HOSPITALITY TO THE STRANGER: THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN THE RESETTLEMENT OF AFRICAN REFUGEES TO THE UNITED STATES

Jennifer Kilps

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role of constituent congregations of Church World Service (CWS) in the process of resettling refugees in the U.S. It is based upon case studies built around a series of interviews conducted with members of three congregations who sponsored African families for resettlement in Minnesota. Reflecting upon the experiences of those interviewed, the discourse considers the efficacy of refugee resettlement as a means for Christian congregations to extend hospitality to strangers.

The thesis explores the broader theme of Christian hospitality as a particular activity of the church. Hospitality is approached using the scriptural theme of welcoming the stranger as it is taken up by contemporary theologians. Christine Pohl, author of *Making Room*, is regarded as a leading authority on hospitality. Much of her research is based on the work of Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche communities. This thesis suggests that Pohl's treatment lacks both a usable definition of hospitality and a sufficient theological framework in which to locate it. In redressing these omissions, Pohl's work is examined in light of Vanier in order to establish an understanding of what comprises a particularly Christian approach to hospitality.

Finally, the thesis proposes that as hospitality is understood as an act instituted by the person of Christ and imbued by the Holy Spirit, it is to be considered an act constitutive of the church itself. Therefore it is an act necessary to the life of the church as the Body of Christ. While contemporary research engages with hospitality as such an act, little work has been undertaken how it can be applied at the congregational level. CWS's model of refugee sponsorship provides congregations with the tangible means by which they may offer hospitality to strangers.

DECLARATIONS

(i) I, Jennifer Kilps, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 99,879 words in length, has been written by me, that it is a record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date
Signature of Candidate

(ii) I was admitted as a research student in September 2002 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D in April 2003; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between September 2002 and December 2007.

Date
Signature of Candidate

(iii) I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions for the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date
Signature of Supervisor

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Date
Signature of Candidate

For my father.

My greatest teacher, my sounding board
and my most fervent supporter.

And for all who remain displaced and in search of a home.

Peace, Salam, Shalom, Amani, Nabáda, Hasîtî, Paqe, Kev tiaj tus, Mir

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AOR	Affidavit of relationship
CCIA	Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
CICARWS	Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service
CWS	Church World Service
CWS/IRP	Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	Department of Justice
DRICA	Department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid
DOS	Department of State
EMM	Episcopal Migration Ministries
ECDC	Ethiopian Community Development Council
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church of American
FY	Fiscal year
HIAS	Hebrew Immigration Aid Society
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IDP	Internally displaced person
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JFCS	Jewish Family and Children's Services of Minneapolis
JVA	Joint voluntary agency
JVS	Jewish Vocational Services
LIRS	Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services
MCC	Minnesota Council of Churches
MFIP	Minnesota Family Investment Program
NCC	National Council of Churches in Christ in the U.S.A.
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NIF	National Islamic Front
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OPE	Overseas Processing Entity
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
PA	Principle applicant
PC-USA	Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A.
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
R&P	Reception and Placement Program
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SOAR	Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement
SLA	Sudanese Liberation Army
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TNG	Transitional National Government

UCC	United Church of Christ
UIC	Union of Islamic Courts
UMC	United Methodist Church
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
USCIS	Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services
USCRI	U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (formerly USCR)
USSR	Union of Soviet Social Republics
USRP	United States Refugee Program
VOLAG	National Voluntary Resettlement Agency
WCC	World Council of Churches
WR	World Relief Corporation

CHAPTER 1

WELCOMING THE STRANGER

INTRODUCTION

What does hospitality mean for Christian ecclesiology today? Theologians in the west and particularly in the United States have expressed a renewed interest in exploring hospitality with regard to its significance as an activity of the church.[1] Within mainstream Protestant circles, this project has been taken up with an emphasis on situating the act of hospitality specifically as a *practice* of the church.

While recent years have witnessed the publication of such in-depth work on the topic of hospitality as Luke Bretherton's *Hospitality as Holiness,* Thomas Ogletree's *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* and John Koenig's *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission,* the focus of their work remains in the realms of social theory and Biblical scholarship rather than being rooted in the experiences of persons who comprise the church itself.[2] As this thesis is ultimately concerned with exploring the activities of the church with specific reference to the experiences of persons, I will utilize as my primary dialogue partners two theologians whose work reflects such an approach, Christine Pohl and, later to be introduced, Jean Vanier.

Christine Pohl has emerged as one of the leading contemporary authorities on Christian hospitality. Her work, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian*

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[1] As what constitutes the *west* is sufficiently vague, I have chosen not to capitalize the word.
[2] Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006); Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

Tradition, takes up the notion that Christian hospitality is best understood in terms of 'practice' and has proven influential in shaping other treatments on the subject.[3] In *Making Room*, Pohl offers a brief history of hospitality from within what could broadly be termed the Christian tradition.[4] In order to engage with hospitality in a contemporary context, Pohl conducts a series of interviews with individuals working or serving at Christian organizations and institutions that she suggests *practice Christian hospitality*. Although the method used in the interview process and the substance of the interviews themselves are not included in the text, Pohl compares the experiences of these subjects with material drawn from history, Scripture and theological reflection in order to establish a groundwork for locating hospitality in the realm of a traditional Christian practice.

Complementing Pohl's text, *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, edited by Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass, considers primarily the notion of practice and how it may or may not inform Christian belief systems. Central to each of the thirteen essays comprising the volume is an appreciation for considering human experience as a valid component to the formation of theological understanding. Though not primarily a treatise on Christian hospitality, six of these essays engage overtly with the subject, with Pohl as a contributing author.[5] These authors take up Pohl's designation of hospitality as a practice as authoritative and utilize the topic as established for an extensive discourse on practice. When considered together for the purpose of exploring hospitality, these two texts reveal a

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[3] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999).
[4] More specifically, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity in the west.
[5] See the following essays in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life.* eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002); Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass, "A Theological understanding of Christian Practices,"13-32; Christine D. Pohl, "A Community's Practice of Hospitality: The Interdependence of Practices and Communities," 121-136; Gilbert I. Bond, "Liturgy, Ministry and the Stranger: The Practice of Encountering the Other in Two Christian Communities," 137-156; Reinhard Hütter, "Hospitality and Truth: The Disclosure of

circularity of argument that proves problematic. Firstly, in order to determine what hospitality actually is, Pohl begins by designating it as a practice of the church without defining what practice is or how hospitality meets the criterion of practice. Following this, the authors engaging with the topic of hospitality in *Practicing Theology* take up this designation in order to expound upon the notion of practice. Nowhere in these two texts is the notion that hospitality should first and foremost be considered a *practice* of the church challenged.

In his article "Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?," Nicolas Healy identifies what he considers a renewed movement in contemporary ecclesiology to explore the church as an arena of concrete activities. He titles this movement the *New Ecclesiology* and associates with it several prominent North American theologians such as George Lindbeck, Robert Jenson, Stanley Hauwerwas, and Bruce Marshall, along with the contributing authors of *Practicing Theology*.[6] While Healy clearly asserts that this classification does not suggest a shared theological agenda, he does make the claim that these authors share certain tendencies, some of which he considers problematic.

Healy is clear that he supports the intentions of the *New Ecclesiology* to reflect critically on the concrete activities of the church. He suggests that this indicates a turn that moves beyond what he calls the "highly systematic and ideal ecclesiologies of the twentieth century".[7] He is particularly critical of what he considers to be idealistic ecclesial modelling of the past reflected through such work as Avery Dulles' *Models of the Church*. Healy values a return to the comparatively unsystematic

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Practices in Worship and Doctrine," 206-227; Kathryn Tanner, "Theological Reflection and Christian Practices," 228-244; Miroslav Wolf, "Theology for a Way of Life," 245-263.

[6] Nicholas M. Healy, "Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?" in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (vol. 5 no. 3 Nov. 2003), 287-308. Because Healy does not capitalize the word 'the' as part of his title referring to the *New Ecclesiology*, I do not capitalize it either.

[7] Ibid., 287.

approaches of premodern ecclesiology that engage with the church's concrete activities, an arena he suggests has "been too long neglected".[8]

While Healy approves of the movement to examine the concrete activities of the church, his primary critique of the *New Ecclesiology* resides in a perceived failure to adequately and thoroughly address important philosophical and theological matters integral to critical reflection. He suggests that it is "too easy to read the new ecclesiology as moving in a troubling direction and, as it may be – or not in some cases, perhaps – too easy to misunderstand it".[9]

Before beginning the thrust of his own argument regarding a Christian understanding of practice, Healy references Volf and Bass' *Practicing Theology* as exemplifying the irregularities and inconsistencies of the *New Ecclesiology's* treatment of what could be considered practice. He highlights the inability of the thirteen theologians included in *Practicing Theology* to agree on the definition of practice itself, a point readily offered by Bass herself in the first chapter.[10] Healy emphasizes the authors' inconsistency in categorizing different types of Christian practices as *necessary* or *unnecessary to* and *constitutive* or *not constitutive of* the church and highlights a general disagreement regarding whether sacraments should be treated together with or separately from practices.[11]

I would suggest that it is the tendency to *categorize* in theology that presents profound problems for ecclesiology in particular. Perhaps this would be more accurately stated as a tendency not to question the *presuppositions* extant in pre-formed categories that theologians continue to utilize. Beginning an exposition on Christian hospitality with the premise that it should first be considered a practice of

[8] Ibid., 288.
[9] Ibid., 288-9.

the church risks severely limiting not only the parameters of what is able to be discussed but shapes the discussion itself. This exacerbates the possibility for a discussion of hospitality to be misplaced, or mis-located, within a theological framework and, more disturbingly, for it to be treated as an optional extra for the church.

Healy further contends that the categorization of hospitality as a practice is in itself problematic. He highlights the complexity of hospitable actions and suggests that "the flexibility and imaginative effort needed to act hospitably with success, whether as an individual or a family or a congregation, make it difficult to see the point of calling such actions 'practices'".[12] Whereupon, considering the extraordinary range and diversity of actions possible within hospitality, Healy challenges, "it is not at all clear that there *is* such a practice".[13]

The assumption, or presupposition, made by contemporary theologians that hospitality should be categorized first as a practice is risky. When approaching theological discourse, one must be clear regarding presuppositions that can shape any discussion. In this instance, hospitality as an ecclesial activity hazards being subsumed by questions regarding practice and so resigned to the very arena of theory from which the *New Ecclesiology* is attempting to escape. That this presupposition has been taken up unchallenged evokes Healy's concern that it is too easy to read this treatment of hospitality as moving in a troubling direction.

This is not to say that hospitality cannot or should not be regarded as a practice at all. Hospitality examined within a framework of practice will offer particular insights relevant to theology. But any critical examination of hospitality as a concrete activity

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[10] Ibid., 289. See also Dorothy Bass, "Introduction," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life.* eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 5-6; Bass and Dykstra, 20.
[11] Healy, 290.

of the church must primarily offer insight into the subject of its concern, namely the church itself. And while categorization must be challenged rigorously, it is in itself a necessity of discourse. Therefore it must be acknowledged that hospitality is in itself a category comprised of a complex and varying set of actions.

Therefore, I would suggest a larger framework in which to locate hospitality, a framework not shaped simply by discourse on practice. I propose to begin a theological exploration of hospitality from within the framework of ecclesiology and what is constitutive of the church. While this may not appear at first as a significant shift from examining practices *of* the church, I will contend that *hospitality should be treated primarily as an act, instituted by Christ*.

When situated within an understanding of the church as both a mode of being, continuing through time and existent here and now, and in terms of agency, the church should not be understood as static. It is established through the relationships that we participate in now through the Holy Spirit with one another and with the person of Christ as he can be known through the acts that he himself instituted. In this manner, the church is constituted as the Body of Christ. Hospitality as instituted by the person of Christ becomes the space in which the church lives. Therefore, rather than being relegated as a optional practice *of* the church, I maintain that hospitality is constitutive of the church itself.

I propose to explore the theological significance of hospitality by considering contemporary accounts of the subject, specifically focusing on Pohl's *Making Room*. Using her work and others, I will build up an account detailing the components necessary to the act of hospitality. As I begin to examine a specifically Christian understanding of hospitality, I contend that Pohl and her contemporaries run the risk

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[12] Ibid., 292.
[13] Ibid., 291. Emphasis his.

of misplacing or mis-locating hospitality to the end that it loses its theological import. I will further suggest that by returning to the work of Jean Vanier, the source and inspiration for much contemporary work on the subject, hospitality can be appropriately located within a Christian theological framework. The focus of my research is ultimately concerned with the significance of hospitality for ordinary, everyday churches. Since Vanier and Pohl approach hospitality from the perspective of those living in Christian community, I will suggest that work in the congregational setting is necessary for hospitality to be properly understood as indispensable to the life and identity of the church.

HOSPITALITY THE ACT

What does the word 'hospitality' mean today in the west and particularly in the United States? Many people would associate the word with the hospitality industry: hotels, restaurants and holiday trips to places other than one's home. Certainly in the United States, this treatment of hospitality is understood as a commodity or in terms of a transaction; I pay to stay in this hotel that I expect will provide me with hospitable service. I will feel welcome; my holiday needs will be met; I will eat food that others prepare for me and sleep in a comfortable bed. In this respect, the hospitality industry is geared toward creating a sense of home away from home but at a price. And the greater the price, the greater the expectation that this home away from home will be far superior to what one knows in everyday life; the food will be better, the beds more comfortable, the company more exciting. At a price, I am able to escape the realities of every day life.

This understanding of hospitality as a commodity is inexorably linked to the notion of an individual reward granted in exchange for payment. It would be a rare

instance for a homeless woman with no available funds to walk into a hotel and expect to be greeted with welcome and offered a bed. Even if the woman's only option for sleep that night was a park bench in freezing temperatures, she most likely would be turned away. The acts of offering and receiving hospitality in this case are not an option, for she cannot pay.

Hospitality is also associated with the notion of entertaining. There is an entire industry built around entertainment that functions similarly to the hospitality industry. However, entertaining can also be regarded as a much more personal affair. The *Oxford English Dictionary* includes in its definition of *entertain,* when considered as a noun, the reception of a guest or the treatment of a person as a guest particularly as relating to a meal; and as a verb, to receive as a guest or to show hospitality to.[14] Entertaining in this light is customarily associated with hosting friends or acquaintances in one's home for a combination of food and beverages.[15] While more personal than the hospitality or entertainment industries, entertaining remains in the private sphere.

Hospitality in the guise of entertaining involves particular expectations between guests and hosts. It involves an invitation, a welcome, a dynamic interchange (over drinks or a meal) and a leave-taking. For instance, it is not commonly understood that an individual could arrive at the host's home and expect welcome of food without an invitation. Entertaining is contingent upon invitation. It would also be highly unlikely that a host would have absolutely no connection with his invited guest; some form of relationship is essential to warrant an invitation. Entertaining does not typically involve complete strangers. It is also assumed that at the end of a prescribed period of time guests are expected to leave the host's home. Though this may appear

[14] Oxford English Dictionary, 2d ed., s.v. "entertain."

obvious, it is culturally situated and warrants use of the phrase *overstaying one's welcome*. These expectations are commonly held and if broken result in designations of being a *bad* host or guest.

These uses of the word hospitality assume several presuppositions which shape its meaning. In this broad context, hospitality can be seen as a commodity and implies a reward as a result of monetary exchange. It is something that is paid for at a cost. With this price, expectations are established and fulfilled; one can expect to be served - his bed made, her food cooked - and one can expect to be welcomed. Hospitality is an individual and private exchange. Whether it is paid for or provided by friends, it is not open to everyone. And finally, hospitality is associated with home. Again, whether one is invited into a friend's home or the experience of a *better* home is provided by others at a cost, hospitality is associated with the home.

Strikingly, these approaches to hospitality bear remarkable similarity to a contemporary Christian understanding of hospitality in the west. Themes of welcome, the dynamic between guests and hosts, entertaining and home are prevalent among recent work on the topic. These themes are certainly not new to theology; they are found within Scripture itself and throughout the theological reflection of the historical church.[16] Current work on the subject reflects a general continuity of utilizing the Scriptural theme of *welcoming the stranger* to inform what constitutes the hospitable act.[17]

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[15] Michael Kinnamon, "Welcoming the Stranger." *Lexington Theological Quarterly* (vol. 34 no. 3 Fall 1999), 160. Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room,* 4.

[16] For an anthology of writings concerning hospitality in the early Christian world, see: Amy G. Ogden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

[17] See the following volumes: Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness;* André Jacques, *The Stranger Within Your Gates: Uprooted People in the World Today* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985); Patrick R. Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 59ff.; John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*; Amy G. Ogden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001); Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger*; Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2003); Pohl, *Making Room.* See also the following essays: Michael Kinnamon, "Welcoming the

Welcoming the Stranger

Welcoming the stranger is a theme prevalent throughout Scripture.[18] It is first established via Abraham, who welcomes three angels under the oak trees at Marme (Gen. 18.1–15).[19] This act provides the occasion for YHWH's heralding the forthcoming birth of Isaac, Abraham's son by his wife Sarah.[20] In this passage, Abraham offers his hospitality to three strangers. Upon seeing them, he runs to these strangers, prostrates himself, offers to wash their feet, and provides them with food and water for their journey. After these services are performed, the strangers announce the fulfilment of the Lord's promise to grant Abraham a son by Sarah. Abraham performs his actions of hospitality with no expectations of a return but is blessed with a message concerning YHWH's fulfilling of the covenant established between them.

The exhortation to welcome strangers is found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and is located in all three bodies of Israel's legislative materials, the Book of the Covenant, the Holiness Code and Deuteronomy. It is a formative component of Israel's covenant with YHWH and lies at the root of Hebraic law. The status of Israel as a nation in exile establishes the particular stance held in Judaism toward the stranger or the sojourner.

Stranger."; Kosuke Koyama, "Extend Hospitality to Strangers: A Missiology of Theologia Crucis," *International Review of Mission* (vol. 82 no. 327 1993), 283-295; Jef Van Gerwen, "Refugee, Migrant, Stranger," *Ethical Perspectives* (vol. 2 no. 1 1995), 3-10.

[18] Focusing on the theme of welcoming the stranger by no means exhausts the possible Scriptural resources that could be engaged with when approaching the topic of hospitality. It merely provides a commonly used starting point within contemporary research on the subject with which to begin this discussion.

[19] For a treatment of this passage with reference to rabbinic and Christian writers of the first several centuries see: Andrew E. Arterbury, "Abraham's Hospitality among Jewish and early Christian Writers: A Tradition History of Gen 18:1-16 and Its Relevance for the Study of the New Testament," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* (vol. 30 no. 3 Fall 2003), 359-376; For further discussion of hospitality as foundational to ancient Abrahamic and Ibrahimic traditions, see: Schulman, Miriam and Amal Barkouki-Winter, "The Extra Mile: The Ancient Virtue of Hospitality Imposes Duties on Host and Guest," *Issues in Ethics*, Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (vol. 11, no. 1 Winter 2000), accessed 13 February 2006. <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/publications/iie/v11n1/hospitality.html>.

Rabbinic scholar Jonathan Magonet refers to the importance of the stranger, or *ger*, in Hebrew Scripture.[21] He contends that the primacy of the mandate to "remember that you were *strangers* in Egypt" provided a measure by which Israel was to gauge the quality and nature of its emerging nationhood according to the manner which they treated the stranger.[22] As a people who experienced the political reality of exile, Israel also experienced exile as an existential reality that informed her systems of belief and self-understanding.[23]

In order to demonstrate how the Israelite is to treat the stranger, Magonet draws a parallel between the two directives expressed in Leviticus chapter 19: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18) and "When a stranger dwells with you in your land you shall not oppress him. Like a homeborn among you shall be the stranger who dwells with you, *and you shall love him as yourself,* for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19.33-34).[24] He emphasizes the similarity between the structuring and placement of the two statements, suggesting that there is to be no distinction between stranger and neighbour, or between neighbour and the Israelites. Therefore they must love strangers as themselves, as they love whom they love.

The Old Testament scholar Frank Crüsemann underscores this reading of the stranger in terms of exile, particularly referring to Israel's exodus from Egypt. "Because Israel has experienced this Exodus, or rather, because its identity as the people of this God is grounded in this Exodus and permanently consists in it, it can

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[20] Arterbury, 360.
[21] For explicit exegetical work on the Hebrew word *ger* with specific reference to hospitality, see Jonathan Magonet, "Guests and Hosts," *Heythrop Journal* (vol. 36 no. 4, 1995), 415-419; Ahn Byung Mu, "A Biblical View of the Refugee Problem," *Reformed World* (vol. 41 no. 7/8 1990), 217ff.
[22] (cf. Exodus 22.20, 23.9; Leviticus 19.34; Deuteronomy 10.19) Magonet, 415-6, 421. Emphasis on stranger is his.
[23] Magonet, 410. See also Frank Crüsemann, "'You Know the Heart of a Stranger' (Exodus 23.9). A Recollection of the Torah in the Face of New Nationalism and Xenophobia," in *Concilium 1993: Migrants and Refugees*, eds. Dietmar Meith and Lisa Sowle Cahill (London: SCM Press, 1993), 101-4.
[24] (cf. Deuteronomy 10.19). Emphasis his.

act toward people who are now in a comparable situation only as God has acted towards it".[25] Both Crüsemann and Magonet attempt to understand welcoming the stranger in terms of a reciprocality that manifests simultaneously, the position of one who has experienced exile within the terms of YHWH's abiding covenant and one who is in the position to welcome others. Welcoming the stranger becomes, in these terms, the realization of YHWH's love for Israel that, in turn, is extended to others. It becomes, in effect, a requirement of YHWH's covenant with Israel.

Welcoming the stranger is firmly established in the New Testament as well but with a crucial difference in orientation from that of the Hebrew Scriptures. For Israel, welcoming the stranger was considered a law prescribed to ensure the continuity of the covenant between YHWH and his chosen people. Whereas in the New Testament, welcoming the stranger is re-oriented solely towards the presence of Christ.

It is Christ himself who re-orients the act of hospitality for Christianity. In Matthew 25.31-46, Jesus instructs his disciples on what it means to welcome the stranger.[26] He conveys this in the form of a parable regarding the Day of Judgement. It is significant to note that this parable represents the culmination of a two chapter discourse concerning the forthcoming eschatological age which will conclude, ultimately, with judgement.[27] It is also the final account in Matthew preceding the passion narrative.

> Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something

[25] Crüsemann, 105.
[26] Pohl suggests that this passage from the book of Matthew represents "the most important passage for the entire tradition on Christian hospitality." See Pohl, 22. I would contend with this statement for two reasons. First is her use of the phrase 'entire tradition' which I would suggest she fails to thoroughly define. On the second point, while I agree with her emphasis on the importance of this passage, I would contest that it loses significance when read in isolation from the entirety of Scripture.
[27] Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000), 466, 484. Carter defines the eschatological age as the time between Christ's resurrection and his coming again.

> to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.
>
> Matthew 25.34-40[28]

In this passage Jesus positions himself, Christ the King, as the stranger. It is Christ himself who is in need of welcome, who is thirsty, hungry, naked, sick and imprisoned. Jesus explains that when we perform these acts for others in need, we perform these acts for him. When we welcome the stranger, we are welcoming Christ.

Jesus institutes Christian hospitality though his actions and teaching. He welcomes into his presence persons who are sick or are considered outcasts or unclean and heals them. He eats and drinks with others without discrimination. During the midst of his own grief over the death of John the Baptist, Jesus welcomes and feeds a crowd of 5,000 (Mark 6.30-44; Matt. 14.13-22; Luke 9.11-17; John 6.5-13) and later feeds a crowd of 4,000 (Matt. 15.32-39; Mark 8:1-10).[29] Significantly, Jesus also receives welcome into the homes of others, particularly Mary and Martha (Luke 10.38-42). Jesus participates in the roles of both guest and host, elucidating the reciprocal dynamic of hospitality. By accepting the invitation of Mary and Martha and acting as guest, Jesus is able to impart to these women the gifts of his teaching and his presence.

Jesus' teachings are also replete with welcome. The parable of the Good Samaritan exemplifies the hospitable actions of one who would have been considered a stranger himself (Luke 10.25-37). In this parable, it is the Samaritan man who

[28] Scripture taken from the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized Edition) unless otherwise stated.

reaches out to bind another stranger's wounds; he feeds and houses this person in need and provides for his care. Likewise, in the parable of the prodigal son, the welcoming action of the father upon his son's return is significant. Before the son has even had the opportunity to repent to his father, the father has already run to him with open arms and embraced him (Luke 15.11-32). Both the father and the Samaritan man welcome others into their lives specifically through their actions. In neither case do these men address the recipients of their welcome verbally, welcoming is only accomplished via their actions.

In Luke's account, the first appearance of Christ after his resurrection occurs as two disciples are travelling along the road to Emmaus (Luke 24.13-34). The disciples are discussing Jesus' death when they encounter a stranger who joins them on their walk. It was only upon offering hospitality to this stranger, and Christ's breaking of the bread with them, that the stranger's identity was revealed. The stranger was Christ himself. As the two disciples offer Christ, in the guise of a stranger, hospitality, so then does Christ offer them himself through the breaking of the bread.

Hebrews 13:2 provides one of the most explicit statements regarding welcoming the stranger in the Epistles: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares". This passage is generally understood to be a harkening back to Abraham's hospitality to the angels at Marme. Biblical scholar, Andrew Arterbury, maintains that this injunction would not have been a new teaching to the listeners of this text. "It is reasonable to assume that the recipients would not have considered hospitality to strangers to be an optional gesture… His [Abraham's] actions were not simply actions that Jews should admire,

[29] The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle attributed to Jesus that occurs in all four gospels. See Koenig, 28.

but Abraham's life provided a law by which they were to live".[30] By reminding its readers of a directive they already know, the passage reorients this command to be understood in the light and person of Christ.

Contemporary Welcome

While I contend that the theologians associated with Healy's *New Ecclesiology* have misplaced hospitality with regard to its appropriate theological framework, I would commend their accounting of hospitality as a concrete activity of the church. Along with focusing upon the theme of welcoming the stranger in Scripture, these theologians have sought to approach the meaning of hospitality through examining accounts of the experience of hospitality. Not only do they examine treatments of hospitality provided historically, via the precepts of the church and interpretations of individual theologians, but they place considerable emphasis on contemporary accounts of experiences of hospitality as well. According to Healy, this marks a retrieval of a premodern and non-systematic approach to theology, one he considers necessary to ecclesiology.[31]

When considering contemporary treatments of hospitality several theologians have emerged who notably contend with the subject. These theologians frequently reference each other's work and in turn are building upon each other's writing to further an understanding of hospitality. It is important to recognize the potential problems of this dynamic since a theological mis-step by one author could generate a series of further problems if it is utilized without critical questioning. I would suggest

[30] Arterbury, 376.
[31] Healy, 288. For further discussion regarding the differences between modern and pre-modern ecclesiologies, see also Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 25-26, 54.

that recent endeavours on the subject of hospitality have been influenced by two significant sources over the past forty years.

Written within the past five years, Pohl's *Making Room* has recently become a standard text for approaching hospitality. It has been utilized in both popular and academic circles.[32] Notably, hospitality also serves as an overarching theme to *Practicing Theology* wherein Pohl is repeatedly referenced as authoritative on the subject.[33] *Practicing Theology* could prove to be substantially influential to the study of hospitality as several of its contributing authors are highly regarded in academic theology.[34] Pohl, herself, contributes an essay to the volume concerning how hospitality as a practice shapes communities.[35]

In *Making Room*, Pohl gives precedence to hospitality as an activity that can be accounted for by persons. She gathers descriptions of the subtle dynamics involved in hospitality through interviews with individuals committed to the activity.[36] For this study she chooses to work with eight established Christian communities located in the United States that are committed to some form of hospitable activity.[37] It is significant to note that Pohl conducts her research on hospitality from within the

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[32] *Making Room* is referenced in the following: Bretherton, 131, 139, 141; Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007). 213; Ogden, 15, 17; Pohl herself contributes the forward to: Michelle Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality: Expecting Surprises* (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1989).

[33] Dykstra and Bass, 20, 25, 28; Nancy E. Bedford, "Little Moves Against Destructiveness," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life.* eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 158, 179; Serene Jones, "Graced Practices: Excellence and Freedom in Christian Life," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life.* eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 76; Hütter, 218. Reinhard Hütter makes special reference to *Making Room* in a footnote, "For more ways in which the practice of hospitality is distorted see the fine account in (*Making Room*). I am indebted to Pohl's account of hospitality for understanding the inherent link shown by the Christian faith between the practices of hospitality and honouring the truth."

[34] This must again be qualified as mainly Protestant theology produced in an academic context in the west.

[35] Pohl, "A Community's Practice of Hospitality,"121-136.

[36] Pohl, *Making Room*, 9-10.

[37] Pohl states that she had originally wished to work with both congregations and intentional Christian communities but chose to focus on the latter since those communities have had longer term and more substantial experiences with hospitality. Many of these communities are part of international organizations with community houses across the globe. Pohl also chose to work across denominations including Protestant, Roman Catholic and evangelical organizations. Each of the organizations she included in this study is comprised of more than one household and produces regular publications. See Pohl, 9-10, 188.

context of communal and household settings, a fact that I will later suggest shapes her understanding of hospitality.

One of the communities Pohl chooses to interview is L'Arche. L'Arche is a collective of Christian communities devoted to recognizing and nurturing the dignity of the disabled through the every day experiences of communal living. L'Arche was founded in 1964 by Jean Vanier, a Roman Catholic communitarian and former professor of moral philosophy. Vanier established the first L'Arche community through the simple act of inviting two men with mental disabilities to live with him in his home in France. L'Arche has now grown to include over one hundred communities throughout the world.[38] Although his written work has been only marginally incorporated into arenas of systematic theology, he is widely celebrated in practical and pastoral circles.[39]

Pohl's focus on L'Arche allows us to consider a second and more primary source of influence regarding hospitality, the writings of Jean Vanier himself and those of Henri Nouwen. Henri Nouwen was a Roman Catholic priest and a former professor at Harvard School of Divinity. Nouwen passed away in 1996 and is particularly remembered for advocating on behalf of the excluded and forgotten in society.[40] Having moved to a L'Arche community in the mid-1980s, Nouwen wrote and spoke frequently about the personal relationships he formed through living with and serving

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[38] Jean Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992), 6.

[39] L'Arche communities across the globe are thriving, and Vanier's work has been utilized in various intentional Christian communities around the world including Catholic Worker Houses, Mennonite and Jesuit Volunteer Services, Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Iona Community, Sojourners Community, Koinonia Community, and Corrymeela, to name but a few. For further discussion of intentional Christian community according to Vanier see: Jean Vanier, *The Broken Body: Journey to Wholeness* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1988); Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community;* Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1989); Jean Vanier, *The Heart of L'Arche* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995).

[40] Nouwen has authored over thirty books that engage with various aspects of Christianity. For further reading regarding Nouwen's interest in hospitality, see: Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love* (London: Darton, London and Todd Ltd., 1997); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Image Books, 1975); Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

mentally and physically disabled people.[41] Vanier served as a mentor to Nouwen, a relationship that helped to shape Nouwen's life and work.

Vanier and Nouwen have significantly and specifically impacted contemporary efforts regarding an understanding of Christian hospitality. Especially when surveyed together, it is possible to discern a shared vision of hospitality that has developed over the past several decades. While Nouwen's written work is more extensive and covers a broader range than Vanier's, they both focus on hospitality within the context of the day-to-day challenges of living in community. For both men, hospitality and welcoming are essential components of community, which, in turn, is an essential component of Christianity. Their conceptions of hospitality are demonstrated and illustrated via personal stories and accounts of their own and others' experiences.

Vanier and Nouwen's contributions to contemporary renderings of hospitality are undeniable. For example, Pohl draws particularly on the writings of Vanier to inform her research while communitarian Parker Palmer and New Testament exegete John Koenig employ Nouwen's ideas.[42] Adding another layer of complexity, Pohl also relies on Palmer and Koenig in her writing.[43] When one then considers Pohl's authority on hospitality, as established by the authors of *Practicing Theology* and their utilization of her work, a picture begins to emerge illuminating the highly complex and interdependent nature of current scholarship on the subject.[44]

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[41] Nouwen is also remembered for his work with and for Central and South American people who have spent decades struggling for justice.

[42] Pohl particularly utilizes various works of both Vanier and Nouwen but engages particularly with Vanier's chapter on "Welcome" to support her work. See: Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community*, 265-283.

[43] Pohl also references Ogletree, but he is generally not used as readily as Palmer and Koenig..

[44] For example, in his book, *Hospitality as Holiness*, Bretherton not only fails to give a concrete definition of hospitality but appears to base the content of his definition of hospitality as a Christian practice on the framework Pohl sets out in *Making Room*. See Bretherton, Chapter 5, 121-151, particularly pages 131-146. As an example demonstrating the complexity attributable to contemporary work on hospitality, Bretherton utilizes the work of Pohl, 131; Vanier, 141 referencing specifically Jean Vanier, *An Ark for the Poor: The Story of L'Arche* (New York: Crossroad, 1995); Hutter, 138; Koenig 129, 132; and Ogletree, 155.

For this investigation, I will attempt to utilize the major contributors to contemporary work on hospitality, focusing on Pohl, while maintaining the precedents set particularly by Vanier and, to a lesser extent, Nouwen. Much of current research converges, producing a determinable and reliable foundation for what constitutes hospitality. Nonetheless, some of the most basic and fundamental questions regarding its relevance for the church and Christianity remain unasked and unanswered. I would suggest that Pohl herself has been remiss in this regard.

Therefore, after exploring the components of hospitality most readily agreed upon, I propose to enquire into several potentially major problems that arise when hospitality is not situated within an appropriate theological framework. I will utilize Pohl's *Making Room* as an example of a text that overlooks the theological significance of hospitality and potentially imparts more problematic questions than it provides critical insight. I would suggest that a suitable location for Pohl's work may be found via a simple return to Vanier, whose means of understanding hospitality are grounded particularly in its contingency upon the person of Christ. While Pohl apparently fails to recognize the significance of this theological orientation, I will argue for its primacy in understanding the significance of hospitality for the church.

HOSPITALITY AS EXPERIENCE

In order to determine the components comprising hospitality, I suggest that hospitality be situated primarily as an act, or action, that can be experienced. While Pohl and the authors of *Practicing Theology* locate hospitality within the category of practice, they concur that practice itself falls within a framework of activity.[45] Rather

[45] In the introduction to *Practicing Theology* Bass asserts, "In this book, we place this concept [of practice] within a theological framework: Christian practices are patterns of cooperative human activity in and through which life together takes shape over time in response to and in the light of God

than beginning with hospitality as practice, I propose to situate it more broadly as an activity that constitutes the church. I would suggest that from this position, the theologian is able to discern more clearly how hospitality functions as an ecclesial activity rather than focusing on how practices, as a category, function in the church. From this starting point we are able to ask, "What does hospitality do?" and "Why is it important for the church?" These are significantly different questions than, "How is hospitality a practice of the church?" and "What do practices do?"

Hospitality is an act, or action, that is experienced as an interaction, involving more than one person; by definition hospitality is always relational.[46] It is first and foremost an experience that can only be manifest in the concrete interactions between persons. According to early church Father, John Chrysostom, hospitality is a face-to-face experience.[47] Hospitality only becomes a theological concept after the act has occurred and we are able to reflect upon it and consider its meaning. In Scripture, Christ himself institutes hospitality as an act through both his own interactions with others and his parables depicting the interactions of particular persons. Paul refers his readers to the hospitable person of Christ in his letter to the Romans: "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15.7). In a sermon concerning this passage, Jürgen Moltmann writes, "[Welcoming] cannot be done by talking – or not, at any rate, if only one person is speaking. [Welcoming] requires two people at least. Their talking and listening must be reciprocal".[48]

The nature of a hospitable interaction is distinctive. Its first step is determined by understanding the act of welcoming. To welcome means to invite someone in. These

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as known in Jesus Christ. Focusing on practices invites theological reflection on the ordinary, concrete activities of actual people…" Bass, *Introduction*, 3.

[46] Pohl, 13; Ogletree, 3; Koenig, 1; Palmer, 68; Kinnamon, 161; Keifert, 76.

[47] Pohl, 6.

two words, welcome and invite, are not interchangeable. An invitation does not necessarily imply a welcome. One can be invited but not warmly received; an invited guest can be merely tolerated.[49] In contrast, welcome does require an invitation. One must be invited *into* a space in order to be welcomed.[50] For example, if a person appears at your door, when you welcome him in you are inviting him in that moment. Inviting does not require welcome, but welcome is contingent upon an invitation. These are important distinctions. Welcoming must also not be confused with greeting. Greeting implies an acknowledgement and stops there. However warm that greeting may be it suffices with an acknowledgement alone. Welcoming is something more than either inviting or greeting. Welcoming is a double movement extended outward and towards another in order to bring that other in.

