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Hunger News & Hope

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Participating in a Miracle:
A Story of Hospitality

by John Garland

Editor's note: John Garland is the pastor of the San Antonio Mennonite Church in San Antonio, TX, just a three-hour drive from the US/Mexico border. John became pastor of SAMC in 2016 at about the same time as a huge migration surge sent thousands of asylum seekers to San Antonio. The church became involved, with John's leadership, in the city's Interfaith Welcome Coalition, a group that met more than 100 refugees a day at San Antonio's airport and bus station.

During those years, the church has offered hospitality to thousands of traumatized immigrants, in the members' own homes and at a hospitality house, La Casa de Maria y Marta (the Mary and Martha House) next to the church building. Also, at one time, almost every inch of floor space in the small church had someone sleeping on it.

The Mary & Martha House has had different iterations in different seasons. During the migration surge, it housed people from Honduras, Guatemala and El

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Hundreds of asylum seekers have found shelter for a brief rest at Hermanos en el Camino (Brothers on the Path) in southern Mexico. Photo by Peter Haden.

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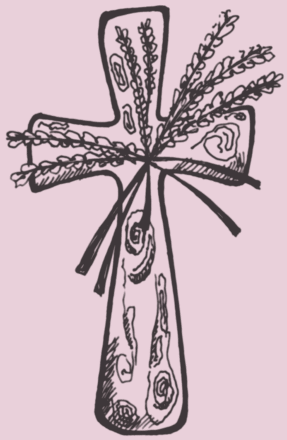

art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

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Salvador. Now it's primarily run by widows who are former guests, and houses people from places like Angola, Congo, Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti, Tajikistan, Brazil and Ukraine. It is being used as a transition to independent living and financial sustainability.

John grew up in Louisville, KY, and spent his high school and college years at Seventh & James Baptist Church in Waco, TX, where the Seeds offices are housed. He was a Seeds intern in high school and a Seeds writer while studying at Baylor University. During those years, he wrote a number of worship resources, some co-written with editor Katie Cook, his high school Sunday school teacher. At that time, he also volunteered at the World Hunger Relief Training Farm near Waco, which led him to service projects in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. This work, in turn, led him to a pastorate in the border community of San Juan, TX. He served Iglesia Menonita Buenas Nuevas in San Juan for eight years before moving to San Antonio.

Below are some of John's thoughts and memories from those years of intense hospitality ministry in San Antonio.

How It All Began

When my family first moved to this neighborhood, the pastor of this church was stepping down. After a year, I applied and they called me to be the pastor. Shortly after that, the migration surge started.

We had just been given this little house next to the church, the Mary & Martha House, and an organization was going to use it as a hospitality house. That plan fell apart. We didn't know what to do with the house, and we had a mortgage we didn't know how to pay. That is when a handful of churches in San Antonio first became aware of the migrant crisis coming through San Antonio.

Every day, these folks were being stranded in our downtown bus station. We became aware of that, and we had this empty house less than a mile from the bus station, we immediately said, "We have this space. Let's do it here." And that how it all began.

Afterwards, we were in the newspaper, there were articles everywhere, we were on NPR [National Public Radio], we were on different programs. We were proud of ourselves then, because we had no idea what was coming. We thought we understood the nativity scene as one of peace, tranquility and charity. Over the next few years, we were to learn that it is the intersection between human suffering and the Creator God.

We ended up pushing away the nativity scene in the worship space because people were sleeping under the altar. Not just a few; there were dozens sleeping on the stage.

We were working with the Interfaith Welcome Coalition, which was a ragtag bunch at the beginning. We were providing hospitality, another group was focused on making backpacks, and other groups focused on helping people find tickets and that sort of thing. Another group focused on advocacy. Then we realized people were getting dropped off at the airport, too, so there was a group hanging out at the airport. It grew into a really great organization.

All this time, the church has never wanted for funds. We tried to do fundraising before, and we always failed. Then we said, "Let's just use this building as if it's not ours." And then something happened, and we've always been provided for. We needed to do renovation, and we tried to do fundraising by selling off some assets. We could barely raise anything. And then all these donations came in. You know, insane donations. Someone called and said "I'm going to give you a hundred thousand dollars this year, next year, and the year after that." Can you believe that? Our whole church budget was $80,000 a year.

Left: Pastor John Garland talks with a parishioner. Photo courtesy of San Antonio Mennonite Church.

We've had that happen with tickets for families, with people needing bail bonds, with folks needing to be ransomed out. Someone gave us a ranch that we're now using for hospitality and training. The gifts just come in. And you know, what's wild is that, two weeks later, I've forgotten. I still worry sometimes. Okay, I still worry a lot. So now I keep a list, and I call it "counting baskets." *(See "Counting Baskets" below.)*

What a Church Should Be

Having good theology is not about being right. It's bad for the church to be correct. When somebody says, "Where do you stand on this?" it shouldn't be a theological question; it should be an ecclesiological question. We shouldn't be standing; we should be moving. The question should be "How can we be church in the context of journeying together?"

Some churches would rather be a social justice club. They would rather craft a statement that's accurate and good, and they can publish it and say it as a church. All that is completely spot on, but they don't want to go any further than that. They don't want to have people staying in their homes. They don't want to change the way they do things so they can be more welcoming. God forbid that we take the scripture seriously.

But that's one of the good things about this church. We don't pretend to be right about anything, and we also don't pretend to be saviors of anyone. Hospitality has dramatically shifted the identity of this church. Our identity has come down to a place where we're just bearing witness to the pilgrim church coming through. We're bearing witness to these folks who've sacrificed everything in love—which Jesus said something about. The only thing that they're living on is their faith—which Jesus said something about, too.

