

From the General Secretary

by Thomas Kemper



The Global Mission Fellows class of 2015-2017—with many of the authors for this issue, including: Albert Wakili, Nicodemus Doe, Peter Karanja, Taurai Jokonya, and Yves Kanangwa.

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Migrants and the Gospel

The Bible is filled with migrants—peoples on the move, such as these few examples from the Old Testament:

- Hebrew wanderers looking for home in the days of Abraham
- The Jacob tribe, victims of drought in Canaan, seeking food in Egypt
- Judeans exiled to Babylon in the days of Jeremiah; their descendants returning to Jerusalem in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah

And a few examples from the New Testament:

- The Holy family finding refuge in Egypt
- The Apostle Paul traversing the eastern Mediterranean to preach the good news of Jesus Christ, initially going to places where dispersed Jews had established communities
- Other disciples fanning out across the East—as far as India, southern Europe, and North Africa—with the gospel.

Scholar Dana Robert points out that those first itinerant, migratory, and boundary-crossing New Testament preachers, who were or became bicultural, are greatly responsible for Christianity becoming a worldwide faith. Migrants carried the Word. (*Christian Mission. How Christianity became a World Religion*, by Dana Robert.)

Migration involves challenges, injustices, and hazards but can also be a blessing. The church has a responsibility to respond to the physical and emotional needs of the displaced, and it can recognize and utilize the value of mobility.

Migrants from England, including Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, played major roles in evangelization and Methodist church growth in colonial America and the young United States. German immigrants to America encountered in Pennsylvania the Evangelical branch of the Evangelical United Brethren heritage of United Methodism and took this Wesleyan movement back to their homeland in the early 19th century. My own ancestors were part of that community. A similar pattern was followed in the late 20th century

when refugees from Vietnam came to the US, were introduced to United Methodism, and went back to their country of origin as missionaries, helping to plant and water what is today a flourishing indigenous United Methodist Church.

Global Ministries recently commissioned a missionary for ministry among migrants from Zimbabwe who have settled in western Canada, placed in collaboration with the United Church of Canada. United Methodist lay and clergy migrants from various parts of Africa are today helping to revitalize Methodist congregations in Italy, Austria, Germany, and Ireland, while also providing services to other migrants in those areas.

Among our missionaries and short-term (two-year) Global Mission Fellows there are at this moment 41 from many parts of the world ministering among migrants in many lands: from the Philippines in Taiwan, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Germany, from Brazil or China in the United States, and from Mexico, Colombia, and the United States along the US-Mexican border. There is an intense sense of “from everywhere to everywhere” in our ministries with migrants.

A vital example of migrants serving the gospel at present is in the United Arab Emirates, a coalition of Muslim monarchies along the Persian Gulf. United Methodist congregations have been organized over the last 10 years by migrant workers from the Philippines and now also from Zimbabwe (see story P. 16).

The annals of faith and mission past, present, and future are filled with accounts of migrants who can confess with St. Paul in Philippians 1:12: “I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel.”

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