Home as a Space for Welcome

What is the recipient of hospitality welcomed into? Pohl writes,

> By definition, hospitality involves some space into which people are welcomed, a place where unless the invitation is given, the stranger would not feel free to enter. When we think about locations of hospitality, we usually think first of the home. Hospitality has always been most closely tied to the home or household, though never exclusively.[51]

Here, Pohl proposes initially that hospitality requires a space into which one can be welcomed. Vanier, Nouwen, and contemporary theologians engaged with hospitality such as Koenig, Palmer and Bretherton uphold this notion.[52] She then

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[48] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Power of the Powerless*, trans. Margret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1983), 98.
[49] Kinnamon, 161.
[50] In his essay *Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility*, Derrida takes issue with the concept of invitation. He claims that invitation rules out the possibility of interaction with the stranger. I would suggest that he has overlooked an understanding of invitation that occurs as part of a welcome. He focuses on invitation as the setting in which hospitality can be given without engaging with the movement of invitation inward after the welcome has been initiated regardless of who is being welcomed, be they a stranger or a friend. In this manner Derrida grapples with the notion of *pure* hospitality, of which he is sceptical. Pure hospitality insists that it be given unconditionally, regardless of the recipient. While I would agree that this could indeed be an impossibility, he is ruling out the possibility of welcoming strangers, a move that I would argue is overly limiting.
[51] Pohl, 39.
[52] Palmer, 69; Koenig, 126, 130; Bretherton, 140; Hershberger, 54.

makes a connection between this space and the home. Although I would concur that Pohl is accurate in identifying the location for welcome as the home, she fails to consider the complexities inherent in making this connection. I would suggest that an exploration of home provides a valuable point of departure for an understanding of welcome.

Along with Pohl, contemporary theologians also form a correlation between a space for welcome and the home.[53] For example, Palmer writes, "Hospitality means inviting the stranger into our private space, whether that be the space of our own home or the space of our personal awareness and concern".[54] Here Palmer identifies space as both the home, in terms of a building in which one lives, and the more abstract dimensions of our personal awareness and concern. In either case, he indicates that this space is both personal and private but is something that can be shared.

Vanier takes the connection between a space for welcome and home one step further, "To welcome is… not only to open one's door and one's home to someone. It is to give space to someone in one's heart, space for that person to be and to grow; space where the person knows that he or she is accepted just as they are, with their wounds and their gifts".[55] Here Vanier maintains that space for welcome be comprised of both opening the door to one's physical house and opening space in the very personal parts of our selves. Because Vanier is writing from the context of the shared home experience of L'Arche, it is clear why he would presume that welcome includes, literally, opening the door to where one lives. Notably, for Vanier, sharing

[53] Upon addressing the topic of hospitality, Healy states, "… home continues as an apt description for the location of welcome.," Healy, "Practices and the New Ecclesiology, 288-9; Koenig accounts for the experience of home with, "…the word (hospitality) may suggest a place of rest from our labours and journeys, a place that is not our home but nevertheless enables us to feel at home," Koenig, 1. See also: Ogletree, 3-8; Haughton, Elizabeth L., "Nostalgia and Hope in a Homeless age" in *The Longing for Home*, Leroy S. Rounder ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 204-216; Ogden, 15; Kinnamon, 160; Newman, 33, 37ff.

the physical space of one's house does not preclude sharing in, as Palmer puts it, the space of our personal awareness and concern. For Vanier the two are not mutually exclusive.

Both Vanier and Parker refer to the location of welcome as a space. Both separate space into two categories. The first is simple and refers to home as the physical house with a door that can be opened. The second is more abstract. It is located interiorly, within ourselves, but opens outward, and also exteriorly, in the world that inhabits our awareness. It is private but also may be shared and entered into. It is a personal space into which we could potentially welcome another.

I propose that *home* provides an apt description of both categories. It certainly can describe the building in which one lives, but it suggests something more. The physical structure where we live does not always connote the sense of home. Home suggests familiarity, comfort, a sense of place where one belongs.[56] Likewise, when we consider a more abstract notion of space, we might not always *feel at home* in our physical surroundings. We might not be comfortable with circumstances at hand or feel disjointed with the unfamiliarity of a given context.[57]

Home is an existential reality. It is not an abstraction but can only refer to our experience of it. It depends upon the person to define and constitute it. In the same manner, the reality of home as a space in which another can be welcomed is conditional upon the action of the host to extend it, to make room, to invite another in.

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[54] Palmer, 69.
[55] Vanier, *Community and Growth*, 263.
[56] In her essay, "Nostalgia and Hope in a Homeless Age," theologian Rosemary Haughton describes home as the following: "Home is the place where I belong, and that belongs to me. The image of home, the symbols and festivals and memories assure me of who I am and give me a specific value. Even the travellers' wagons and the tents of nomads are home; they define the people and the culture…" See Elizabeth L. Haughton, "Nostalgia and Hope in a Homeless Age" in *The Longing for Home*, ed. Leroy S. Rounder (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 213.
[57] Even when a person's physical home is neither comfortable nor considered *safe,* as in the home of an abused person or someone living on the streets, there is yet a familiarity and sense of belonging to that space. Such follows an understanding of the difficulties of leaving home; while home may be dangerous or frightening, what exists outside that home may be less familiar and less understood than what is experienced on a day-to-day basis.

Home is subjective in the sense that it is located in and with persons, but it is subjective only to the extent that we, as persons, share meaning. Understanding of the world around us cannot happen, and never happens, in isolation. We participate in a shared network of meaning that emerges out of human interpretation known through social history and in the present as it is being experienced through human persons.

Home, as opposed to a house, is a social space filled with meaning. Our awareness of the world and our concern with it has been interpreted via the meaning we give to it, meaning that is contextually and experientially situated. The space for welcoming, which is our concern, is bound to an understanding of home as such. In this sense home is not an idealized place. No one's experience of home is perfect, nor is it always even positive. Nevertheless it is constituted in this space that is both contextual and yet singular, conditions that, according to French theorist Jacques Derrida, imply constant movement and give rise to possibilities for transformation.[58]

In *Making Room*, Pohl provides only a partial understanding of welcome with regard to the home. I would suggest that because she is determined to situate hospitality as a practice, she attempts to fix this space in terms of the house. Through her research, Pohl examines hospitality primarily from within the context of communal living settings, of people who live together in a house. She also utilizes Vanier, who is writing out of a shared living situation. Her investigation reveals a desire to emphasize the concreteness and repeatability of the act of hospitality that would support viewing it in terms of a practice, but such a move shapes the outcome of research and limits the scope in which hospitality can be understood.

The Fourfold Nature of the Hospitable Interaction

[58] Derrida, *Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility*, 79.

The first two steps of hospitality as an act, or more specifically as an interaction, occur via extending an invitation *out* and welcoming another *in* to a particular space, which we will refer to as the home. What further can be said regarding the nature of this interaction that distinguishes it as distinctly hospitable? The answers to this question must be presented in two further steps.

The next, or third, movement of hospitality requires the giving of a gift.[59] The nature of the gift is determined primarily by the immediacy of another's need. Simply put, if you welcome another into your home and they need sustenance, you feed them. If the person needs a place to sleep, you house them. If they need comfort in the midst of grief, you provide them with that comfort. This dynamic bears remarkable similarity to the passage found in Matthew 25: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me".

How does one discern the needs of another in order to give the appropriate gift? By welcoming another into your home — your personal space, your awareness and concern, your physical house — you have already given the first part of this gift, namely the time and space for the other person's needs to become apparent. The remainder of the gift must in part be determined by the guest herself; it cannot be

[59] Bretherton also utilizes the theme of gift-giving in his exegesis of the parable of the Great Banquet, Luke 14:15-24, in reference to the dynamic between guests and hosts. While I find his use of this language appropriate to both the text and an understanding of hospitality, Bretherton specifies the inability on the part of the guest to give anything back to the host. I would suggest that this determination is more pertinent to a reading of this particular passage than to a wider understanding of hospitality. Bretherton focuses on feasting and banqueting as the enactment of hospitable giving and receiving that in turn allows for communion between host and guest. While the provision of a meal indeed is often the most conspicuous venue for the interaction between guest and host, it is but one possibility among countless possible creative interactions between and among people. The Great Banquet is a parable concerning God's hospitality, wherein all needs are or can be provided for; all that is required is the acceptance of the gift or the invitation. While God's hospitality is hospitality perfected (from the Father, by the Son, through the Holy Spirit), we are concerned primarily with an extant church involving very human persons. Bretherton's example of gifting runs the risk of idealizing the church and hospitality enacted between and among persons. See Bretherton, 131-8. See also: Hershberger, 28, 33-47; Palmer, 131.

imposed or forced upon another.[60] In many cases peoples' needs can be quite obvious, but even in situations where an immediate need is apparent, such as food or shelter for the night, the greater need, or even the real need, can take time to manifest. Discerning the appropriate gift can only take place within the space of a relationship between or among persons; it requires interaction.

Another requirement of the gift is that it be unconditional. It is given without question and without expectation of a return. Derrida illustrates this effectively:

> So unconditional hospitality implies that you don't ask the other, the newcomer, the guest, to give anything back, or even identify himself or herself. Even if the other deprives you of your mastery or your home, you have to accept this. It is terrible to accept this, but that is the condition of unconditional hospitality; that you give up your mastery of your space, your home, your nation. It is unbearable. If however, there is pure hospitality it should be pushed to this extreme.[61]

It is in the light of unconditionality that contemporary theologians describe the act of hospitality as involving risk.[62] Intrinsic to offering one's home as a space for welcome is the possibility that what is meaningful in this space will be altered or even harmed. The gift must be freely given regardless of potential outcomes. A gift cannot be located within an economy of exchange. Giving requires a certain level of vulnerability, of openness. As soon as one presupposes or expects a particular result, one has already placed conditions upon giving and the gift is no longer a free gift.

Derrida himself maintains the notion of unconditionality as he examines hospitality with the express intent to consider presuppositions that might adversely determine its meaning. He takes particular umbrage with the premise that hospitality is by nature inherently reciprocal.[63] For Derrida, hospitality involves a break from the conventional and circular movements of exchange, economy and commodity. He

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[60] Palmer identifies the host's role in this dynamic as "meeting the stranger's needs while allowing him or her simply to be, without attempting to make the stranger over into a modified version of ourselves," Palmer, 68; Ogletree refers to it as "a readiness to honour what is 'other' precisely in its 'otherness'," Ogletree, 3; See also, Hershberger, 30, 62.
[61] Derrida, *Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility*, 70.
[62] Pohl, 14, 93-8; Derrida, *Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility*, 71; Ogletree, 4, 6-7; Palmer 68-70; Vanier, *Community and Growth,* 266; Ogden, 86; Haughton, 208.

maintains that the expectation of reciprocity is antithetical to the unconditional giving necessitated by the act of hospitality and cannot be constitutive of it. Therefore any expectation of exchange removes the act from a consideration of hospitality.

It is only *after* the gift is understood as given unconditionally, with no expectation of return, that the final facet distinguishing the hospitable interaction emerges. Only then is it unmistakable that the hospitable interaction *is* reciprocal.[64] As detailed previously, the act of welcoming involves a double movement of extending outward in order to bring another person in. The giving of gifts replicates this double movement. Whether the gift given is something substantial such as a meal, a place to sleep, a new suit or a ride to the doctor, or something less tangible such as a listening ear, help with homework or filling out tax returns, the patience needed to sort through a problem or simply time to be with another person, the gift given is extended from the host to, or toward, the guest.

The gift returned completes the fourfold movement. At its most simple and basic extent, the reciprocated gift can be understood in terms of the transformation of the home. When a person opens their home and their world to another, they will be altered by the experience. It is true that as human persons we can be said to change with every moment of time as we are in constant relationship with the world around us. What becomes significant in the hospitable interaction is its location within the home. The guest has been invited and welcomed into that very personal space of our awareness and concern where we develop and share meaning, a space that is very much our own.

Christian ethicist Thomas Ogletree describes this phenomenon as follows:

> To offer hospitality to a stranger is to welcome something new, unfamiliar, and unknown into our life-world. On the one hand, hospitality requires a recognition

[63] Derrida, *Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility*, 69.
[64] Pohl, 72, 186; Palmer, 70; Bretherton, 136-7; Koenig, 6,9; Ogden, 4; Hershberger, 44-47.

> of the stranger's vulnerability in an alien social world. Strangers need shelter and sustenance in their travels, especially when they are moving through a hostile environment. On the other hand, hospitality designates occasions of potential discovery which can open up our narrow provincial worlds. Strangers have stories to tell which we have never heard before, stories which can redirect our seeing and stimulate our imaginations. The stories invite us to view the world from a novel perspective. They display the finitude and relativity of our own orientation to meaning… The stranger does not simply challenge or subvert our assumed world of meaning, she may enrich, even transform, that world.[65]

Here Ogletree illustrates the fourfold movement particular to reciprocated giving. By extending outward inviting another in, our homes are opened to welcome the potentially unfamiliar, the strange, the different, the possibly new. Welcoming another into the home draws this unknown into the most personal part of our selves. Parker echoes Ogletree's description of this dynamic, "Who knows how the presence of the stranger may throw light on some aspect of our lives which we had not seen before – a bias, a misapprehension, a hidden treasure, a gift? Hospitality to the stranger gives us a chance to see our own lives afresh, through different eyes".[66]

Both Parker and Ogletree emphasize the transformative capacity of the hospitable interaction. The fourfold movement is completed when the host's gift is given and the guest reciprocates, giving a gift in return. After the reciprocated giving has been exchanged, both guest and host have undergone change. As Ogletree articulates, "The promise borne by the reciprocal dialectic of host and stranger is the emergence of a new world of shared meanings".[67] Out of this particular dynamic between human persons something new is generated. A new world emerges from within the old as it is shared between and among persons. It is a new world that can, in turn, be further shared with others.

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[65] Ogletree, 2-3.
[66] Parker, 69.
[67] Ogletree, 4.

WHO IS THE STRANGER?

The Least of These

Thus far I have attempted to situate hospitality in terms of an experience delineated by the Scriptural theme of welcoming the stranger. I have described the constituent components of hospitality with reference to a space for welcome and the nature of the hospitable interaction. While I have primarily utilized contemporary, western, Christian theologians in undertaking this task, with the exceptions of Jonathan Magonet and Jacques Derrida, I have presented very little in the way of theological content. What has been described up to this point, with the exception of Scriptural references, could easily be mistaken for a secular, or a not particularly Christian, account of hospitality.

Wherein do we derive the theological content of a Christian understanding of hospitality? In order to approach this question we need to account for the missing component in our examination thus far, namely, *who is the stranger*? I would suggest that the answer to this question continues to pose the greatest challenge for western and particularly Protestant accounts of hospitality today. Strikingly, I would also suggest that the simplest answer to this question suffices, namely that the stranger is Christ. This answer is provided directly in Scripture as depicted by Christ himself in Matthew 25. But as we are considering theological accounts of hospitality, we shall proceed to examine this question via theological inquiry. I will begin by considering Pohl's response to the question *who is the stranger*?

In *Making Room*, Pohl makes several conflicting statements regarding who can be considered a stranger. At the beginning of her narrative she defines the stranger in the

following terms: "Strangers, in the strictest sense, are those who are disconnected from basic relationships that give persons a secure place in the world".[68] She states that strangers are, quoting Walter Brueggemann, *people without a place*.[69] She interprets Bruegemann's words as follows:

> To be without a place means to be detached from basic, life supporting institutions — family, work, polity, religious community, and to be without networks of relations that sustain and support human beings. People without a place who are also without financial resources are the most vulnerable people. This is the condition in which homeless people, displaced poor people, refugees, and undocumented persons find themselves. They not only lack supportive connections with other human beings, but they also are unable to purchase many of the basic necessities of life.[70]

On a cursory level, Pohl's assessment of strangers as people without a place corresponds with our treatment of hospitality thus far. Strangers are people in need of a place, or a space, wherein their needs can be provided for or met.[71]

Nevertheless, I have included the entirety of this passage for a particular reason. Pohl places a great deal of emphasis in her interpretation of strangers as being people who are set apart, who can somehow be distinguished from other persons who do have a secure place in the world. Elsewhere in her text she is clear in stating that not everyone should be considered a stranger, that to do so would diminish the situations

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[68] Pohl, 13.

[69] Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation and Obedience* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991), 294, quoted in Pohl, 87.

[70] Pohl, 87. Further underscoring Pohl's influence in the exploration of a Christian account of hospitality, Bretherton cites the beginning of this passage and Pohl's reference to Bruggemann's definition of stranger as a person without a place in order to explain the distinctive understanding of the stranger within the Christian tradition.

[71] In this passage Pohl makes three distinctions in her definition of strangers as people without a place. The first corresponds with the previous definition of *home* as a shared social space filled with meaning via institutions, family, work, polity, religious community and other relationships. This is significant in that *place* is determined by relationships. The second distinction suggests that lack of access to financial resources makes these strangers particularly vulnerable. This would be particularly true in societies where people are more dependent on money to obtain *the basic necessities of life* rather than in subsistent or bartering communities. Her third distinction is puzzling. Wherein her first point links place to an understanding of *home,* the examples she uses all denote place in terms of the loss of a house rather than a home. Homeless people are understood as people without a house, or building, rather than people without a home. Displaced people, refugees and undocumented aliens are all people without the ability or right to exist in a place, in a literal understanding of the word *place* as in a country, city or a geographic area. I would suggest that this third distinction reveals a lack of consistency in Pohl's original reference to Brueggemann and a return to a literal definition of *place*.

of those in great need.[72] Therefore *stranger* refers to a particular state of being that is somehow defined by a person's special needs.

Pohl's suggestion that particular people have particular and critical needs warrants no cause for theological concern. It is certainly very true. It is also true that we are able, to a limited extent, to categorize people according to those needs. This, on the contrary, should be of the utmost concern to Christian theology. While categorizing people is often a social and communicative necessity, it can often exclude and marginalize if not undertaken with the strictest care.

What Pohl accomplished in the aforementioned passage is an example of the dangers implicit in categorization. While her motivation is to distinguish and preserve the particular needs of specific sets of people, in effect she flattens out these distinctions and groups them together into a separate category. What was originally a set of people who have particular needs becomes a larger, less specific set of people called the needy. The particular and the specific is absorbed into the general. The danger here is that the real, tangible need of the human person is lost as he or she is subsumed into the larger, ill-defined category.

For example, Pohl groups together persons who are homeless, displaced, refugees and undocumented. While these categories share several overlapping qualities, they are specific descriptors that describe particular circumstances. While most refugees and displaced persons can, in some manner, be considered homeless, their situation arises out of a context that occasions a specific fear for their lives, an attribute not

[72] Pohl claims that she does not agree with Koenig and Parker in that all persons can be considered strangers. "When we describe everyone as a stranger, we wash out some of the crucial distinctions between socially situated persons and persons who are truly disconnected from social relations," Pohl, 90. Here Pohl contradicts herself. While she insists on hospitality for those who have only particular needs, when she examines the work of Calvin and Wesley she identifies the stranger as *every person*. Pohl, 67, 75-7. In other words, Pohl is not clear regarding who can be considered a stranger. I would suggest that while she aspires to maintain a special dispensation for people with special needs that is indicated via her choice of research subjects, she is not able to maintain this position theologically. As her identification of the stranger with those in need forms the basis for her thesis, a defence of this position is required.

necessary to the category of homelessness. Likewise, while refugees and displaced persons often arise from similar circumstances, they have different and distinct state and international legal rights, or lack thereof. This distinction becomes even more significant when considering that millions of persons fall into these two separate categories. Undocumented persons, on the other hand, may indeed have homes in which they have lived for many years, making a correlation with homelessness even less appropriate.

The persons fitting into these separate categories may all have needs, but they are most likely very different needs. The categories Pohl utilizes in her example concern individuals who already experience marginalization as a result of their particular circumstances. To be considered the subjects of an even broader level of categorization has the potential to further set them apart. In this scenario, strangers are further removed from their particular, personal and concrete situations. The stranger is regarded more abstractly, as a person with needs rather than as a person who is homeless or a refugee. The focus of theological concern is thus moved further away from considering the real needs of human persons and more towards an abstraction of the stranger.

While any move that risks further excluding the already marginalized is questionable, the point where Pohl's theology becomes problematic rests with her explanation of the particularly Christian significance of Christian hospitality. She states quite clearly that the singular component of Christian hospitality that distinguishes it from other forms of hospitality is that only Christians direct their welcoming particularly toward those strangers who can be considered *the least of these*.[73] Pohl takes the phrase *the least of these* directly from Matthew 25.40 and 45

[73] "The distinctive quality of Christian hospitality is that it offers a generous welcome to the "least"[referencing Matt. 25:40, 45], without concern for advantage or benefit to the host." Pohl, 16.

and interprets it to mean those that are most in need. In other words, according to Pohl, the ultimate criteria for distinguishing the theological content of Christian hospitality is that only Christians direct hospitality specifically toward people in need.

This is not the case. Christianity cannot claim exclusivity in offering hospitality to people who are in need. If one were to follow this logic, then every act of hospitality toward a person in need would be a Christian act regardless of the religious affiliation of the host. If one is not willing to entertain this possibility, then the question regarding the theological significance of Christian hospitality remains.

Pohl's theological accounting of Christian hospitality is further demonstrated in the following passage, wherein she interprets Luke 14.12-14 as indicative of Christ's own understanding of hospitality:

> Ordinary hosts invited friends, relatives, and rich neighbours to their banquets. In doing so, they solidified relationships, reinforced social boundaries, and anticipated repayment from their guests. By contrast, hosts who anticipated the hospitality of God's Kingdom welcomed the poor, lame, crippled, and blind, those who were more dependent and lived on the margins of the community. While such hosts expected no immediate benefit, they would ultimately experience God's repayment at the resurrection.[74]

In this interpretation, Pohl applies her distinction between Christian and non-Christian approaches to hospitality by affirming that only Christians direct hospitality to people in need. Significantly, she is unambiguous in claiming that while a Christian must expect no payment from a guest, repayment may legitimately be expected in the form of a reward, namely salvation in the next life. Such an expectation is not only antithetical to an understanding of hospitality as unconditional, it reveals how hospitality can be understood to function as merely a means to a particular end that is individual and self-oriented. Salvation becomes a commodity

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"The distinctive Christian contribution was the emphasis on including the poor and neediest, the ones who could not return the favour," Pohl, 6. "The distinctive character of Christian hospitality was most clearly articulated in the fourth century. During that time Jerome, Lactinius, and Chrysostom, among others, defined Christian hospitality as welcoming the "least" with no concern for advantage or ambition," Pohl, 47. See also Pohl, 22-23, 35, 62.

[74] Pohl, 21.

that is transacted and exchanged. Interestingly, this approach bears a striking similarity to the common western understanding of the word with its themes of reward, expectation and payment.

Throughout *Making Room*, Pohl equates the stranger with those who can be designated as *the least of these*. She defines *the least of these* as people who are in the most need.[75] In keeping with Pohl's definitions, pursuing the question of *who is the stranger?* brings us to two possible positions. Either, the stranger must be every person because every person has needs, or the stranger is distinguished because he or she meets a certain criteria of need fitting to the designation of *the least of these* or the most needy. For her part, Pohl appears unwilling to concede that every person could be considered a stranger.[76] Therefore, since every person has needs, the stranger must be a person who has met a certain criteria of need.

I would suggest that Pohl has made a mistake in defining her terms. By equating the stranger with those who would qualify as *the least of these*, she places a limit upon who can be considered a stranger. Strangers are not potentially everyone but are only the neediest of people. If *the least of these* are the neediest of people, does this not create the problem of how are we to determine who, exactly, these people are?

Recognizing the Stranger

Pohl devotes much of the central section of her book to determining who is the stranger. She discusses the necessity of being able to recognize the stranger.[77] She suggests that there are different kinds of strangers: relative strangers, unknown

[75] Upon considering mention of *the least of these* in Matt. 25:31-46, Pohl acknowledges that there is some contention as to its specific meaning. She argues that the phrase refers specifically to the needy. Pohl, 22-23. For further discussion of the interpretation of *the least of these* with reference to hospitality, see Bretherton, 131; Ogden, 18-20; Palmer, 64-67.
[76] Pohl also finds the definition of *neighbour* as potentially every person to be problematic. Pohl, 76. Notably, Bretherton specifically adopts Pohl's argument for defining strangers as the needy. Bretherton, 131.

strangers, risky strangers, desperate strangers and strangers close to us.[78] These categories depict different aspects of being a stranger, from strangers who do not appear particularly needy to strangers who have overwhelming needs. Pohl also suggests that it is possible to fail to recognize the stranger. [79]

Being able to recognize the stranger is critical to Pohl's understanding of Christian hospitality. For Pohl, hospitality occurs as the stranger is welcomed. The stranger, though, must be a person with a certain criteria of need. They must be of the neediest persons. This begs the question, does it qualify as hospitality if a stranger is welcomed who is only marginally needy? Consider a person whose need is small. If that person is welcomed by another, does it qualify as hospitality?

Placing too much emphasis on the necessity of recognizing strangers can potentially disrupt the interaction among guests and hosts to the effect that it cannot be considered hospitality. In this scenario, one risks that the host becomes the adjudicator regarding who is in need and who is not. If the stranger is one who is distinguished by his or her level of need, it follows that in order to recognize the stranger the host would be reliant upon his or her own ability to perceive that need in order for the act to qualify as hospitality. The focus of hospitality becomes displaced from meeting the actual needs of another to confirming the perceptions of the host. Under these circumstances hospitality becomes arbitrary and is based more on the needs of the host than on those of the stranger. Instead of potentially opening up the home and established worlds of meaning, this dynamic is turned inwards and redirected toward the self.

Another risk involves the possibility of enforcing exclusionary social boundaries or stereotypes in order to recognize the stranger. While categories can be useful tools

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[77] Pohl, 64-84.
[78] Pohl, 85-103.

in helping point the way to people who have specific needs, when they are determined by conditions of marginalization and exclusion, these conditions can, in effect, become the factor necessary for recognition to occur. A dependency is created on the category and the conditions that determine it. While this scenario does not eliminate the possibility for an hospitable interaction, serious consideration must be given to the extent to which utilizing stereotypes or boundaries may inadvertently perpetuate their very existence, thereby establishing conditions that are, in fact, the reverse of welcoming.

If preconceived notions regarding the nature of another's need are employed in recognizing the stranger, opportunities for the stranger to communicate her own needs can be diminished or even eliminated. Unquestioned reliance on assumed categories of need often mask issues of greater concern to the individual involved.[80] Assuming another's need alters the nature of what could be considered hospitable giving. When the gift is predetermined, it is, in a sense, imposed upon the stranger. It is still a gift, though its appropriateness could validly be questioned. What is significant is that there is no need for a personal relationship to be established for this type of giving to occur. Without the establishment of an actual relationship this dynamic cannot be considered hospitality.[81]

Meeting categorized needs can also assist with introducing people to each other who may not traditionally share the same social space. In this manner margins and

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[79] Pohl, 78-82.

[80] For example, a person's more obvious need for shelter may be secondary to another need such as the need for emotional support after losing a loved one or a job, or for appropriate medical care.

[81] Pohl further qualifies the necessity of recognizing and welcoming the neediest of strangers. At one point she suggests, "It was not sufficient that strangers be vulnerable; hosts had to identify with their experiences of vulnerability and suffering before they welcomed them." Pohl, 97. While I contest Pohl's emphasis on the need to recognize strangers, I firmly disagree with the necessity of a host being able to relate to a stranger's particular vulnerability in order to welcome them. This notion undermines itself in that many hosts will not have experienced the particular vulnerabilities that make a stranger one of the most needy. For example, people who are not or have not been refugees will have a difficult time relating to that particular experience in another person. Adding this as another criteria for welcome further limits opportunities for hospitality to the extent that it becomes an impossibility.

social boundaries may be crossed, allowing for real interpersonal relationships to develop. Take for example the suburban teenager serving food at a day shelter. He, for the first time, meets a woman who is homeless. They talk and a relationship ensues. If the other components of hospitality are present, it is then appropriate to ask, who is providing hospitality to whom? The woman, because she is welcoming a stranger into her social space and helping him meet a need to learn more of the world? Is it the staff of the shelter itself, making space for such interactions to occur? Or is it the boy who has opened up a part of himself, allowing this woman the space to work through a particular problem or issue or merely to have a safe place for sharing? The reciprocity of the hospitality interaction breaks down the stereotypes and boundaries that keep people apart.

There are two issues critically at stake when hospitality is contingent on recognizing the stranger. The first is that hospitality becomes optional. It is not available to potentially every person but only to those deemed the most needy in society. Limiting hospitality in this manner runs the risk of it being treated as an optional extra, a set of actions that is performed sometimes with some persons. At worst, hospitality becomes an unnecessary activity, a good thing when it happens but not relevant. This has serious implications for the church.

The second involves a theological understanding of hospitality, or, in other words, how we understand God's involvement or relationship with the hospitable interaction. Let us review Pohl's train of thought. She agrees that the stranger is a person who has needs. Her use of *the least of these* stipulates that strangers are only some people who qualify as the most needy. This limits who can be considered a stranger. Pohl accedes that hospitality allows us the possibility for recognizing Christ in the

stranger.[82] Therefore, when our conception of hospitality is limited from the beginning, we limit our own understanding of the possibilities for recognizing Christ in others.

Mis-placed Concreteness

Pohl's work on hospitality is significant in the arena of contemporary theology and makes several valuable contributions to the field of ecclesiology in particular. *Making Room* can be considered both as a piece of scholarship as well as a book that could prove meaningful to the average parishioner. It is clearly intended not only to provide a biblical and historical account of hospitality but to situate the topic in a contemporary context. *Making Room* is not a highly-systematized account of hospitality with no obvious significance outside of the realms of theological academia. Rather it affirms Healy's suggestion that theology, and particularly ecclesiology, should engage with the concrete activities of the church. Pohl conducts interviews with members of organizations that engage in hospitality as part of the basis of her research, advancing the notion that human experience is a valid subject for theological reflection.

Nevertheless, her explanation of the theological significance of hospitality is insufficient. Not only is her understanding of '*who is the stranger?'* limited, her

[82] Pohl, 67-68. At several points in *Making Room*, Pohl refers to the actual presence of Christ located in the stranger. At other times, the stranger merely symbolizes Jesus or refers to him. This is an important theological distinction. For example, she states, "Practitioners view hospitality as a sacred practice and find God is specially present in guest/host relationships." Pohl, 8. In apparent contradiction she then asserts, "In the church, the household of God, hospitality is a fitting, requisite, meaning-filled practice. Hospitality is important symbolically in its reflection and reenactment of God's hospitality and important practically in meeting human needs and in forging human relations," Pohl, 29-30. Pohl's theological position changes and appears to reflect whomever she is engaged with at that particular moment, be they theologians or participants in her interviews. She makes the specific effort to mention that for some "practitioners" of hospitality, it is a "very literal experience" to see Christ in every guest. Pohl, 68. At one point in her exposition, she fails to grasp the potential theological significance of one of her own examples. She points out that both Luther and Calvin acknowledge the importance of hospitality, but offers as illustrations of their positions that Luther equates the stranger with the *person* of God and Calvin likens the stranger with the *image* of God (see Pohl, 6). This example alone contains two potentially important theological distinctions that have

assertion that only Christians direct hospitality to the most needy does not constitute what could be considered a theological account of the activity. Pohl is unable to provide a consistent reasoning behind the functioning of hospitality, nor does she set out specifically what her understanding of the practice is.[83] One aspect of hospitality that she practically insists upon is that it *almost always* involves shared meals.[84] However, throughout *Making Room* she cites many other avenues for hospitality which do not include food or a meal.[85]

Pohl's choice of research subjects has played a critical role in directing and shaping the results of her research. Each of the eight organizations Pohl chooses for her interviews identifies with hospitality as part of what they do. She refers to these organizations as communities of hospitality.[86] They are each houses or, more appropriately, homes that welcome individuals or families into either temporary or permanent living situations. Each home participates in some form of intentional Christian communal living, with guidelines and rules to help organize their daily lives together. These are structured organizations, each with a form of mission or mission

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helped to shape what have become two different traditions. Instead of following this up, she appears content that they both view hospitality as important.

[83] At various points Pohl asserts that hospitality functions as a moral practice, but she does not explain why or how. See Pohl, 4, 17, 38, 101, 174. At other times she states that hospitality functions pedagogically. See Pohl, 11, 21.

[84] "In *almost* every case hospitality involved shared meals," Pohl, 6. "The practice of hospitality *almost always* includes eating meals together," Pohl, 12. "In many communities of hospitality, meals and worship are regularly intertwined," Pohl, 30. "Offers of food or a meal together are central to *almost all* Biblical stories of hospitality, to *most* historical discussions of hospitality, and to *almost every* contemporary practice of hospitality," Pohl, 73. "In a hospitable household, conversations and meals are closely linked, and people are nourished through both," Pohl, 155. "Churches, like families, need to eat together to sustain their identity as a community. The table is central to the practice of hospitality in home and church - the nourishment we gain there is physical, spiritual, and social," Pohl, 158. See also Pohl 35, 96, 101, 168.

[85] For example, after she describes a pub set up by Catholic sisters in order to provide meals to immigrants, she points out that telephone calls can also be viewed "as a place for hospitality," Pohl, 168.

[86] Pohl, 188. The organizations with whom she conducts over fifty interviews include: L'Abri Fellowship in Massachusetts, Annunciation House in Texas, the L'Arche Community in Washington D.C., the Catholic Worker House in New York, Good Works Inc. in Ohio, Jubilee Partners in Georgia, The Open Door in Georgia, and the St. John's and St. Benedicts Monasteries of Collegeville, Minnesota. See Appendix: Communities of Hospitality, 188-195.

statement and non-profit standing in the U.S.[87] They are also reasonably similar to one another.

These eight organizations each operate as households. Built into the structure of their daily lives are shared meals. I would suggest that because Pohl focuses on these particular communities for her research into hospitality in contemporary settings her findings are skewed toward an overemphasis on meal sharing and on the house as the location for the home. While I believe her observations and reflections on hospitality are appropriate when placed in the context of intentional Christian communities, their relevance outside of that particular setting must be taken into question. An overemphasis on sharing meals or even a requisite of sharing meals would severely limit what could be considered hospitality.

The concern and focus of this thesis is on hospitality at the level of ordinary, everyday churches as well as for the church. While accounting for the work of its non-profits and charities is absolutely necessary when considering the concrete activities of the church, Pohl's examples of hospitality do not have much relevance for the average church-goer or congregation. While congregation members could certainly volunteer or work in one of these settings or support them financially, two activities the organizations themselves depend upon, it would take an enormous amount of commitment and dedication if they wished to start a similar organization themselves.

This begs the question, what sort of options are left for hospitality in a congregational context? Is hospitality to be understood as merely potluck dinners, house group get-togethers and wearing nametags at coffee hour? Take, for example, a middle-class congregation located in an affluent suburb. What are the options for this

[87] In the U.S. a non-profit, or not-for-profit, organization has an official 501(c) 3 standing with the U.S. Federal government and is the equivalent of what is considered a charity in the U.K.

congregation to extend hospitality to those who are homeless when there may be no homeless people in their neighbourhood? What would it mean for them to open a soup kitchen if people that live in the surrounding area are not hungry? What options remain for the congregation that does not live amongst the poor? Is their only course of action a ministry of stewardship via financial contributions? While this act is absolutely necessary for the work of the church to continue, it does not provide the opportunity for encounter between and among people. Hospitality is relational, an interaction between and among persons.

Speaking from an interest in the public life of the church, Parker Palmer challenges congregations to move past narrow understandings of hospitality,

> …(The church) must find ways of extending hospitality to the stranger. I do not mean coffee hours designed to recruit new members for the church, for these are designed at making the stranger "one of us". The essence of hospitality–and of public life—is that we let our differences, our mutual strangeness, be as they are, while still acknowledging the unity that lies beneath them.[88]

It is important to consider that coffee hours intended to assist the church's members and guests to feel comfortable are beneficial in strengthening relationships and building community within congregations, as are potluck dinners and the meeting of house groups. Yet, they serve as limited examples of hospitality in a world where people's needs often outstrip their ability to survive.

Where does Pohl's investigation into contemporary accounts of hospitality leave congregations? To sum up this inquiry, Pohl does not provide an adequate explanation for what hospitality actually is or why it should be considered a practice of the church. Neither does she provide a clear or consistent understanding of the theological implications involved with such a practice. While much of her work aligns with what has been proffered regarding the mechanisms of the hospitable interaction, I suggest she makes a mistake in defining strangers and the subsequent

necessity of recognizing them. Her research is directed toward organizations that offer hospitality at what could be called a professional level located within specifically communal living situations. What we are left with has limited application at a congregational level to the extent that it could be considered an *optional extra* of the church - something that is to be considered positively when it occurs, but not essential to the church's activities, particularly as there is no theological impetus for it to be so.

While my assessment of Pohl's work on hospitality may appear overly critical, I would stress that I view her overall project favourably. I believe that she is moving in a positive direction, particularly by engaging with contemporary accounts of hospitality through investigating the experiences of persons involved with hospitality. At the same time I agree with Healy that it is indeed *too easy to read* Pohl *as moving in a troubling direction* and *too easy to misunderstand* her work.[89] If her contribution to the ongoing project of theological exploration into Christian hospitality continues to be regarded as seminal, several aspects of her work must be examined and accounted for critically before a significant portion of the field of research becomes *mis-placed*.