We're doing the bare minimum for them. Even that is transformative for them, but it's even more transformative for us. This may be inappropriate for me to say, but hosting those hundreds and hundreds of people in our building wrecked our building, and it wrecked the church in some really, really good ways.

Here's an important paradigm that we've used. I primarily focus on the feeding of the five thousand in Mark, because he's directly quoting Psalm 23; he's saying Jesus made them lie down in the green grass. Then, in chapter 6, you have the festival of death in Herod's palace, and John is beheaded, and right next to this is this feast, this festival of life that Jesus is doing in the desert. That's appropriate because I feel like we're up against Herod's palace in many ways.

But what I find important in that passage is that they're in a desolate place. Churches need to go to desolate places and see people there and be seen there. For us, that was going down to the nasty little downtown bus station. It was a nexus of drugs and violence and human trafficking going up Interstates 35 and 10, and then we had all of these migrants being dropped off from the border patrol checkpoints, or from the prisons that surround San Antonio. We were being there and being seen, in a desolate place, looking people in the eyes and speaking to them as though they were human beings, brothers and sisters—which they are.

When you see the magnitude of it, you recognize your very first reaction is just like the disciples had: "You need to send these people away. They need to fix their own problems. They need to go back to where they came from, and we should probably build a wall to keep them from getting in." And then you hear the voice of Jesus saying, "You feed them." And you immediately do a calculation and say, "No, no, no, no, no, no. That's going to be a ton of dinner." And then someone actually does the specific calculation (which we're constantly doing). And then you hear the voice of Jesus again: "You feed them." I think what that really means is "Go and see what you have."

One of the American church reactions, if you get to this point, is that you go and see what you have, and you immediately start feeding people with what you have. You show up, saying, "I've got a loaf or two; I'm going to immediately serve this." On paper, 50 percent of our budget goes to hospitality, but it's really more like 75 percent. That feels good. It feels appropriate.

What's so powerful about this is that when you go see what you have, you immediately bring it back to Jesus. It's no longer yours. That's what happened with our hospitality house. We were given this house through a miracle; we could not sustain it. But we looked at it and said, "This is not ours." That's when the crazy multiplication started happening. Other people, other organizations, other churches, began saying, "Can we come in with you?" And we were saying, "It's not ours. Yes."

Then we had partnerships that grew and grew. We couldn't always be in the bus station, but now there was a whole network of people who were. We were using our building space for gatherings, for offices, for synergy and connection, and the result of that was that the hospitality house has been full for nine years. We never had a budget good enough to fund it, but we were always given what we needed.

All of that was really beautiful, but I think then you get caught up in the service—I think like the disciples did—where you're serving and serving and serving.

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All you do is serve. And sometimes you get kind of frustrated with the people and sometimes the people get a little frustrated with you. I've definitely gotten to that place. And I forget what I'm in the middle of.

In Mark, there's a serving of five thousand in Jewish territory, there's a serving of four thousand in Gentile territory, and right after they serve four thousand people, they're in a boat, and they're worried about where they're going to get the bread for the journey. It's hilarious. I think Mark set it up to be funny, but when I read that again I thought, "Oh my gosh, that is me." We've been given so many resources, and I'm still worried about how I am going to take care of this or that. Or even worse, I'm thinking, "God's going to be disappointed in me because I forgot something, or I didn't follow through with this, or I didn't do this." I think that is what's happening in that journey on the boat.

Participating in a Miracle

A few years ago, there was a woman from Honduras who came to the church and her daughter was deeply scared and hiding behind her mother. I barely interacted with the daughter at all. She never spoke; the mother spoke very little. They had nowhere to go, no family, no hope, no place to go back to. The day before, a church in the middle of Illinois had called me, saying, "We're ready to adopt a family." I've done this with a number of churches. It's kind of a hard process. They'd been discerning this for a month. I'd asked them to prepare several things, and they'd done it all. Then they called and said, "We're ready." This woman and child completely fit what they were prepared for. Two days later, they were on a bus and living in rural Illinois.

At that time, I was getting bombed every night with families, with so much need. We were serving a family—there are so many horrific stories. There was a family separation, a mother separated from a child. We were trying to figure out how to respond to that. And we were worried about some dramatic something here, and some dramatic something there, and I was in a flow of just serving. I would get just enough sleep, do my church needs, then serve the families. Serve, serve, serve, serve, serve.

Then this church in Illinois contacted me, saying that things were going well and that there was a bunch of other churches in the area that wanted to do the same thing. (There's actually a documentary called ACROSS about those churches; a mega church picked up on this story and they made a documentary series about how hosting these folks completely changed the church.)

Anyway, these churches invited me to go to Illinois to do a training on how to do hospitality with migrants and trauma victims. I went to Illinois and to the first session. I walked into this little rural church, and running down the aisle was this young woman, who was now up to my shoulder. She ran down the aisle and she gave me a big hug. And then her mother came down the aisle, and the girl was talking to me in perfect English. She pulled out a picture she had drawn of the time she spent in our hospitality house.

I looked at her, and I had no idea what her name is. I couldn't remember the mother's name, and I could barely remember the time that they were at our house. That's when I realized, "Oh my gosh, I was participating in a miracle, and I had no idea."

