

New Roots Review

March 2020 Edition

Confused? Love.

by Fred Wilgenburg



**NEW ROOTS
MINISTRY**

What is true? What numbers are we to accept? Fox News says one thing, while CNN says nearly the opposite. I desire giving people the benefit-of-the-doubt; I choose to believe that most people, besides a few who are truly insidious and manipulative, do not desire to misstate “facts,” they just feel passionate about what they are hearing or are choosing to hear, and they jump on that band-wagon. This is true of most political issues, including policies on human migration, defined by Wikipedia as “the movement of people from one place to another with the intentions of settling permanently or temporarily at a new location.”

New Roots Ministry’s motto is “a Springboard for Immigrants & Their Churches,” so we work with immigrants of most types: 1) refugees, 2) diversity immigrant visa recipients, who are part of what is sometimes known as the DV/Green Card lottery, 3) asylum recipients, 4) DACA/Dreamers, 5) those who originally came illegally and then have gone through a penal system through which they became legalized, 6) those who have specially received a work- or student-visa, 7) and many who perhaps came 60+ years ago as they had people already in the US who could sponsor them, such as when my parents came from the Netherlands in the 1940s and 50s.

Is one immigrant’s situation more dire than another’s, therefore to be higher on the priority list for being able to come to the US? That depends on one’s perspective, but I hear most individuals making pretty good cases for themselves. Many refugees in Syria seem to be in unimaginably tough situations which must feel hopeless, but from what I hear, things are also very difficult for South Sudanese refugees in Africa. At the same time, I imagine a mother with her son at the Mexican border town of Tijuana, having walked across Mexico to seek asylum in the US, could paint a bleak picture of the danger they faced in El Salvador or Honduras as drug cartels sought their loyalty, or else.

Most of them have legitimate desires to leave where they are currently living. It’s then up to government officials to make immigration policies which strike the right balance between humanitarian concern, economic sense, and security. That must be a challenging job, especially as constituents chime in for action in the areas they are most passionate about. For example, a fine agency like the Christian Reformed Church’s Office of Social Justice (<http://justice.crcna.org/>) gives much weight to policies showing humanitarian concern. On the flip side, a vivid presentation by Roy Beck (type “YouTube Roy Beck gumballs” in your search engine) shows that his organization, NumbersUSA, gives extra weight to economic concerns, though he states that his position equally weighs toward humanitarian concern at a global level. *(I qualify my inclusion of his information: (a) His information does not clarify the situation of some of the immigrants he includes—refugees, defined by the UN as “someone who has been forced →*



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ing of immigration policies, as to humanitarian concern, is not necessarily a sign of not being loving. I agree, but let's re-read those verses above just to be sure we do prioritize love of others. Let's also read Leviticus 19:33-34: "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

In closing, I can have a tendency to read impersonal statistics and then align with a certain policy, forgetting that there is a face, a name, and a story behind each statistic. It's then helpful to remember the story about the starfish:

An old man, walking the beach at dawn, noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Catching up with the youth, he asked what he was doing. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun. "But the beach goes on for miles and miles and there are millions of starfish," countered the man. "How can your effort make any difference?" The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to this one," he said.

"Church Between Borders" is an event encouraging a fresh way to talk about immigration. New Roots Ministry will co-host this event with Dr. Jason Lief—professor at Northwestern College & rep of CRC Office of Social Justice. We will hear personal stories. It will be lively but non-political. We will grow in Biblical insight. We will enjoy ethnic treats!

Saturday, March 28 / 9:30—11:30AM / First Reformed Church, 4800 S. Tomar Rd., Sioux Falls

Continued...

to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence." (b) I realize his presentation is from ten years ago. (c) I realize I am choosing to trust his numbers.)

In sorting things out, let's remember that a Christian's main priority is to love others—"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13); "...Let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7-8).

Some might think that giving equal weight to economic and security concerns in the mak-

What is New Roots Ministry?

It's "a springboard for immigrants & their churches." This is done through workplace chaplaincy (both as Fred is chaplain for 17 hours/week at Smithfield Foods & as we train & place bi-lingual chaplains on commercial farms), through Timothy Leadership Training, through hosting special educational events, through empowering refugee/immigrant pastors, leaders, and their churches, through offering unique Service Opportunities—serve in, or visit, stores owned by refugees or immigrants, then hear their stories, and through helping people navigate the American system and strategically achieve their goals, like education.