RETURNING TO VANIER

Much of what I have suggested as being problematic in Pohl's investigation into hospitality can be accounted for by a simple return to one of the main influences on her work, Jean Vanier. As one of the founders of the L'Arche communities and their greatest advocate, Vanier's modelling of intentional Christian community has had a profound impact in helping to shape contemporary perspectives and experiences of

[88] Palmer, 130.
[89] Healy, 288-9, my paraphrase.

Christian communal living.[90] Implicit in his approach to Christian community is an understanding of hospitality and specifically of welcoming the stranger.

In order to address the difficulties presented by Pohl in *Making Room*, I suggest a return to the question as of yet inadequately answered, namely, *who is the stranger*? By examining Vanier's response to this question, we see that he not only clarifies the troublesome aspects of Pohl's research, but he also places hospitality in a solid theological framework from which further questions regarding the church can be asked. Like Pohl, Vanier uses his and other's experiences drawn from the context of intentional Christian community as the basis for his work. While he does not write specifically at a congregational level, his reflections on hospitality are transferable to that setting.

Who is the Stranger?

Whereas Pohl's response to this question appears at first glance to be simple and straightforward—namely that strangers are the neediest of people—her response quickly devolves into a series of qualifying statements and further questions necessary in determining how we can recognize who these strangers are. In other words, what appears on the surface to be a simple answer quickly proves much more complicated the more it is scrutinized. Under these conditions it becomes understandable why Pohl spends so much of her text discussing different types of strangers and how to recognize them rather than exploring what comprises the actual *practice* of hospitality itself.

[90] The phrase intentional Christian community, which is used in ecclesiastical circles, refers to Vanier's particular definition of community, " When I use the word community… I am talking essentially of groupings of people who have left their own milieu to live with others under the same roof, and work from a new vision of human beings and their relationships with each other and with God. So my definition is a restricted one Others would see 'community' as something wider," Vanier, *Community and Growth,* 10.

Conversely, Vanier's understanding of *who is the stranger* requires more explanation at the beginning of a discourse on hospitality but coheres as the topic is further explored. In part this is due to the nature of Vanier's response itself. While many theologians view the primary task of theology as the sustained effort to organize and structure theological reflection into closed and complete systems of thought, Vanier operates under no such prescription. Although trained as a moral philosopher and adept in the rigours such a discipline requires, Vanier is content to situate his theology in the *mystery* of God.[91] He is comfortable with the word mystery and all the unknowns, paradoxes and unexplainable phenomenon that accompany it. His theology reflects what Healy describes as a "comparatively unsystematic approach," one that is at home with the undetermined.[92]

In order to fully appreciate Vanier's approach to the stranger, it is important to realize that he *presumes* that his readership, or audience as the case may be, also understands who the stranger is. This is one of Vanier's blatant presuppositions. He does not argue for who the stranger may or may not be. He assumes that the answer to that question is obvious. He also provides several different answers to the question. He assumes that his readers will not find this a contradiction but rather will be able to discern the need for a subtle flexibility integral to any concept of the stranger. Any comprehension of the stranger is both simple and complex for Vanier; in other words, it is paradoxical.

One who is Different

Implicit in Vanier's understanding of the stranger is the most simple and common definition of the word. The stranger is someone who is different, strange or

[91] The first section of *Befriending the Stranger* is entitled, "The Mystery of Jesus." Jean Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2005), 15-22.

unfamiliar. The stranger is a person who either is unknown or has an unknown quality or aspect to himself or herself. Vanier explains,

> Those who are different are the strangers among us. There are many ways of being different: one can be different by virtue of values, culture, race, language or education, religious or political orientation. And while most of us can find it stimulating or at least interesting to meet a stranger for a short while, it is a very different thing to truly open up and allow a stranger to become a friend.[93]

Foundational to his understanding of the stranger is the notion that he or she is one who is different. Vanier sees no need to attempt to explain *how different* a stranger must be in order to be considered a stranger, nor does he find it necessary to discuss the quality of a person's difference as a criteria for recognizing them as such. Vanier assumes that everyone is at some level a stranger to each other since we all have differences. We all have parts of our persons unknown to each other and oftentimes even to ourselves.

Vanier discusses our tendency to reinforce our differences, creating barriers that set us apart from each other. He addresses this specifically by referring to the human tendency to categorize.

> We do place people in easy categories. Those who belong to another church or political party, or who profess other values are quickly given a label. Those who belong to a different race or social class are assigned to a place in the order of the world as we see it. We like to see ourselves at the top of a pyramid; we look down on those who are different; we do not see them as brothers and sisters. We may not always hate others, but we are very quick to categorize them. As humans we put up barriers with ease.[94]

Vanier maintains a delicate balance in his approach to the stranger. While he decries the production of barriers that keep persons apart from each other and that actively obstruct the formation of relationships between and among persons, he realistically acknowledges that categorizing will occur. What he warns against is the *easy*, prejudicial categorization of people who are different.

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[92] Healy, 288.
[93] Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1998), 76.
[94] Vanier, *Becoming Human,* 142.

Vanier holds in tension Pohl's concern regarding preserving what is particular to a category alongside the danger of flattening out categories and losing the distinction between and among persons.[95] His work has been based on a lifetime shared with "people with mental handicaps".[96] This is a specific category of persons. Vanier is clear when he uses such terminology that the entire phrase is important with stress being placed on the word *people* or *persons*. People never fit into only one category. People are complex. Although a person who fits into a specific category may share some of the particular needs of others in that category, they also may not. What takes primacy is the human person over the need or needs themselves. Categories in this sense are merely tools and should not be taken as more than that.

What is of interest to Vanier is how people react to difference. His concern is that "we are frightened of the other, the one who is different".[97] This fear of difference can become compounded when it is applied to entire categories of people. What may have begun as a simple perception of something as unfamiliar or strange becomes the basis for exclusion or marginalization of large groups of people. As is so often the case, entire categories of people can be excluded from even the most basic necessities of life: access to food, water, shelter, medical care and basic human rights. Throughout his work Vanier tells stories of individuals he knows who had been abandoned as babies, forgotten in mental institutions or left to beg in the streets because they are considered first as "persons with a mental handicap" rather than as persons.

The Paradox of Christ as the Stranger

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[95] Pohl, 90.
[96] While this particular choice of words changes and has evolved over the years, the concept remains consistent within each particular text he has written or talk he has delivered. Jean Vanier, *The Heart of L'Arche,* 11-12.

Vanier's conception of the stranger maintains that we all may be considered strangers as we are all strange or different to some, or to all, as the case may be. Situated alongside this approach is the position that at the same time, the stranger is also Christ. Vanier considers this to be one of the great mysteries of the Gospel. Throughout his work he draws consistently upon Matthew 25 to explain his understanding:

> When Mary carried the baby Jesus in her arms, she was carrying God in her arms. This is the folly of the Incarnation which Jesus extends even further when he says: 'Whatever you did to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'. (Matt 25:40) Whoever visits a prisoner, clothes the naked, welcomes a stranger is visiting, clothing and welcoming God. This is a great mystery![98]

Vanier is saying that just as Christ was incarnated as a baby boy, an actual child whom his mother carried about in her arms, Christ is also incarnate in the stranger, wherever the stranger may be.

It is with this notion of Christ as the stranger that we advance toward what Vanier demonstrates is implicit in welcoming the stranger. During a series of lectures given by Vanier at Harvard University Divinity School in 1988, he depicts the meeting between Jesus and the woman from Samaria at the well found in the Gospel of John (John 4.7-42).[99] Vanier describes how the Samaritans were rejected and marginalized as a people and how they were particularly despised by the Jews. He explains that this woman would have been equally rejected by her own people since she continued to break their laws. Vanier ascribes the following to their encounter:

> This woman is perhaps one of the poorest, most broken women of the Gospels. When Jesus meets her, he does not tell her to get her act together. Rather he exposes to her his own need. He says to her: 'Give me to drink.' It is good to see how Jesus approaches broken people-–not from a superior position but from a humbler, lower position even from his fatigue: 'I need you'.[100]

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[97] Jean Vanier, *Encountering 'the Other'* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005), 28.
[98] Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger*, 4.
[99] Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community,* 24-25.
[100] Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community,* 24.

Vanier interprets this passage to indicate a reversal of expectations as Jesus seeks assistance from a woman presumably in great need herself. He asks for help from a woman who was rejected and despised. The expectations broken in this encounter could refer to those of Jesus' disciples, to an observer of the scene or to the contemporary reader who may have expected Jesus to meet this woman's need rather than to ask for her help. Vanier continues,

> However, there is still a paradox. Those with whom Jesus identifies himself are regarded by society as misfits. And yet Jesus is that person who is hungry; Jesus is that woman who is confused and naked. As I carried in my arms Eric who was blind, deaf and with severe brain damage, I sensed that paradox: 'Whosoever welcomes one of these little ones in my name, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me'.[101]

Christ as the stranger moves this encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well past the merely unexpected to the inexplicable. Vanier recognizes the paradoxical nature of Christ as the stranger as he considers the nearly helpless child he holds in his arms. This is the paradox of God located in helplessness and in weakness. For Vanier, to welcome those persons who are considered strange or different, who are set apart or marginalized, or who are vulnerable or weak, is to welcome God. For Vanier, to welcome any person, for all persons are helpless, different, weak and strange, is to welcome Christ.

In his seminal volume on community, *Community and Growth*, Vanier dedicates a chapter to the importance of "Welcome" in which he refers specifically to the stranger of Matthew 25:[102]

> It is not surprising that Jesus comes under the guise of the stranger: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' The stranger is a person who is different, from another culture or another faith; the stranger disturbs because he or she cannot enter into our patterns of thought or our ways of doing things. To welcome is to make the stranger feel at home, at ease, and that means not exercising any judgement or any preconceived ideas, but rather giving space *to be*.[103]

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[101] Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community,* 25.
[102] Vanier, *Community and Growth,* 265-283.
[103] Emphasis Vanier's. Vanier, *Community and Growth,* 266.

Vanier is not surprised that Christ comes as the stranger because he assumes the unexpected and the inexplicable to be present in the act of welcome. He assumes that contained within the hospitable interaction is disruption and inevitably change. Again, inherent in this dynamic is a measure of contradiction. While a host endeavours to extend to a guest the experience of home, of feeling at ease and having space *to be,* the host's home will be disrupted and altered. Vanier suggests that Christ disrupts human existence, bringing the different and the strange into peoples' lives.

Taking up Vanier's notion that Christ is present in the stranger does not necessitate the loss of distinctions among categories that appropriately communicate real needs of human persons. Vanier employs the use of categories when he describes his experiences with the people who have mental handicaps with whom he shares his home. Categories such as people who are refugees, have survived Hurricane Katrina, live below the poverty level or are in prison, are all apt descriptions that reflect the particular reality of specific groups of people. Vanier is not concerned with categories as such but with the barriers that arise as a result of those categories. He speaks of Jesus' action in the world regarding such barriers: "[Jesus] came to break down the walls that separate the rich from the poor, the strong from the weak, the healthy from the sick, so that they might be reconciled to one another and discover that they are all part of one body".[104]

What is crucial to recognize in Vanier's assertion is that while he proclaims that Christ came to *break down the walls* that separate people from one another, he is not stating or even implying that those categories will disappear. He is stating that the *barriers between and among people* will disappear, not the conditions themselves. Essential to this understanding is that while we exist in this time, in the already/not

[104] Vanier, *The Heart of L'Arche,* 18.

yet of salvific history, there will always be those persons who are poor and sick and weak.

This reflects another of the central tenets of Vanier's theology and the paradox of the stranger. Christ did not come to eradicate sickness and poverty and weakness in the time we know now; those things will continue until he returns. Rather he came to establish a new way of being in the world, a way of being that can be understood specifically in terms of hospitality. Through his actions and his interactions with those he met, Jesus institutes how we are to be in the world and with each other. Jesus disrupts the expected and establishes that it is through the stranger, and all that the stranger implies, that we meet him.

Vanier conveys the paradox of the stranger as he describes how we encounter Christ today through the Spirit via the actions he himself instituted:

> This is perhaps the great secret of the Gospels and the heart of Christ. Jesus calls his disciples not only to serve the poor but to discover in them his real presence, a meeting with the Father. Jesus tells us that he is hidden in the face of the poor, that he is in fact the poor. And so with the power of the Spirit, the smallest gesture of love towards the least significant person is a gesture of love towards him. Jesus is the starving, the thirsty, the prisoner, the stranger, the naked, the homeless, the sick, the dying, the oppressed, the humiliated. To live with the poor is to live with Jesus; to live with Jesus is to live with the poor (cf. Matt. 25.)[105]

Vanier suggests that it is paradoxical that God, the source and creator of all things, can be found in the smallest of persons, that God can be both at once. This appears to be self-contradictory. For Vanier, paradox rests at the heart of hospitality. "People come to L'Arche to serve the needy. They only stay if they have discovered that they themselves are needy, and that the good news is announced by Jesus to the poor, not to those who serve the poor".[106]

Ultimately, Vanier works from within a theological framework wherein the mystery of God continues to be active. He maintains no contention with what he

[105] Vanier, *Community and Growth,* 95.
[106] Vanier, *Community and Growth,* 99.

suggests are paradoxes and contradictions found in Scripture or in the life of Jesus. Conversely, he expects the unexpected to be made manifest in the continuing life of the church. In this manner, one can see that for Vanier there is no problem in understanding the stranger as potentially all persons, specifically some people and at the same time as Christ. He is more concerned with what happens in the interaction of hospitality. Above all, he is concerned with relationships and the human heart.

> The frontiers that separate people from each other can come down if we open our hearts to this vulnerable God. Jesus sent us the Spirit, to change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. He became weak and was crucified and died on the cross. The message of Jesus is transformation. He calls us to open up to others. So the big question will always be, 'Do we want to change? Do we want to open our hearts to the different?'[107]

Vanier's Experience

In his book, *The Company of Strangers*, theologian Parker Palmer addresses the topic of extending hospitality to strangers as part of a broader look into the 'public life' of the Christians.[108] In order to introduce the specific topic of Christian hospitality, Palmer suggests that hospitality is recognized via the experience of it.

> Most of us from experience know what real hospitality feels like. It means being received openly, warmly, freely, without the need to earn your keep or prove yourself. An inhospitable space is one in which we feel invisible–or visible but on trial. A hospitable space is alive with trust and good will, rooted in a sense of our common humanity. When we enter such a space we feel worthy, because the host assumes we are. Here there are no preconceptions about how we "should" or "must" be. Here we are accepted for who and what we are.[109]

Vanier's reflections upon the themes of hospitality, welcome, the stranger and home arise from his experiences with the L'Arche communities. Vanier's primary interest is in relationships, people's relationships with each other and their relationships with God. As his orientation towards the stranger demonstrates, by extending hospitality to those who are different or strange into our lives we are potentially welcoming God. It is critical to recognize that hospitality is entirely

[107] Vanier, *Encountering 'the Other'*, 61-62.

relational. It cannot occur without the interactions of persons - human persons and the person of God. Any consideration of hospitality must eventually come back to the experience of human relationships, be they personal experiences or accounts of others' experiences. This holds equally true concerning the stories of Jesus' experiences and his relationships with others.

Vanier relates numerous stories of his relationships with his fellow community members at L'Arche. When recounting his experiences he customarily provides the name of the person of whom he is speaking along with details regarding that person's life. Particularly when referring to persons who have disabilities, he consistently stresses the attributes and personality of the person over their disability. Each story he shares is located in the specific and the personal, in specific times and places with unique persons. It is through reflection on the aggregation of those particular relationships that Vanier is able to state, "By one of those mysteries of life, I was drawn to people with disabilities. Through living with them, sharing with them, laughing with them, struggling with them, praying with them and working with them I have been transformed".[110]

Vanier maintains that extending hospitality to the stranger not only transforms the host but also those with whom she shares social space. Thus new opportunities are created for critical appraisal of the self or society, lending to further possibilities for change. "When we enter into a personal relationship with those who are different or on the fringes of society, it is amazing how we are able to look more critically at our own culture. We begin to see the deep prejudices that exist".[111] Once located, efforts can be made to break down those barriers that keep people apart from one another,

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[108] 'Public life' is terminology specifically used by Palmer.
[109] Palmer, 68.
[110] Vanier, *Encountering 'the Other',* 15.
[111] Vanier, *Becoming Human,* 95.

barriers that further exclusion or marginalization. Vanier explains, "As we open up to others and allow ourselves to be concerned with their condition, then the society in which we live must also change and become more open".[112]

In this manner, relationships are understood as the media for hospitality. Vanier suggests that vital to the formation of hospitable relationships is the willingness on the part of the host to listen attentively to his guest. He emphasizes the importance of listening in creating the space necessary for a guest to feel at ease:

> It is important to discover what it means to listen to others, to understand them, to understand how people function. It's not easy to see how another person functions. There is no point in just telling people what to do. We must discover how to enter into each other's story so that there is dialogue and mutual trust. That is a beginning.[113]

The gifting of this space to the guest takes substantial effort on the part of the host. It is not merely a decision to let another into one's home but a concerted action.

> To welcome is not just something that happens as people cross the threshold. It is an attitude; it is the constant openness of the heart; it is saying to people every morning and at every moment, 'come in;' it is giving the space; it is listening to them attentively.[114]

The gift of opening one's heart, or home, provides the space necessary for the real needs of the guest to be distinguished and, thus, for the reciprocal giving of hospitality to occur.

Vanier ascribes to each human person a capacity for giving meaningfully to others, particularly those whom, in large part, society designates as worthless, such as the people with mental handicaps with whom he lives. He attributes the development of this perspective to a young Jewish woman who died in Auschwitz named Etty Hillesum. Vanier read in her diary of the compassion she felt for a Gestapo officer who had insulted her. The story of her actions impacted Vanier's understanding of the human capacity to relate to those who are radically separated from ones' self, or

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[112] Vanier, *Becoming Human,* 6.
[113] Vanier, *Encountering 'the Other,'* 37.

put another way, the potential of persons to relate to strangers. He describes Etty as one of the most influential women in his life. Vanier speaks of her, "She… had a deep sense of who the human person is. What makes a human person the sacred reality that person is? Her deepest belief was that each person is a 'house' where God resides… She had a deep sense of the beauty of each person; she felt that each one was carrying the mystery of God in a capacity to be, to love and be loved".[115]

For Vanier, the theological significance of Christian hospitality is located precisely in the welcoming of Christ's presence into our homes. He admits that for Christians this can be difficult to grasp.

> People often prefer to keep Jesus in the churches and places of worship, where they can go and see him from time to time, when they feel like it or when they feel the need. But to have Jesus in their home – which is also the home of their hearts – this is harder to accept. When we welcome Jesus into our "home," he transforms us and he transforms our way of living.[116]

Here Vanier is specifically addressing a limited approach exercised by many Christians regarding the possibilities of where God could be located or found. He is critical of the notion that Christ is found only inside the building of the church, or even within the 'membership' of the church—those who would self-identify as Christians. Clearly for Vanier this is not so. As Christ is the stranger, so he is found wherever the stranger is located, be it inside a church building, down the street at the school building, inside the nearest prison or halfway around the world in a country or village unknown to us.

For his part, Vanier also offers a gentle criticism concerning churches. He suggests that too often churches are not synonymous with the home. They are not places of welcome and they are not safe places to be welcomed into. He is speaking here of the extant church comprised of actual congregations; churches made up of

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[114] Vanier, *Community and Growth,* 267.
[115] Vanier, *Encountering 'the Other'*, 29.
[116] Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger*, 22.

particular people; churches that have a place, a location in the world. Vanier has a vision of churches-as-places being spaces into which the stranger can be welcomed. He has a vision of churches being home.

> In the midst of all the violence and corruption of the world God invites us today to create new places of belonging, places of sharing, of peace and of kindness, places where no-one needs to defend himself or herself; places where each one is loved and accepted with one's own fragility, abilities and disabilities. This is my vision for our churches: that they become places of belonging, places of sharing.[117]

Vanier's reflections on hospitality arise primarily through his experiences at L'Arche. He does not write specifically from a congregational setting. That is not to say that his work is not relevant at the congregational level. I would suggest that not only is Vanier's understanding of hospitality applicable at the local church level, but that revisiting his work can assist in re-locating hospitality within a theological framework whereby hospitality can be seen as necessary to the activities of the church. As this thesis is concerned with hospitality at the congregational setting, I propose to briefly consider several concerns regarding contemporary renderings of hospitality and the local church before moving on toward my specific research with congregations.

CONSIDERING CHURCHES

Ultimately this thesis is concerned with the significance of hospitality for the church. By church, I am referring to both the catholic and ecumenical church and to individual churches or congregations.[118] Towards this end I have made an enquiry into contemporary accounts of hospitality to help determine what it actually *is* and what significance it has for Christian theology.

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[117] Vanier, *Befriending the Stranger*, 12.

[118] Church can also refer to specific denominations or groups of churches. As this thesis is concerned with the church in a catholic and ecumenical sense, in the case of specific denominations I will utilize their particular names. Thus, the church refers to either the church universal or a specific congregation. For a more specific definition of catholic church I will depend upon Healy's definition that reads, "the

In summary, hospitality can be said to be a set of actions that occur between and among persons. It is specifically an interaction that is comprised of the following components: invitation and welcome, the unconditional gifting of home, and reciprocal giving from the guest. It is a fourfold movement that includes the act of extending outward to welcome another into our home, and its resultant complement, that by welcoming another in, our home is opened outward.

While there has been a recent resurgence of theological interest regarding hospitality, I have suggested that current accounts risk the danger of being unable to define what the act of hospitality is, thus confusing the study of it. I have also suggested that there is a demonstrated lack of cohesive and consistent theological understanding supporting a Christian reading of hospitality, particularly by Pohl, a recent authority on the subject.

Jean Vanier continues to be a source for contemporary research into hospitality. Vanier's life and writing have influenced the development of current pursuits on the subject. Both his work and the communities of L'Arche remain as examples of a particular aspect of the church's activities. In light of what I have proposed are problems in the field, I have suggested a return to Vanier's work in order to locate a Christian enquiry into hospitality in a cogent theological framework. Central to Vanier's thinking is the understanding that Christ himself is present, via his Spirit, in the hospitable interaction, between and among people in relationship.

Vanier and Pohl use their own experiences and the experiences of others as the basis for their research and writing. They both address the concrete activities of the church but from the specific setting of community living. While their contributions to Christian consideration of hospitality are invaluable, what has resulted is a gap

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word 'church' refers to all those diverse Christian groups who accept what is sometimes cumbersomely called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed." Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life,* 6.

wherein hospitable action at the congregational level is potentially overlooked. If hospitality is viewed primarily in terms of being exercised by specific organizations or agencies, it is not difficult to conceive how it could be considered merely an optional extra at the congregational level.

In his article "Church for Others," ecclesiologist Ottmar Fuchs presents a picture of the need for churches to be engaging in concrete activities of service. While Fuchs refers to the broad category of service, for the purposes of this study we will consider service specifically in terms of hospitality. At the heart of Fuchs' concerns lies the notion that the church's identity itself is established through service to others. In support of his thesis, he cites Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "The Church is only the Church when it is there for other people".[119] Expanding on Bonhoeffer's statement, Fuchs asserts,

> The Church, that is to say, is only the Church when it helps those who need help, and helps the helpers to help, and when it liberates the oppressed and helps the liberators in their task of liberation; and all this is irrespective of who these 'others' are. This is the praxis in which the Church is authentically the Church, because its identity comes into being through service.[120]

Fuch's claim that the church's identity is constituted through its acts of service reflects Healy's own position regarding the church:

> It is thus not unreasonable to describe the concrete church, at least initially, more in terms of agency rather than in terms of being. Its identity is constituted by action. That identity is thoroughly theological, for it is constituted by the activity of the Holy Spirit, without which is cannot exist. But it is also constituted by the activities of its members as they live out their lives of discipleship.[121]

In these instances, both men are referring to the church as a whole. Essentially, what they are proposing is that the church is not a fixed *thing*. It has an existence though history, the past, present and future. The church is changeable. It is continually being constituted in each moment of its existence, or perhaps it is better

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[119] Dietrich Bonhoeffer as quoted in Ottmar Fuchs, "Church for Others," in *Concilium: Diakonia: Church for Others*, eds. Norbert Greinacher and Norbery Mette (Edinburgh: T&T Press, 1988), 41.
[120] Ibid., 42.
[121] Healy, *Church World and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, 5.

stated as being re-constituted in every moment through time. Christ instituted the church through his actions in the world. As Christians, we are being the church whenever we do or perform these actions that Christ has instituted. When we celebrate the Eucharist, which Christ instituted, we are *being* the church. When we visit those in prison, we are *being* the church. When we minister to the sick, spend time with the lonely, welcome the stranger, we are constituting the church in that moment.

The understanding of church both as a way of being and as constituted via its actions is reflected in the work of noted ecclesiologist John Zizioulas. Zizioulas begins his seminal work, *Being as Communion*, with the following statement, "The Church is not simply an institution. She is a 'mode of existence,' a *way of being*. The mystery of the Church, even in its institutional dimension, is deeply bound to the being of man, to the being of the world, and to the very being of God".[122] Zizioulas eschews a conception of the church as a group of individuals who share a certain set of beliefs. Rather, the church *is* the Body of Christ present in the world as realized through the ministry.[123]

> Thus the expression: 'the ministry *of* the Church' is not to be understood in the sense of a possessive genitive. The being of the Church does not precede her actions or ministries. Charismatic life (i.e. concrete ministries) is constitutive of and not derivative from the Church's being. The question whether 'essence' precedes 'existence' or not should not be introduced into ecclesiology; it is rather along the lines of *simultaneity* of the two that we must understand the Church.[124]

As the church is constituted via the actions Christ has established and instituted, so do the actions of Jesus' lifetime take on an added significance. It is not uncommon for the stories and experiences of Jesus to be given secondary or lesser consideration after the mysteries of the cross, resurrection and ascension. The accounts of Christ's

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[122] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 15.
[123] Ibid., 211.
[124] Ibid., 217.

life and actions primarily depict his relationships with those around him. Jesus' own parables are stories of relationships. For Zizioulas, the church as *a way of being* is also constituted via relationships.[125] As Fuchs advances,

> Yet if we look at the Jesus Christ of whom the gospels tell, we have surely to perceive that what he says about the kingdom of God and about God himself is said pre-eminently in the context of encounters in which he has already acted, as healer; or where he has entered into dispute on behalf of the poor and despised.[126]

Hospitality is not an optional extra for the church. Through stories of Jesus' actual experiences and the experiences he depicts of others, he establishes hospitality as the manner of relating to others throughout the Gospels. By his own actions he institutes hospitality as the *way* to relate with the stranger, with one who is different. Hospitality is the *way* of relationships.

Chiefly, Fuchs is interested in the church at the congregational level. While he supports the institutions and organizations that engage in the church's ministry, he is concerned for congregations that participate in little to no direct service. He suggests that there is a need for activities that fall between the professional organizations of the church and the context in which people live.[127] He addresses the consequences of the isolated church that has little contact with the stranger in need:

> Because there is so little social contact with the handicapped, the distressed, and those suffering from discrimination, we lose the particular 'competences' which these people have to offer and can claim, for a perception of what the Gospel means and for the beginnings of a practical realisation of the kingdom of God.[128]

Fuchs is not disposed to consider service as a way of expanding church membership and is highly critical of ministry that is conditional upon a recipient's entering the "institutional and ideological fold of the church".[129] Likewise, he is also sceptical of congregational service that takes only the form of financial donations, questioning the

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[125] Ibid., 15.
[126] Fuchs, 50.
[127] Ibid., 45.
[128] Ibid., 46.
[129] Ibid., 43.

effects on the particular parish. He suggests that congregations can become insular, isolated from the needs of others and the world around them.

Rather, Fuchs is interested in encounter and in the breaking down of barriers that exist between people. He calls for congregations to actively seek out opportunities for ministry.

> …Christians and congregations are, in principle and from the outset, 'the neighbour' of people in need; and they have to seek these people out, and discover where they are (Luke 10:36). It is not for the person in need to force himself on the congregation's attention first of all, proving that he is their neighbour. They have to discover *him*, since they have made the fundamental existential decision that they will be the neighbours of the suffering.[130]

Correspondingly, I would suggest that the same injunction applies with regard to hospitality. Churches should actively seek out different ways by which they can welcome the stranger. Hospitality is not optional for the church; it is a necessity. Just as Christ is present as the stranger is welcomed into our homes, so should churches be the location of home where Christ can be found.

The objective of the following chapters will be to explore hospitality from the specific perspective of churches. To this end, I have chosen as the topic for this study one particular form of hospitality that has been historically situated in the life of the church for over fifty years, that of refugee resettlement.[131] The crux of my research takes the form of case studies conducted with congregations that have actively provided hospitality to refugees as they are in the process of being permanently resettled in a new country. Each case study is based upon interviews with members of congregations who have helped to resettle specific families. It is my intention that their experiences and stories will contribute to building an account of hospitality from a particularly congregational perspective. From this location, I will reflect upon the

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[130] Ibid., 49.

[131] It could reasonably be argued that the church has always been active in refugee resettlement. It has certainly always participated in providing aid to refugees, but refugee resettlement can be defined as a specific act making it more amenable to this study.

theological import of hospitality, particularly in light of Vanier, and the significance it has in the congregational setting.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHURCH AND REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

The world is experiencing a refugee crisis. There are approximately 13,948,800 refugees and asylum seekers in the world today.[132] As westerners, we are confronted with this crisis daily. On the television we watch the overwhelming atrocities taking place in Darfur where millions have been displaced and continue to suffer inhumane conditions due to fighting amongst factions and raiders. In newspapers we read about *invasions* of refugees and asylum seekers *overwhelming* our cities and towns, taking away jobs and *taking advantage* of our social services. We hear the cries of politicians as they demand *stricter* and *tighter* policies regarding admissions of refugees across borders. Refugees have been depicted as possible *terrorists*, as *opportunists* and as *threats* to our very livelihoods.[133]

Amidst this rhetoric regarding the world's refugees, human responses of compassion and genuine desire to assist the people caught up in these circumstances are getting lost. The more we continue to discuss issues concerning refugees out of a context of fear, the more we perpetuate the dehumanization of these millions of

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[132] This grand total of 13,948,800 breaks down into the following totals by region: Americas and the Caribbean 648,900; East Asia and the Pacific 953,500; Europe 569,200; South and Central Asia 2,914,200; Africa 2,932,000; and the Middle East 5,931,000. USCRI. "Table 2: Refugees and Asylum Seekers Worldwide," *World Refugee Survey 2007* (Washington DC: USCRI, 2007), 2-3. Ferris states that of the all the sources providing data on refugees, "the USCR(I) is generally recognized as having the most reliable statistics." Elizabeth Ferris, *Beyond Borders: Refugees, Migrants and Human Rights in the Post-Cold War Era* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), 93. I would agree with Ferris that the USCR's statistics are widely accepted as the most accurate of sources. Note, the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR) changed its name in 2005 to U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI).

[133] For examples of refugees being equated with terrorists see, Ruud Lubbers, "After September 11: New Challenges to Refugee Protection." in U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 2003* (Washington DC: USCRI, 2003), 1-6; Jennie Pasquarella and Mia F. Cohen, "Victims of Terror Stopped at the Gate of Safety," *Immigration Law Today* (July-August 2006), 16-25; BBC World News, "Refugees 'Victims Not Terrorists'," updated 20 June 2005, accessed 18 March 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4110452.stm>.

people who are genuinely suffering. Consequentially, the more we strip these individuals of their personhood and their identities, the less we are able to envision creative solutions to their particular and corporate travails. We become increasingly distant from the notion that we, as caring individuals, have either the ability or capacity to help.

Current perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers have developed since the time when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was first established. The UNHCR came in to existence in order to assist the refugees produced by the Second World War. It has through time become the established international authority regarding the safety and well being of refugees across the globe. Significantly, it is important to note that the UNHCR has no real political authority. It merely serves to coordinate the international community regarding concerns for refugees and remains dependent upon the attitudes and policies of individual countries in order to mobilise protection and assistance for these fragile communities. As state sentiments and policies regarding refugees become more hostile, the UNHCR becomes less able to provide the support and relief needed to resolve refugee crises.

As conditions worsen for refugees awaiting solutions to the circumstances that have forced them to flee, the measures the UNHCR may employ to protect them decrease. While resettlement of refugees to countries other than their own was a preferred solution for refugees during the Cold War, the UNHCR is unable to exercise this option as countries become less willing to allow refugees within their borders. For many refugees, the UNHCR has determined that resettlement stands as the only viable solution to their particular circumstances. But even with this determination,

these refugees find little hope as there are fewer and fewer countries willing to accept them.

Christian churches have long been involved in providing assistance and protection to refugees. Since before the founding the UNCHR, churches have proven instrumental in relieving the plight of those driven from their homes for fear for their lives. With the simultaneous founding of both the United Nations (UN) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), Christian churches and organisations became more coordinated in their international efforts to assist refugees. The WCC has played an instrumental role in the process of establishing Christian churches as effective participants in the delivery of services to refugees. This precedence for Christian church involvement with refugees has extended to the U.S. where denominations and congregations work together via ecumenical and interfaith networks in order to assist refugees in their plight.

The U.S. remains the leader among the few countries in the world that still accept refugees for permanent resettlement. Christian churches, and those which comprise Church World Service (CWS), play a crucial role in the United States Refugee Program (USRP), particularly with regard to resettlement. The federal government has recognised the importance of church involvement to the success of the USRP. Legally, every refugee or refugee family must have a designated sponsor in order to be resettled in the U.S. The USRP has allowed congregations to act as named sponsors. Through its constituency base, CWS organizes congregations to act as sponsors in order to assist refugees as they begin their new lives in their new country of residence.

For many refugees, resettlement often brings further upheaval to an already traumatic set of experiences. Sponsorship is designed to facilitate and ease the

transition of refugees during resettlement. CWS provides a model for congregations to use in order to assist them in developing their sponsorship. The sponsorship model outlines services and tasks that need to be accomplished as part of the resettlement process. Some of these services meet the legal requirements of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for resettlement and others reflect the accumulated wisdom of years of experience with congregational sponsorship. The model provides a framework and materials with which churches are encouraged to develop an active ministry with refugees. Sponsorship is designed to enable refugees to find the one thing they need most after flight, a community and a place to call home.

This chapter sets out to explore the historic relationship between Protestant churches and the UNHCR that has led to the practical application of the sponsorship model used by CWS for resettlement in the U.S. Throughout the chapter I maintain that there is an historical precedence for the Christian church in the arena of international refugee resettlement. I begin with a brief history of the UNHCR and a description of its capacity to provide protection to refugees. Critical to understanding refugee issues at an international level is an explanation of the accepted definition of who can and cannot be accorded refugee status by UNHCR guidelines. Within this general context I will address shifts in international attitudes and state policies over time regarding resettlement as an option for refugees. I will observe how these attitudes and policies have shifted after September 11th 2001.

I will then attempt to provide an understanding of the difficulties facing refugees that extend beyond political definitions by addressing several experiences basic to refugee life. I will discuss three commonalities all refugees share, namely, a need for safety, the presence of fear, and a desire to return home. From this perspective I will engage with specific challenges confronting refugees which illustrate the extreme

nature of their travails. Finally, I will return to the UNHCR to examine the options available to end the continued suffering of refugees with particular reference to resettlement as a viable solution.

The next section will relocate these considerations in the context of the church. From this context I will explore the history of the WCC's involvement in refugee relief with special attention given to three areas: first, to its role in establishing the Christian church as an active participant in international refugee assistance; second, to the significance of the WCC's close relationship with the UN for the Christian community; finally, to its activities in forming ecumenical relationships that have contributed to building an international network of churches involved with refugee issues. From this point I will examine the role of churches in their capacity as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and their functions within the USRP resettlement process.

Finally, to situate these considerations at the congregational level, I will examine the mechanisms of sponsorship as they relate to the delivery of practical assistance to refugees. Specifically I will explore the model of sponsorship used by CWS congregations during resettlement. I will conclude this chapter by reflecting on the pragmatic implications of church sponsorship in the lives of refugees.

UNDERSTANDING THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE COMMUNITY

What is the UNHCR?

The UNHCR is the specific agency of the UN whose purpose is to oversee the international community in providing protection and assistance to the world's refugees. The role of the UNHCR is one of coordination. The UNHCR itself has no direct governing authority. Rather, it sets the norms and standards regarding the

rights and well-being of refugees which governments adhering to UNHCR conventions agree to uphold. In turn, each participating government formulates its own refugee policy and laws that align with UNHCR guidelines. While the UNHCR does not determine individual state policies regarding the treatment of refugees, it does monitor compliance to agreed-upon international standards.[134] The real power of the UNHCR lies in its capacity to make judgements and challenge state policies regarding the mistreatment of refugees and abuse of refugee conventions. The capacity to hold governments accountable endows the UNHCR with political leverage and provides the organization with a unique position to negotiate for resolution in arenas of conflict.