Counting baskets

This is why I think one of the most important parts of that story in Mark 8 is when Jesus says, "How many baskets were left over? How many people was it—five thousand? How many baskets were left over? How many in the other place—four thousand? How many baskets were left over?" And the disciples tell him,

Left: A bus stops at the downtown San Antonio Mennonite Church to drop off asylum seekers. Photo courtesy of Anabaptist World/San Antonio Mennonite Church.

"There's twelve baskets. Oh, there's seven baskets." And then Mark ends the story, saying, "Don't you get it now?"

And here we are, saying, "No, I don't get it!" That was the moment when it became clear to me; these are the leftover baskets in rural Illinois. We were participating in a miracle. Every day we have our time of prayer, and we have the lists of our petitions. But now, every Friday, we flip it, and we count baskets. That has been critical. It is easy to forget or just not realize what's happening. But then it's so empowering, humbling, and hope-giving, when you realize it. You count your baskets.

Sometimes you're frustrated with yourself, you're frustrated with them, and, in your mind, you never have enough resources. Then you look back and there's leftovers. Leftovers! That's very important for the pastoral imagination.

Trauma-Informed Theology

All during this time, the church was dealing with intense trauma. Everyone we received had suffered extreme and multiple traumas. They had suffered and seen atrocities in their homelands, on the journey, and then at the hands of US immigration authorities. Families were separated. They were hungry and exhausted beyond what you and I can imagine.

The other thing is that we were dealing with our own secondary trauma. These folks were staying in our house and interacting with our kids. My own daughters were asking me questions about how could this happen to these little girls, and could this happen to us? There was story after story of the deepest darkness that human beings can inflict on one another, to force onto families and rip them apart. So I was asking, "How do we respond to this trauma? How do we respond to the secondary trauma in ourselves?" And the horrible realization I had was, "This is what Christianity's all about. Christianity's a movement, and it's all about response to trauma and witnessing the transformation of trauma."

Probably the most significant thing I've done as a pastor is to let my pastoral imagination come out of a view of the transformation of trauma. Trauma-informed theology starts with this: all scripture came through the hands of traumatized communities. I don't think there's an author that God used that had not been traumatized. I can't think of any. I don't think there's anything in scripture that didn't come through a traumatized community—either from someone who had been beaten, jailed, watched their best friends killed horrifically, or they were actively in exile.

So there's that reality, and then there are the images of what Christianity is supposed to be. It's about the transformation of trauma. It's about seeing the public torture and seeing the ripping apart of life and being called into something beyond that forever.

Our response to traumatized people is to provide safety. How can we provide an experience of safety? In the church, we use trauma-responsive techniques in the layout of the house and in our training, so that their experience is safety and rest.

Theologically, that's the good news. The good news is, the kingdom of God is here. The good news is you are loved here, you are forgiven of everything, there's nothing you can do about it, you're forgiven forever. You are safe, you're loved, you're forgiven. And then we ask ourselves, "How is this a kingdom of God moment? How can we participate in their safety?"

Over the next five or so years, I think we're going to be talking about a theology of resilience. I think we're going to probably move away from talking so much about trauma and we're going to be talking about resilience. How is Christianity a movement of receiving resilience? Are we resilient enough to see that our brothers and sisters are drowning?

I would define resilience as first letting God pull you out of the deep water. Then you think "I am loved and I'm safe. I'm a vessel of love even in my worst moments." Then you realize that you have the ability to control your own stress responses, even when things are really hard, so that you can see the trauma of the other person. I think we're going to be talking more about developing that, pastorally, about leading people into receiving resilience.

That's what I do every day now. We have a prayer group, and I do a little two-minute audio postcard. In the morning, it's a mantra prayer from the Psalms. It introduces the mantra, where it is from in the Psalms and how to use it. And then midday, it's a reading from Mark, but just pulling out images of how Jesus is in that narrative. Mark does that kind of thing more than any of the other texts in Scripture. Mark leads us through the experience of being pulled out of blindness, pulled out of darkness, pulled out of illness, pulled out of the waters.

And then in the evening, we go through the examine. I always begin by saying, "Let's get out the stressful stuff. Let's list them out, and then let's get out all the things that you feel you have to do urgently." And then we focus on the lies. "How have you experienced or heard the lies today?" That's the other thing I do pastorally all the time, like *ad nauseum*, saying, "Where are the lies? Where's the lie in the room right now?" And

Please see "Miracle" on page 12.

The Naomi House:

Bringing Light & New Life to Asylum Seekers

by Grace Sincleair

We constantly hear about the US-Mexico border crisis in the news and in political spheres. Large numbers of people flee their home countries and seek safety for themselves and their children in the United States. However, upon crossing the border, their journey is far from over. They need a great deal of support to survive and start a new life.

This is particularly true of those who legally enter the United States as asylum seekers. While some immigrants, such as refugees, receive some funding from the government, asylum seekers receive none. In addition, they must wait for six months while their paperwork is processed before they can begin working. This means that they need the help of others as they wait for the day when they can have a job.[1]

Thankfully, asylum seekers are not alone in their struggles. There are many churches and organizations across the Southwest US who desire to help those seeking asylum.

One of these churches is DaySpring Baptist Church in Waco, TX. They saw the great need and chose to act by creating a hospitality house called the Naomi House. Dr. Dennis Tucker, one of the members of the Naomi House leadership team and a professor at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary, gave us some insight into the Naomi House and its beginnings, structure, and impact.

