million->



So, he immigrated to Massachusetts with his family and became very successful at the company, eventually becoming the manager of the factory. Thomas Leavis was my great great great grandfather. Fast forward to his descendant, my Grandfather Johnson, became the first in his family to attend college. He then went on to become the treasurer of The University of Massachusetts. This history again represents many themes that immigrants today have to face, such as fleeing from religious persecution and going from a potentially higher societal rank or job to a lower one once you immigrate.

I learned through examining my ancestors in this way that there were two questions that kept coming up about immigration. Why do people leave where they are? What do they struggle with? My ancestors left for better opportunities, which they found in America. Also they left to flee religious persecution and safety concerns. Once in America some faced prejudice and weren't welcomed. These themes are the same today for many immigrants. Despite the struggles faced by my ancestors, I want to point out that the stories I have are overall happy ones. However, it's important to remember that throughout history many immigrants have been enslaved or suffered death.

The United States of America is built on immigrants, with the exception, of course, of Native Americans. Many of us are descended from immigrants from other countries that make up our great melting pot of America. I recommend taking an interest in your ancestors. Take a look back, and it will help you look forward. God bless.

Could you pass the US Citizenship Test?

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

There are many steps that must be completed in order to become a US citizen. It is not an easy path many eligibility requirements must be met, fees paid, and complete an interview which includes a civics test. During the the naturalization interview, a USCIS officer conducts an oral civics test. Newly updated in 2020, the civics test consists of 20 questions from the list of 128 civics test questions. Would you be able to pass? Here are a few questions from the possible 128 questions. Test your knowledge and check the answers on the last page of the newsletter!

- 1.) How many amendments does the US Constitution have?
- 2.) What is the "rule of law"?
- 3.) We elect a US senator for how many years?
- 4.) The House of Representatives has how many voting members?
- 5.) If both the President and Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes president?
- 6.) Who is one of your state's U.S. Senators now?
- 7.) When was the constitution written?
- 8.) Before he was president, Eisenhower was a general. What war was he in?
- 9.) The Federalist Papers supported the passage of the US constitution. Name one of the writers.
- 10.) What territory did the US buy from France in 1803?



"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so, some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

HEBREWS 13:2



Reflections on Immigration

BY PASTOR JOHN

One of the things I'd invite the church to think and pray about is how we treat immigrants. Yes, there are a lot of policy debates we could have concerning immigration's strain or benefit to the economy and national resources, but as important as we may believe those issues to be, they are secondary to the character a Christian disciple should exhibit. How we treat immigrants is one of the main themes of the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament.

Starting with the exodus of Israel from Egypt, God makes clear that His children should care for the foreigner, the alien, as one of their own because of what God had done for them. Leviticus perhaps puts it best: "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." Indeed, the main theme of the Book of Ruth is not loyalty but how aliens/foreigners are treated. Jews place Ruth in the prophet section of the Bible because it is to their shame that only Boaz chose to care for Ruth the Moabite. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah explicitly include equal care for the alien as one of the communal actions God expects of Israel to once again receive God's favor.

What's interesting about these commands is that God also tells the Israelites to drive out the Canaanites and others from the Promised Land so that Israel may be holy, set apart. We could say, then, that God didn't want aliens in the midst of Israel yet still commands the Israelites to care for them as if they are citizens. So the policy debate around immigration really is secondary.

Who I am and have become is itself a reflection of the fact that many of us and many of our communities still have a lot of work to do to treat immigrants, the alien, better. My mother was not treated well moving from Puerto Rico to Springfield, MA, just down the street from us. That's worse considering that Puerto Ricans are actually U.S. citizens.

My mother's move may have been many years ago, but we can still hear comments and chants of, "Go back home!" aimed at any number of people. We also hear plenty of comments that we have no legal or moral responsibility to immigrants. From a legal perspective, that's true, but it's hard to hear self-professed Christians claim we have no moral responsibility. Because God's children were once slaves in Egypt, and because God is our Lord, we surely do have some moral responsibility: to care for the alien as a citizen, as a neighbor, if not fiscally or legally then at least in spirit, compassion, and support.

I'd love for us to reflect and pray about how we might better follow God's commands in this regard.

Answers to citizenship questions

HOW WELL DID YOU DO?

- 1.) Twenty-seven (27)
- 2.) Everyone must follow the law, Leaders must obey the law, Government must obey the law, No one is above the law
- 3.) Six (6) years
- 4.) Four hundred thirty-five (435)
- 5.) The Speaker of the House
- 6.) Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey are the MA state senators
- 7.) 1787
- 8.) World War II
- 9.) James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay
- 10.) The Louisiana Territory

"The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the last of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

LEVITICUS 19:34

March is

- Women's History Month
- National Colon Cancer Awareness Month
- Bleeding Disorders Awareness Month
- Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

PLEASE KEEP ALL THOSE INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY THESE IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS THROUGHOUT THE MONTH.