The United Nation's 1951 Geneva Convention and its subsequent 1967 Protocol direct the UNHCR's efforts in the protection of refugees. The 1951 Geneva Convention establishes the guidelines for determining the status of refugees and assures the rights and well-being of people in flight. Foremost of these rights are "the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state and to return home voluntarily".[135] The overall goal of UNHCR efforts is to provide lasting solutions for people who qualify for refugee status. The UNHCR not only assists these people as

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[134] For the purposes of this research I will be using the terms state, government, and country interchangeably . In essence these terms refer to the formal political organization of a people. The state is a region with a government; it has particular boundaries, or country boundaries, and it can be mapped. I group these terms loosely together in order to distinguish them from an understanding of the word nation. "Nations are social and cultural entities, groups of people who share common language, history, ethnic background, religion or culture." (See William Shawcross, *Deliver Us From Evil: Warlords and Peacekeepers in a World of Endless Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001), 27-28) Ultimately states are not nations and nations are not states. Countries and governments have closer ties to nationhood but must also be distinguished from it. This distinction will be relevant throughout this thesis.

[135] UNHCR, "What Rights does a Refugee Have?" *Who is a Refugee: Basic Facts* (Geneva: UNHCR 2002), accessed 27 October 2002 <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/basics/>. The rights referred to include the position whereby refugees are afforded the same basic rights as any foreigner who is a legal resident of the particular country of asylum. These rights vary from country to country but include freedom of thought and movement and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. Refugees are also afforded basic economic and social rights including access to medical care, schooling, housing, legal protection and employment. See Arthur C. Helton, *The Price of Indifference: Refugees and Humanitarian Action in the New Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 123.

they flee from persecution but aids in helping refugees either return to their home country or resettle in another country.

Who, then, is able to qualify for the status of *refugee*? This designation is often misconstrued. Many people associate the term with people who are victims of natural disasters, famine and economic hardship. In actuality, in order to be considered a refugee by the UNHCR one must meet two set criteria.[136] According to the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol, a refugee is:

> Any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.[137]

Therefore, from the start, a refugee must be able to establish that she has a *well-founded fear* for her life and that she is not able to find protection within her own country. In order to establish a well-founded fear, that individual must provide verifiable grounds of personal persecution which threatens her life, and this proof must be provided during an official interview with the UNHCR or an associated representative. An important aspect in understanding the term well-founded fear, as it applies to individuals, is that the person under consideration must be able to prove she has been singled out for persecution and cannot obtain safety from the auspices of her state. It is not enough to be able to prove that one lives in a violent or dangerous area, perhaps in the middle of a conflict zone. In order for an individual to be considered a refugee, that person must prove how she, specifically, is targeted for persecution. In exceptional circumstances, the UNCHR will allow for entire groups of people to be eligible for refugees status; this is referred to as conferring *group status*. In this

[136] It is important to note that individual states can also confer refugee status. While for the most part the method for determination is similar or the same, there are differences that vary from country to country. For the purposes of this study we will focus on the UNHCR as the norm or standard.

instance, establishing a well-founded fear may merely mean establishing membership or affiliation with a particular religious, ethnic, or political group.

The second criteria to be met in order to be considered a refugee is that this person cannot be dwelling in his country of origin when applying for refugee status. The terminology *country of origin* refers to a person's home country or state. In other words, a refugee must be able to prove the case that her life is threatened due to persecution and must do this in a country other than her home country. Therefore, a person who leaves his home due to economic hardship or natural disaster, even if these factors may threaten their lives, would not be considered a refugee since that person is not directly experiencing persecution. That person would fall under such categories as economic migrant, vulnerable person, or displaced person. A great number of people who are eligible for refugee status on the basis of a provable well founded fear are not considered refugees because they remain in their country of origin. These people are specifically referred to as internally displaced people. Many internally displaced people remain in their own countries after finding long-distance travel to international borders too difficult or too dangerous to undertake. The particularly vulnerable, namely women, the elderly, disabled persons and small children, are more likely to remain in their countries as internally displaced people since it may be too difficult, or they may be unable, to travel.[138]

The Capacity of the UNHCR to Protect Refugees

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[137] UNHCR, *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*, Revised edition (Geneva: UNHCR, January 1992), 39.
[138] Ferris, 13.

Currently 147 countries have ratified either or both the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol.[139] One could assume that with such a high degree of international state support, the UNHCR would find itself in a position of great power regarding its negotiation capacity and ability to rally the international community around refugee crises. But in actuality, UNHCR operations are hampered by machinations of political and bureaucratic complexity. The functioning of the UNHCR is not simple, nor has its history reflected a consistency in attitudes toward refugees and their protection.

One cannot understand the operational capacity of the UNHCR without a basic understanding of the United Nations (UN). Like the UNHCR, the UN was created to be a non-political forum for international relations. It has no law making capacity or direct ability to enforce its decisions. It merely facilitates international dialogue and coordinates international responses to global crises. Currently, nearly every country in the world belongs to the UN amounting to a total of 192 members.[140] The UN is made up of six organising bodies, which include: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the Secretariat and the International Court of Justice. The Secretary General heads the Secretariat and is the most public figure of the UN. The Secretary General is often the chief negotiator in times of conflict. The Security Council is responsible for maintaining peace and international security. It has five permanent members: the U.S., China, Britain, France and Russia, each of whom have the power to veto any decision made by the Security Council. The General Assembly constitutes the entirety of the member states and meets once a year to discuss relevant issues. It functions similarly

[139] UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, in English (Geneva: UNHCR, September 2007), 7.

to a parliament. Issues of civil society and development, including the UN Commission on Human Rights, fall under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. These branches of the UN work in conjunction on a variety of issues which directly impact the work of the UNHCR in both positive and negative respects.

The UNHCR, however, is technically a program of the UN and reports to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. It is led by an Executive Committee and the High Commissioner who, like the UN Secretary General, is a highly public figure. When considering how the UNHCR functions one has to remember that the UNHCR is a coordinating and organising body. In order to accomplish tasks and provide assistance and protection to refugees, the UNHCR works closely with two separate sets of organizations.

The first of these is the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The IOM was founded in conjunction with the UNHCR in order to oversee the operational side of refugee migration. The IOM is not a UN agency but handles the technical side of refugee resettlement including working out financial details, making travel arrangements, providing medical screenings and ensuring reception upon a refugees arrival.[141]

The second is a collection of entities known as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). NGOs are exactly that—organisations which do not represent state bodies; they are non-governmental. NGOs include charities, non-profit organisations, humanitarian organisations and, in some cases, special interest groups. Two examples of NGOs that act in partnership with the UNHCR are the International Red Cross and Red Crescent, which operate refugee camps and provide direct aid to

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[140] United Nations, Department of Public Information, *United Nations Member States: Lists of Member States* (Geneva: United Nations, 2007), accessed 1 September 2007 <http://www.un.org/members/list.shtml>.
[141] Ibid., 29.

refugees, and Médecins Sans Frontières, which provides medical support in refugee camps. The UNHCR annually signs over 500 partnership agreements with NGOs to carry out its mandate to protect refugees.[142]

Even though UNHCR partnerships are facilitated through NGO coordinating bodies, the amount of organization needed to implement refugee protection is monumental. Arthur Helton, the former human rights lawyer and refugee advocate killed in the 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, describes this scale of coordination as "an inside bureaucratic game with profound outside human consequences. The term 'coordination' is defined as the harmonious functioning of parts for effective results. In the context of international humanitarian action, the stakes are particularly high".[143] Helton goes on to explain that senior UN officials "sometimes refer to coordination as the 'C' word" and that one U.S. State Department Official proffered that "we should ban the word's use for a decade".[144] While the UNHCR must work to coordinate with NGOs, which implement actual protection for refugees, it must also work within the coordinating body of the UN to obtain approval for its actions. To make matters more complicated, unlike other programs of the UN, the UNHCR is funded primarily from direct, voluntary contributions from governments, NGOs and individuals.

Due to its responsibilities to each of the organisations with which it must coordinate, the UNHCR is placed in a delicate position regarding its ability to protect refugees. Gil Loescher, Senior Research Fellow at the Oxford Centre for International Studies and retired Emeritus Professor of political science at Notre

[142] UNHCR, "Non-Governmental Organisations," *Donors/Partners* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2002), accessed 27 October 2002 <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/partners/>.
[143] Helton, 201.
[144] Ibid.

Dame, is widely accepted as an expert on the UNHCR and refugee issues.[145] Loescher suggests that assistance to refugees has been largely constrained to reactive responses concerning refugee problems rather than being proactive in terms of preventing refugee crises from occurring.[146] He explains that in order to initiate relief operations, the UNHCR must have permission from the country of asylum and subsequently raise money from donor governments. These donor governments may place constraints on how, when and if aid may be provided. Therefore, the UNHCR is limited in criticising or protesting the refugee policies of both the asylum country and its donor sources because it must maintain coordination. Furthermore, decisions of asylum and how refugees are treated remain the prerogative of individual states, and this also limits the level and amount of criticism the UNHCR can reasonably present.

Shifts in International Attitudes Regarding Refugee Resettlement

For over eighty years the international community has sustained an abiding interest in assisting and protecting refugees. But while the interest has remained, the motivations for assisting refugees and the extent to which states have become involved in this endeavour have changed throughout the years. Shifts in state attitudes and policies toward refugees have influenced the common perceptions of societies and individuals regarding refugees and their needs. In turn, these perceptions reflect back and drive the formation of altered state attitudes and policies. Whether policy or perception occurred first is not the subject of this discourse. What remains significant is the declining interest of states to become involved in refugee

[145] Loescher lost both his legs in the same bombing that took Arthur Helton's life and is most highly regarded in the international refugee community.
[146] Gil Loescher, " Introduction," in *Refugees and International Relations*, eds. Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 18-19.

assistance and ultimately in refugee resettlement. The history of declining interest in refugee assistance can be broken down into three phases.

The first phase includes the period just before and after WWII, when the UNHCR was formed. As early as 1921, the League of Nations appointed a High Commissioner to assist with the refugee crises which was then arising in Europe. After going through several incarnations and competing with other refugee relief agencies, the United Nations appointed its first High Commissioner in 1950. The actual founding of the UNHCR occurred in response to the refugee populations produced as a consequence of WWII. The UNHCR at this time was European-focused.[147] It was originally set up with a three-year mandate to help with post-war reconstruction and humanitarian aid. The UNHCR was never intended to become a permanent agency.[148] Refugees displaced by the war consisted primarily of Eastern Europeans, many of whom were liberated from concentration camps. The number of refugees amounted to approximately 20 to 30 million, a much larger total than was expected.[149] Due to these vast numbers, considerations were given to permanently resettle a portion of these refugees in countries other than their home country or country of asylum. This position was considered tenable due to the ease of immigration to the U.S. at the time and the expectation that these culturally homogenous refugees would fit in well within their resettlement countries.[150] The policies and attitudes of the time were generous and resettlement of refugees was viewed in a positive, humanitarian light.

The next phase in international refugee assistance was ushered in by the onset of the Cold War. Refugees and refugee policies became politicised during the Cold War.

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[147] Gervase Coles, " Approaching the Refugee Problem Today," in *Refugees and International Relations*, eds. Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 375.
[148] In fact, the UNHCR is still considered a somewhat temporary agency with its mandate renewed periodically.

Refugees were viewed as assets and resettlement continued to be encouraged and held in favour by the West. During this period, from the 1960s through the early 1980s, international politics were viewed in terms of the dichotomy of democracy and communism, or from the western perspective as good versus evil. The U.S. and U.S.S.R. competed to build up allies in a rivalry based on differing ideologies and a shared fear that the other would gain control of the international political sphere. At the beginning of the Cold War, refugee migration tended to move from Soviet and communist countries to the West. Refugees were viewed as instruments of the Cold War and defection from the East to the West was encouraged.[151] Loescher illustrates, "Refugees fleeing communism were portrayed as 'voting with their feet.'"[152] Permanent resettlement became the preferred option as repatriation was seen as incompatible with foreign policy objectives. It was only during the late 1960s and 1970s that concern with refugees spread from Europe and the U.S.S.R. to include the Third World. Loescher describes the political climate of this time: "Throughout the Third World, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. competed to build up local allies and, through economic aid, political support and weapons deliveries, constructed a range of client regimes which included not only governments but also liberation regimes".[153]

At the end of the Cold War, attitudes toward refugees shifted as the number of refugees produced by the Third World grew. This period of time witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union and change around the world as colonies of western powers gained their independence. While on the surface these changes may appear as victories for peoples around the world struggling under imposed rule, in actuality they mark the beginning of a new era of conflict and confusion across the globe. With the

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[149] Gil Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 34.
[150] Loescher, " Introduction," 29.
[151] Helton, 185; Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics*, 7-11; Loescher, "Introduction," 16.

dissolution of overt colonialism and the U.S.S.R., formerly controlled territories were free to finally govern themselves, though often with the assistance of their former colonizers. Borders which had separated areas of governance came into dispute as practical differences between nation and state began to emerge. Colonial and Soviet borders had often failed to take into account identities of nations and peoples. When imposed governance was lifted, questions over these borders became issues of national identity. Elizabeth Ferris, former staff member of the WCC's International Affairs Peace & Human Security Team and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Foreign Policy Studies Program, explains the impact of questionable boundaries in terms of refugee trends:

> [national] migrations were identified as refugee movements only when [state] boundaries were drawn. The establishment of [state] borders—particularly when existing cultural and ethnic settlement patterns were not taken into account—has created monumental political problems leading to mass refugee movements. These refugee movements are very different from those of earlier eras.[154]

As the numbers of refugees from Third World countries grew, the West became less and less interested in providing resettlement as an option for refugee solutions. Whereas refugee resettlement was encouraged during the Cold War, repatriation became the theme of the 90s.[155] Governments became more concerned with keeping refugees safe *near their homes*. Interest in humanitarian issues began to play a larger role in international politics and humanitarian aid increased as the UNHCR began to handle refugee crises in the regions in which they occured. Refugees started to

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[152] Gil Loescher, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Domestic and International Security Implications* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 24.
[153] Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics*, 10.
[154] Ferris, 11. For clarity I have replaced her use of the word nation with state where appropriate, differentiating between "nations of people" and "governmental bodies."
[155] Helton, 177; Loescher, 17; Ferris, 101.

become issues of security as more asylum seekers became more and more mobile.[156] Hence, refugees were increasingly seen as burdens. As Loescher describes, "Thus at the end of the twentieth century, refugees became a symbol of system overload, instead of what was always best in the Western liberal tradition".[157] Refugees had made the transition from being considered an asset to a liability.

Yet the refugee crisis continues to worsen. According to the 2007 U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) annual World Refugee Survey, there were 13,948,800 refugees and asylum seekers in the world for the year 2006.[158] Many persons represented by that figure can also be considered as having lived under, what the UNHCR refers to as, *protracted refugee situations*.[159] A protracted refugee situation is

> one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance.[160]

A protracted refugee situation includes the requisite that the refugees involved have been living under these conditions for at least 5 years, specifically in developing countries.

The term *protracted refugee situation* has only come into usage in recent years. Emerging alongside this phrase is the term *warehousing*. Warehousing is often used interchangeably with protracted refugee situation, but holds a slightly different meaning. It focuses more closely on the immobility of the refugees in

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[156] Loescher, 12-13.
[157] Ibid.,16.
[158] USCRI. "Table 2: Refugees and Asylum Seekers Worldwide," *World Refugee Survey 2007*, 3.
[159] The UNHCR estimates that in 2004 there were over 9.2 million persons living under protracted refugee conditions, a figure representing over 61 percent of the world's refugee population. UNCHR, "Protracted Refugee Situations: The Search for Practical Solutions," *State of the World's Refugees 2006: Human Displacement in the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2006), 109.
[160] UNHCR, "Protracted Refugee Situations," *Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Standing Committee, 30th Meeting*, UN Doc. EC/54/SC/CRP.14, 10 June 2004, 2, quoted in both: UNCHR, "Protracted Refugee Situations: The Search for Practical Solutions," 106.; and Loescher, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Domestic and International Security Implications,* 13.

question and refers to having lived in a protracted situation under restricted living conditions, such as in a camp or a settlement. In the words of Merrill Smith, the editor of World Refugee Survey since 2003, "Indeed, the key feature of warehousing is not so much the passage of time as the denial of rights".[161]

Bill Frelick, Refugee Policy director at Human Rights Watch, former director of USCRI and editor of the *Refugee World Survey*, opened the 2002 *World Refugee Survey* with a glimpse at what has become commonplace in the world of refugees:

> Living on the margins of unwilling host communities, often in overcrowded and fetid refugee camps, the long-term uprooted—including Afghans, Palestinians, Sudanese, Somalis, Iraqis, Angolans, Colombians, Eritreans, Azerbaijanis, Sahrawis, and Burmese—became the victims not only of the war and persecution that forced them from their homes, but of the neglect that kept them in misery and denied the hope of political settlements to resolve the underlying causes of their misfortune.[162]

The 2007 *World Refugee Survey* declares that in 2006, 8,809,700 refugees had experienced long term sequestration in refugee camps or settlements for 10 years or more.[163] For many refugees in today's world there is little hope that peace may someday be found and established at home. For a growing number of this population, the secondary, but equally fervent, hope to someday find *any* place that they might legitimately call home is also diminishing.

New Attitudes Regarding Refugee Resettlement

I would suggest that we are now transitioning into a fourth phase regarding international attitudes and policies toward refugees. Even before the September 11th 2001 events in New York City, refugees were increasingly viewed as threats to state

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[161] Merrill Smith, "Warehousing Refugees: A Denial of Rights, A Waste of Humanity," in *World Refugee Survey 2004*, (Washington DC: USCR, 2004), 51.
[162] Bill Frelick, "The Year in Review," in U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 2002* (Washington DC: USCR, 2002), accessed 25 February, 2003. <http://www.refugees.org/worldmap.aspx?subm=19&ssm=115&area=Investigate>.
[163] USCRI. "Warehoused Refugee Populations," *World Refugee Survey 2007*, 4.

security.[164] Since the Cold War, governments have developed more rigid and exacting policies regarding the admission of refugees and asylum seekers into their countries. These controls are being linked with heightened policies of state security.[165] More and more, there is a growing interest to keep refugees out or send them back home.[166] Kathleen Ptolemy of Inter-Church Aid describes the manifestations of exclusionist policies:

> In North America, Europe and South East Asia the "not welcome" signs are in prominent view for asylum seekers. Detention centres, movement and employment restrictions, incited racism and xenophobia, government propagated myths about economic refugees and job snatchers, and interdictions on the seas and airports prevail. The world, it seems, has grown tired of refugees but is still energetically pursuing the very policies and practices that will inevitably give rise to new refugee movements.[167]

These words of Kathleen Ptolemy were published in 1986. How much more do they ring true now?

Since September 11th 2001 refugee resettlement has ground to a near halt. Across the globe, the U.S. consistently resettles the largest number of refugees annually. Even so, for the year following September 11th 2001, the UNHCR reported that the U.S. took in a mere 26,317 refugees when the admissions ceiling had been set at 70,000.[168] Exclusion and stigmatisation of refugees only worsen when cycles of fear and perceived threats drive policy makers. Geneviève Jacques suggests that when alarmist fears promote links between foreigners and extremists or terrorists, which are then supported by the media, that eventually a *fortress mentality* of policies and attitudes are constructed to keep strangers out.[169]

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[164] September 11th is also significant for Chile as the Chilean coup d'état of 1973 occurred on the same day in September. Further use of September 11th refers to even that occurred in New York City in 2001.
[165] Leon Gordenker, *Refugees in International Politics* (Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1987), 141.
[166] Loescher, 18.
[167] Kathleen Ptolemy, "Ministering to the Uprooted," in *Refugees in the Age of Total War*, ed. Anna C. Bramwell (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1988), 108.
[168] Immigration and Refugee Services of America, *Refugee Reports* (vol. 23 December 2002), 9.
[169] Geneviève Jacques, "Confronting the Challenges of Exclusion," in *The Ecumenical Review* (vol. 46 1994), 330-1.

The media plays an important role in the shaping of state policies and attitudes. It has the power to affect the fate of refugees by two primary means. The first is by sensationalising the suffering experienced by refugees through the images they choose to portray. Mark Raper, former International Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service, writes, "Sensationalising human suffering (by CNN, and fund-raising releases by some NGOs) shows scant respect for the dignity of the refugees, distorts the reality of their situation and weakens the public's belief that solutions are possible".[170] These images may also have the effect of desensitising the public to the very human aspects of refugee life. The second power of the media lies not in what they portray but in what they do not cover.[171] Large scale humanitarian atrocities and conflicts may not manage to make headlines if the media judge that their constituents may not be interested or are experiencing compassion fatigue.[172] At other times stories are suppressed, or at least not encouraged, by states who may have interests in that particular region. The media is a powerful tool in shaping the mindsets of people. It can reinforce and even promote the fortress mentality to which Jacques refers.

We are entering a new phase of international refugee policy and attitudes toward resettlement. It is too early to predict what long term effects September 11th will have on refugees, the UNHCR, and the agencies who have committed to assisting and protecting them. If past and present trends continue, the numbers of refugees in the world will continue to rise while the options afforded them for a peaceful life will decline. In light of these circumstances, and in accordance with Smith's claim that

[170] Mark Raper, "The Cause of Forced Displacement: The Breakdown of Sustainable Global Community," in *Sedos Bulletin,* accessed 11 April 2002 <http://www.sedos.org/english/raper.htm>.
[171] Kenneth Slack, " Editorial Foreward," in *Hope in the Desert: The Churches' United Response to Human Need, 1944-1984*, ed. Kenneth Slack (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), xii.
[172] Shawcross, 376.

warehousing has "emerged as a de facto *fourth* and all-too-durable solution," one sees how few options are available for millions of refugees.[173] Ptolemy foretells,

> As resettlement and repatriation opportunities diminish the problems increase. Refugees rejected for resettlement linger on in growing despair for their future, social problems increase, and self reliance programs designed to help bridge the gap between flight and permanent resettlement become symbols of false hope.[174]

As concerns over protracted refugee situations gain prominence, it is clear that without further concerted effort on the part of the UNHCR, governments and NGOs, refugees will continue to live in despair.

REFUGEES AND THEIR OPTIONS

Life as a Refugee

Becoming a refugee is never a choice. Becoming a refugee is something that is forced upon a person. To look at it another way, becoming a refugee means that your life is ripped away from you; it is stolen and violated. Everything you know and everything that is familiar to you, everything that you love, is brutally taken from you or is suddenly situated beyond your reach. It is never a choice.

All refugees have three things in common. The first is the desire for safety. Any person who qualifies for refugee status is at risk of losing their life. It is this basic need for safety that forces husbands to abandon their wives and children so as to remove the threat to their lives. It is this need that forces sons and daughters to leave elderly and failing parents so that some of their family might have life. This need for

[173] Smith, 38.
[174] Ptolemy, 113.

safety has even forced parents to lose or become separated from their young children with no hope of ever seeing them again.

The second commonality shared by all refugees is fear.[175] It is fear that drives one to flee from persecution. But fear does not stop with flight. Rather it marks the beginning of a life stripped of identity and context. This fear is constant and continues after finding a safe haven and permanent place to dwell. It is the fear that the refugee will never being able to understand his surroundings, will never be with his family again and that he will never have a place to call home. This fear may never leave even if he is able to eventually return home. There is always the fear that he will have to flee again.

A third commonality of refugees is the desire to return home. Because refugees do not choose to leave their homeland but are forced to do so, this desire remains with them on some level. The desire for home is often the element of a refugee's experience that sustains them through the trauma of flight. Even when a refugee is resettled permanently in another country and understands that they have given up the option for returning home, hopes and dreams of pasts remembered and possibilities for a future for their homeland nourish them. Jacques Cuénod, a former Deputy Director for the UNHCR and Executive Director of a refugee-related NGO, relates the following story of a group of refugees' desires for home:

> One historic example (of this) occurred during the exceptionally cold winter of 1949-50 in the Middle East. Palestinian refugees in many camps refused to have their tents waterproofed because they believed that this would signify their acceptance of permanent resettlement in the countries of first asylum and thereby rule out a return to their homeland. As a result many refugees died of cold that winter.[176]

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[175] Helton suggests that fear extends out toward those who are in a position to assist refugees. Fear in that they, too, could be in the same position and fear that keeps individuals and governments from offering a safe haven to refugees. Helton suggests that refugees are fear personified and that this personification must be grappled with in all levels of society. Helton, 13.

[176] Jacques Cuénod, " Refugees: Development or Relief?," in *Refugees and International Relations*, eds. Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 220.

When refugees flee their homeland they are accepted into a country of first asylum. During this time they must go through the process of applying for refugee status. Again, this is different than applying for asylum status, which has its own sets of rules and procedures. As refugees they are offered temporary protection in the country in which they have applied or in another country nearby. Temporary protection consists of living under restricted conditions or, as in the case of large refugee numbers, in a camp, until the UNHCR determines either that it is safe enough to return home or that they must be resettled elsewhere.[177] Life under temporary protection is difficult as refugees are typically not granted rights to employment. When temporary protection lasts for many years, the experience of living in-between and in waiting produces a new kind of trauma for refugees.

Life in refugee camps can be particularly difficult particularly when what is intended to be a temporary solution lasts for many years. Issues of food, water and health services become matters of life and death in many camps, especially those in war-torn areas. Refugee camps are usually situated close to borders where mass migrations of people can be met with assistance and protection. Camps can arise from the efforts of refugees building temporary shelter from scraps of material at hand, but they usually become more organised and habitable with the help of the UNHCR and various NGOs. While locating camps along borders may result from natural and necessary factors of accessibility, borders are typically areas of higher dispute and can be subject to outside violence and attack.[178] Millions of refugees remain warehoused in camps for many years. Generations have been born in refugee camps with children having no experience of the outside world. Refugees who have

[177] I will go into this process at length in the following section, "When does Refugee Resettlement become an Option?"

spent seven, ten and many more years in camps gradually come to have little hope of ever returning home or being resettled elsewhere.

Women and children become extremely vulnerable in refugee camps. For women this vulnerability is exacerbated when they come from societies where they traditionally have a lower social status than men.[179] While all refugee women are at risk for the additional emotional and physical abuses of sexual violence, abduction and extortion, a woman from traditional societies may bear the additional burden of being deserted or blamed by her husband if she is raped.[180] As caretakers of the family and of the home, women maintain the functions of family units even under these extreme conditions. Andres Jacques, former secretary for the WCC's Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, highlights a description of women's experience in refugee camps: "Women refugees in the third world are always the last to be served; they wait interminably at the end of the queue to receive food, water, medicine–all their basic needs".[181] Health services in many camps may not meet the specialised needs of women and children. Unless children reside in a well-organised camp, they may not receive any education throughout much of their childhood. Teresa Okure, a theologian from Nigeria, describes the effects life in a refugee camp can have on children, "Children grow up without a sense of identity, roots, culture. … Confined to camps, if they are lucky to be in one, like

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[178] For further discussion regarding the susceptibility of refugee camps to violence and attack, see Elly-Elikunda Mtango, "Military and Armed Attacks on Refugee Camps," in *Refugees and International Relations*, eds. Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 87-121.
[179] Geneviève Camus-Jacques, "Refugee Women: The Forgotton Majority," in *Refugees and International Relations*, eds. Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 148.
[180] Dimza Pityana, "The Root Causes of Migration/Refugees: Economic and Political Dynamics from Women's Perspectives," in *Reformed World* (vol. 41 1990), 229.
[181] Geneviève Jacques, "Confronting the Challenges of Exclusion," in *The Ecumenical Review* (vol. 46 1994), 55.

animals in a cage they grow up in an artificial context. This leaves a negative impact on them, sometimes for life".[182]

A refugee's life is full of trauma. Being forcibly uprooted from everything they know leaves refugees with a profound sense of identity loss. One experiences multiple losses of family, friends and community; familiar religious and spiritual structures that help to define personhood; social status; vocation; property and economic resources.[183] Refugees experience cultural alienation outside of their homeland. Being unable to speak the language of those around them can enforce refugees' feelings of alienation and rejection.[184] Most refugees are stripped of their ability to work and provide for their families, perpetuating feelings of helplessness and dependence. Many refugees have been victims of torture and carry the deep psychological scars associated with physical and mental violence. Elie Wiesel, author, professor, and winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace, speaks of his experience as a refugee:

> Now what is the characteristic of a refugee? It is that she or he has no citizenship. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of human beings have felt – overnight – unwanted. Now nothing can be more painful than being unwanted everywhere, undesired, and this is what a refugee is.[185]

Refugees become orphans of the world's state system.[186] Many refugees arrive at borders undocumented and are considered illegal by state standards. Loescher explains, "Refugees have always (and by definition) entered countries illegally—often without proper documents, and with the help of traffickers. None of these acts detract

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[182] Theresa Okure, "Africa: A Refugee Camp Experience," in *Concilium: Migrants and Refugees*, eds. Dietmar Meith and Lisa Sowle Cahill (London: SCM Press, 1993), 13.
[183] World Council of Churches, "A Moment to Choose: Risking to be with Uprooted People," in *International Review of Mission* (vol. 85 Jan. 1996), 98.
[184] André Jacques, *The Stranger Within Your Gates: Uprooted People in the World Today* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985), 64.
[185] Elie Wiesel, "The Refugee," in *Cross Currents* (vol. 34 Winter 1984-85), 388.
[186] William R. O'Neill and William C. Spohn, "Rights of Passage: The Ethics of Immigration and Refugee Policy," in *Theological Studies* (vol. 59 March 1998), 94.

from their refugee status—on the contrary, they may in fact confirm it".[187] When a person is fleeing from persecution there is often no time to locate important personal documents. Indeed, many refugees must flee without time to put shoes on their feet. In some countries, refugees do not have what is considered *proper documentation* to begin with, especially when they come from remote areas. Birth certificates and marriage certificates are often not the first thing on peoples minds when they are forced out of their homes or have just watched their spouses or parents being shot. Wiesel, ever so eloquently, addresses the subject of legality: "You who are so called illegal aliens must know that no human being is "illegal." That is a contradiction in terms. Human beings can be beautiful or more beautiful, can be right or wrong, but illegal? How can a human being be illegal?"[188]

Refugees are all around us. Those who have been resettled in our western countries are typically doing the entry level, unpopular work. They mop our floors, work in our factories, clean our dishes and hotel rooms. They are the invisible in our societies. Oftentimes frightened and distrustful of unfamiliar societal structures, refugees continue to live in fear and isolation. What is our perception of those refugees around us? Are we aware that the man driving our taxi spent twelve years as a heart surgeon, but his medical degree is not recognised in our country? Do we know that the woman stocking shelves in the supermarket spends her free time searching for her three children who disappeared while she was in hospital in a coma? Do we ask the woman weeping at the bus stop about the letter she is holding, the letter telling that her mother, who she had to leave, has died?

When does Refugee Resettlement become an Option for Refugees?

[187] Loescher, 365.
[188] Wiesel, 388.

In order to obtain an accurate perspective of the options provided to refugees, it becomes important to understand the process the UNHCR employs when determining whether a refugee is eligible for resettlement. When the UNHCR discusses various options for refugees, their ultimate goal is to provide lasting solutions, or *durable solutions,* for refugee settlement. When refugees flee their homeland, they arrive in a country of first asylum. Staying in a country of first asylum is usually considered a temporary solution.[189] The first and foremost desire of the UNHCR, in any refugee situation, is for refugees to be able to voluntarily return home under safe conditions. If conditions are safe and seem as though they will last, this option is considered a durable solution. It is termed voluntary repatriation.[190] If the reasons causing refugee flight do not appear to be resolving, the option for refugees to return home cannot be considered a durable solution. Because of the UNHCR's preference for voluntary repatriation, they will wait years in order to ascertain whether or not it must be ruled out as a non-durable solution.

Only after voluntary repatriation is ruled out as a durable solution will the UNHCR consider its second option, local integration.[191] Local integration consists of settling the refugee permanently in either their country of first asylum or in a country nearby. One of the hopes of this method is that if a refugee is geographically closer to their homeland, integration into the local community will not be as difficult. One of the dilemmas regarding local integration is that the process must be approved by the settlement country. If the settlement country is currently protecting a large amount of refugees, they may legitimately claim that they cannot handle an increase in permanent residents. Many Third World countries simply do not have the resources

[189] According to Loescher, extremely large numbers of refugees put heavy stresses on countries of first asylum economically, environmentally and in terms of diplomatic relations. Loescher, " Introduction," 3.

to accommodate large masses of refugees, especially when they may be handling conflict problems of their own. According to Mark Raper, "90% of the world's refugees struggle to survive in other poor countries that adjoin theirs".[192] It is also the case that 90% of Third World refugees will never leave the Third World.[193]

When local integration is deemed a non-durable solution, then, and only then, will third country resettlement be considered an option.[194] Third country resettlement entails the movement of refugees, possibly across long distances, for permanent resettlement in a country that has agreed with the UNHCR to take in a specific number of refugees. States that have traditionally agreed to resettle refugees include the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Scandinavian countries. For refugees, resettlement to a third country can be the least desirable solution. Many refugees feel that the further they are moved, the less likely they will ever go home again.[195] The following is taken from the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook and describes the importance of resettlement as an option for refugees:

> Resettlement is a vital instrument of protection and durable solution. Resettlement under UNHCR auspices is geared primarily to the special needs of refugees under the Office's mandate whose life, liberty, safety, health or other fundamental human rights are at risk in the country where they sought refuge. It is also considered a durable solution, in particular circumstances, for refugees who do not have immediate protection concerns. The decision to resettle a refugee is normally taken, with priority, when there is no alternative way to guarantee the legal or physical security of the person concerned. In light of this, the common description of resettlement as a "last resort" should not be interpreted to mean that there is a hierarchy of solutions and that resettlement is the *least* valuable or needed among them. For many refugees, resettlement is, in fact, the best - or perhaps, *only* - alternative.[196]

Unfortunately, resettlement is often approached as a last resort. For the year 2006, of the nearly 14,000,000 refugees in the world only 69,369 were resettled

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[190] UNHCR, Division of International Protection, *Resettlement Handbook*, revised edition (Geneva: UNHCR, July 2002), II/1-3.
[191] Ibid., II/4-5.
[192] Raper, par. 7.
[193] Loescher, 365.
[194] UNHCR, Division of International Protection, *Resettlement Handbook,* II/5-7.
[195] Loescher, 313.
[196] UNHCR, Division of International Protection, *Resettlement Handbook*, 1.

permanently in countries other than their own. [197] This amount is scant, particularly when considering that the total number of refugees had increased by close to 2 million from the two years previous.[198]

It is clear that the world is experiencing a refugee crisis of enormous proportions. While the UNHCR is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of refugees, it is also clear that the attitudes and policies of states have shifted from a stance of involvement and interest to one of closed borders and fear. Refugees are among the world's most vulnerable people. Without the assistance of NGOs and international states, the UNHCR is powerless to help. The following section will describe the important and historic role churches have played with regard to refugee resettlement in the international arena, with an emphasis on the participation of Protestant denominations in the U.S.

CHURCHES INVOLVEMENT IN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

The World Council of Churches: The UN at Prayer

During the 1940s an international and ecumenical community of Protestant churches from both Europe and the U.S. joined together in order to assist the refugees of war-torn Europe.[199] These churches were, at the same time, in the process of laying the foundations for what would become the World Council of Churches (WCC). In 1948 the WCC was officially established upon the basis that "the World

[197] USCRI. "Table 15: Resettlement by Country," *World Refugee Survey 2007*, 15.
[198] USCRI. "Table 1: Key Statistics," *World Refugee Survey 2005*, 1.
[199] See Ferris, 60; Elizabeth G. Ferris, "The Churches, Refugees, and Politics," in *Refugees and International Relations*, eds. Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 162; Willem A. Visser t' Hooft, "Inter-Church Aid: How it all Began," in *Hope in the Desert: The Churches' United Response to Human Need, 1944-1984*, ed. Kenneth Slack (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 1.

Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit".[200] Its current membership consists of over 340 churches and denominational groups across the globe who have aligned with the WCC's mission "to pray for and pursue the visible unity of Christ's church—in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world".[201]

The WCC has played an important role in shaping faith-based participation in the world of refugee assistance and relief. In her book *Beyond Borders: Refugees, Migrants and Human Rights in the Post Cold-War Era*, Elizabeth Ferris explores the history of international refugee assistance from the perspective of the practical manifestations of this complex system. Ferris suggests that, "religious communities [were] crucial in the early years of the emergence of an international refugee relief system".[202] In her account Ferris is referring to the work of Jewish communities and the Roman Catholic Church as well as Protestant Churches. Indeed these three faith communities continue to remain the most active and well organised of religious bodies in the world of refugee assistance and relief.[203] I would suggest that the WCC has influenced the manner by which faith based organisations approach refugee assistance in three significant ways: first by promoting the precedence for faith based participation in refugee work; second, by helping to forge relationships between faith

[200] Mariln Van Elderen, *Introducing the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990), 4. Van Elderen is quick to point out that this basis is not a confessional statement of faith but, rather, expresses the foundation for what the Council is and what it does.
[201] World Council of Churches, *Who are We?* (Geneva: WCC, 2001), accessed 21 November 2002 <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/index-e.html>).
[202] Ferris, 9.
[203] Melander, 10.

based organisations and the UN; and third, by encouraging ecumenical collaboration among Christian denominations and between faiths.