Following an Unexpected Call

Tucker said the church did not originally seek to start a hospitality house. They planned to host one family at a time. "We really thought as a church that was going to be our mission: We would help one family, then we'd help another family," Tucker said. "And then, during COVID, we started thinking as a group online and [on] Zoom, 'Should we do more? Could we open up a hospitality house?' And so, we began thinking about that, looking for a house, trying to think about what that would look like for our church."[2] After about eighteen months of planning, the congregation opened the Naomi House—named after the biblical character Naomi, who welcomed Ruth into her home community and country[3]—and received their first family in the summer of 2022.[4]

> ***There are challenges in this kind of project. First, it's difficult to bring complete strangers together to share a living space peacefully.***

Left: A typical bedroom in the Naomi House, a hospitality house for asylum seekers in Waco, TX. Photo courtesy of DaySpring Baptist Church.

Living at the Naomi House

The Naomi House finds its residents through a network of partners who help asylum seekers. Once people cross the border, they sometimes find aid from non-profits, churches and social organizations, many of which are partners with DaySpring Baptist Church.

These organizations contact the people on the Naomi House leadership team if they find a family that would fit the Naomi House and needs a place to stay. Dr. Tucker stated, "One of us every week will get an email or a phone call

from partners or from networks that we're on who will say, 'How many rooms do you have open this week? We have someone who needs a room.' There's just a lot of need out there."

The Naomi House falls under the category of "mid- to long-term housing." The church commits to residents for up to one year. During that time, the Naomi House leadership team and volunteers help adults get their paperwork and find a job, attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and start their new life in the United States. Residents participate in other activities as well, such as working in the garden onsite, practicing English with volunteers and learning the American financial system.

They are also encouraged to rest after their long journey. The house has room for two somewhat large families, but it can accommodate more if needed. The Naomi House pays for residents' rent, groceries, medical care and counseling care.

The Naomi House has affected many migrants through their services. "Those whom we have helped so far, they have left the Naomi House, [and] virtually all of them have left with their employment documents," says Dr. Tucker. "We've helped them get a job—a 40-hour-a-week job—some of them with insurance. We help them find an apartment."

These people go on to live new lives. The relationships the residents form through the Naomi House are also influential. Most of the residents stay in Waco and remain connected with DaySpring and the Naomi House in some way. "We try to help them launch well, but I think they've gotten to know Waco, they've gotten to know us. They still come to church with us some, and so it keeps a bond together."

Enduring the Struggles

There are challenges in this kind of project. First, it's difficult to bring complete strangers together to share a living space peacefully. Additionally, DaySpring Baptist Church is a small church; in order to provide their services, they seek funding from other sources. Dr. Tucker shared that he spends many evenings calling people trying to raise money for the house.

It is also challenging to combat the myth that asylum seekers are illegal immigrants. Dr. Tucker reminds people that asylum seekers are pursuing a legal process and that the ministry of the Naomi House complies with all the legal codes regarding how one can help asylum seekers. The assumption that all migrants are committing illegal acts is a difficult wall to break through.

Those who serve feel incredibly blessed, which makes the struggles worthwhile. Tucker tells a story about an Easter Monday celebration: "We asked what they did in Latin America and some of their countries, what were some of their favorite memories of Easter? [Many of them] said, "'Well, we always fried fish.'" So, they invited previous residents, other asylum seekers, and Hispanic community members to a fish fry. The kids played; people sang hymns in English and Spanish. It was a sweet moment for those in attendance. These joyful times remind the volunteers at the Naomi House why they continue to serve asylum seekers.

Joining the Mission

There are many ways that individuals can become involved in ministries like the Naomi House. Tucker suggests that interested people see if there is a hospitality house in one's area and find ways to support that ministry. He suggests consulting with an organization called Fellowship Southwest[5] for this kind of information. One can also talk to his or her congregation about the possibility of starting a hospitality house, or even hosting a family in a spare bedroom.

Please see "Naomi House" on page 13.

Right: The living room in the Naomi House, a hospitality house for asylum seekers in Waco, TX. Photo courtesy of DaySpring Baptist Church.

Eight Common Myths About Asylum Seekers

from Church World Service

Asylum seekers are ordinary people with lives, plans and dreams for their future. But war, violence and persecution have forced them to leave everything behind for a chance at safety for themselves and their children.

More than 6.9 million people around the world were waiting for a decision on their asylum claims at the end of last year. That's millions of people waiting in limbo for the opportunity to build safe, new lives for themselves and their families. As the United States prepares for a new administration, asylum and border policies—and the millions of individuals whom these decisions impact—are being discussed more widely than ever before. But how much of the way asylum seekers are portrayed in the news is true?

> ***But how much of the way asylum seekers are portrayed in the news is true?***

Below are eight common misconceptions about asylum seekers, and facts and figures about the truth behind the asylum process.

Myth 1: Asylum seekers are looking for easy ways to enter the United States without following proper immigration procedures.

Fact: Seeking asylum is a human right and every person in the world has the legal right to apply for asylum if they are fleeing conflict or persecution, as determined by the 1951 Refugee Convention. International human rights law dictates that asylum seekers must not be expelled or returned to situations where their lives or freedoms would be in danger.

Once asylum seekers arrive, they are screened to determine if they face a credible fear of persecution were they to return home. Asylum seekers then wait to have their cases heard before an immigration judge, who will determine if they will be granted protection.

The process can sometimes take years before asylum seekers have their cases reviewed, and many are held under harsh prison-like conditions in immigration detention while they wait. As the immigration backlog grows, the average wait time is 1,572 days, or 4.3 years, from the time the process reaches the court until it receives a hearing.

Asylum seekers in a temporary shelter. Photo by Sandor Csudai.