Setting the Precedent

From its very formation the WCC has set a precedence for the church's work with the uprooted. As early as 1946 the churches who would soon form the WCC founded two delegations to address the special needs of war torn Europe. The first was established as the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) which conjoined the work of both the forming WCC and the International Missionary Council.[204]

The CCIA had two main objectives: to assist in the rebuilding of war-torn Europe and to work closely with the newly forming UN as it developed its objectives and agendas. At the same time the Department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid (DRICA) was assembled specifically to address the needs of Europe's burgeoning refugee population.[205] This department had three objectives. The first was to provide food, clothing, and emergency aid in Europe. The second was to provide services and assistance to refugees. The third was to explore growing concern with issues in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The DRICA has gone through many incarnations, its longest being the Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service (CICARWS).[206] CICARWS focused specifically on providing aid and protection to refugees. When the emphasis of CICARWS shifted from administering refugee resettlement programs to supporting local ecumenical initiatives, it became the WCC's Refugee and Migration Services. In January of 1999 the Commission on

[204] World Council of Churches, Churches in International Affairs, *The Role of the World Council of Churches in International Affairs* (Geneva: WCC, 1985), 3.
[205] Visser t' Hooft, 10.

International Affairs and the Refugee and Migration Service joined together to form the International Affairs, Peace & Human Security team.

The focus of the WCC's involvement with refugees has shifted over the years. From its beginnings the WCC had led international efforts in providing relief and assistance to refugees. It was involved with all levels of the functional aspects regarding refugee assistance and relief including the act of resettling refugees. In time, the constituents of the WCC began to take on the functional aspects of refugee assistance as they had the ability to assist locally in these endeavours. As this happened the WCC began to focus specifically on coordinating the educational and advocacy work on the part of its constituency. Marlin Van Elderen, author of *Introducing the World Council of Churches* and former editor of its magazine *One World*, explains this shift in terms of the desire on the part of the Council not to replicate services but to empower its constituency base.[207] Even with this shift in focus, the WCC has undeniably played an important part in establishing the precedent for the church's participation in providing services for refugees.

The WCC and the UN

The second major influence the WCC has had in the world of international refugee assistance concerns its relationship with the UN. Historically, both the UN and the WCC shared similar motivations regarding their respective formations. They specifically shared the desire to assist refugees produced by the Second World War and to help rebuild Europe. At the same time, both the UN and the WCC aspired to create forums of international exchange regarding their particular constituency bases. The WCC records the sentiments of the time regarding the potential relationship

[206] For a time the name of this commission was the Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service (DICARWS), which changed its name in 1971 to CICARWS. See Van Elderen, 89.

between churches and the UN: "The new United Nations bore the marks of the aspirations of the fellowship of churches who were eager that it become an instrument of the world's peoples, not just the world powers".[208] In many ways the formation of the WCC has reflected the configuration of the UN. As Van Elderen offers, "the WCC is often described as a sort of *ecclesiastical United Nations* or a *UN at prayer*".[209]

The contact between the WCC and the UN has proven through time to strengthen the ties between churches and the UNHCR. A statement from the UNHCR to the CICARWS upon its fortieth anniversary highlights the important relationship between the two organisations:

> When the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was created in 1951, CICARWS became one of UNHCR's first operational partners. Since that time CICARWS has maintained a close relationship with the Office, working as UNHCR's partner in refugee programmes around the world. CICARWS acts either directly or indirectly, through national or local churches or through ecumenical agencies. CICARWS is one of UNHCR's longest-standing partners both in operational terms and in term of consultation and dialogue on refugee issues.[210]

The UNHCR relies on its close relationship to the network of churches it has been afforded historically through the WCC.[211] It also depends on the advocacy work on the part of churches with the public, with its constituency base and with state organisations, work that the UNHCR is in many ways constrained from undertaking.[212] The WCC's associations with the UN have forged the path for further affiliations between the UNHCR and faith-based organisations. The WCC has encouraged the UN to develop a wide variety of ecumenical and interfaith

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[207] Ibid.; Ferris, 159.
[208] World Council of Churches, Churches in International Affairs, *The Role of the World Council of Churches in International Affairs,* 3.
[209] Van Elderen, 141. Emphasis his.
[210] UNHCR, "A Tribute to Cooperation," in *Hope in the Desert: The Churches' United Response to Human Need, 1944-1984*, ed. Kenneth Slack (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 136.
[211] Ibid., 136.
[212] Ibid., 140.

relationships across the globe and has helped to enable direct cooperation between the UNHCR and religious NGOs.

Ecumenical Relationships and Dialogue

The third influence of the WCC in the arena of international refugee assistance has been through the promotion of both ecumenical networking and collaboration among religious organisations. The advancement of ecumenical dialogue and cooperation lies at the heart of the WCC's mission. "The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the WCC is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance that unity in order that the world may believe".[213] The WCC suggests that this purpose is best expressed through an understanding of the word *koinonia*.

Koinonia is understood by the members of the WCC in terms of a *communion* among churches.[214] This definition moves past a common perception of the word as *fellowship* to reflect the theological understanding that koinonia depends on a reality that already exists before the act of coming together, namely the reality of the Trinity and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit.[215] Koinonia exemplifies the ecumenical nature of the Council's work and constitutes the basis for its action in the world. Willem Visser t' Hooft, leader of the provisional committee of the WCC before its formation, defines the spirit of Christian koinonia as "the spirit of solidarity, of

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[213] World Council of Churches, Churches in International Affairs, *The Role of the World Council of Churches in International Affairs,* 6. For a more thorough exploration of koinonia with reference to the ecumenical nature of the WCC see: Margaret Jenkins, "Towards Koinonia in Life," in *The Ecumenical Review* (vol. 45. 1993). And Gennadios Limouris, "Being as Koinonia in Faith," in *The Ecumenical Review* (vol. 45. 1993).
[214] World Council of Churches, "The Diaconal Task of the Churches Today," in *Hope in the Desert: The Churches' United Response to Human Need, 1944-1984*, ed. Kenneth Slack (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 133.
[215] Van Elderen, 10.

unselfish and unconditional sharing between those who recognise each other as members of one and the same body of Christ".[216]

The WCC is made up of its member churches, associate member churches and national council bodies from all over the world. Membership to the WCC requires that a church have a membership of 25,000 persons to qualify as a voting member and 10,000 to become an associate member, one who can participate but not vote.[217] In this regard the use of the word *church* represents larger church organisations such as denominations or communities; it does not refer to membership of individual churches.

The WCC is set up similarly to the UN in that it is governed by a Central Committee which meets annually in order to discuss and preside over the workings of the entire WCC. The Central Committee is responsible to and guided by an International Assembly which convenes every seven years in different locations around the globe. The day-to-day life and work of the WCC is carried out by several commissions which focus on the particular tasks set out by the Central Committee and the International Assembly. The membership of the WCC includes most Protestant denominations and many evangelical communities and Orthodox organisations. Although the Roman Catholic Church is not an official member, the WCC works to maintain close ties with them as well as promoting interreligious relations and dialogue with Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu communities.

Churches as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Of those churches which comprise the WCC's constituency, most have some form of program set up to assist refugees as part of their organisational structure. These

[216] Visser t' Hooft, 4.
[217] World Council of Churches, *Who are We? x.*

programs, or agencies, fall into the category of religious NGOs. The vast variety of Christian NGOs across the globe are involved in particular ways with all aspects of refugee services including providing relief in refugee camps, assisting refugees to reunite with their families, advocacy and church organising work and refugee resettlement. The WCC is, in itself, an NGO, but unlike most international NGOs all of its support is carried out through its member institutions and associated local churches.[218] As an NGO the WCC acts as a coordinating body assisting and facilitating ecumenical and interfaith cooperation among its members and associates.

NGOs play a crucial role in the world of international refugee assistance. During the 50s and 60s religious NGOs accounted for a full 90% of the relief efforts provided to refugees after the war.[219] Ferris explains that NGOs, and particularly church related agencies, have the ability to affect international services to refugees via three significant avenues.[220] First, because NGOs deal more directly with refugees, they have access to grassroots information which can be used to help change state policies. Secondly, they have the freedom to mobilize public opinion and subsequently are able to put pressures on governments regarding just refugee policies. And lastly, NGOs also have a degree of autonomy from governmental bodies which allows them to participate in justice and reconciliation efforts.

It should be noted that there are fundamental differences between how religiously-affiliated and secular NGOs operate. While both religious and secular organisations are responsible to their constituency bases and both must work to raise funds, there are differences as to how these organisations are structured and how they relate to their constituencies. Religious bodies and communities are, broadly speaking, generally held together by certain shared values, beliefs and a unity of purpose. The

[218] Van Elderen, 101.
[219] Ferris, *Beyond Borders*, 37.

work of Christian NGOs are often "motivated by Christian compassion, although their beliefs/ideas/views on how to interpret the Gospel in refugee ministry may take many different forms".[221] Christian NGOs are responsible to their local churches and ultimately to a theological belief system. They are under pressure to interpret the Gospel faithfully and must embody the Christian message through their work.

Christian NGOs are usually funded through denominational networks or are supported by particular churches. While these NGOs have their share of funding difficulties, they are often supported by networks of local churches, denominations and religious organisations. Therefore secular NGOs have different sets of pressures from their constituents. Secular organisations consist of members, people who have chosen to support their particular issue or approach. Membership must be cultivated by secular NGOs in order to provide support for their work. They do not have the security of shared financial networks or as much access to collaborative support. Secular organisations must, to a certain extent, work harder to provide information to their members in order to justify their actions and to maintain support.[222]

Current U.S. Church Involvement and Refugee Resettlement

While religious NGOs which participate in providing services to refugees exist across the globe, only a small percentage of these agencies are directly involved in the process of refugee resettlement. Because there are but a small handful of countries that officially accept refugees for resettlement, the number of NGOs associated with this process is relatively small.[223] Of the countries which accept refugees for resettlement, the U.S. continues to accept the largest number of refugees annually.

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[220] Ibid., 62.
[221] Ferris, "The Churches, Refugees, and Politics," 161.
[222] Ferris, *Beyond Borders*, 48.

While this fact may appear impressive at first glance, it must be put into a broader context. Religious NGOs are crucial to the U.S.'s process of resettlement, both on an administrative and functional levels. This next section will explore the relationship between Christian NGOs and the U.S. resettlement process.

Determining Ceilings for Refugee Admissions into the U.S.

Each year the United States government determines how many refugees will be allowed admission into the U.S. during its next fiscal year, October 1 to September 30. This number is not a quota but rather a ceiling. According to the Refugee Act of 1980, the President consults with both Congress and the State Department in order to determine the maximum numbers of refugees who will be admitted for the upcoming year.[224] During this consultation, specific ceilings for particular nationalities and groups are also determined. The President then releases a statement, called the Presidential Determination, which authorises these fixed admission ceilings. The following table illustrates the determined ceilings for refugee admissions to the U.S. for the fiscal year 2002 compared with the total numbers of refugees worldwide for

	Total Number of Refugees & Asylum seekers Worldwide 2006[225]	U.S. Presidential Determination Ceiling FY2006[226]	Actual Number of Arrivals FY2006[227]
Europe	569,200	[Eastern Europe] 15000**	10,456
N. America			3,145
S. America	[Americas & the Caribbean] 648,900	[Latin America] 5,000	119
		[Unallocated Reserve] 10,000	
	14,900,000	**70,000**	**41,150**
Africa	2,932,000	20,000	18,185
Asia	[East Asia & the Pacific] 953,500	[East Asia] 15,000	9,245
	[South Central Asia] 2,914,200	[Near East/South Asia] 5,000*	
	[Middle East & North Africa] 5,931,000		

* Includes both Middle East and South and Central Asia.
** Includes the former Soviet Union.

[223] Again, a country which accepts refugees for resettlement differs from a country which only accepts asylum applications. It should be noted that most countries who accept refugees for resettlement also accept asylum seekers into their borders.
[224] Church World Service: Immigration and Refugee Program, *Manual for Refugee Sponsorship* (New York: CWS/IRP, 2002), 6.

the same period:

Using these figures as a standard it remains clear that the U.S. does not accept refugees according to need but rather according to preference. The U.S. bias toward particular communities, which was clear during the Cold War, remains active in contemporary resettlement policies. Notably, the U.S. is willing to resettle 2.6% of the 953,500 Europeans and refugees from the former U.S.S.R., while out of almost 3 million African refugees, more than three times the number of refugees in Europe, the U.S. is willing to resettle a mere 0.7%. Only two years previously, the ceiling for African admissions was set at 30,000, having decreased 10,000 in two years.[228] While the number of African refugees admitted into the U.S. has risen slightly over the past decade, refugees from the Middle East and South/Central Asia, which constitute the world's largest refugee populations, are severely under-represented by U.S. admission ceilings.

Since these are ceilings, as opposed to quotas, the U.S. government is not compelled to accept the same number of refugees as there are places allocated each year. For example, referencing the decade before September 11th2001, Frelick observes, "In fact, during the past ten years, there has been an average shortfall of about 11 percent in meeting annual refugee admission targets—a ten-year cumulative total of 106,894 admissions places that remained unused".[229] Frelick's statement

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[225] USCRI, "Table 2: Refugees and Asylum Seekers Worldwide," *World Refugee Survey 2007*, 2-3.
[226] USCRI, "Regional Refugee Ceilings and Admissions to the United States, FY 1993-2006," in *Refugee Reports*, no. 1 vol. 27 (Washington DC: USCRI, February 2006), 15.
[227] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), Office of Admissions, Refugee Processing Center (RPC), "Table 14: Refugee Arrivals by Region and Country of Origin: Fiscal Years 1997 to 2006." Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2006, accessed 19 March 2008, page last modified 4 January 2008 <http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/publications/YrBk06RA.shtm>.
[228] USCRI, *Regional Refugee Ceilings and Admission to the United States, FY 1989-2002,* 15.
[229] For the years 1992-2002. Bill Frelick, "Rethinking U.S. Refugee Admissions: Quantity and Quality," in U.S. Committee for Refugees *World Refugee Survey 2002* (Washington DC: USCR, 2002) accessed 25 February, 2003 <http://www.refugees.org/worldmap.aspx?subm=19&ssm=115&area=Investigate>.

highlights the fact that the numbers put forward by the government each year do not reflect the total number of refugees actually admitted into the country. After September 11th 2001, the numbers of refugees admitted into the U.S. for resettlement dropped off steeply. For the years 2002 – 2005, the numbers of refugees admitted was 117,787, significantly less than half of the set ceilings totalling 280,000.[230]

Within U.S. admission ceilings, refugees are admitted into the U.S. according to established guidelines regarding the priority of individual cases. The U.S. government has created five categories which it uses to determine who ranks higher regarding the urgency and need for resettlement. Priority One (P-1) is intended for especially urgent cases; Priority Two (P-2) for particular, identifiable nationality (and sub-nationality) groups; Priority Three (P-3) for refugees separated from immediate family members who legally reside in the United States, including spouses and children; Priority Four (P-4) for more distant relatives; and Priority Five (P-5) for even more distant relatives. Therefore refugees who have been accepted for admission to the U.S. under the P-3 category may have to wait indefinitely for resettlement, even when refugee ceilings have not been met.

In a report commissioned by the U.S. government and presented to the Department of State entitled, *The United States Refugee Program: Reforms for a New Era of Refugee Resettlement*, Professor of International Law and Fellow of the Migration Policy Institute David Martin expresses concerns regarding the continued failure of the U.S. to meet its Presidential Determination ceilings. The second recommendation of his report states that, "The number of admissions set in the annual Presidential Determination should be treated as a goal, not a ceiling".[231] Lavinia Limon, current President and CEO of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and

[230] USCRI, *Regional Refugee Ceilings and Admission to the United States, FY 1989-2002*, 15.
[231] Martin, 18.

Immigrants (USCRI) and former Director of the State Department's Office for Refugee Resettlement (ORR), emphasises the need for the U.S. to honour its pledges exhibited through its Presidential Determinations:

> When America pulls back on its international commitments, other countries follow suit. Australia is implementing new policies that turn away ships laden with refugees and tightening its asylum procedures. Western European countries are selecting fewer refugees for resettlement, claiming that large numbers of asylum seekers are overwhelming their capacity for integration. Canada is contemplating more restrictive border enforcement and asylum regulations.[232]

While the slowing down of refugee admissions directly after September 11th was understandable, the continuation of restricted refugee admissions into the U.S. will create serious problems for the many refugees for whom the UNHCR has determined that resettlement is their only option. For the year 2006, only 41,150 refugees were admitted into the U.S.[233] This figure represents just over half, or 59%, of the number of individuals allowed to enter the country under the FY2006 Presidential Determination Ceiling. If the Presidential Determination Ceilings continue to not be met, the UNHCR's refugee resettlement program could be significantly damaged or even halted. This situation would leave millions of refugees without hope for an end to their struggles.

The Role of the Religious NGO in the U.S. Resettlement Process

The number of refugees resettled into the U.S. each year is waning. As a leader in the international community, U.S. policies toward refugees influence the stances of

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[232] Lavinia Limon. "Everything has Changed," in U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey 2002* (Washington DC: USCR, 2002) accessed 25 February, 2003. <http://www.refugees.org/worldmap.aspx?subm=19&ssm=115&area=Investigate>. Based on her experience with the State Department and refugee resettlement Limon also insists, "The number of refugees that the United States admits annually is miniscule compared to the number of people admitted under other immigration categories. Only some 75,000 refugees, including asylees, are admitted every year, compared to about 600,000 to 750,000 new legal permanent residents who arrive in the United States annually."

[233] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), Office of Admissions, Refugee Processing Center (RPC), "Table 13: Refugee Arrivals: Fiscal Years 1980 to 2006," Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2006, accessed 19 March 2008, page last modified 4 January 2008 <http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/publications/YrBk06RA.shtm>.

other countries regarding their refugee policies. Because the U.S. resettles more refugees than any other country, it continues to set the international precedent for how the resettlement process might unfold. Within this context, the significance of religious NGOs, and particularly Christian NGOs, becomes explicit.

Religious NGOs are an integral component of the U.S. refugee resettlement system. Since the beginning of U.S. involvement in refugee resettlement, churches and religious organisations have assumed the responsibilities for resettlement activities.[234] The involvement of churches and religious NGOs proved indispensable in the 70s during the tremendous influx of refugees from East Asia after the Vietnam war. During this time, the services provided to refugees via churches and religious NGOs expanded, and these organisations became the experienced leaders of the refugee resettlement community. The U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 placed religious NGOs under federal coordination, conferring upon them the responsibilities of acting as the operational mechanism for governmental refugee policy.[235]

While many branches of the federal government are involved in the complex workings of the U.S. Refugee Program (USRP), the three which participate most directly in refugee resettlement are the Department of Homeland Securities (DHS), the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of State (DOS). It must be noted that since September 11th, there has been a massive restructuring of the USRP. In 2003, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was abolished and replaced by the DHS.[236] The DHS subsequently split the duties of the INS into three further departments and has increased interest and active involvement in security issues. Much of the work of the former INS is carried out by the U.S.

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[234] Lanphier, 315.
[235] Ibid.
[236] For futher discussion on the function and structure of the DHS, see chapter IV of Martin, "The Role of the Deprtment of Homeland Security," 59-65.

Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). While the DHS does not function in direct partnership with NGOs, they must frequently confer on immigration and naturalization issues.

The USCIS assists the UNHCR in determining which refugees meet the requirements for refugee status. It also determines which refugees are admissible into the U.S. for resettlement. The durability of resettlement is dependent upon a refugee's legal relationship with his or her new government.[237] When a refugee enters the U.S. she is given an I-94 card that serves as the her identification card and authorises her eligibility for employment. After one year a refugee is entitled to apply for *permanent resident alien status,* and after five years can apply for U.S. citizenship. The USCIS and therefore the DHS is responsible for assuring that resettled refugees are afforded the same rights as legal residents in the U.S..[238]

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is responsible for coordinating the assistance refugees receive from the U.S. government after they enter the U.S.. It falls under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The ORR is responsible for assuring that refugees receive both temporary cash assistance and medical assistance. Temporary cash assistance can last up to eight months and is dependent on the size of the family and whether they have children under the age of 18. Medical assistance is also temporary as refugees are encouraged to find employment in the first months after their arrival. Working refugees would then be insured medically through their place of employment. Children under the age of 18 can apply for Medicaid which insures them for up to two years. Cash and medical assistance are arranged through NGOs working with the State Department. The ORR

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[237] Lanphier, 322.
[238] Department of Health and Human Services, *Office of Refugee Resettlement. U.S. Resettlement Program-An Overview* (Washington DC: DHHS, June 2002), accessed 13 February 2003 <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/overviewrp.htm>).

provides other social service programs which assist refugees in becoming self-sufficient as quickly as possible, with an emphasis on employment training.

The Department of State (DOS) coordinates resettlement policy and manages the Reception and Placement Program (R&P) for arriving refugees. The R&P program is run through public-private partnerships between the DOS and NGOs, known as National Voluntary Resettlement Agencies (VOLAGS). The DOS currently has formal agreements, known as Cooperative Agreements, with ten VOLAGS in the U.S.. Through this agreement these NGOs are provided with direct funds from the DOS to ensure that refugees receive appropriate reception and orientation as they are resettled in the U.S. The R&P program has developed these agreements with VOLAGS specifically because of the holistic reception refugees receive through their offices and volunteers.

The DOS is aware that refugees have needs during the resettlement process that cannot be met through access to state and federal social services alone. NGOs have the capacity to facilitate potentially long-term relationships between refugees and individuals or groups of people. These relationships can assist refugees' resettlement processes by providing community, stability, mentors and friends to people who may be experiencing both culture shock and post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Six out of the ten NGOs which currently comprise the National Voluntary Resettlement Agencies are faith-based organisations.[239] These six NGOs include CWS, Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS) and World Relief Corporation (WR). The first three organisations represent the mainline Protestant churches in the U.S., while the

remaining three serve the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish Community and Evangelical networks respectively. While the practices of these institutions are similar, for the purposes of this study I will be focusing on the endeavours of the Protestant NGOs and specifically on CWS as it is structurally an ecumenical enterprise.

The Christian denominations represented by CWS, EMM and LIRS all belong to the National Council of Churches in Christ in the U.S.A. (NCC). Each of these agencies represent different denominational constituency groups but collaborate closely on refugee issues and services. The Lutherans and Episcopalians have maintained separate identities from CWS, which includes most other Protestant denominations, based on their separate histories of working closely with specific refugee groups. They have built up identities as agencies that are distinctly identifiable among their constituency groups, identities which they have chosen to maintain. In all other respects the functions of these agencies are so similar that they are almost indistinguishable from each other. CWS, LIRS and EMM provide their direct services to refugees out of local offices, located in specific geographic areas around the country. These local offices are called *affiliate offices* and serve as regional extensions of the respective NGOs. In fact, many of these affiliate offices act as joint affiliate offices, representing combinations of two or all three of these agencies simultaneously.

The R&P requires that every refugee that is resettled in the U.S. must have what is known as a *sponsor*. A refugee cannot be resettled in the U.S. without the guarantee of a sponsor. A sponsor is responsible for providing the basic essentials a refugee needs upon arriving in the U.S., such as food, clothing and temporary

[239] The remaining four VOLAGS are secular NGOs and include the State of Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services, Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), U.S. Committee for Refugees and

housing. While sponsors have a binding and legal responsibility for the welfare of the resettled refugees, ultimately the affiliate office and its larger agency are responsible for assuring these necessities are provided in the first months of resettlement. There are two basic types of sponsorship which occur in the U.S. The first is termed a *family reunification sponsorship*. Refugees that fall into the category of family reunifications arrive in the U.S. because a family member has applied on their behalf. These are P-3, P-4 and P-5 cases, in which the family member formally agrees to act as a sponsor for that person or persons.

The second type of sponsorship occurs when no family has applied for reunification, and the refugee(s) arriving in the U.S. are essentially on their own. This type of resettlement is much more complicated. If the refugee has an acquaintance or friend living in the U.S., that friend can request that the refugee be settled in their region. The VOLAGS make every effort to assist refugees in reuniting with friends and communities and will often assure that the refugee concerned is resettled near her associates.[240] These individuals can act as sponsors for the refugees concerned. When the refugee has absolutely no acquaintances in the U.S., then the NGO must act as the sponsor. When this occurs, the affiliate office will arrange for sponsorship by a local congregation which will agree to provide the necessary services. For EMM and LIRS the sponsoring congregation is found through their respective denominations. For CWS, the affiliate office must find a congregation from the denomination which is handling that particular case. CWS denominations include American Baptist Churches, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian

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Immigration (USCRI) and International Rescue Committee (IRC).

[240] This occurs partly out of practical necessity. If refugees are not resettled near friends, they will often move to that location as soon as possible, creating extra complications and paperwork for the affiliate office and its VOLAG.

Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church.

Sponsorship is an integral component to the refugee resettlement process. According to Robert Bach, former Executive Associate Commissioner for Policy and Planning for the former INS,

> Sponsors serve as effective bridges to carry refugees into job and housing markets, enrol them in public assistance programs, and enable them to participate in language and occupational training courses. This aid is so important, in fact, that differences among resources available to sponsors are primary reasons for uneven rates of economic progress among refugees in both the United States and Canada.[241]

While Bach's description of sponsorship engages with the material aspects of refugee resettlement, I would suggest that sponsorship provides refugees with much more than material assistance. Sponsorship furnishes refugees with a community of people who help to sustain them during their transition to a new life and a new home. Churches and faith-based fellowships are able to provide refugees with community that moves beyond assistance and has the capacity to transform their lives.

FROM SERVICE TO MINISTRY

Emotional Needs of Refugees During Resettlement

Compounding the difficulties refugees face during the process of flight, refugee resettlement presents an additional set of transitions and adjustments which can exacerbate refugees' experience of trauma. For many refugees, resettlement formally signals the loss of hope for ever returning home.[242] Resettlement confronts them with a new set of fears. They are moving great distances from their homes and even,in some cases, from the familiarity of their country of first asylum. They will most likely not be able to understand the language or the culture. Refugees travelling from

[241] Robert L. Bach, "Third Country Resettlement," in *Refugees and International Relations*, eds. Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 323.

Third World countries to the First World understand that there will be a difference in culture but cannot anticipate how great those difference will be. For those refugees who will not be reuniting with family or friends, resettlement can dramatically heighten feelings of loneliness and isolation.

What often proves even more traumatic to refugees are the circumstances they face when they arrive in the U.S. Many refugees meet resentment as they arrive in their new communities. They encounter the anti-immigration sentiments U.S. citizens have been known to extend to refugees.[243] Many refugees are exposed to negative and even violent responses to their arrival in the U.S.[244] For those refugees whose skin color is not white, American racism is often a new and disturbing experience. Many refugees are often confused upon entering into an established system of oppression based on their skin colour. Many are disoriented and frustrated at being associated with groups of persons with which they are unfamiliar solely on the basis of skin colour.

The one hope many refugees carry with them to the U.S. is the possibility of receiving education, either by learning English or through the opportunity to attend school. This hope is often extinguished, as the first priority of resettlement is employment. Even attending English language classes can be difficult when one is either looking for employment or working in a strange and different environment. For many refugees their only contact with society is through their place of employment.[245]

Women may experience particular difficulties in adjusting to a completely new environment. Many women are often educated less formally than men.

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[242] Gordenker, 138.
[243] Ibid., 144.
[244] Bach, 327.
[245] Ibid., 328.

Subsequently, men have a higher tendency to speak English on arrival in the U.S.[246] As traditional keepers of the home, women may have fewer marketable skills upon entering a foreign job market. Torn from traditional roles, they may develop dependencies on their spouses and children, especially regarding the speaking of English. Women may also experience a sense of confusion regarding their social roles in U.S. society. Concepts of feminism and sexual equality can be distasteful as well as confusing to women coming from different cultures. For both men and women the North American concepts and expectations regarding the family and sexual roles can be a difficult and often painful adjustment. Both sexes may be subject to reproach regarding their cultural parenting styles and their understandings of men and women's roles in society.

Churches Ministering to the Needs of Resettled Refugees

Church World Service (CWS) shares with its counterparts, Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), a model for addressing both the material and emotional needs of refugees during the process of resettlement. Congregations who sponsor refugees use this model to organise themselves in order to participate fully with refugees though the challenges they confront as they resettle in the U.S. These congregations provide refugees not only with the material assistance they need to begin a new life in a new country, but with a community of persons who will accompany them on their journey.

[246] Camus-Jacques, 149.

CWS works closely with congregations to assist them in the process of resettling refugees. As a church begins to explore the possibility of refugee sponsorship, a member of the local affiliate staff will work with the congregation to ascertain what would be involved if they chose to sponsor a refugee. They explore, together, different options for assisting refugees, including gathering donations and fundraising to assist arriving families, volunteering to tutor children and adults in learning English or participating in advocacy work on behalf of refugees as well as the option to sponsor a refugee or refugee family. The staff member is also made available to the congregation in an educational capacity to conduct adult forums or Sunday schools, or preach during services in order to explore themes of Christian hospitality as they relate to refugees.

If after this process of discernment the congregation decides to proceed with sponsorship, the affiliate staffperson will assist the congregation to organize for the arrival of the refugees. In order to begin this process, CWS recommends that a sponsorship resettlement committee be formed.[247] The committee will ideally consist of church members who represent a variety of different interests, age groups and experiences with outreach. Pastors and Ministers are not encouraged to participate in the direct function of a sponsorship committee. Rather they are urged to support the efforts of the sponsorship committee through the functioning of their office. The committee should have at least one chairperson who will act to coordinate the different functions of the committee. The rest of the committee should be assigned to the different tasks and roles which need to be carried out.

The resettlement committee has a number of different responsibilities which can be allocated to members of the committee on the basis of interest and individual's

[247] Church World Service: Immigration and Refugee Program, *Manual for Refugee Sponsorship* (New York: CWS/IRP, 2002), 14.

gifts. Preparation for the refugees' arrival is essential even though the congregation will not know the date of their arrival until approximately two weeks beforehand. Under these circumstances the committee must be prepared to act quickly when the arrival date is known.[248] Of the many tasks the committee must prepare for, hospitality is among the most important. Meeting the refugee at the airport is crucial to helping the refugees feel welcomed. Arranging for temporary housing is also essential for the refugees first days. Many times the committee will arrange for the refugees to stay with a host family before a permanent apartment is found for them to rent. Host families serve to assist the refugees' orientation to American life. Some refugees will not be familiar with western uses of electricity or indoor plumbing.[249] Overcoming these basic cultural barriers assists refugees in feeling more comfortable in their new home. The committee can also arrange to help with food during the first few weeks until the refugees are familiar enough with local markets to purchase food for themselves. Committee members can assist the refugees in keeping their first medical appointments and meetings with social services and the DHS.[250]

The next step in the resettlement process is securing housing, employment and schooling for children. Furnishing must be collected and moved to the refugees' new home and orientation to their new apartment conducted. Sponsors can assist refugees in understanding the financial and economic structures of the U.S. and the implications of renting.[251] They can also help the refugee prepare for and find their first job. Early employment is an essential component of the R&P program. CWS stresses the benefits of early employment: "Finding appropriate employment is perhaps the most crucial element in successful resettlement. The psychological

[248] Ibid., 21.
[249] Ibid., 22.
[250] Ibid., 25.
[251] Ibid., 29.

impact of obtaining employment can be vital in building a refugee's sense of self respect. Most refugees are eager to work as soon as possible and should be encouraged to do so".[252] Sponsors often serve as wonderful resources for job opportunities for refugees, particularly with local work. Children should be enrolled in school as quickly as possible. This helps both the children and parents orient themselves to their new environment.[253]

After these basic needs of resettlement are dealt with, both sponsors and refugees have time to address the deeper questions and concerns that both refugees and sponsors might have. It is during this time that some of the more traumatic stories of refugees' lives may surface. Sponsors must be prepared for this possibility and are instructed to inform the CWS caseworker if they have serious concerns regarding the psychological state of the person involved.[254] This is the time when deeper relationships are formed between refugees and sponsors. Sponsors must be aware of the position of power they are in concerning the refugees' lives and must treat both that position and the refugees with respect and dignity. CWS describes the role of sponsors as having three general responsibilities. "Sponsors act as guides, friends and advocates to those newly arrived in the U.S. In all cases, a sponsor's overall goal is to assist refugees in becoming as self sufficient as possible".[255] When refugees start approaching self-sufficiency, the relationship between sponsors and refugees shifts from a mentoring relationship to more of a friendship.

After six months the refugee should be relatively self-sufficient. Churches should allow refugees their autonomy but also remind them of their continuing presence. CWS stresses that during these first six months that the congregation not be involved

[252] Ibid., 27.
[253] Ibid., 25.
[254] Ibid., 25.
[255] Ibid., 14.

with overt evangelizing of the refugees. Ferris applies this standard to most mainstream Protestant churches associated with the WCC: "Most of the Church and agencies described here have rigorously defended the cultural integrity and religious traditions of the refugees. They see their ministry to refugees as rooted in their Christian commitment to help those in need, regardless of their religious beliefs".[256] Refugees must be able to be in the position to choose what type of relationship they wish to have with their sponsoring congregation.

Practical Implications of Congregational Sponsorship in the Lives of Refugees

Refugees who are resettled are just beginning a phase in their lives when recovery and healing become a possibility. Resettlement itself brings new traumas and challenges which also need to be overcome and assuaged. These refugees need communities to assist them in coping with, and recovering from, the traumas they have experienced. They require relationships which foster and nourish their damaged identities. Simply knowing that other people are aware of their situation helps to alleviate fears of isolation and can signal the start of a recovery process which will last for years. When trust is built between refugees and assisting communities, refugees are free to accept not only material assistance from these communities but also offerings of love, friendship and a sense of belonging. André Jacques, former Secretary of Migration for CICARWS, explains the necessity of creative adaptation on the part of both refugees and their communities during resettlement: "Creative adaptation requires creative partners in the receiving countries, who understand the needs of the uprooted and who are ready to encourage them to take responsibilities and to break out of the dependent position to which they are often confined".[257]

[256] Ferris, "The Churches, Refugees, and Politics," 166.
[257] André Jacques, 53.

Christian churches have an opportunity to provide this community to refugees though sponsorship. While people can group together in order to provide assistance to refugees, they are creating a community based upon the impetus to help a particular people in a particular situation. This action does create a community of sorts, but it is temporary and will fade as refugees gain greater independence. Even when individual relationships are formed between refugees and their sponsors, relationships which may last for years, the original community which formed to resettle these refugees will dissolve.

While refugees require direct assistance in the first six months of their arrival, the form of community they need is one that may be accessible to them for years. Churches are able to provide this long-lasting place of community, whether the refugees involved choose to participate in it or not. Many refugees do not choose to attend services or become an active part of the church community, but congregations who sponsor refugees through CWS are aware of this fact. They understand that refugees are going through traumas that members of the congregation might never be able to comprehend. They also understand that refugees must make their own choices in life and the role of the congregation is to help support those choices. Refugees who are sponsored by CWS congregations are given a home, a place where they will always be welcome.

The sponsorship model used by CWS serves to provide refugees with the structure though which they may begin to recover their lives. It is a practical approach to involving Christian churches in the daily lives of refugees and provides the church's individual members the opportunity to form relationships with people who are in dire need of many basic human necessities. Through congregational sponsorship, Christians are able to provide the relationships refugees need to move past the fear,

loneliness and loss of identity which characterize the trauma of forced flight. In this very practical manner, sponsorship allows for individuals and churches to become agents in transforming the lives of refugees.

CONCLUSIONS

Through an examination of the UNHCR and its role as coordinator of the international refugee community I have explored the increasing difficulties of the UNHCR to fulfill its mandate to protect the rights and well-being of refugees. It must balance its loyalties and responsibilities to both its donor states and to the states which have provided asylum to fleeing refugees. It must, at the same time, hold these countries accountable to the standards of the1951 Geneva Convention which they have agreed to uphold. The UNHCR's position is placed under additional duress due to the shifts in attitudes and policies of its member states toward providing assistance and relief to refugees, particularly regarding the resettlement of refugees as a potential durable solution. After September 11th 2001, negative sentiments toward refugees have escalated, with many countries placing further restrictions on the number of refugees allowed to enter their borders.

I have argued that resettlement often presents the only option for refugees who have experienced extended periods of transition. Because all refugees share three things in common, the desire for safety, fear and the desire to return home, they experience many levels of trauma as part of their ordeals. Refugees have lost family, friends and their homes, three important aspects of life that contribute to human identity and a sense of self. Refugees cannot sustain themselves under prolonged conditions of transition. At some point, they must be offered long-term solutions to their problems. In many cases, resettlement is the only long-term solution available.

The Christian church has long played a role in assisting and protecting refugees. Through the work of the World Council of Churches the church has become an integral component to the international refugee system. The WCC has set the precedent for Protestant church involvement in refugee issues, particularly regarding the role of the church in the process of refugee resettlement. Protestant churches in the U.S. have carried on these efforts to assist refugees during the resettlement process. Through organisations such as CWS, churches work closely with the U.S. government in functioning as the main agencies which carry out refugee resettlement.

Refugee resettlement presents its own set of traumas for refugees. The U.S. government is aware that social services alone cannot meet the needs of refugees resettling in the U.S. Refugees require sustained communities in order to begin recovering from their distress. CWS employs a model which churches can utilise during their efforts to assist refugees resettle. It is a practical model which results in an extension of the long-standing community of a congregation to include resettling refugees. This model not only allows for the church's ministry to assist in transforming the lives of refugees but also presents a practical avenue for Christian involvement in the lives of these oppressed peoples.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXT AND METHOD

Heroes, all of them - at least they're my heroes, especially the new immigrants, especially the refugees. Everyone makes fun of New York cabdrivers who can't speak English: they're heroes. To give up your country is the hardest thing a person can do: to leave the old familiar places and ship out over the edge of the world to America and learn everything over again different that you learned as a child, learn the new language that you will never be so smart or funny in as in your true language. It takes years to start to feel semi-normal. And yet people still come from Russia, Vietnam and Cambodia and Laos, Ethiopia, Iran, Haiti, Korea, Cuba, Chile, and they come on behalf of their children, and they come for freedom. Not for our land (Russia is as beautiful, not for our culture, they have their own, thank you), not for our system of government (they don't even know about it, may not even agree with it), but for freedom. They are heroes who make an adventure on our behalf, showing by their struggle how precious beyond words freedom is, and if we knew their stories, we could not keep back the tears

Garrison Keillor[258]
Minnesotan author, storyteller,
and presenter of the radio show, *Prairie Home Companion*

All Africans are potential refugees. In Africa, we can become refugees overnight.

Vivi Akakpo, West African Regional Coordinator,
Ministry with the Uprooted Program,
All Africa Conference of Churches[259]

INTRODUCING THE CONTEXT

Garrison Keillor is considered by many to be a quintessential Minnesotan. His 37-year-old, popular and award-winning radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion," and the majority of his books humorously and poignantly depict life in small-town Minnesota. Many of Keillor's stories focus on church, particularly the Lutheran Church, and its importance in the lives of his characters. His work highlights the idiosyncrasies of Minnesotan life, emphasising the particular in order to appeal to

[258] Garrison Keillor, "Laying on Our Backs, Looking Up at the Stars," in *Newsweek*, (4 July 1998) as cited in The Minneapolis Foundation, *Immigration in Minnesota: Minnesota, Nice or Not* (Minneapolis, 2000), 2.
[259] Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program, "Empathy, Listening Mark Vivi Akakpo's Work with Refugees," in *Monday*, vol. 24, no. 3 (New York: CWS/IRP, May 2005), 3.

shared experience. Keillor opens up the lives of his characters for his listeners through the telling of personal and localised stories with which they can relate.

The quotation cited above appeals to its reader to recognise the particular and personal in the faces of immigrants and refugees. During such times when immigration reform in the U.S. appears to be regressing toward a McCarthy-era state of fear and suspicion and people's attitudes toward the immigrant and the refugee have become flagrantly bigoted and xenophobic, Keillor's words affect to tell a story of what it means to leave one's country. He attempts to break through common misconceptions regarding the motives of migration and describe the all-too-painful process of becoming a stranger, whatever that motivation is: leaving the familiar, having to relearn how things work, how to speak, becoming less human in the perceptions of others. Keillor promises us that if we listen to the stories of migrants, we will share in their grief, their despair, their loss.

Minnesota is probably not the first place one considers when exploring issues concerning immigration and refugees in the United States. Locations such as California, Florida and New York would appear to be more suitable for such a study. But Minnesota has long been a state of immigrants. In 1910, 29% of the state's population were immigrants, amounting to 550,000 persons.[260] In the year 2000, that number has decreased to approximately 260,000 persons, or 5.4% of the state.[261] While this represents a decrease in the population, from the years 1990 to 2000, the population of immigrants more than doubled, from 110,000 to 240,000, signifying a resurgence in migration to the state.[262]

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[260] League of Women Voters, *Immigration in Minnesota: Challenges and Opportunities* (St. Paul: League of Women Voters of Minnesota Education Fund, 2000,) 1.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid.

Even more compelling is Minnesota's history concerning refugees. According to the Department for Homeland Security (DHS), Minnesota admits the second-largest number of refugees for resettlement in the U.S. of any state.[263] In the years 2004 and 2005 the percentage of refugees arriving in the U.S. that resettled in Minnesota totalled 11.2% and 11.8% respectively.[264] The total number of arriving refugees that resettled in Minnesota for those years is 12,289.[265] The Minnesota State Demographic Centre estimates that for the year 2004, the most prominent refugee populations in Minnesota totalled over 140,500.[266]

This total represents a figure significantly higher than the number of refugees who were originally resettled in the state. Many of these refugees arrived for resettlement in the U.S. via other states, having flown directly from refugee camps and locations of displacement to their DHS-sanctioned destination. Then, after some time of adjustment, these individuals and families moved to Minnesota to be near friends, family, or members of their particular ethnic community. This phenomenon is referred to as secondary migration.[267]

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[263] U.S. Department for Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, *Annual Report: Refugees and Asylees, 2005,* prepared by Kelly Jefferys (Washington DC, May 2006), 2.
[264] DHS, Office of Immigration Statistics, *Annual Report: Refugees and Asylees, 2005*, 2.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Accounting for refugee totals is an extremely complex exercise. Several questions must be considered when approaching this task, the predominant being, when is a refugee no longer considered a refugee? This question can be answered in a variety of ways, such as when the person is no longer eligible for refugee benefits, when the refugee becomes a citizen or is eligible to become a citizen. There are also considerations concerning refugee children. A child born in the U.S from legally migrated parents is considered a citizen. If the child has two Liberian refugee parents, would this child be counted as a refugee? The Minnesota State Demographic Office utilizes a combination of age-based multipliers and particular adjustments to arrive at their total. The Minnesota Department for Health and Family Services estimates that for the year 2006 over 70,500 refugees residing in Minnesota were eligible for refugee benefits. See, Minnesota Department of Human Services, "Refugee Assistance," 2006, <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/economic_support/documents/pub/dhs_id_004115.hcsp> as cited in Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, *Fact Sheet: Immigration in Minnesota*, (Minneapolis, 2006). For further discussion regarding the complexity of accounting for refugees with special reference to recent welfare reform in the U.S., see Miriam Potocky-Tripodi, *Best Practices for Social Work with Refugees and Immigrants* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 74-96.
[267] The phenomenon of secondary migration is significantly responsible for the difficulty of accurately accounting for where refugee populations permanently settle. If not for this occurrence, DHS records would provide the material necessary for tracking refugee populations with respect to their original resettlement location. But because refugees often move across state boundaries, this information must be correlated with both U.S. and state census records and those of other governmental agencies such as federal and state welfare departments.

Just as particular locations within a nation, state, city or town become associated with particular groups of people, so it is with refugees. For example, Minnesota is generally thought to be associated with Scandinavia, Germany and Ireland as many of the immigrants from the 1800s—1900s originated from those locations.[268] In contrast, San Francisco is often associated with east Asian populations such as the Japanese and Chinese. In Chicago, various immigrant groups have gathered and settled into distinct neighbourhoods bearing such appellations as Chinatown, Little Italy, the Ukranian Village, and Greektown.

In the same way, Minnesota has now become associated with several different refugee communities. These communities have developed and become established over time and have changed over the years according to global refugee trends and U.S. refugee policy. As of 2004, the largest major refugee communities in Minnesota were estimated at:[269]

Hmong	60,000
Vietnamese	25,000
Somali	20,000 - 50,000[270]
Laotian	13,000
Former Soviet Republics	12,500
Ethiopian	7,500
Cambodian	7,500

These communities differ in many respects. Many of the Southeast Asian people, including the Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian, have been resettling in Minnesota since the 1970s while Somali people have only been arriving in the U.S. since the mid-1990s. Minnesota is host to the largest urban Hmong population in the

[268] It must be noted that Minnesota also remains highly associated with the Ojibwe and Dakota people who these immigrants originally displaced.
[269] Minnesota State Demographic Center, *Estimates of Selected Immigrant Populations in Minnesota: 2004*, prepared by Barbara J. Ronningen (St. Paul, June 2004), 6.
[270] It should be noted that the estimation concerning the Somali population ranges from a conservative 20,000 to 50,000 in different publications. League of Women Voters, 10.

world, including Asia.[271] However, the majority of Hmong people in Minnesota are not immigrants, rather they are second and third generation citizens.[272] The Somali population in Minnesota is the largest in the United States.[273] In their report, *Immigration in Minnesota,* the League of Women Voters quotes a Somali woman, Hawa Aden, as saying, "You ask anyone in Somalia or in the refugee camps, and they all know Minnesota!"[274] While many refugees from Southeast Asia now own their own homes and run their own businesses, Somali people are first-generation immigrants who have only been in the U.S. for a decade and are just beginning to settle in to life in Minnesota.

Refugees from Africa are, on the whole, a recent phenomenon in U.S. resettlement history. From 1993 through 1998, the U.S. accepted anywhere from 4,770 to 6,969 refugees per year from the entire African continent for resettlement. This number peaked in 2004 at 29,125.[275] While these figures represent an exceptionally small percentage of the total number of refugees in Africa, a number that is consistently in the millions, the Presidential Determination ceiling has held at approximately 20,000 since the year 2000.[276] This can be read as a small but positive sign of commitment toward the alleviation of Africa's refugee crisis. The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants estimates that by the end of the year 2005, of the approximately 2,884,500 refugees in Africa, 2,262,000 have lived as refugees for at least ten years or more.[277] With the conflicts, civil wars and turmoil around the

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[271] Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, *Fact Sheet: Immigration in Minnesota* (Minneapolis, 2006), 2; The Minneapolis Foundation, *Immigration in Minnesota: Discovering Common Ground* (Minneapolis, October 2004), 12; League of Women Voters, Forward.
[272] The Minneapolis Foundation, *Immigration in Minnesota: Discovering Common Ground*, 12.
[273] League of Women Voters, 10.
[274] Ibid.
[275] USCRI, "Regional Refugee Ceilings and Admissions to the United States, FY 1993-2006," in *Refugee Reports*, vol. 27 no. 1 (Washington DC: USCRI, February 2006), 15.
[276] Ibid.
[277] For figures see, USCRI, "Table 8, Principle Sources of Refugees as of December 2005," in *World Refugee Survey 2006* (Washington DC: USCRI, 2006), 11; and USCRI, "Table 7, Warehoused Refugee Populations as of Refugee Populations," in *World Refugee Survey 2006* (Washington DC: USCRI, 2006), 10.

continent showing no signs of abating, the need for resettlement of Africans may prove to be the only durable solution available for years to come.

Minnesota has become a home for many African refugees. According to the 2000 census, 13% of Minnesota's immigrant residents were from Africa, this being the highest percentage of any state in the U.S.[278] Along with the burgeoning Somali population, the state is home to refugees from other African countries as well, including Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Rwanda, Congo-Kinshasa, and Togo. Minnesota also lays claim to hosting the largest community of Oromo people outside Ethiopia, the Oromo being one of the longest-standing African communities in the state.[279] The presence of these communities affects the flow of Africans who are resettled in the state. While refugees are not able to choose where they are to be resettled, national and local agencies attempt to place them in areas where there exist communities of the same ethnic background in order ease the process of acculturation.[280]

Refugee resettlement tends to occur in waves. Refugees from particular areas of conflict are likely to be resettled around the same time, such as the large influx of Vietnamese after the end of the Vietnam War or of people from the former Yugoslavia during and shortly after the Balkan conflict. These periods of resettlement reach a certain peak and then tend to taper off. The Hmong people have an established community in Minnesota's capital, St. Paul. They have been settling there since the 1970s and many now own their own homes and businesses. The Balkan people have had a relatively easier time adjusting to life in Minnesota, parts of which are even said to resemble Bosnia and Serbia. This could be due to a number of

[278] Minneapolis Foundation, 10.
[279] Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, 2.

factors: greater familiarity with western culture, greater exposure to the English language and vocations that have translatable correlations in the U.S. African refugees are relative newcomers to Minnesota. It remains unclear how well they are adapting, though signs look promising. It is certain that several communities of Africans have chosen to remain in Minnesota and that via secondary migration these communities are growing.

All of these refugees have come to Minnesota to begin a new life. They have been forced from their homes and have had to flee for their lives. They have probably lived long enough in a refugee camp or settlement to know that being resettled means both that there is no hope for a peaceful life in their home country and that they will likely never see that home again. They arrive in Minnesota to begin again in a place that is famous for its long and bitter winters. Many of these refugees have little or no idea what is in store for them after they arrive. Many look with expectation toward a life lived in relative safety, only to find that the neighbourhoods where they can afford housing tend to have higher crime rates. Many hope to continue an education that was cut short by conflict or to begin a degree, only to find that the U.S. government expects them to find employment immediately. If they have an advanced degree, such as in medicine or law, they find that their degree or training is not recognised in the U.S. and they must take entry-level jobs for little pay. Many refugees do not or cannot anticipate how difficult the road that lies ahead of them will be.

One thing all refugees can be sure of is assistance, from the government, the agency that resettled them and their sponsors. The U.S. government provides monetary and programmatic assistance via VOLAGs, local resettlement agencies and limited public benefits. Local agencies offer refugees case management services, an

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[280] Erin Patrick, "The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program," *in Migration Information Source* (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, June 2004), accessed 24 April 2007

orientation to American culture and help securing employment. While all of these participants are necessary to the resettlement process, a refugee's most significant support is often provided by church sponsors. Through experience with the resettlement of Vietnamese and Southeast Asians after the Vietnam War, the USRP recognised that while a certain level of material and monetary assistance is necessary for refugees to begin a new life, what makes the resettlement process successful is the presence of sponsors, particularly church sponsors.[281]

This thesis is ultimately concerned with the topic of hospitality as experienced in the context of church sponsorship with refugees. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to conduct a series of interviews with three congregations in Minnesota that have sponsored three separate African refugee families for resettlement. The focus of the research is the congregations' experiences, not the experiences of the refugees. The objective of this chapter is to introduce the subjects of this study, provide a context for their experiences, and explain the various factors considered when determining the parameters for the case studies. First, I will introduce the three refugee families that were sponsored by these congregations. Within the limited parameters set by the Minnesota Council of Churches (MCC) for this research, I will briefly describe the histories of several protracted conflicts across Africa, discuss what happens while refugees wait for resettlement, and give brief descriptions of the families resettled.[282] Then I will introduce the churches with whom I conducted

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<http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=229#8>.

[281] Interview with Joel Luedtke, Director of Refugee Services, 12 November, 2003. As mentioned previously, sponsors are groups and individuals committed to assuring that refugees arriving into the U.S. are welcomed into a community which will provide them with as much assistance as they need to begin their new lives. They can be both family members already living in the U.S. or a committed group of people, typically a church, or combination of both, depending on the needs of the refugee family.

[282] According to an agreement with the Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services Program, I was granted access to their constituent churches and Refugee Services case files but can not reveal the following in the presentation of this thesis: the refugees' names or identifying characteristics of their identities, any reference to their home countries or regions of Africa they came from or what parts of the Twin Cities metro area they came to live. Likewise, names of the congregations and church

interviews. I will describe the churches' roles and responsibilities in the process of resettlement and how I chose the three congregations that constitute the case studies for this research. Finally, I will introduce the churches themselves, providing brief descriptions of the congregations and of the three persons from each church that I interviewed.

INTRODUCING THE FAMILIES

As stated previously, refugees fear for their lives. Many refugees have been singled out by oppressive regimes, often military led, for the particular work they have done in their country, such as speaking out for peace, political organizing, religious leadership or participating in political or social movements. Many other refugees fear for their lives because they can be identified as belonging to a particular group of people, such as a particular clan or tribe, religious affiliation, or political party. These refugees have often been forced to leave as a group and therefore have been granted refugee status collectively. In either instance, the threat to the refugee is very real.

Oftentimes this threat is not resolved after the refugee has been resettled. Because of this possibility, the identities of the three families related to this study must be withheld. Along with names, any overt indicators that could assist in possibly identifying the families must also be suppressed. This includes any overt references to what countries these families once called home, their countries of first asylum, their specific locations of residence within the Twin Cities metro area and the specific year in which they were resettled within a three-year margin. Specific requirements pertaining to the identities of the congregations will be described later in the chapter.

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members are to be withheld as well as overt descriptions of their locations in the Twin Cities metro area.

For this study, I have chosen to focus on three Christian churches that have resettled three African families in the Twin Cities metro area. Each of these churches are constituents of both the Minnesota Council of Churches and Church World Service (CWS). The three families involved were all resettled during the three years prior to September 11, 2001. They originate from different parts of the continent, excluding what is considered North Africa and the state of South Africa. In order to facilitate discussion regarding these three families, while protecting their anonymity, from this point on they will be referred to as family Ndleda, family Raselemane and family Kukame.[283]

In order to provide a context for the resettlement of these three African families, some discussion of the situations they were forced to flee must be undertaken. For these purposes, I will provide brief summaries of the causes for flight in five countries from which the U.S. accepted the highest number of African refugees for the fiscal years 1999 - 2001.[284] I will begin with a description of the unrest during the general time period when the families were resettled in the U.S and an update for the current situation as of the years 2005 - 2007.

Losing Home

Ethiopia

[283] Rather than call the families A, B and C, I wanted to preserve at least an African name for these very real people. These names were chosen completely arbitrarily from the list of strikers for the South African Senior National Men's Team, *Bafana, Bafana*. They in no way correlate with the refugee families involved, particularly as South Africa has been excluded from this study. See Safa, National Teams, *Bafana, Bafana,* accessed on 15 March 2007, <http://www.safa.net/teams/team_details.asp?team=1>.

[284] USCRI, "Refugees Admitted to the United States, by Nationality, FY 1992-2005," in *Refugee Reports* (Washington DC: USCRI, February 2006), 16-17. These five countries also correlate with the top five countries from which Minnesota received the highest number of African refugees for fiscal years 2000 and 2001. See Office of Refugee Resettlement, *Amerasian, Asylee (from Northern Iraq), Entrant and Refugee Arrivals by Country of Origin and State of Initial Resettlement for FY 2000,* accessed 12 March 2007 <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/fy2000RA.htm.>; and ORR, *Amerasian, Asylee (from Northern Iraq), Entrant and Refugee Arrivals by Country of Origin and State of Initial Resettlement for FY 2001,* accessed 12 March 2007 <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/fy2001RA.htm>.

Ethiopia has an unusual history in the African context in that it is the only country not to have been formally colonised by Europe. Despite a brief five year occupation by Italy in the Second World War, Ethiopia has remained Africa's oldest independent state.[285] Despite this unique position, Ethiopia continues to be one of the world's poorest countries. Ethiopia has suffered from multiple droughts and famines since the 1970s and has experienced multiple conflicts, particularly dating back to the early 1990s.

Ethiopia was ruled by the Emperor Haile Selassie until 1974 when he was ousted from power by a military junta led by Mengistu Haile Mariam. Mariam exercised a bloody regime which sparked a civil war causing thousands of Ethiopians to flee to neighbouring countries. Mariam was overthrown in 1991, at which time the UNHCR declared that the conditions causing the previous years flight were improving, and those who left the country prior to 1991 would no longer have refugee status since they could return home.[286]

In 1993, Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia. In 1998, war broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea over border disputes. At this time approximately a quarter of a million people of Eritrean descent were living in Ethiopia as Ethiopian citizens.[287] During the war, the Ethiopian government forced approximately 75,000 persons of Eritrean heritage across the border into Eritrea.[288] Many of these people had lived their entire lives in Ethiopia and were coerced without warning from their homes; families were torn apart. The war lasted two years until a peace agreement was reached in 2000.

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[285] BBC World News, "Country Profile: Ethiopia," updated 2 March 2007, accessed 20 March 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1072164.stm>.
[286] USCR, "Country Reports: Ethiopia 2000." in *World Refugee Survey 2000*, accessed 20 March 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Ethiopia> 2000>.
[287] USCR, "Country Reports: Ethiopia 2000."

By the end of the year 2000, approximately 40,000 Ethiopians could be counted as either refugees or asylees, with another 280,000 people displaced within the country.[289] Much of the displacement occurred near the border, rendering homeless a population consisting mostly of subsistence farmers. At the same time Ethiopia was host to approximately 190,000 refugees, including approximately 120,000 from Somalia, 70,000 from Sudan, 3,000 from Eritrea and 1,000 from Djibouti. [290]

Since that time, tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea have remained high, though they have maintained a tentative peace. This is due in part to the presence of special UN peacekeeping forces, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. While reporting on the "deadly" seriousness of the ongoing boundary disputes, a report released by the International Crisis Group alludes to a common description of the two-year war having been "as pointless as two bald men fighting over a comb".[291] As of 2005, there were reportedly 63,900 refugee and asylum seekers from Ethiopia and 150,000 – 265,000 internally displaced persons.[292] Return home for both refugees and the internally displaced has been hindered for several reasons, including the pervasiveness of landmines on farmland, damaged health clinics and water systems, drought and famine.[293]

Instability in the area could be heightened by both Ethiopia and Eritrea's involvement in Somalia. At the end of 2006, Ethiopia had supplied the interim government of Somalia, relegated to a small area around Mogadishu, with troops to

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[288] USCR, "Country Reports: Ethiopia 2001," in *World Refugee Survey 2001*, accessed 20 March, 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Ethiopia> 2001>.
[289] USCR, "Country Reports: Ethiopia 2001."
[290] Ibid.
[291] International Crisis Group, "Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War Crisis Group," *Africa Report*, no. 101 (Nairobi/Brussels, 22 December 2005), 2.
[292] USCRI, "Country Reports: Ethiopia 2006," in *World Refugee Survey 2006*, accessed 20 March 2007 <http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?subm=&ssm=&cid=1583>.
[293] USCR, "Country Reports: Ethiopia 2004," in *World Refugee Survey 2004*, accessed 20 March, 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Ethiopia> 2004>.

help fight against the Islamic militias representing the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) who maintain control of most of the country. Subsequently, Eritrea has been accused of supplying arms to UIC forces along with six other countries, a charge which Eritrean officials have denied.[294] Such alliances can only increase possibilities for future conflict in the area.

Somalia

Somalia remains one of the most fractious and war-torn countries of our contemporary age. Somalia has basically had no effective government since 1991, leaving the country in turmoil without an infrastructure to support the basic needs of its people. From the mid-1800s until 1960, Somalia was divided in two and ruled separately by the British and the Italians. Upon gaining independence in 1960, these two territories were joined to form what is now known as Somalia. The borders between these two territories and with neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya have never been stable. Much contemporary conflict in the Horn of Africa is understood as centring around border issues.

Conflict in the past four decades began in 1969, when socialist leader Muhammad Said Barre seized power and nationalised most of the country's economic base.[295] Barre originally aligned his government with what is now the former Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.). When the U.S.S.R. began to supply aid to Somalia's rival, Ethiopia, Barre broke off relations with the communist government and accepted military and economic aid from the U.S. The U.S. supplied $50 million in arms annually to

[294] BBC World News, "Timeline: Eritrea," updated 9 March 2007, accessed 20 March 2007 < http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1070861.stm>.
[295] BBC World News, "Timeline: Somalia," updated 2 April 2007, accessed 6 April 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1072611.stm.>.

support Barre's regime in exchange for use of military facilities in the area.[296] As Barre's regime became more bloody, the U.S. severed ties with Somalia in 1989 due to flagrant human rights abuses.[297]

Civil war broke out in 1988 and has continued to this day. Barre was ousted from power in 1991, during the early years of the war, by clans opposing his domination. What the leaders of these clans subsequently failed to accomplish was an agreement regarding a replacement government. This further escalated warfare among clans for control of the country. Upheaval during the early years of the war came to a peak in 1991 and 1992 when some 800,000 Somalis left the country as refugees, leaving approximately two million internally displaced persons.[298] The sheer volume of the internally displaced led to famine in 1992. It is estimated that by the autumn of 1992, 25% of Somali children under the age of five died due to the famine.[299] Warfare culminated in 1992 and 1993 when a failed U.S. humanitarian mission ended with the death of hundreds of Somalis and the eventual departure of UN peacekeeping forces in 1995.[300]

Warfare, anarchy and conflict persisted during this time, particularly in southern Somalia and its capital Mogadishu, continuing throughout the 1990s. In 2000 a new government was formed with the participation of all of the leading clans, and Abdulkassim Salat Hassan was elected as president.[301] The government officially became known as the Transitional National Government (TNG). Hassan appointed Ali Khalif Gelayadh as Prime Minister. The TNG has since failed to unite the

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[296] League of Women Voters, 10.
[297] Ibid.
[298] USCR, "Country Reports: Somalia 1999," in *World Refugee Survey 1999*, accessed 20 March, 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Somalia> 1999>.
[299] League of Women Voters, 10.
[300] BBC World News, "Timeline: Somalia."
[301] USCR, "Country Reports: Somalia 2001," in *World Refugee Survey 2001*, accessed 20 March, 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey>

country or bring peace among opposing clans. In 2004, a new parliament was established again with the agreement of the major warlords, making this Somalia's fourteenth attempt to set up a government since 1991.[302] This new government, known as the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), elected Abdullahi Yusuf as President and appointed Ali Nohamed Ghedi as Prime Minister.

In February of 2006, the TFG met for the first time in Somalia in the town of Baidoa. Meanwhile, an Islamist militia emerged out of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), a judiciary body set up by the Somali business community with the goal of bringing stability and order to the predominately Muslim country without dependence on clan affiliation.[303] The UIC and its militias had taken control of much of southern Somalia, including Mogadishu. Violence and warfare continued to intensify around the country. With the support of Ethiopia and backing of the UN Security Council, the TFG entered Mogadishu in January 2007, claiming it as the seat of their interim government and declaring a state of emergency.[304]

As of early April 2007, fighting between Ethiopian troops and UIC militia had escalated in the capital, causing thousands to attempt to escape the violence. The UNHCR reported that since 21st March, 2007, an estimated 47,000 persons had fled the city.[305] One of the UNHCR's representatives reported, "I have never seen such a displacement in the last 15 years. It reminds me of 1991, when the central government collapsed. Most of the people fleeing are women and children who attempt to escape

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Country Reports> Somalia> 2001>. Note that since sources do not agree, I have chosen to utilise the BBC's spelling of Hassan's name.

[302] BBC World News, "Country Profile: Somalia," updated 6 March 2007, accessed 6 April 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1072592.stm>.

[303] BBC World News, "Profile: Somalia's Islamic Courts," updated 6 June 2006, accessed 6 April 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5051588.stm>.

[304] BBC World News, "Timeline: Somalia."

[305] Weibel, Catherine, UNHCR News Stories, "Almost 5,000 Flee Mogadishu Since March 21, More Expected," (Nairobi: UNHCR, 2 April 2007), accessed 9 April, 2007 <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/461135612.html>.

by any means available, including cars, trucks, buses, wheelbarrows, donkey carts and even on foot".[306]

Warfare and violence in Somalia has clearly escalated rather than abated in 2007. Hopes for peace in the region remain dim in the midst of chaos and bloodshed. Hopes for Somali refugees are also not promising. By the end of year 2005 there were approximately 279,500 refugees who had been living in refugee camps or segregated settlements, or warehoused, for seventeen years or more.[307] That figure represents an entire generation born and raised to adulthood in captivity and fear. The UNHCR estimates that as of January 2006 there were approximately 394,800 Somali refugees and asylum seekers in the world, making Somalia the former home to the 5th largest number of refugees in the world.[308]

Sudan

Like Somalia, Sudan has been embroiled in civil war for the past 23 years. Sudan's civil war can be broken down into two general time periods and locations. The majority of the conflict has occurred between a predominately Arab, Islamic north and a black, Christian and traditionally animist south. This conflict lasted for 21 years and has only lately been resolved as of January 2005. The second phase of war has occurred as relatively recently as 2003 when government backed militias began the systematic murder of black African villagers in the western region of Darfur. Both of these conflicts have involved matters of autonomous governance and religious difference. The families involved with this study would have been directly

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[306] Ibid.
[307] USCRI, "Table 7, Warehoused Refugee Populations as of Refugee Populations," in *World Refugee Survey 2006* (Washington DC: USCRI, 2006), 10.
[308] UNHCR, "Table 3: Origin of Major Refugee Populations – 1 Jan. 2006: Ten Largest Groups," in *Refugees by Numbers 2006 Edition* (Geneva: UNHCR 2006), 8. This ranking excludes the approximate 4.3 million Palestinian refugees who fall under the auspices of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

affected by the first and longest civil war but may have family and friends affected by the second.

Sudan gained independence from Britain and Egypt in 1956. In 1962, leaders in the south fought for self governance of the region, which was granted in 1971. In 1983 civil war broke out as Islamic law was imposed upon the people of Sudan by President Jafar Numayri. The rebel group the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM), and their army, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), fought the government and their policies of Sharia law. Numayri was deposed in 1985 and replaced in 1989 by Omar al-Bashir, leader of the Revolutionary Command for National Salvation. In 1991 Bashir partnered with the National Islamic Front (NIF). Despite a series of establishing and dissolving parliaments, Bashir has concentrated power in his own hands. By the end of 1998, government militias controlled most towns and villages in southern Sudan. A 1998 report estimated that since 1983 1.9 million people in southern and central Sudan had died because of the civil war.[309]

By the end of the year 2000, war had produced approximately 465,000 Sudanese refugees or asylum seekers and four million internally displaced persons.[310] Among those internally displaced persons are the infamous Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan. The Lost Boys and Girls consisted of some 12,000 boys and several thousand girls between the ages of 7 and 14 who had banded together to cross from southern Sudan to the relative safety of Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.[311] These children walked for miles, some as far as 1,250 miles.[312] Many ate leaves and dirt in order to survive. Many children didn't reach the camps and there were reports of children drowning

[309] USCR, "Country Reports: Sudan 2000," in *World Refugee Survey 2000,* accessed 25 March 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Sudan> 2000>.
[310] USCR, "Country Reports: Sudan 2001," in *World Refugee Survey 2001,* accessed 25 March 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Sudan> 2001>.

while attempting to cross rivers and being eaten by lions.[313] One boy describes his journey of making the walk naked: "I took my clothes off and walked naked. There were people killing boys just for their clothes". [314] These children languished in refugee camps, since without parents they were unable to be resettled until they were 18. Some of the boys were eventually resettled in groups, making up family units. The fates of the girls were less certain as they were and remain particularly vulnerable to rape and kidnapping, common incidences of camp life. [315]

2001 saw the advent of famine as approximately three million people were facing starvation.[316] U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell stated that with regard to conditions in Sudan, "There is perhaps no greater tragedy on the face of the earth today".[317] But at the same time 2001 heralded peace talks between the north and the south. These agreements were formalised in January 2005.

While divisions between north and south were moving toward peace, in 2003 violence erupted in western Sudan's Darfur region. The World Refugee Survey for 2005 reports that in 2004, "Government forces bombed villages from the air while Janjaweed on horseback systematically raped and murdered civilians and burned and looted livestock and property. The Janjaweed raped more than 40 schoolgirls and teachers in one town in February and 40 more at an IDP camp in June".[318] The Janjaweed are a militia comprised of Arab Africans from various tribes in western

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[311] Moumyzis, Panos, "Murder, Flight… and Pizza," *Refugees*, vol. 1 no. 122 (Geneva: UNHCR, 2001), 22.
[312] Ibid.
[313] Ibid. and Emmanuel Nyabera, "Man-eating Lions, Crocodiles, Famine," *Refugees*, vol. 2 no. 126 (Geneva: UNHCR, 2002), 8.
[314] Kumin, Judith, "The Long March," *Refugees*, vol. 2 no. 119, (Geneva: UNHCR, 2000), 12.
[315] Nyabera, 8-9.
[316] BBC World News, "Timeline: Sudan," updated 24 January 2007, accessed 25 March 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/827425.stm>.
[317] USCR, "Country Reports: Sudan 2002," in *World Refugee Survey 2002,* accessed 25 March 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Sudan> 2002>.
[318] USCRI, "Country Reports: Sudan 2005," in *World Refugee Survey 2005,* accessed 25 March 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Sudan> 2005>.

Sudan and Chad who purportedly had the backing of the government for the atrocities in Darfur. The Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) claimed that the government was oppressing black Africans and subsequently began attacking government targets. These groups have further splintered into other factions. These events contributed to the inefficacy of the 2006 peace accords, which have been considered a failure.[319]

In 2004, then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell referred to the conflict in Darfur as genocide.[320] It is estimated that by the end of 2004 the violence had claimed anywhere between 70,000 and 140,000 lives and forced 1.84 million persons from their homes.[321] When added to the figures of the internally displaced from other parts of Sudan, the total ranges between 5.3 and 6.2 million persons.[322] The BBC reports that of 2006 the total number of deaths in Darfur to be greater than 200,000.[323] Concurrently, the UNHCR reported that as of January 2006 Sudan ranked second in the world for originating the highest number of refugees and asylees, with an approximate total of 693,300.[324]

Liberia

The founding of the country known as Liberia is unique in Africa. Liberia was founded in 1822 by a private organization in the U.S., the American Colonization Society, as a haven for former slaves. While the ancestry of these former slaves was

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[319] BBC World News, "Hopes Fade for Solution for Darfur," updated 3 April 2007, accessed 10 April 2007 < http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6522713.stm>.
[320] BBC World News, "Timeline: Sudan," updated 24 January 2007, accessed 2 April 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/827425.stm>.
[321] USCR, "Country Reports: Sudan 2004," in *World Refugee Survey 2004,* accessed 25 March 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Sudan> 2004>.
[322] Ibid.
[323] BBC World News, "Sudan's Darfur Conflict," updated 27 February 2007, accessed 10 April 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6522713.stm>.
[324] UNHCR, "Table 3: Origin of Major Refugee Populations – Jan. 2006: Ten Largest Groups," 8. Again excludes Palestinian refugees, who fall under the auspices of UNRWA.

African, they came from all over Africa and therefore maintained a distinct communal identity that was part African, part U.S.-American. This led to tension between the indigenous Africans and the newcomers. In the late 1880s as European nations began the so-called "Scramble for Africa," Liberia avoided European colonization and declared its independence in 1847. Its constitution and flag are both derived from the U.S.

Liberia has experienced two civil wars over the past two decades. The first lasted seven years between 1989 and 1996. During this time approximately three million persons were uprooted from their homes and became refugees or internally displaced persons and 150,000 were killed.[325] Life in post-war Liberia was difficult. Towns had been destroyed, along with hospitals, clinics and schools, and food shortages were common. At the same time, by the end of 1996 Liberia hosted an estimated 100,000 refugees from Sierra Leone.[326]

Until 1980, Liberia had been led by the minority group of former slaves from the U.S. In 1980, after riots over food prices, Samuel Doe staged a military coup. The government was overthrown and Doe assumed a dictatorial leadership of the country. By the late 1980s Liberia was facing economic collapse. During 1989 – 1990, Charles Taylor, commanding, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) militia group, led a series of uprisings against the government across the country. In 1990, Doe was executed by a group associated with the NPFL.[327] The NPFL splintered and other rebel groups arose, all fighting each other. In 1990 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed peacekeeping troops (known as

[325] USCR, "Country Reports: Liberia 1999," in *World Refugee Survey 1999*, accessed 24 March, 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Liberia> 1999>.
[326] Ibid.
[327] BBC World News, "Timeline: Liberia" updated 2 January 2007, accessed 24 March 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1043567.stm>.

ECOMOG) to Liberia.[328] In 1992 a cease-fire was reached, which left the NPFL controlling 95% of the countryside and an interim government controlling Monrovia.[329] In 1993 fighting broke out again and was followed by a peace agreement signed in 1995. While violence erupted again in 1996, eventually peace was established. In 1997 Charles Taylor won the Presidential election.

The second civil war followed soon after in 1999 and lasted through 2003. Taylor's regime was brutal, and in 1999 fighting broke out in opposition to the government. Taylor accused Guinea of backing the insurgents. At the same time, Ghana and Nigeria accused Taylor of supporting the rebels in Sierra Leone. In 2003, Taylor was accused of war crimes for allegedly backing rebels in Sierre Leone and, under international pressure, left in exile to Nigeria. [330] Since then a relative peace has been restored to Liberia. With the aid of the UN and ECOWAS, elections were held in 2005. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was instated as President in 2006.

Taylor was extradited from Nigeria in 2006 on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for which he will be tried in the Hague. The *2004 World Refugee Survey* reports on the devastation to the people of Liberia at the height of the war in 2003:

> Militias and government troops looted deserted homes and extorted fees at checkpoints from fleeing civilians. Sexual violence was rampant against civilians of all ages, including boys, girls, and elderly women. Repeatedly, armed forces recruited children to serve as soldiers, kidnapped civilians for ransom, beat and harassed civilians, and forced many children into prostitution. An estimated 15,000 of Liberia's 40,000 to 50,0000 combatants were children, according to the UN.[331]

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[328] ECOMOG stands for Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group and is the military contingency of ECOWAS.
[329] USCR, "Country Reports: Liberia 1998," in *World Refugee Survey 1998*, accessed 24 March 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Liberia> 1998>.
[330] BBC World News, "Timeline: Liberia."
[331] USCR, "Country Reports: Liberia 2004," in *World Refugee Survey 2004*, accessed 24 March, 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Liberia> 2004>.