Myth: Asylum seekers can freely work and live in the United States.

Fact: While federal laws protect the right of asylum seekers to work in the United States, the process can be lengthy and complicated. Asylum seekers must wait at least 180 days after filing their asylum applications to receive a work permit.

When people seeking asylum arrive in the Unit-

ed States, they aim to support themselves and their families rather than depend on humanitarian aid. The current waiting period restricts asylum seekers' ability to provide for themselves and their families, increasing their risk of exploitation or other abusive situations. Providing work opportunities would benefit the US workforce, as asylum seekers help to fill critical labor market gaps and labor shortages.

Asylum seekers also generally receive limited government support in finding other temporary housing, forcing them to rely on nonprofits like CWS, who help to connect individuals with shelters or find long-term housing solutions.

Myth: Asylum seekers are a burden on the US economy.

Fact: When asylum seekers arrive in the United States, the services they receive are limited, and over time, the economic contributions asylum seekers make surpasses the government assistance they receive upon arrival.

In fact, a new US Department of Health and Human Services study recently found a nearly $124 billion positive fiscal impact of refugees and asylum seekers on the US economy over a 15-year period. When the United States supports asylum seekers and other newcomers to integrate into their communities, the benefits are immense. Asylum seekers continue to contribute to the US economy the longer they are living in the country, and on a per capita basis, the report shows that asylees have a comparable positive fiscal impact as the total US population.

Overall, the socioeconomic impacts of welcoming our neighbors in search of safety is positive.

Myth: It is easy to qualify for asylum protection.

Fact: In order to qualify for asylum protection in the United States, individuals must prove that they have a credible fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion if returned to their country.

The asylum application process is rigorous, and after a lengthy waiting period, many cases are not approved. Between June 2023-June 2024, of the 661,308 individuals represented in immigration court, only 314, 862 (or 47.6 percent) had their asylum cases granted.

Securing asylum protection in the United States is a complex and challenging process, with stringent requirements and significant hurdles. Less than half of asylum cases are approved, underscoring the difficulty that many individuals face in obtaining this vital protection.

Myth: Asylum seekers choose to migrate to high-income countries like the United States to benefit from services and take jobs.

Fact: Asylum seekers do not choose to migrate. War, gangs, pervasive harassment or discrimination, corruption and violence are just a few reasons why millions of people around the world are forced to leave their homes each year in search of safety for themselves or their children.

In 2020, the US Department of Justice found that, relative to undocumented immigrants, US-born citizens are more than twice as likely to be arrested for violent crimes, 2.5 times more likely to be arrested for drug crimes and over four times more likely to be arrested for property crimes.

Those who are forced to flee struggle to leave their homes behind, and the majority of those individuals are internally displaced. As of June 2024, more than 68.3 million people, or approximately 58 percent of the world's displaced population, live within the borders of their home country. In total, 75 percent of the world's displaced people seek protection in low-income countries, with the minority finding safety in countries like the United States.

Myth: After arriving in the United States, asylum seekers do not show up to their immigration court hearings.

Fact: Regardless of whether asylum seekers have legal representation, research has shown that the majority of individuals appear for all of their court hearings.

In 2019, a TRAC[1] analysis found that 98.7 percent of non-detained asylum seekers showed up for every court hearing, and a 2021 American Immigration Council report showed that, of the 2,797,437 immigration court removal proceedings between 2008 and 2018, an overwhelming 83 percent of immigrants attended their hearings. Those who did fail to appear in court rarely received notice or faced hardship in getting to court.

As research shows, asylum seekers want to attend their immigration court hearings so they have the opportunity to thrive in their new communities in the United States.

Myth: Asylum seekers are a threat to the safety of our communities.

Please see "Myths" on page 13.

A Migration Glossary

Compiled by Grace Sincleair

Throughout this issue and other *Hunger News & Hope* issues, you may notice a great deal of terminology relating to the topic of migration. This nomenclature can quickly become confusing. This glossary provides definitions of common migration terms to clarify similarities and differences between them.

• **Asylum seeker:** A person who is seeking national protection. In countries that have individualized procedures, asylum seekers enter the country before the country makes a decision about their claim. Refugees start out as asylum seekers.

• **Border management:** The administration of the authorized movement of goods and persons and the prevention of unauthorized movements of goods and people. Additionally, border management includes the detection of crimes such as smuggling and trafficking, as well as watching for people in need of assistance or protection.

• **Displacement:** When people are forced or obligated to flee their homes because of violence, human rights violations, war, natural disasters or human-made disasters. A person can be internally displaced (displaced within one's own country) or cross-border displaced (forced to flee to another country).

• **Economic migration:** Migration for the purpose of finding a better life for oneself and one's family, to avoid acute poverty.

• **Emigration:** From the perspective of the country of departure, leaving one's country of usual residence or nationality and moving to another country. The new country then effectively replaces the original country or usual residence.

• **Expulsion:** The formal act by a state that forces a non-national individual to leave the territory of that state. "Expulsion" is related to the terms "removal" and deportation." Expulsion is the order for a person to be removed, while removal and deportation refer to the implementation of the order.

• **Immigration:** From the perspective of the country of arrival, entering a new country from one's country of nationality or usual residence. This country then effectively replaces the country they left as their country of usual residence.

• **Irregular migration:** the movement of people that occurs outside the laws, international agreements, and regulations of a state. Used as a humanizing form of the term *illegal migration*.

• **Migrant:** Anyone who leaves their country of usual residence for another. This includes moving within the same country, short-term and long-term moves, and the variety of motivations for the move. *Migrant* is a general term; it serves as an umbrella term for a number of legally defined terms, but has no international definition itself.

Center for Global Education

• **Migrant worker:** A person who is engaged, will be engaged, or has been engaged in working for pay in a country that is not their country of usual residence.

• **Migration:** The movement of people from their usual place of residence to another location, either inside their home country or to another country.

• **Naturalization:** Any way one acquires a nationality that is not one's own by birth, through the completion of an application by this person or their legal agent and the granting of the nationality by a public authority.

• **Refugee:** 1) A person who has fled their country of usual resi-

dence to a new country for fear of persecution or danger and is unable or unwilling to seek the protection of their country of usual residence; 2) A person with no nationality who has fled their country of habitual residence to a new country for fear of persecution or danger and is unable or unwilling to return to their former country of residence.

• **Regular migration:** Movement of people that is aligned with the laws, international agreements and regulations of a state.

• **Removal:** The physical removal of a person following a removal, expulsion or deportation order by a state. This person is forced to leave the state and return to their country of origin, or a third country if they are unable to return to their country of origin.

• **Smuggling:** Obtaining the irregular entry of persons into a state of which those persons are neither nationals nor permanent residents, in exchange for direct or indirect financial or material benefits.

• **Trafficking:** Using force, threats or other forms of coercion to recruit, transfer, harbor or receive persons in order to exploit those persons for the benefit of others. This exploitation can, at the very least, take the form of slavery and slavery-like practices, sexual exploitation, prostitution and forced labor.

• **Usual residence:** The place within a country in which a person has a place to live and spends their daily time of rest.

–Grace Sincleair, a native of Salado, TX, and a Baylor University Professional Writing student, is the summer 2024 Seeds of Hope editorial intern. Sources: "Key migration terms," International Organization for Migration, July 5, 2019. "Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers," The Migration Collective, June 12, 2020.

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
–Deuteronomy 10:17-19

Miracle,

continued from page 5

I simplify it: "You are lied to when you're told you're not enough. How are you hearing the lie that you're not enough, that you haven't earned love enough yet, you need to do more?"

Then there's this imagining of Jesus covering over that lie and saying, "It can't touch you anymore. It's not going to hold you tonight." And then we ask, "How are you participating in beautiful things?" Not "What have you received?" or "What have you done?" but "How have you participated in love? How have you participated in beauty today? How have you participated in this creation work?" And then, "Who do you love?" Or "Who is God loving through you? How are you participating in God's love for someone else?" And then we close with the Lord's Prayer, and then back to the mantra that we started the day with.

This is me experimenting pastorally, figuring out how to guide people into receiving resilience. It's finding a way to open us up to receive. I want to receive it through mantra, I want to receive it through hearing the narrative and seeing myself in the narrative. I want to develop this pastoral theology of resilience in the next couple of years.

God's Lullaby

One night the church was full of people, and the families were wearing these GPS[1] shackles around their ankles. There are private companies that do this for the government. They're basically terror devices. They would beep, every—I don't know how often it was, half an hour, every hour, something like that. It was this bright beep just to remind the person it was there. I hadn't slept in two nights. There were something like 500 shackles, and they were constantly beeping.

I was sleeping in my office with the doors open, and you could hear everyone who was in this hallway and everyone who was down that way and everyone who was down in the fellowship hall. It was packed with people, and there was this incessant beeping and coughing. People were coughing because they were all sick. The heat wasn't working, so it was wicked cold. And I just lost my mind. I went up and sat on top of the steps outside my office and just started to cry. It was so overwhelming. I was thinking, "I can't do anything…."

Every time we tried to do something proactive, there would be more people coming or some little disaster or someone would be rushed to the hospital. We weren't really set up for shelter, but we couldn't do anything proactive to get them into better situations. It just felt like a disaster. It was 3:00 am and I was just sitting there, crying.

Just at that moment, a woman started to sing a lullaby. She was in the back corner of the fellowship hall, and I could hear her very clearly, because she was singing loudly. It was dark throughout the whole building. You hear this beeping and coughing, and then this woman singing a lullaby. And I thought, "That's how God sings over us. I want to participate in that lullaby. I want to hear that lullaby." When we're drowning in the beeps of the world, all the chaos and the powerlessness, in the midst of that God's saying, "I know it seems like this is too much for y'all, but I want to sing my baby to sleep."

–Sources: Interview with John Garland by Katie Cook; San Antonio Mennonite Church website (www.sanantoniomennonite.org); ACROSS, a collaborative documentary film series about immigration, hospitality and theology (across documentary.com); "San Antonio Mennonites Join Interfaith Immigrant Hospitality Networks," Anabaptist World *(anabaptist world.org).*

Endnote
1. Global Positioning System.

Left: Former guests of San Antonio Mennonite Church's hospitality created a food truck that sits in an attractive courtyard next to the church building. Photo courtesy of Christie reader/San Antonio Mennonite Church.

Myths,

continued from page 9

Fact: Asylum seekers undergo rigorous screening, including both biometric and biographic checks, which occur at multiple stages throughout the process, and are less likely than US-born citizens to be convicted for a crime.

In a recent Stanford University study, research showed that first-generation immigrants have not been more likely to be imprisoned than people born in the United States since 1880, regardless of their legal status. Researchers at the CATO Institute also found that undocumented immigrants were 37.1 percent less likely to be convicted of a crime in Texas than US-born citizens. In 2020, the US Department of Justice found that, relative to undocumented immigrants, US-born citizens are more than twice as likely to be arrested for violent crimes, 2.5 times more likely to be arrested for drug crimes and over four times more likely to be arrested for property crimes.