By the end of 2003, Liberia was home to an estimated 500,000 internally displaced persons as well as 60,000 refugees from other countries, while 386,000 persons had left Liberia as refugees and asylum seekers.[332] As of 2007, the UN maintained approximately 15,000 soldiers in Liberia, making it one of its most expensive peacekeeping operations.[333]

Sierra Leone

Formerly a British protectorate, Sierra Leone became an independent nation in 1961. Its capital, Freetown, was originally established by the Sierra Leone Company as a settlement for former U.S. slaves who fought with the British in the Revolutionary War. Upon gaining independence, governance of the country was inconsistent until 1967 when Siaka Probyn Stevens came into power. Stevens' leadership was interrupted by a coup and an attempted coup which led to the declaration of Sierra Leone as a republic in 1971 and a one-party state in 1973. By 1985, Stevens had retired and appointed Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh as President.

Civil war began in 1991 when Foday Sankoh, rebel leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), began a brutal campaign against Momoh, capturing towns in the country's eastern, lucrative diamond mining region.[334] ECOMOG and the military were unable to arrest the violence. Momoh was ousted in 1992 by a military coup. In 1995 the Sierra Leonean government hired a South African mercenary group long

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[332] Ibid.
[333] BBC World News, "Country Profile: Liberia," updated 28 February 2007, accessed 24 March 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1043567.stm>.
[334] BBC World News, "Timeline: Sierra Leone," updated 19 December 2006, accessed 26 March 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1065898.stm>. See also, USCR, "Country Reports: Sierra Leone 2001," in *World Refugee Survey 2001,* accessed 26 March, 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Sierra Leone> 2001>.

enough to hold multi-party elections.[335] Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was elected President in 1996 and signed a peace agreement with the RUF. He was deposed by coup in 1997 and fled to Guinea. In a reverse coup, ECOMOG drove the rebels from Freetown and reinstated Kabbah in March of 1998. By the following January, rebels backing Sankoh and the RUF attempted to seize Freetown but were driven away after weeks of bitter fighting.[336]

In 1999, a peace agreement was reached between the rebels and the Sierra Leonean government. The UN sent peacekeeping troops to assist with the peace process. In 2000, UN forces were attacked and several hundred UN troops abducted by rebels. Britain deployed troops to the region who assisted in the release of the troops and the capture of Sankoh. By 2001, the UN began the process of disarmament and peace was declared at the beginning of 2002. Kabbah won the elections held in May, and the UN committed to conducting a war crimes tribunal and assisting with the rehabilitation of rebel troops. Sahkoh subsequently died in 2003. According to a study by the UN, Sierra Leone was ranked as the poorest, least developed country in the world during the year of peace, 2002.[337]

The most distinguishing factor of the civil war in Sierra Leone was the rebel forces' practice of dismembering their victims. Typically hands, arms and legs were amputated, often by machete. The elderly, women and children were not spared from this savagery. In an issue of the UNHCR's magazine, *Refugees*, dedicated to the situation in Sierra Leone, Ray Wilkinson describes the apparent purpose and motivation of this practice, referring to "… the thousands of innocent civilians whose arms and legs were hacked off indiscriminately by rebel soldiers whose sole aim

[335] USCR, "Country Reports: Sierra Leone 2001."
[336] BBC World News, "Timeline: Sierra Leone."

appeared to be to spread terror among the population and intimidate the government".[338] While the traumas of war can leave extensive and profound damage to a community—physically, spiritually and psychologically—the presence of these amputee victims will remain a specific and visible, collective reminder of this war for generations to come.

More than 130,000 Sierra Leoneans remained refugees or asylum seekers by the end of the war in 2002, while 60,000 Liberians had fled to Sierra Leone to escape the violence in their own country.[339] During the eleven years of war, over 750,000 persons had been displaced within the country.[340] Wilkinson describes Sierra Leone's civil war as,

> one of the most vicious wars of modern times. … Tens of thousands of persons were killed and wounded, unknown numbers of women and girls were raped, entire villages were razed and their occupants kidnapped in a conflict rooted in ethnic and regional rivalries and an ugly scramble for the country's rich gold and diamond deposits.[341]

As of 2005, there remained only an estimated 20,500 refugees and asylum seekers outside Sierra Leone, and many of the internally displaced have returned home or settled elsewhere within the country.[342] While the fighting may have ceased and some sense of stability has returned to the country, the people of Sierra Leone, like any who have survived war, have only just begun the process of healing.

From Africa to Minnesota

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[337] USCR, "Country Reports: Sierra Leone 2003," in *World Refugee Survey 2003*, accessed 26 March, 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Sierra Leone> 2003>.
[338] Wilkinson, Ray, "We Will Forgive… We Will Never Forget," *Refugees*, vol. 1 no. 118 (Geneva: UNHCR, 2000), 6.
[339] USCR, "Country Reports: Sierra Leone 2003."
[340] USCRI, "Country Reports: Sierra Leone 2005," in *World Refugee Survey 2005*, accessed 26 March, 2007 <http://www.refugees.org Path: Investigate> Publications & Archives> World Refugee Survey> Country Reports> Sierra Leone> 2005>.
[341] Wilkinson, 6.
[342] USCRI, "Country Reports: Sierra Leone 2006" in *World Refugee Survey 2006*, accessed 26 March 2007 <http://www.refugees.org/countryreports.aspx?subm=&ssm=&cid=1600>.

After a person has fled her home and entered another country as a refugee, she will find her living conditions reflect one of three scenarios. Either she will be living in a refugee camp, a refugee settlement or she will be living on her own wherever she has ended up. When considering Africa, an image of the dusty, overcrowded refugee camp is most likely to spring to mind, complete with its ubiquitous hovels and starving children. While this is indeed a horrific image, it is not universally true. Nor does it reflect the wide variety of activities and concerns that accompany refugees after leaving home. In many ways, what is truly horrifying regarding life as a refugee in exile are not the specific conditions themselves, but rather how long they must be endured.

Across the world, 40% of the refugees cared for by the UNHCR live in refugee camps, while 13% and 47% respectively live in urban areas or are dispersed though rural areas. In Africa, the percentage of refugees living in camps increases to fifty.[343] The proportion of African refugees living camps is significantly higher than the global mean. In 2003, an estimated 2.4 million people in the world were living in a total of 267 camps; 170 of those camps were located in Africa.[344] In addition to camps, refugee settlements, often specifically referred to as "segregated refugee self-reliance projects," are pervasive in Africa.[345] Funded in order to promote self-sufficiency in refugee communities and deter their dependence on the host country, settlements can appear to hold obvious advantages over life in a camp, but often these advantages are illusory. While settlements are less confining than camps, they are still segregated from mainstream life in the host country and dependent on aid for

[343] UNHCR, "The Refugee World – At a Glance," *Refugees*, vol. 4 no. 129 (Geneva: UNHCR, 2002), 13.
[344] Ray Wilkinson, "Africa on the Edge" *Refugees*, vol. 2 no. 131 (Geneva: UNHCR, 2003), 26.
[345] Merrill Smith, "Warehousing Refugees," 51.

survival.[346] Travel permits are required to leave the settlement, and work permits, which cost money, are required for wage earning; both must be obtained by permission of the commandant or supervisor of the settlement.[347] And while many camps could easily qualify as restrictive, they can offer a measure of protection in dangerous situations, particularly for women, children, the infirm and elderly.

Refugee camps vary from place to place, some giving the impression of fully-functioning small towns or cities, others fulfilling pre-conceived images of squalor and despair.[348] In camps, refugees are provided with the most basic essentials to keep them alive. They are given materials for shelter, anything from plastic sheeting, to wood or brick building material, to tents. They are provided with access to water and rations of food that often include only the most essential supplies such as rice, maize and oil. Most camps offer basic education services and some even boast libraries, language classes and access to the internet. Varying degrees of medical care are often provided by international aid agencies.

For refugees the trauma of flight is quickly compounded by the inability to affect their livelihoods and the inevitable dependency of camp life.[349] Jeff Crisp, former head of the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit at the UNCHR, and Ray Wilkinson, former editor of the UNHCR's magazine, *Refugees*, paint a bleak picture of the transition into camp life:

> Most refugees have little money and few possessions when they arrive in a new country. Shunted into inhospitable camps, increasingly deprived of international support, already meagre food supplies sometimes reduced, they can quickly become trapped in a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and deprivation. Education is a major casualty. Though UNHCR attempts to fund primary classes there are few funds available for secondary education, setting the stage over a

[346] Ibid., 40.
[347] Ibid., 51. Most African governments refuse refugees the right to work. See Joel Frushone, "Unevenly Applied, More Often Denied: Refugee Rights in Africa," in *World Refugee Survey 2004* (Washington DC: USCR, 2004), 76.
[348] For an example of case studies involving three disparate African refugee camps, see Ibid., 74-81.
[349] Assefaw Bariagaber, "States, International Organisations and the Refugee: Reflections on the Complexity of Managing the Refugee Crisis in the Horn of Africa," in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 37, no. 4. (Dec., 1999), 604-5.

> period of years not only for a 'lost generation' of young people deprived of any learning, but also helping to create an increasingly bored and resentful population. Women turn to prostitution, human traffickers or recruiters for local militia flourish as do drugs, alcohol and, inevitably, domestic violence and disease such as HIV/AIDS.[350]

In another volume of *Refugees* magazine specifically concerned with the scope of the refugee crisis in Africa, Wilkinson reports on the conditions at two particularly populous camps:

> Kenya's Kakuma and Dadaab camps are among the largest in Africa, sheltering between them 180,000 people. [A study by the UNHCR] showed even such mundane items as blankets, jerrycans and kitchen utensils were last distributed on a large scale seven years ago and those items have probably long since perished. … In Dadaab, where summer temperatures can reach above 40 degrees Celsius, refugees currently receive 17 liters of water per day, but they are also expected to feed their livestock from this amount. There is only one toilet available for every 275 students at school compared with a target of one for every 20; there are 144 children for every classroom and one teacher for every 60 children. … Seventy-five percent of pregnant women are anemic. The space available to each refugee is less than three square meters—minimum standard is 3.5 square meters—and 'shelters are in pathetic conditions.'[351]

Crisp and Wilkinson depict a dismal picture of life for refugees relegated to camps in Africa. But even when refugees are living under the very best of conditions, it is critical to remember that life as a refugee seeking shelter in a host country is still considered merely a temporary solution. The real horror of refugee life occurs when what is originally intended to be a temporary solution becomes an almost permanent one. When life in a camp or settlement lasts for over a generation, children grow into adulthood having known no other 'home' but this 'temporary' solution. When people spend five, ten, twenty years languishing in a refugee camp, they gradually lose hope not only of ever returning home but of ever having a home again.[352] This situation occurs when return to the refugee's country of origin is not a safe option, nor does it appear that it will be safe in the foreseeable future, and the host or neighbouring

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[350] Jeff Crisp and Ray Wilkinson, "Crisis Without End or Solution," *Refugees*, vol. 4 no. 129, (Geneva: UNHCR, 2002), 26. See also, Smith, 39; Frushone, 79; UNCHR, "Protracted Refugee Situations: The Search for Practical Solutions," *State of the World's Refugees 2006: Human Displacement in the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 115.
[351] Ray Wilkinson, "Africa on the Edge," 19.

countries cannot offer the option of permanent resettlement. These circumstances are the result of a protracted refugee crisis and leaves little hope that the refugees involved will be able to settle anywhere.[353] The refugees become victims of what the USCRI refers to as warehousing, which is "the practice of keeping refugees in protracted situations of restricted mobility, enforced idleness, and dependency—their lives on indefinite hold—in violation of their basic rights under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention".[354] Merrill Smith, Director of International Planning and Analysis at USCRI and editor of the World Refugee Survey since 2003, asserts that whether in a camp or settlement, refugees can be considered warehoused "when they are deprived of the freedom necessary to pursue normal lives".[355]

It is under these conditions that resettlement to a third country, most likely outside the continent of Africa, can be understood as a rare chance for hope.[356] But even if a refugee is to be included in the total of 20,000 Africans that are annually accepted into the U.S. Refugee Program (USRP) for resettlement, it may take months or even years for the refugee to reach the U.S.[357] The procedures required by the USRP before departure are time-dependent and a delay in any one area can result in the whole process starting over from the beginning. Before refugees can be ready to travel, they must have received the assurance of a sponsor, undergone medical screening, treatment and inoculation, completed an extensive interviewing process

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[352] Shortly after 2000, the USCR investigated the plight of refugees who had lived for an extended period of time in this 'temporary' manner and found that many of the people they met had been living in their current circumstance since Richard Nixon was President of the U.S. See Frushone, 74.
[353] Crisp and Wilkinson, 22.
[354] Smith, 38.
[355] Ibid.
[356] It is understood that options for resettlement to other African countries are continually being exhausted and that if these refugees could be resettled in a safe place, reasonably close to home, meaning on the continent, they would be.
[357] "Even when a decision is made to resettle a particular group (or individual), the actual movement to the United States may be delayed by months or years, owing to operational factors that are not wholly under the control of U.S. government officers. The refugee resettlement machinery is highly complex, and dozens of pieces must line up successfully before resettlement takes place." See David Martin, *The United States Refugee Admissions Program: Reforms for a New Era of Refugee Resettlement* (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2005), 7.

with subsequent security checks and received a cultural orientation to the U.S. The cultural orientation attempts to prepare refugees for the culture shock they will experience upon reaching the U.S. It includes information regarding work, managing money, health, housing, child care practices and family structures. Emily Russ, director of the cultural orientation program at the Refugee Processing Center in Accra, Ghana, says, "Our goal is to teach them their rights and responsibilities in the U.S., promote self-sufficiency, and encourage independence. … We try to be as accurate and realistic as possible without setting up unreasonable expectations. Refugees are surprised when they learn that the dollar doesn't go as far in the U.S. as in Africa".[358]

Once these procedures have taken place, refugees are ready for travel. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) attends to the transit of refugees from Africa to the U.S. Representatives from IOM assist the refugees with connection in European airports and meet them at their entry point into the U.S. IOM personnel help the refugees with their documentation and another set of security checks with the DHS, including fingerprinting. Once granted entry into the U.S., the IOM representative will accompany the refugee family to their flight. While there is no agency assistance if the family has a connecting flight, personnel from airports and airlines have grown accustomed to refugee transit and assist accordingly, particularly with travel delays.

Due to airline scheduling, African refugees usually reach Minnesota in the evening. They typically have been travelling for over 24 hours and are exhausted as well as overwhelmed. In the wintertime, flights are often delayed due to weather conditions, meaning that the caseworker and sponsors have been waiting with anxiety

[358] The OPC in Accra, Ghana is operated by CWS. CWS/IRP, "Crash Course Softens Culture Shock for Refugees," in *Monday*, vol. 22 no. 6 (New York: CWS/IRP, June 2003), 6.

for the family's arrival. The family is most likely hungry and also ready for sleep. What is unmistakable, undeniable and always present at these moments is the excitement on the part of both the refugees and the sponsors. As the Refugee Ministry Organizer for Refugee Services, I have been present at many airport arrivals of African families. I am there to support the resettlement committee as they welcome the refugee family. The caseworker is always the first to greet the arriving family. I forewarn the resettlement committee that the family will probably not remember their names and encourage the committee leaders to gently greet the family members. Typically the family is so excited that there are hugs and handshakes all around. Riding an escalator is usually a first for many Africans and is something in which the committee can help the family. The luggage is gathered and loaded into vehicles and the family is transported to their accommodation for the night. If the family has arrived in winter, they will be given hats, gloves and scarves before going outdoors. And if there is snow on the ground or falling from the sky, children, especially, will laugh and express their amazement at something so strange and new.

MEET THE FAMILIES

The primary purpose of this research is to examine the experiences of three congregations that have resettled African refugee families. While the main focus is on the churches themselves, insight into the composition of the families involved is essential. The subjects of the case studies, namely the church members, will be describing their experiences and relationships with these families. In this section I will introduce the families themselves, providing as much essential information as possible without compromising their identities. In order to do this I will furnish the same basic details about the families that would have been supplied to the local

affiliate agency, in this instance Refugee Services, prior to the families' arrivals.[359] This information will include basic family structure, ages, literacy and communication skills and general religion. Further details regarding the refugee families will be revealed via the case study narratives of the churches as they explain their own experiences with the family members.

Ndleda Family

The Ndleda family has four members consisting of a father, aged 28, two daughters, ages seven and three respectively and a cousin whose age was not supplied but appeared to be of a similar age to the father.[360] Very little information was provided about the family. Of the details available, it was recorded that only the father spoke English. In actuality, he spoke very little. The family was also listed as being Christian and that they had fled their country of origin on foot. The only other significant detail available pertained to a significant health problem concerning the father. No information was supplied at this time regarding the children's mother, but upon arrival the father told his case worker that she had died.

The exact relationship between the father and the cousin was never determined, but it remains unlikely that the two men were cousins or even related, since cousins

[359] Prior to a refugee's arrival in the U.S., the individual or family is given a case number by the Refugee Processing Center (RPC). The RPC is operated by the U.S Department of State's (DOS) Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). The RPC gathers basic information about the individuals associated with each case and compiles that information as the case BioData. The BioData is then provided to the specific Resettlement Agency that has accepted the case, in this instance CWS. CWS then passes the case and its corresponding BioData on to the affiliate agency, in this instance Refugee Services, that has agreed to resettle the case. BioData is basic information about the individual or family that includes: the name of the principal applicant (PA) and family members, date of birth, sex, country of birth, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, religion, relationship to the PA and marital status. Additional information is included when available, such as information regarding an anchor relative if available, general health, languages written and spoken, education and employment and skills. While this list may seem comprehensive, it is not necessarily clear or accurate. For example, if the BioData form has a "Y" in the section for "English," this could represent fluency or a very limited ability to communicate. Even information as to a person's age can be incorrect or vague as many people do not have birth certificates or recognize a birthdate in the western fashion and therefore must guess as to when they were born according to the western calendar.

[360] Note that these ages represent their ages upon arrival in the U.S.

are not eligible to be resettled with the primary applicant.[361] The family was designated a P1 case, or Priority 1, meaning that they were referred to the U.S. by either the UNHCR or an U.S. embassy for urgent resettlement. It is possible that the cousin could have been resettled as a P1 individually, but since he knew the father, a special exception was granted. So even though they were, in actuality, two families, a father with two daughters and an individual man, they were resettled together as one case.

The Ndleda family was resettled in the U.S. as a "free case". They had no friends, relatives or even distant connections with anyone in the U.S. who could assist them with their resettlement process. Therefore they required a church that would act as a full sponsor, taking responsibility for a significant portion of their resettlement. It was understood that this could be a difficult resettlement merely by the fact that it involved a single parent with significant health problems.

Raselemane Family

The Raselemane family was a family reunion case. They came to join Hanna, a refugee woman who had been living in the U.S. for ten years.[362] This case was unusual in that during the time Hanna applied for her family to join her, she had been attending a specific United Methodist Church (UMC) in the Twin Cities metro area. When she received notification that her family was being prepared for travel, she asked her church if they would help her with the resettlement process. At this time, I had already met with this particular congregation regarding their interest in possibly working with a refugee family. When Hanna brought her situation to the

[361] This relationship was not determined either in Refugee Services' case notes or by the church case study interviews.

congregation's attention, they called me for assistance. Refugee Services was able to arrange to have the case allocated to their office and the UMC church became the family's co-sponsors.

Hanna needed assistance because the family joining her totalled fourteen people. This included Hanna's 70-year-old father, who served as the PA, and his wife who was 65. In many cultures around the world and particularly in Africa, polygamy is common marital practice. In equally as many countries, polygamy is viewed as illegal. Hanna's father had three wives. Since many of the countries that accept refugees for resettlement, including the U.S., also do not recognize polygamy as a valid form of marriage, Hanna's father was only allowed to bring one of his wives with him as they resettled. It is most likely that the wife he brought was his first wife, the wife he was married to the longest and who had the highest status in his household. The other two wives were left in Africa.

All of the Raselemane father's children were eligible for resettlement regardless of who their mother was. With him he brought seven daughters ranging from ages 20 to 6 and two sons, aged 20 and 11. Also with him were his three grandchildren, Hanna's children, two girls, 16 and 15, and a boy, 14. No other information was supplied regarding the family other than the father had experience with tractors and the wife had been a housewife and baker. While Hanna would be able to assist her family with some of the most important aspects of resettlement, including translation, she clearly needed assistance with finding housing, setting up homes for them, enrolling the children in school, finding employment for the children over the age of 18 and transporting them all to the various appointments they would need to attend. Fourteen is a very large number of people to resettle. Besides coping with the

[362] All names are changed. First names were chosen randomly but according to sex from an African name website. See Namesite.com: African Names and Meanings, accessed 12 March 2007

resettlement of her 11 family members, Hanna also had to handle the emotions and considerations associated with being reunited with her own children, whom she had not seen in ten years.

Kukame Family

The Kukame family was also a large family reunion case that needed a co-sponsor. Amana had come to the U.S. as an asylum seeker. She applied for her family of 11 to join her, but their arrival in the U.S. was delayed by a police detention in their host country. The principal applicant was Amana's mother, who was 53-years-old and in poor health. Her father was 54 and her siblings included five girls, aged 21 to 7, and four boys, aged 17 to 6. It is probable that the father had multiple wives and that by applying for her mother as the PA, Amana would be assured of her arrival in the U.S.

The family was quite educated. The father and seven of his children were literate in their local language. The father and his three eldest daughters also had some familiarity with English. The eldest daughter had the best grasp of English. She also became pregnant within her first year of resettlement. The family is Muslim, and there was some question as to how they would react to assistance from a Christian church. Amana dispelled those questions and provided assurance that her family would only be grateful.

The Kukame family was in a similar position to the Raselemane family. With eleven members in the household, the possibility of finding them housing where they could live together was slim. Amana worked full-time and would need the assistance

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<http://www.namesite.com/search.php>.

of others in order to help her family accomplish all of the many tasks required for them to begin their new life.

INTRODUCING THE CHURCHES

Churches Resettling Africans in Minnesota

Africans migrate to Minnesota via a number of pathways. They may arrive as asylum seekers, typically crossing the border from Canada into the U.S. They can immigrate in a more straightforward manner, such as with a student or work visa or through marriage to a U.S. citizen. These two categories represent a small portion of the Africans that reside in Minnesota. The majority of Africans arrive in Minnesota as refugees. Again, as refugees they can arrive in three manners: as *free cases*, families with no ties in the U.S., as *family reunion cases* or as *secondary migrants*.[363] Secondary migrants typically spend the first months of their resettlement at the location of their arrival in the U.S. There they go through the processes and fill out the necessary paperwork that establish their rights as refugees in the U.S. They are also entitled to benefits during this time, benefits they would lose if they moved to another state. This study is concerned with African refugees whose point of arrival in the U.S. is Minnesota, referring specifically to free cases and family reunion cases.

There are six agencies in the Twin Cities metro area that assist in resettling refugees.[364] While five of these agencies are faith-based, only Refugee Services and World Relief work directly with churches in sponsoring refugees. At the time of this study, Refugee Services resettled anywhere between two to three hundred people per

[363] The terms family reunion cases and family reunification cases are interchangeable.
[364] Jewish Family and Children's Services of Minneapolis (JFCS); International Institute of Minnesota; Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services; Lutheran Social Services Refugee Resettlement and Employment Services (representing LIRS); World Relief Minnesota Refugee Resettlement Services (Greater Minnesota Association of Evangelicals); Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services Program (representing CWS and EMM).

year.[365] While this represents a smaller number than those refugees resettled by Lutheran Social Services and the International Institute, both agencies work primarily with family reunification cases making Refugee Services the agency that resettled the largest number of free cases.[366] Refugee Services serves as the local affiliate office for both CWS and Episcopal Migration Ministries, providing a broad denominational constituent base of churches from which to draw upon for refugee sponsorship and assistance.

Responsibility for the resettlement of a refugee family travels with the refugee as they journey toward their destination.[367] In Africa, every refugee eligible for the U.S. Refugee Program (USRP) will have been interviewed by a representative of an Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) in preparation for an interview with the U.S Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).[368] The USCIS, formerly known as the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), comes under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) formed in 2003. In many cases the refugee has already been interviewed by the UNHCR and granted refugee status, but in order to be accepted into the USRP they must first pass a security screening and be (re)interviewed by a representative of the USCIS. Once accepted into the USRP, the refugee's case is then taken up by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population,

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[365] Interview, Joel Luedtke.

[366] The period of time for this study constitutes the three years directly prior to September 11th. Since September 11th, the entirety of the U.S. immigration system has gone through major changes, the most remarkable being the institution of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) which usurped what was then known as the INS. Since September 11th, no free cases have been resettled in Minnesota.

[367] Since September 11th there has been a massive restructuring of the U.S. Refugee Program (USRP) including changes in names of agencies and departments that handle different aspects of the resettlement process. David Martin, in a report prepared for the Department of State and published by the Migration Policy Institute, elaborates on the complexity of this process. He states that in his interviewing process, he found "some persons deeply involved and expert in certain parts of the process may have only a dim conception of other key elements." See Martin, 67. For further discussion of the mechanisms of the USRP, see Martin, 67-77.

[368] Two matters of note: first, refugees eligible for the USRP include referrals by the UNHCR, U.S. embassies and State Department determination as a response to an Affidavit of Relationship (AOR) filed by a family member already in the U.S. Secondly, OPEs (Overseas Processing Entities) were formerly referred to as JVAs (Joint Voluntary Agencies). OPEs are representative programs of the different VOLAGs set up around the world in order to prepare refugee case files for interview by the DHS.

Refugees and Migration (PRM), which manages the U.S. refugee admission program and the Refugee Processing Center (RPC). At this point the refugee's case passes from being handled in Africa to being processed in the U.S.

Responsibility for the refugee's case is passed on from the government to one of the national voluntary resettlement agencies (VOLAGs) through discussion with the RPC. A national agency, such as CWS, will then take responsibility for the case. Ultimately the case is passed on from the national resettlement agency to a local resettlement agency. Because CWS is comprised of a number of member denominations, each case will be allocated to, or chosen by, one of its member denominations. Once the case is allocated to a local CWS office, it lies within the responsibility of the denomination, locally and nationally, to assure that the refugee's resettlement needs are met. In this way, responsibility is shared by the U.S. Federal government, CWS, whatever denomination has agreed to be responsible for the case and, specifically, the Refugee Services Office in Minnesota.

Congregations who agree to sponsor refugees also share the responsibilities of resettlement. Though not a legal agreement, sponsors are made aware of the potential needs of the refugees before they commit to sponsorship. This applies to both family sponsors and church sponsors. In the instance of a free case, Refugee Services are required to find a church sponsor before the CWS can assure the RPC that the refugee will be resettled responsibly. Only then will the USRP begin the arrangements for the refugee's journey from Africa to Minnesota. In family reunion cases, the family sponsor has already filed an affidavit attesting to their relationship to the family member(s) he or she hopes will join them in the U.S. That affidavit serves as an indicator to begin the resettlement process with specific refugees in Africa. This process can take years. Several months before the potential arrival of the applied-for

family members, the family sponsor is interviewed by Refugee Services to ascertain their ability to resettle their family members considering, primarily, the sponsor's finances and how much time they have available to contribute to the resettlement. When the family sponsor requires assistance, a church from within the specified denomination will be sought to act as a co-sponsor.

Several factors contribute to the pairing of a church with a specific free case or family reunification case. The main consideration rests with the specific CWS denomination that has agreed to assist with the case. If possible, finding a church of that denomination is a priority since they contribute to the overall funding of the resettlement and, in some instances, can contribute finances directly to a specific case. Another essential consideration is that of geography. Within this field, certain factors must be balanced with and against each other and weighed against the geographical location of the church. These details include the location of an established ethnic community, the availability of affordable housing and the availability of public transportation.[369] In the instance of co-sponsoring a family reunification case, it is helpful if the church is located near the family sponsor's home. The third and critical element in matching a church with a refugee family is the readiness of the congregation to assist. Rushing congregations into sponsorship generally leads to negative experiences for both the refugee family and the congregation. The congregation must be prepared both organizationally and emotionally for the responsibility of sponsorship. The tasks required in the process of resettlement can be overwhelming for an unprepared congregation, which potentially leads to

[369] There are a number of factors agencies in any location have to consider. In addition to those listed above, accessibility to employment and schools would most likely be considerations. These factors will differ depending on the location of the agency. In Minnesota, both employment and schools are fairly accessible in most locations, whereas housing is not, and African communities have established themselves in specific locations in the Twin Cities metro area. Other agencies might not have the same issues with finding affordable housing but might have more difficulty in accessibility to entry-level jobs.

resentment and frustration. These negative feelings can be directed toward the family and often reflect a deep disappointment in the congregation's own expectations of sponsorship, expectations that could be grounded more realistically with preparedness.

Determining who has responsibility for what in the resettlement process can potentially be confusing, particularly for the refugee(s) involved. While this responsibility has a vertical aspect, from the USRP and CWS down to Refugee Services, it also has a horizontal component that can include agency employees, church sponsors and family sponsors. The more people associated with the resettlement, the more potentially confusing it can be. Any time a congregation is involved, another layer of human interaction is added to an already delicate system. There is no question as to the benefits church sponsorship brings to both the agency and family sponsor, particularly regarding the amount of work the congregation can do that directly relieves both parties' responsibilities. Conversely, there is also the potential that church sponsors may aggravate a caseworker's work load or undermine the caseworker's authority. Clarity regarding roles and responsibilities among all parties involved is essential but will vary from case to case.

The local agency ensures that every refugee family has at least a caseworker and an employment counsellor. The caseworker has a specific set of responsibilities that remains constant from case to case. For each refugee family, the caseworker must meet them at the airport, provide a cultural orientation, refer them to appropriate social service providers and visit the family's home within the first month; for free cases, he or she must visit the home again within 90 days. While the caseworker must ensure that the family's basic needs are being met, these needs may be actualized by a family or a church sponsor. Therefore, a congregation can assume responsibility for

many of the tasks the caseworker would otherwise need to perform. The agency's employment counsellor assists refugees over the age of 18 in finding employment. Church sponsors can also aid in this process.

Refugee Services provides casework and employment support for refugee families for 90 – 180 days. Employment counselling may last longer depending on the work available and the refugee's skill and communication levels. During the first few weeks of resettlement, each member of the refugee family members must apply in person for social services benefits, including cash assistance, refugee medical assistance and food stamps. If the refugee in question is over 18, they will be enrolled in the Match Grant Program administered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement instead of applying for refugee cash assistance.[370] Participants in the program are provided with financial assistance while they are searching for employment. These funds are to act as an incentive to refugees and a substitute for refugee cash assistance. The members of the refugee family must also be seen at a medical clinic for health screenings. A complete health screening requires three separate visits. For the first 30 days of resettlement, Refugee Services, and therefore the caseworker, is obliged to assure that the family has their basic daily needs met, which includes food, clothing, housing and furnishings.

Both congregational and family sponsors are expected to assist in transporting the family to and from appointments and secure the items essential to the family's basic needs. Most times, family sponsors themselves are working and have difficulty transporting their families to appointments that often last several hours. Most find it impossible with large families. Caseworkers occasionally have the time to assist with one or two appointments but cannot accompany the family to every appointment. In

these instances church sponsors are indispensable. Churches often have access to large vehicles for transporting large families. Resettlement committees usually have several retired people or stay-at-home parents who may be able to assist with those appointments that must occur during normal working hours. At the time of this study, the Twin Cities metro area was experiencing a severe housing crisis. This made finding and financing affordable housing for large families a considerable task. Oftentimes two or more apartments or houses must be secured to accommodate larger families. Churches are able to assist with the downpayment and first month's rent for the families until they find employment. In addition, obtaining furnishings, clothing and food for a large family also takes time. Clothing must be provided immediately since many refugees do not have a change of clothes with them and African refugees rarely have appropriate garments for Minnesota's winter weather. Sizes for clothing are not known until the family arrives and often cannot be collected sufficiently prior to arrival. Stocking a kitchen is also a difficult task when a family sponsor is not involved. Resettlement committees do their best at estimating what an African family might be accustomed to eating, but many non-Africans find the task intimidating or difficult and the families themselves are probably not familiar with U.S. food products, much less a Minnesotan kitchen. All of these tasks and considerations are activities the caseworker cannot accomplish alone. With large families, it is unrealistic that a family sponsor could singlehandedly manage these tasks either.

Often it is members of the church's resettlement committee that spend the most amount of time with arriving families. If these relationships are strong, members of the family may turn first to church sponsors with their questions rather than to their caseworker. In most instances this is appropriate, especially when the questions are

[370] The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is a program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families division. Ultimately the intention of the

easily answered. This dynamic can become problematic if the refugees bring significant problems to committee members which require professional assistance, such as in the cases of past experiences with torture, post-traumatic stress syndrome, unwanted pregnancies or instances of domestic abuse. Many times the relationships forged between the family and congregation are based on well-earned trust. When a family member comes to a church sponsor with a personal problem, it is often difficult to know when to involve the caseworker. The congregation member does not want to break that trust. Nevertheless, if the caseworker is not involved in these questionable situations, the chances rise that the situations may turn into serious problems.

Congregations that sponsor refugee families have a better chance of serving the family's needs when they are organized for sponsorship. At Refugee Services, the Refugee Ministry Organizer performs this task. Using both the *Manual for Sponsorship* produced by CWS and the *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* compiled by Refugee Services and geared toward local sponsorship, the Refugee Ministry Organizer works with congregations to prepare them regarding expectations, likelihoods and possibilities associated with sponsoring a refugee family.[371] In many ways the Refugee Ministry Organizer acts as a caseworker for the congregation itself. Initially taking a leadership role with the congregation, the Refugee Ministry Organizer gradually passes that role on to the resettlement committee which, in turn, leads the congregation. The main responsibility of the Refugee Ministry Organizer

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ORR is to provide services to and promote self-sufficiency for refugees.

[371] Through the funding of the position of Refugee Ministry Organizer, Refugee Services was able to develop its own local version of a sponsorship manual. The *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* was compiled over several years using material from the following sources: *Manual for Refugee Sponsorship*, Church World Services (CWS); *Plenty Good Room*, Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM); *Open Your Heart Open Your Home,* Sue Veazie, Committee on Refugee Services (MCC); *Volunteer Manual*, Refugee Services, LSS of North Dakota and the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota; *Role of Sponsor, Agency, and Community*, Richland-Wilkin Friends of Refugees Refugee Ministry Committee; The Episcopal Parish of St. David Bosnian Refugee Committee; Gethsemane Lutheran

becomes one of support and encouragement. It entails listening to members of the committee as they struggle with specific situations and celebrate others. It may involve giving suggestions and advice when warranted. The Refugee Ministry Organizer assists the resettlement committee in exercising discernment regarding when the caseworker needs to be involved and when not. In an ideal situation, the Refugee Ministry Organizer eventually becomes an observer as the congregation assists the family in becoming self-sufficient in their new home of Minnesota.

Methods of Case Study Determination

As the churches themselves are the focus of this research, much consideration was given to determining which churches to interview. Several factors were involved in this process, but the main concern was to choose three congregations that would represent a diversity of congregational life within the Twin Cities metro area and had assisted in resettling African families. Because the interviews will serve as the text from which I will evaluate the experiences of these congregations with particular reference to hospitality, I have chosen to approach this research qualitatively rather than quantitatively, seeking depth rather than statistics. Therefore I have chosen three congregations with which to work, conducting three in-depth interviews with each church, one with the pastor of the congregation and two with members of the resettlement committee.

The objective of these interviews was to have the interviewee speak as much as possible about his or her experiences of resettlement as part of a congregation with as

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Church & Mizpah UCC Refugees; United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR); Christian Council of Metropolitan Atlanta; Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR), Portland, Oregon.

little input as possible from myself. In order to facilitate this process, I chose three congregations with whom I had worked as Refugee Ministry Organizer at Refugee Services. As Refugee Ministry Organizer I visited MCC and CWS constituent churches, speaking with them about refugee sponsorship. Once a congregation had decided to act as a sponsor, I would then assist them in organizing for the refugee family's arrival. By deciding to interview three congregations with whom I already had established relationships, I reasoned that this familiarity would engender trust and allow the interviewee to speak more freely. Because I had no intention of conducting research in this area at the time of my employment with Refugee Services, those relationships were not directed toward this research in any way.

In order to determine which congregations would become the subjects of the ensuing case studies, I considered several specific factors and set parameters for the research. Firstly, the three congregations were all located in the Twin Cities metro area.[372] Because the identities of the refugee families involved must be protected, this concern must also be extended to several aspects of the churches' identities. Selecting congregations within the metro area allows for general descriptions of social and economic aspects of the congregations without revealing distinguishing factors that could promote identification. To state this simply, the combination of choosing, for instance, a rural congregation that resettled an African family and the descriptions of the church provided by the interviewees themselves would make it too easy to identify the refugees involved.