Regardless of an individual's immigration status or the types of crime surveyed, immigrants are up to 60 percent less likely to be incarcerated for crimes than people born in the United States.

Myth: The United States welcomes the greatest number of people seeking safety.

Fact: The majority of people—69 percent as of June 2024—in need of international protection live in countries neighboring their countries of origin. Collectively, Colombia, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Türkiye host 39 percent of individuals seeking safety.

The United States has a long history of welcoming our neighbors. As we consider the facts about those arriving in search of safe, new lives for themselves and their families, we have an opportunity to reestablish our legacy of welcome.

–Church World Service declares that it has one goal: building a world where there is enough for all. Since 1946, CWS has been working with 37 Christian denominations to help US and global communities devastated by crises such as hurricanes, earthquakes and wildfires. Its staff works in more than 70 countries to help settle the millions of people around the world displaced by war and climate disasters. They also provide sustainable sources of food and water to developing countries, sponsor afternoon programs for unhoused youth and stand up for women facing gender discrimination worldwide. CWS connects with local and indigenous agencies of all faiths, to respond immediately to communities suffering from disaster, and in developing countries to bring food security in those areas. In the US, faith communities come together in thousands of CROP Hunger Walks across the country to raise money for CWS work. For more information, go to cwsglobal.org. The list above was published in July 2024.

Endnote

1. Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse

Naomi House,

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Some churches may be interested in helping asylum seekers, but are not ready to start their own hospitality house. In these cases, Tucker will often suggest that the church be the Naomi House's "supply partner" and fund the Naomi House for a month or two. Other hospitality houses may offer similar ways to be involved.

It is also challenging to combat the myth that asylum seekers are illegal immigrants…. The assumption that all migrants are committing illegal acts is a difficult wall to break through.

Hebrews 13:2 states, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels without knowing it." The Naomi House welcomes the stranger and gives them aid without asking for anything in return, and in doing so, they bring light into the lives of migrants.

–Grace Sincleair, a native of Salado, TX, and a Baylor University Professional Writing student, is the summer 2024 Seeds of Hope editorial intern.

Endnotes

1. Caleb Mynatt, "Central Texas church opens Naomi House for asylum seekers," *fellowship!*, pp. 24-26, March 7, 2023.
2. From author's interview with Dr. Dennis Tucker. All information is from this interview unless otherwise stated.
3. Ruth 1:1-22.
4. Tiffani Harris, "In Central Texas, the Naomi House makes me proud to be a Baptist again," *Baptist News Global*, October 7, 2022.
5. www.fellowshipsouthwest.org.

What Happens Past the Border:

A Review of the Documentary Missing in Brooks County

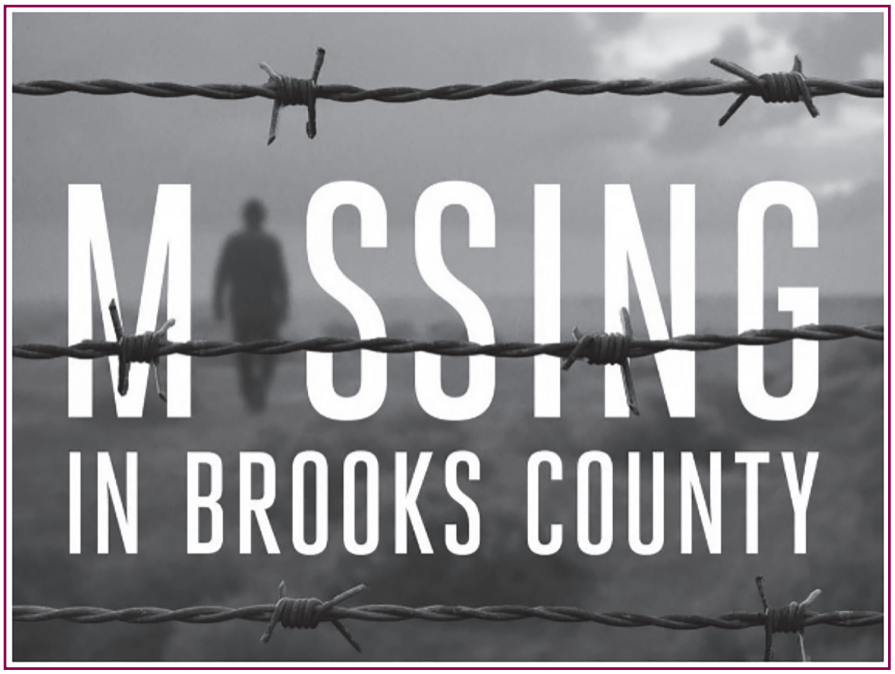
by Grace Sincleair

Missing in Brooks County, 81 minutes
Directed by Lisa Molomot and Jeff Bemis,
edited by Jacob Bricca, 2020
Available on various streaming channels
Winner of 2023 Peabody Award.

What happens to migrants after they cross the South Texas border from Mexico? The assumption is that crossing the border is the hardest and most dangerous part of their journey, but that idea is incorrect.

Missing in Brooks County is a documentary that shows the dangers of crossing through Brooks County, a county in Texas just north of the border, and how the systems in place make it hard for people to be reunited with their families. The film was directed, filmed and produced by Lisa Molomot and Jeff Bemis in 2020.

Missing in Brooks County shows the story of the danger of migration from several different angles. The first person we meet is Eduardo "Eddie" Canales, a staff member at the South Texas Human Rights Center, a nonprofit located in Falfurrias, TX—a town in Brooks County—that works to help people find missing loved ones and end the death that happens along the Texas-Mexico border.[1] In addition to working with the local government and others to help people find their loved ones, this organization partners with seven local ranches to leave clean water on the ranches for migrants.



During the film, viewers witness Canales assist two families: the family of Homero Roman and the family of Juan Maceda Salazar. The Roman family lives in Houston, TX. Two of Homero's siblings go to Falfurrias to try and find Homero. Homero has not been seen in a couple years. His family has tried to find him before, but to no avail.

Juan Maceda Salazar left much closer to the time that the story is filmed. His cousin comes to the South Texas Human Rights Center to try and find him. Juan was 18 years old when he went missing.

Meanwhile, a group from Texas State University, led by biological anthropologist Dr. Kate Spradley, is trying to identify the remains of unidentified persons. Dr. Spradley and her team dig up the graves of these people and try to give some sort of DNA identification to the remains. This is very difficult because records are incomplete and hard to find at times. Spradley is very passionate about helping migrants and their families, and she works alongside Canales and other people in the area to find as many unidentified graves as possible. She says that she thought this would be a one-year project, but she soon realized that the project will take many years to complete.

Viewers also meet some of the ranchers in Brooks County. Some of these ranchers partner with Canales and try to help the migrants survive. Others, such

as Dr. Mike Vickers, do not trust the migrants or Canales. Vickers sees the negative news about migrants being perpetrators of rape and bringing drugs into the country, and he does not want to allow those things to happen. He is part of a group known as the Texas Border Volunteers that watches for migrants walking through ranches at night and reports them to the Brooks County Sheriff's Office.

Why do so many people come through Brooks County when there is such danger? It is basically their only option. During the Clinton administration, the borders that were easier to cross were shut down. The plan was to funnel people into the most dangerous crossing to discourage people from crossing the border at all. Government officials knew there would be a high death toll, but they hoped that people would see that danger and choose not to cross.

Why do so many people come through Brooks County when there is such danger? It is basically their only option.

This did not happen. People continue to flow into the area. A "coyote" frequently gives them a ride to Brooks County, but then the migrant must get out of the car before the interior checkpoint, which is some miles from the border. After that, they have to walk through forty miles of private ranches. Many die because of exposure or dehydration.

According to the sheriff of Brooks County, only one in five of the migrants who go missing in Brooks County is ever found. It is estimated that over 2,000 migrants have died in Brooks County between 2008 and the time of the film.

Why do people bother to make that crossing? Some, like Juan Maceda Salazar and Homero Roman, are desperate to return to their families. Others, such as Miguel Angel, a migrant picked up by the sheriff's office, left because of hard situations at home. His business was taken over by the mafia in Mexico, and he could not get a job to support his wife and children after that. So he made the decision to come to the United States despite the dangers.

The film does an excellent job of sharing the differing opinions of those who deal directly with the issue. While it supports those who try and help migrants survive, it does not harshly judge those like Vickers who see the situation differently. Everyone involved makes the decisions that they believe are best, but these choices are often radically different. The film is also interesting because of the different kinds of shots they take. Most of the scenes are candid shots of the people involved. Some shots are direct interviews with the people involved. A couple of scenes include text messages between Homero Roman and his mother. This adds a level of creativity to the film and keeps viewers engaged.

Overall, *Missing in Brooks County* shows the complexity and reality of the border crisis. It continues to be a real and pressing issue for many people. Despite attempts to reunite, many families remain separated and some may never know what happened to their loved one. *Missing in Brooks County* stirs compassion in viewers and reminds them that all humans—whether legal citizens of the United States or not—are human.

–Grace Sincleair, a native of Salado, TX, and a Baylor University Professional Writing student, is the summer 2024 Seeds of Hope editorial intern.

Endnote

1. From the South Texas Human Rights Center Mission Statement.

Do Not Disturb

ONE: The responsibilities of faith and love at times disturb our easy peace. We ask forgiveness from the Lord that we have not allowed ourselves to be disturbed. Lord, have mercy.

MANY: Christ have mercy.

ONE: "Do not disturb," we say, and we close our eyes to the needs of our neighbor. Lord, have mercy.

MANY: Christ have mercy.

ONE: "Do not disturb," we say, and we tolerate injustice and discrimination. Lord, have mercy.

MANY: Christ have mercy.

ONE: Have mercy on us, Lord, and forgive our complacency.

MANY: Light in us the fire of your Spirit."

—from a worship bulletin at Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, TX

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Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

art by Jesse Manning

We become more human as we discover we are able to love people. And when I say "love people," I mean to see their value and their beauty, to love people who have been pushed aside, humiliated, seen as having no value. Then we see that they are gradually being changed. At the same time, sharing our lives in community with the weak and the poor, we come in touch with our own limits, pain, and brokenness. We realize that we, too, have our handicaps which are often around our need for power and the feeling that our value lies in being powerful—a power that frequently involves crushing other people. So we're confronted by two visions of society: a vision of a pyramid, where you have to have more and more power in order to get to the top, or a vision of a *body* where every person has a place."
–Jean Vanier

Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry people in God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group seeks out people of faith who feel called to care for poor and vulnerable people; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

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Seeds also produces *Sacred Seasons*, a series of worship materials for Advent, Lent and an annual Hunger Emphasis—with an attitude "toward justice, peace and food security for all of God's children." These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art and drama.