Other indicators that came into consideration when choosing the congregations included the size of the congregation, the relative financial viability of the

[372] The Twin Cities metro area includes the cites of Minneapolis, St. Paul and their surrounding suburbs. Another aspect of the consent agreement between myself and the Minnesota Council of Churches Refugee Services Program is that the locations of the refugee residents as well as the locations of their sponsoring churches be concealed.

congregation and its members, whether the church was located in the urban centres or the suburbs and the ethnic makeup of the congregation. In weighing these factors I specifically selected congregations that shared some of these traits but differed in others. Of shared traits, all three of the congregations were predominately white, middle class and had all sponsored refugee families at some point in the past.[373] Regarding differences among the churches, I wanted to ensure that while the congregations were all constituent members of both the MCC and CWS, they represented different Christian denominations.[374] The sizes of the congregations varied slightly. If one considers a church of thousands as large and one with less than 100 members small, then two of the congregations could be said to be medium-sized and the third small. The two medium sized churches were located in the suburbs and financially robust while the smaller church was urban and was more financially limited.[375]

I must be clear about one point. In no way would I suggest that any of these factors determine whether a congregation is *successful* in its sponsorship of a refugee family.[376] In fact, I would suggest that they do not; they simply allow for different types or kinds of sponsorship to occur. For example, a financially-limited congregation might have to be more creative in raising funds for sponsorship, which could include holding bake sales or partnering with another congregation that could provide the funds but not assist on a personal level. A large congregation may have

[373] The past could include anytime between the first wave of Vietnamese and Hmong refugees in the 1970s until the time of sponsorship, as long as the memory of the sponsorship remained present in the members of the congregation. Oftentimes congregations that sponsored refugees as far back as the 1970s remained proud of these acts, which had in turn become a part of the congregation's identity.
[374] I am not suggesting that denominational differences significantly affect refugee sponsorship in any qualitative manner, I simply wanted to have some diversity in this aspect that reflected the diversity of both the MCC and CWS.
[375] By financially robust I refer to the fact that the congregations could afford the salaries of two pastors, at least one minister of education and administrative staffs of two or more. These churches also made sizeable, annual financial contributions to other charities and ministries. The small church had a staff of two, the pastor and a secretary.
[376] VOLAGs and the ORR use a standard timeline of self-sufficiency as the model for what constitutes a successful resettlement.

more difficulty in communicating with all of the members of its congregation regarding the family and their particular and perhaps subtle needs, but might find other aspects of sponsorship easier, such as collecting furniture or household goods. A small congregation may be intimate enough to help one family feel at home but might feel smothering to another family. One situation is not inherently or intrinsically *better* than the other. They are merely different.

Therefore, by taking these factors into account I am attempting to provide a platform for variety in the interviews themselves. By no means were the subjects chosen based on what might constitute a successful sponsorship or not. Again, I am not interested in quantifiable analysis but rather in narrative text generated from peoples' individual and collective experiences. The one assumption that can be made is that all sponsorship is difficult. Refugees are persons who have experienced tremendous psychological and physical terror. Their difficulties do not end with resettlement; they actually encounter a whole new host of challenges and fears as they begin a new life in a strange new place. Sponsors must assume that resettlement will be difficult for the refugees involved and that that difficulty will extend to the congregations experience also. Every sponsorship and resettlement of refugees will have its successes and failures, its triumphs and uncertainties. Refugee resettlement is ultimately about people.

MEET THE CHURCHES

This next section will introduce the specific churches that serve as the subjects of this research. Each church sponsored an African refugee family between September 1998 and September 2001. As Refugee Ministry Organizer, I was invited to each of these congregations initially to speak with them regarding sponsorship and later to

assist them in preparing for the task. While the names of the congregations and interviewees have been changed, the denominational affiliations of the churches remain accurate. Three interviews were conducted with each congregation, including the pastor most closely involved with the sponsorship, the head of the Refugee Resettlement Committee and a member of that committee.

Faith United Methodist Church (UMC)

Faith UMC is a suburban church with a congregation of approximately 1200 people. The church acted as sponsors for the Raselemane family. Faith is a predominantly white, middle to upper class congregation composed of a large number of white collar professionals and academics. Founded in the 1950s in the newly-developing suburbs of the Twin Cities, Faith represents the merging of two smaller congregations. In the tradition of the UMC, Faith is governed by a council which in turn is informed by a series of committees and ministry teams. The congregation has approximately a dozen committees and teams as well as a charitable foundation, a board of trustees that manages the church's properties and a board of directors that presides over the church's preschool. The church supports two pastors and a number of individuals who direct various programs. Faith formed a subcommittee of their extant Missions Committee in order to facilitate the resettlement of the Raselemane family.

Faith UMC had originally contacted Refugee Services in response to an informational mailing regarding church sponsorship of refugees. I was invited to speak with the congregation's Women's Group on the subject and was received warmly. The group was interested in being involved with some sort of refugee ministry and possibly sponsoring a family. Joann, who eventually became the chair

of the Refugee Resettlement Committee, and Lisa, the chair of the Missions Committee, proposed the idea of sponsorship to the church council. At that time the council rejected the idea since there seemed to be a lack of volunteers able to commit to the project.

Shortly after this time, Hanna approached the Associate Pastor, Lynn, telling her that fourteen of her family members would be arriving in Minnesota as refugees. She asked Lynn for help specifically with housing her family, particularly since the Twin Cities was experiencing a housing crisis at the time. Lynn had recently joined the staff at Faith UMC. She brought Hanna's concerns to the Missions Committee, which agreed to assist. It was at this point Refugee Services was contacted and the Raselemane case was transferred to CWS and Refugee Services. Because the UMC is a constituent of CWS, transferring the case to CWS allowed Refugee Services and Faith to access denominational support for the family's resettlement.

Of those that assisted the Raselemane family, I chose to interview Lynn, Joann and Lisa. Lynn was actively involved in the family's resettlement. During the time of sponsorship, she had been a UMC minister for approximately ten years, spending three of those years at Faith. The resettlement of the Raselemane family occurred during those three years, from the initial contact with Refugee Services through the time when the family was largely settled and self-sufficient. Both Joann and Lisa were instrumental in forming and facilitating the work of the Refugee Resettlement Committee. Lisa served as the chair of the Missions Committee and had expressed an interest in having a hands on project for the committee. Joann was a stay-at-home mother with her two children. Joann became Chair of the Resettlement Committee organizing a large group of people to assist this large family.

In many ways, the resettlement of the Raselemane family appeared to proceed smoothly and effortlessly, an ideal example of sponsorship. But this impression does not accurately reflect the staggering amount of work and coordination required to assist the family. The members of Faith UMC put in hundreds of volunteer hours preparing for and spending time with the family. And just as the family members each experienced their particular difficulties in adjusting to life in Minnesota, different members of the committee experienced their own difficulties at different times of their sponsorship.

Hope United Church of Christ (UCC)

Hope UCC is a small urban church with a socially diverse congregation. While predominately white and working to middle class, Hope UCC has a strong commitment to inclusivity, particularly toward the marginalized. Hope UCC expresses this commitment by designating itself as an Open and Affirming, Anti-Racist and a Just Peace congregation. Each church in the UCC and Disciples of Christ denominations have the choice to declare themselves Open and Affirming.[377] For a congregation to be Open and Affirming means that they support the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in the life of the church. Similarly, the commitments of Hope to being Anti-Racist and Just Peace signify the determination of the congregation to publicly declare themselves as actively working to counter systematic racism and advance non-violence in personal and social relationships. In many ways Hope UCC's identity is bound up with its commitment to being open and welcoming.

Sue, the pastor of Hope, had been hired eight years before the congregation's sponsorship specifically to assist in what was considered a dying, urban congregation. During the early years of her ministry there, the congregation had partnered with another congregation to help resettle a Bosnian refugee family. The congregation had found this to be a positive experience and after a few years wanted to assist with another family, specifically from Africa. I was invited by Sue to speak with a group of people who were interested in helping sponsor a family, many of whom had previous experience helping resettle the Bosnian family or with a Vietnamese family they assisted in the 1970s. They agreed that they would like to sponsor again and requested that it be an African family. This is significant in that many congregations that I dealt with were hesitant about working with an African family. Some claimed that it wouldn't be fair to the family to be hosted by an all-white congregation or to place them in the predominantly-white suburbs. Some expressed a greater interest in working with East-Asian, Russian, Kosovar or Bosnian families. So, at the time, to have a congregation specifically interested in sponsoring an African family was a rarity.

Originally we had matched Hope UCC with a different African family. They were excited about the family's arrival and I worked with them to prepare for sponsorship. Unfortunately, one of the members of the family had a medical condition that put the family on an indefinite medical hold and kept them from travelling. Meanwhile, and understandably, the Resettlement Committee was becoming dispirited in their delayed hopes for the family's arrival. The Resettlement Committee was chaired by Janet, a former engineer, a teacher and a mother who had been active in assisting with the previous resettlement. Janet's father Bill, a retired

[377] The UCC's Open and Affirming program is similar to other denominational programs concerned with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered issues such as the ELCA's *Reconciling in Christ*, PC-

doctor, had not originally been active in the preparation for sponsorship but quickly became one of the crucial members of the committee. While waiting for the family's arrival, Janet, Sue and myself did our best to maintain the excitement level of the committee.

It was during this time that Refugee Services was allocated the Ndleda case. It was clear from the beginning that it would be a difficult case to resettle. The father was ill and the single parent of two young daughters and they were accompanied by another single man. This made for an unusual family group with specific needs. We also knew that it was a P-1 case and there was some urgency concerning the resettlement. I met with Hope UCC and described potential difficulties that might be associated with sponsoring this family, particularly regarding the situation of an ill father responsible for two young girls. I explained that they needed a sponsor urgently and asked, since we did not know when the original family they were matched with would arrive, if would they consider sponsoring the Ndleda family instead. I pointed out that not only were they experienced in sponsorship, but as a congregation particularly committed to and experienced in welcoming a diversity of people, they would most likely excel at providing a personal and nurturing environment for this family, who would most likely need extra care. Hope UCC agreed to sponsor the family.

From Hope UCC I chose to interview Sue, Janet and Bill. While Sue was very supportive of the family and the Resettlement Committee, she maintained a certain distance from the particulars of resettlement in order to fulfill her primary role of being a pastor to both. This is a position that I advocate since oftentimes the congregation needs pastoral care, particularly when sponsorship is challenging. The

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USA's *More Light* and the Reformed Church's *Room for All*.

resettlement of the Ndleda family proved to be exceptionally difficult in ways that could not have been anticipated. Sponsorship of the Ndleda family would have been extremely difficult for any congregation to undertake. The members of Hope UCC handled several demanding situations with compassion and delicacy as well as strength. The particular skills and experiences of the congregation's members proved invaluable in attending to the family's unique problems.

Peace Presbyterian Church (PC)

Peace Presbyterian Church is located in the suburbs of the Twin Cities metro area. Also a middle to upper class, predominately white congregation, it is located in an area with the same socioeconomic distribution. Founded over 140 years ago as a mission church on the prairies, Peace Presbyterian has grown to become home to a congregation of approximately 1000 people. The church is financially robust with funds distributed through various long- and short-term investment accounts. It is able to support a large staff, including two full time ministers. The congregation contributes to and participates in a variety of mission projects locally and abroad.

Peace Presbyterian acted as sponsors for the Kukame family. As with Faith UMC, Peace Presbyterian Church assisted in the resettlement of a large family whose anchor relative, Amana, could not meet the demands of sponsorship on her own. One of the most interesting aspects of this case was that the family were practicing Muslims of a tradition that had customarily been particularly hesitant toward sponsorship by Christian congregations. When questioned regarding her and her family's willingness to have a Christian church act as a co-sponsor, Amana expressed no reservations and assured that her family would only be grateful for any help they received.

Peace Presbyterian came into contact with Refugee Services through Julie and Beth, who attended an event sponsored by the Refugee Services office entitled *Welcoming the Stranger*. The day-long event was geared toward educating members of local congregations regarding the plight of refugees and options for their congregations to participate in refugee ministry. Both Julie and Beth served on their congregation's outreach committee and after attending the event, invited me to address their committee. The outreach committee quickly agreed to sponsor a family, formed a Resettlement Committee and began the process of organizing for sponsorship. Julie and Beth served as co-chairs of the Resettlement Committee.[378] The congregation had sponsored a refugee family approximately ten years previously and several of the committee members had been a part of that effort.

Julie, Beth and the Resettlement Committee were enthusiastic about sponsorship. When the Kukame family's case was allocated to Refugee Services and the case worker and I had met with Amana, I approached the congregation with the possibility of sponsoring this particular family during one of our meetings. I told the committee how much I, personally, enjoyed meeting Amana and assured them that I thought she would be extremely helpful in the resettlement process. They asked to meet her also. After the committee met with Amana, they agreed to assist in sponsoring her family. The committee was aware that finding a home or homes for a family of eleven would be difficult with the housing crisis and a lack of affordable housing in their particular suburb. They were also aware that there might be a certain amount of distance between the Kukame family and the church, more than with refugee families of other faith traditions.

[378] I also encourage Refugee Resettlement Committees to have two chairs in order to share the position that often has the heaviest workload. In this instance, Julie ended up taking on more of the chair's responsibilities while Beth concentrated on housing, the most difficult aspect of the resettlement.

For this case study, I chose to interview Julie, Beth and the senior pastor, Paul. Paul was not involved much in the actual resettlement but was supportive of the process. Julie, particularly, took the lead with the Resettlement Committee, maintaining strong connections with the family and particularly with Amana. Julie was a teacher that worked with emotionally and behaviourally disordered children. Beth brought with her particular skills regarding refugees, as she worked with immigrant and refugee women in a job training program. She also had experience with African refugees and, more specifically, refugees from the same place as the Kukames.

Peace Presbyterian's sponsorship of the Kukame family went well. The congregation experienced a great deal of difficulty in trying to house the family. At one point during the sponsorship, the Director of Refugee Services enlisted the help of the Resettlement Committee to restore a house with the intention that the Kukame family could buy it. That plan did not work well, and the church raised a large amount of money to assist the family with the down payment, money that was not used. There was a certain amount of distance between the congregation and the family, but that was more likely due to the physical distance between the church and the location where the family could find housing rather than because of any religious or traditional distinctions.

CONCLUSIONS

The function of this chapter is to provide a context for the interviews conducted with the three sponsoring congregations. The history of conflict in Africa and the conditions suffered by millions of refugees on the continent have shaped the experiences of the Raselemane, Ndleda and Kukame families. Their experiences in

turn contribute to the formation of the relationships established among the family members and congregations. Likewise the context of the churches, their particular histories, personalities and understanding of ministry/mission will also effect those relationships. Of the nine persons interviewed, three were clergy and the remaining six were key members of the Resettlement Committee for their respective congregations.

The next chapter will examine the experiences of these nine persons from within a framework of resettlement based on the sponsorship manuals of both CWS and Refugee Services. I will use the interviews conducted with these individuals as texts with which to examine the various components of congregational sponsorship. The final chapter will draw on these experiences as it reflects back to the topic of hospitality with special reference to the constitution of the church as the body of Christ.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVES OF EXPERIENCE

As this thesis assumes that human experience forms the basis for theological reflection, this chapter presents the material that will be used for further reflection on the topic of hospitality and its relevancy for the church. The chapter consists of three case studies based around the experiences of three churches in the Twin Cities metro area of Minnesota. The three churches had each sponsored an African refugee family for resettlement in the U.S. by the USRP through CWS between September 1998 – September 2001. Each case study is based on a series of interviews conducted with members of these three congregations during the months of October and November in 2003. The case studies are written primarily using the narratives of these interviews as text. When necessary, they have been supplemented with information gathered from Refugee Services case files of both the refugee families and the congregations and from notes taken during the interviews.[379]

The interviews were conducted with the pastor of the church and two members of the Resettlement Committee from each sponsoring congregation. Each interview lasted, typically, just over an hour. My task during the interviews was to help the interviewee feel comfortable and engender trust so they could speak as naturally and honestly as possible regarding their experiences. This process was facilitated by the fact that I had known each of the interviewees personally in my former capacity as Refugee Ministry Organizer. When conducting the interview I

[379] Each interview was taped and transcribed with both tape and transcription destroyed according to the terms of the Consent Form drawn up between the Minnesota Council of Churches' Refugee Services Program and myself. The transcribed interviews totalled over 100,000 written words. Of the interview tapes, only one did not tape properly. In the Interview with Pastor Paul from Peace

attempted to keep my questions to a minimum and ask very simple and standard questions that would promote further narration on the part of the interviewee.[380] While this meant that not all interviewees were asked the exact same questions, it allowed them to address what they wanted to talk about and not only what I wished them to discuss.

Materials gathered from the interviews and case files were compiled to tell the story of each church's experience with the refugee family they sponsored. Before detailing the unique and distinct experiences of the three congregations, this chapter begins with what is common to all three, namely information provided by CWS on how to prepare for sponsorship. After a brief description of the different tasks associated with sponsorship and how to organize for the family's arrival, I will present the cases themselves. Case Study number one follows Faith United Methodist Church's sponsorship of the Raselemane Family. Case Study number two attends to Hope United Church of Christ and their relationship with the Ndleda Family. Case Study number three recounts the experience of Peace Presbyterian Church and the Kukame Family.

ORGANIZING FOR SPONSORSHIP

As a congregation prepares for the arrival of their sponsored refugee family, it is imperative that the Resettlement Committee takes the time and energy necessary to

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Presbyterian, is it clear that the tape recorder was either moved or sufficiently blocked early on in the interview as the recorded voices become suddenly muffled.

[380] I utilized a standard and basic set of questions for the interviews. During each interview, I would begin by asking questions from this set. As the interviewees grew more comfortable, they invariably directed their narratives in different directions. I would oftentimes ask follow-up questions to an interviewee's statement if I sensed the individual had more to say on the subject. If not, I would return to the sheet of standard questions. The set of questions presented to congregation members began by my asking them to tell me about themselves and their occupations. I then asked how they became involved with helping their specific family and what role they played as part of the Resettlement Committee. I asked them to tell me of their experiences with the families, what were the most difficult and most rewarding aspects of the sponsorship. With the pastors of the congregations, the questions focused more on their relationships with the congregation during the sponsorship. I began by asking

organize themselves *before* the family arrives. Typically there is at least a month between the time a congregation is matched with a refugee family and the family's arrival.[381] During this time the Refugee Ministry Organizer, or another representative from the local affiliate agency, will help to prepare the congregation for the arrival of their sponsored family.[382] As part of this preparation, each congregation is supplied with CWS's *Manual for Refugee Sponsorship* or, as in the case of Refugee Services, with a localized version of the manual, entitled *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship.* By using this as a resource, the congregation is able to draw upon years of previous experience congregations have had sponsoring refugees in order to prepare for their own sponsorship.

While CWS's *Manual for Refugee Sponsorship* and Refugee Services' *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* differ slightly in form, they both contain the same basic material. There are minor differences between the two, based predominately on the fact that Refugee Services' Guide is geared specifically for local sponsorship. It takes into consideration the context of resettlement at a given time, for example, the significance of the housing crisis and the availability of public transportation in the Twin Cities metro area. The two also differ in that Refugee Services' *Guide for*

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them to tell me about their respective congregations. I then asked about their experiences of the resettlement. The questions deviated at this point.

[381] Occasionally this time is shorter, but more often it is extended as the family meets their final security and medical checks. The most likely cause for a shorter time between the local affiliate agency assuring that they have a sponsor for a particular family and the family's arrival rests with the local affiliate. Occasionally the congregation matched with the family changes its mind and decides not to sponsor. More likely, the affiliate assures the case without a firm commitment from a congregation, taking on the responsibility for finding a church in time or providing more intensive care for the family upon arrival. This is never an ideal situation when a sponsor is much needed. For free cases, the sponsor *must* be found before the assurance is given, but with co-sponsorship this process can be hurried in order to assure that the family is placed in the same city as their anchor family members.

[382] The position of Refugee Ministry Organizer is also known in CWS as the Sponsorship Developer. Not every local affiliate has the necessary budget required to support a Refugee Ministry Organizer or Sponsorship Developer. In most cases, these duties are taken on by the Director or as a side task of another staff member. In either instance, support for the congregation is minimal. After the commitment for sponsorship has been assured, the congregation must organize themselves based upon CWS's *Manual for Refugee Sponsorship*. During the time of this study, Refugee Services was fortunate enough to have the resources to support a full time staff person for the task of working with congregations as they supported refugees through various activities, particularly via the sponsorship of refugee families.

Refugee Sponsorship is slightly more task-oriented while CWS's *Manual for Refugee Sponsorship* is based more broadly on the entirety of the resettlement process. For the purposes of this study, I will be utilizing the basic structure of Refugee Services' *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* in outlining the tasks of sponsorship which should be assumed to reflect CWS's *Manual for Refugee Sponsorship* unless otherwise stated.

The *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* is clear in delineating the eight tasks around which the Resettlement Committee should organize in order to be prepared for the family's arrival. Some of these tasks require the involvement of one or two people while others are best served by creating subcommittees. Each of these tasks vary in degree as to how much contact the committee member has with the family. Some entail direct, one-on-one time spent with the family members while others can be accomplished either before the family arrives or in the background of the Resettlement Committee's work. The tasks also vary in degree as to how much of the wider congregation is best involved. Ideally for some tasks, the more members of the congregation involved the better, while others may be best left to the Resettlement Committee.

The differing nature of these tasks allows for the participation of congregation members with a wide range of skills. They require leaders and extroverts who are comfortable calling people they don't know well and speaking in front of the whole congregation. Some tasks call for the involvement of organizers and individuals who prefer to remain in the background keeping track of the details. Others demand strong people for lifting heavy furniture and the gentle touch needed to make a kitchen feel homey. The tasks require people who are innovative and people who are patient. They are best served by individuals with a variety of skill sets such as doctors, factory workers, teachers, parents, retired persons and children. And each of the individuals

involved in these different tasks contribute to what will eventually become the emerging network of relationships that is sponsorship.

Before delving into the case studies and the substance of the interviews, the following section briefly describes the eight subcommittees outlined by the *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship*. In order to appropriately locate the accounts of the various interviewees in the context of sponsorship, it is important to have an understanding of the various tasks of these subcommittees and how they relate to one another. This in turn will help situate the relationships of the interviewees with respect to the other members of the Resettlement Committee, their congregation, Refugee Services and the family members.

Resettlement Committee Coordinator(s)

The Coordinator of the Resettlement Committee does just that; he or she organizes the activities of the Resettlement Committee. As stated above, as Refugee Ministry Organizer I recommended that every Resettlement Committee have two Coordinators. The Coordinators carry a great deal of responsibility for the entire resettlement effort. They are responsible for keeping track of the various subcommittees and tasks that need to be accomplished. They schedule and run Resettlement Committee meetings, act as the main contact point for the family *and* Refugee Services and generally function as the main agents of communication for the sponsorship. Because this position requires a large time commitment and spans the length of the sponsorship, it is not uncommon for Coordinators to burn out or become exhausted by the resettlement process. With two Coordinators available, they can share the tasks and responsibilities of the position and relieve each other when

strained. The position requires both leadership abilities and the capacity for keeping track of details, skills that are more thoroughly accounted for by two persons.

Host Family and Hospitality Subcommittee

A host family provides immediate housing for the family when they first arrive in the U.S. Not every CWS sponsorship requires the involvement of a host family. In most cities across the country, apartments for the family are easily rented when the affiliate agency and sponsors learn of the family's arrival date. Because the metro area was experiencing a severe housing crisis at the time, such an endeavour was almost impossible. Locating and renting adequate and affordable housing could take a month, and in some cases several months, from the time that Refugee Services and the Resettlement Committee learn of the family's arrival date. Oftentimes smaller families are able to stay with their family sponsors until housing is located. For larger families, not only do they require temporary accommodation, they require a large amount of it. In these cases host families are invaluable.

Host families can offer many benefits to newly-arrived refugees. Living in a home with a U.S. American family can provide an orientation to life in the U.S. that cannot be conveyed in an hour-long orientation meeting. Particularly for rural Africans who may not be familiar with the modern conveniences found in the west, having people around to explain electrical devices, such as appliances and light switches; home safety tips, such as how not to use said appliances and what is poisonous; and how a typical western family operates, such as not leaving young children alone in the house and other parenting expectations, can prove invaluable. Staying with a host family can also be a great aid to learning English. Hosting a

family is extremely time intensive and can be exhausting. The host family should be adequately supported by the Resettlement Committee.

The hospitality subcommittee can be seen as an extension of the host family. They are there specifically to welcome the family at the airport, provide meals for the family and relief for the host family, assist in orientating the family to life in Minnesota, and arrange for welcoming gatherings for the family at church when appropriate. Members of the hospitality subcommittee are encouraged to provide outings for the family to assist them in becoming comfortable in their new surroundings. Trips to the library, grocery stores, neighbourhood parks, restaurants and other areas of interest and entertainment can be immeasurably helpful for the family, particularly as the first trip to many of these places can be daunting and overwhelming experiences for newly-arrived refugees. Hosting a family and being part of the hospitality subcommittee are highly relational activities that offer a great deal of one-on-one time with the family members. The hospitality subcommittee can provide significant inroads towards establishing relationships between the family and the larger congregation.

Permanent Housing Subcommittee

The Housing Subcommittee is responsible for locating and acquiring safe and affordable housing for the family. Ideally, this would be accomplished so that the family could be able to move straight into their new house or apartment upon arrival, but this is hardly ever the case in the Twin Cities. The housing should not only be safe and affordable, it should also have access to nearby schools and stores. When looking for housing the subcommittee should also consider locating near potential avenues for employment and near arterial public transportation routes. Once housing

is acquired, the subcommittee is responsible for setting up the appropriate utilities such as gas, electricity and phone. Members of the subcommittee should also be prepared to orient the family to the building, the particular relationships between tenants and landlords and the responsibilities of rent and bill paying. This subcommittee can be as large or small as deemed necessary. For congregations working in the Twin Cities metro area, this subcommittee can potentially be one of the most frustrating for its members. This task can be difficult and does not provide many opportunities for one-on-one time with the family. As Refugee Ministry Organizer, I invariably advised Resettlement Committees that this could prove to be the most difficult task of the sponsorship.

Furniture, Food and Clothing

This subcommittee is responsible for furnishing the refugee family's new home, stocking their cupboards with food prior to their arrival and gathering clothing to outfit each member of the family. It is expected that these goods will be acquired through donations from members of the congregation. The subcommittee should ascertain what furniture and household goods will be needed for their particular family and proceed to develop a system to obtain and store the items until housing is secured. At that time, the subcommittee should move the furniture in and set up the home, making sure to remember such details as linens for the beds, cleaning supplies, toiletries and kitchen items. Food for the family should be interpreted as stocking the cupboards of the new house. Subcommittee members are encouraged to research and acquire foodstuffs that might be familiar to the family and to supply plenty of staples such as rice, cooking oil and flour. Clothing the family can prove to be a more delicate operation since clothing sizes are not known until the family arrives.

Typically, the subcommittee can estimate sizes and request donations from the congregation with the understanding that leftover items would be donated to a shelter. In my experience, this subcommittee offers many opportunities for creative participation and its members can often have a great deal of fun. It is an excellent avenue for involving the entire congregation in the sponsorship and can provide occasions for congregation members to become closer with each other. Contact with the family themselves is most often minimal but can be increased with creative effort.

Employment Subcommittee

Finding employment quickly is essential for the refugee family's route toward self-sufficiency. It is an expectation of the USRP and CWS that every able family member over the age of eighteen find work as soon as possible after arrival. The Employment Subcommittee assists in this process. Refugees are often most employable in entry-level positions. Even when refugees hold degrees and have held positions of authority in their home country, those degrees and areas of expertise are not always recognized by employers and institutions in the U.S. Examples of this phenomenon include most medical degrees and certification and professionals in the fields of law or teaching. Language barriers also make finding employment a difficult task.

Members of the Employment Subcommittee can solicit help from the congregation at large to assist in finding suitable jobs for the refugee family members. Congregation members themselves typically work in the local area and can prove to be an unique and invaluable resource in locating work opportunities. Congregations members may be business owners themselves, or managers of local businesses, that could provide jobs or access to employment. The Employment Subcommittee

researches potential work opportunities and assists in facilitating the application process. This subcommittee works with the congregation to explore their local knowledge of employment opportunities and extends this knowledge to the refugees themselves and to the staff at Refugee Services.

The Employment Subcommittee can provide both hands-on and behind-the-scenes support for the refugee family. A subcommittee member who chooses to become closely involved with one of the family members may make an extra effort to understand that individual's work history and skills. He or she may choose to help the family member prepare for and accompany them to their job interviews. Even when refugees have knowledge of English they are often lacking in literacy skills and may require help with application forms and preparing resumes. The subcommittee member may assist the family member in acquiring appropriate work clothes or assuring that he or she can find their way to work on public transportation.

A more behind-the-scenes approach can entail a focus on research and building up a repository of job possibilities. In this role, a person may scour papers for job listings or telephone local businesses to enquire as to their need for entry-level workers. In cases where the family member is enrolled in the Matching Grant Program, they will have an additional staff member at Refugee Services working toward finding them employment. In some cases, members of the Employment Subcommittee supply research to the Matching Grant Coordinator who takes the lead in working with the refugee during the interviewing process.[383] An effective Employment Subcommittee will involve aspects of both approaches, ensuring that the

[383] The Matching Grant Program is a program of the ORR that works to assist refugees in attain self-sufficiency without having to utilize public funds. It matches donations made by VOLAGS and their constituents that in turn is provided to refugees via their resettlement agency. Additional employment assistance is subsidized by this program.

refugee family members have access to a comprehensive range of the most suitable positions available and receive hands on support during the job seeking process.

Education and Language Subcommittee

Many refugees are excited when they come to the U.S. by the potential opportunities for education. Often they have had little to no previous access to education or have had their studies interrupted by the causes of flight. In either case, most refugees recognize the value of education in the U.S. system and wish to begin their life in the U.S. by learning English. Members of the Education and Language Subcommittee assist the refugee family with the different facets of the educational system. Arguably, the most important work of this committee is to assist the children of the family to enroll in school. In many cases, members of the Education and Language Subcommittee may work with the Housing Subcommittee to ensure the children have access to good schools.

Another crucial task of the subcommittee is to assist the family in learning English. This is often easily facilitated by enrolling the adults in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. In many cases, adults have a desire to learn English before starting a job, but with the USRP's focus on self-sufficiency, this is not possible. It is important for subcommittee members to remind the family that they will most likely become more proficient at English earlier by learning it at their job, or in the case of children, at school. ESL classes are easily accessible across the Twin Cites metro area and are typically held in the evening and during non-working hours. Assisting the family members enroll in these classes will help them as they try to learn the language.

One-on-one tutoring can assist both adults and children in their studies and language abilities. This is an excellent way for subcommittee members to develop relationships with the family members while helping them to make progress with their studies. This resource can be particularly valuable for adult members of the household who are unable to work. Their exposure to the language is more limited and they sometimes have a more difficult time learning English.[384] Tutoring can assist all members of the refugee family and helps to develop relationships and trust between family members and members of the congregation.

Transportation Subcommittee

Refugees have a large number of appointments that need to be kept, particularly during the first few months after their arrival. Each member of the family must visit the doctor three times for their health screenings and must also visit social services for social security cards, refugee and medical assistance and to apply for food stamps. Along with these appointments, the family will need help getting to the grocery store, schools and job interviews. Even with a small family, the amount of assistance they will need travelling to and from their many appointments is substantial. If the size of the family is large, travel to each appointment alone can become a huge undertaking.

The Transportation Subcommittee should be headed by one or two persons who recruit and organize a pool of volunteers from the congregation who would be available to take the family to appointments. Because transporting the family to their many appointments can be a prodigious task, this subcommittee is often best served when the head(s) restrict themselves to organizing other people to drive rather than driving themselves. The heads of the subcommittee should assemble a list of

[384] With some hesitation I also informed Education and Language Subcommittees that the television is often a useful aid in learning English. See also Refugee Services, *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship*, 22.

volunteers, keeping track of what days and at what times they are available. Since many of the family's appointments occur during normal working hours, retired congregants and stay-at-home parents often make good volunteers.

Eventually the family must either become proficient at using public transportation or must acquire a vehicle. In many cities, public transportation is an efficient and inexpensive means of transportation. In the Twin Cities metro area, the efficacy of public transportation varies among the different neighbourhoods and suburbs. Many families find it easier to own a vehicle. Before the family chooses to acquire a car, or after one has been donated to them, a thorough explanation of the costs of driver's insurance, taxes, maintenance and petrol must be conveyed to the family. Then one of the family members must acquire a driver's license. Often, a member of the subcommittee will volunteer to help teach the family member(s) how to drive and help him or her pass the driver's exam. This can be a time-consuming task, especially if the family member does not pass his or her exam on the first try.

This subcommittee lends itself to developing close one-on-one relationships between the family and congregation members. The amount of time drivers spend with family members, driving them to appointments, waiting with them and driving them home, allows for a great deal of time to get to know each other. It is important for the head(s) of this subcommittee to recruit as many volunteers as possible. Again, particularly if the family is large, the amount of driving necessary can be considerable. If the subcommittee does not have enough volunteers, its members can suffer from burnout.

Fundraising and Finances Subcommittee

This subcommittee is concerned with two separate aspects of resettlement. The first pertains to the finances the church will need to adequately support the sponsorship. Refugee Services is very clear when working with church sponsors to insist that the only financial assistance the church give the family be limited to the security deposit and first month's rent for the family's housing.[385] Anything more than this could lead to a dependence on the congregation financially and could hamper the family's ability to become self-sufficient. This is an important message for both the church and the family to understand. If the congregation or its members violate this understanding it can lead to both the family having unrealistic expectations regarding their relationship with the church and members of the congregation feeling taken for granted or having their graciousness exploited. Therefore, this rule should remain inviolate. The congregation is encouraged to contribute to the family's welfare via donations of furnishings, food or clothing. Oftentimes the congregation is able to donate something as substantial as a car. That is acceptable, as long as consideration is given to the extra expense an automobile can impart on the family. Also, services donated by professionals in the congregation are always appreciated, such as pro bono medical or dental care. The congregation is encouraged to raise the required funds for the security deposit and first month's rent however they may wish. This is a task for the church alone and can be a galvanizing effort for the entire congregation.

The second task of this subcommittee involves assisting the family with financial understanding and planning. On an entirely practical level, this involves orienting family members to U.S. currency, ATM machines and credit cards and paying rent

[385] At the time of this study that figure averaged around $1500. See Refugee Services, *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship*, 9.

and bills. Subcommittee members should also assist the family in opening bank accounts. On a more discreet level, members of the subcommittee can offer to assist the family in understanding how to manage money in the U.S., how to handle the debt of their travel loans and how to plan for the future. This is a very delicate task and should be handled cautiously. It should always be remembered that the family will most definitely be capable of handling their own finances, they just might need some help getting started. Subcommittee members involved in helping the family plan should have the utmost respect for the family's decisions and must make every effort not to be meddlesome. These tasks offer further opportunities for congregation members to get to know the family. Both the chair of this subcommittee and the chair(s) of the Resettlement Committee should have confidence in the discretion of the individual(s) assisting the family with their financial matters.

CASE STUDIES: EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

In this next section, I will present the interviews carried out with the three congregations chosen as case studies. The substance of this research is qualitative rather than quantitative and will rely on the stories told by the individuals interviewed. The entirety of my research has been an exercise of interpretation, attempting to provide the reader with a set of conditions from which theological inquiry can arise. In providing a context for the subject matter I wish to explore, I have chosen what information to impart and what to withhold. Such is the case with any academic enterprise: it is subject to the contestability of what can be considered academic facts and the rigours of discursive argumentation.

The following subject matter is derived from a series of interviews conducted with nine members of three churches. As with the previous chapters, the onus will rest

with me as to what I choose to include and disregard from this research. With this in mind, I will attempt to provide an account of their experiences with refugee resettlement with an objective voice, insofar as this is possible. Using the content of the interviews as text, I will make every effort to allow the interviewees to tell the stories of their own experiences, providing specific information garnered from the interviews themselves when appropriate and necessary.

CASE STUDY 1: FAITH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND THE RASELEMANE FAMILY

Decision to Sponsor

Faith United Methodist Church (UMC) sponsored the Raselemane family at the request of Hanna, the family's anchor relative who had been attending Faith UMC for the past year. Hanna had approached Lynn, the Associate Pastor, with the news that fourteen members of her family were leaving Africa to join Hanna in Minnesota. Hanna told Lynn that these family members were refugees who had nothing and were depending solely on Hanna to take care of them once they arrived in Minnesota. She asked the congregation for help.[386]

Lynn related how she felt when first approached by Hanna:

> I was at the church for only a few weeks when Hanna came up to me and handed me a piece of paper and said, "I have fourteen family members in [Africa] who are coming as refugees and I need a place for them to live. I need you to help me find a place for them to live." And I looked at her, and I knew it was the tightest rental housing market that the Cities had probably ever known. It was amazing. I just said, "That's crazy, I don't think that's possible." And she said, "You have to help me." … She was very persistent. So I made some phone calls, but I couldn't figure anything out at all. Every place I called couldn't seem to give me any help. So I, finally, just took it to the mission committee and I said, "Do you want to do this? I think it's kind of crazy." And the chair of the missions committee, Lisa, who is a very serious, dedicated, proper woman said, "I've been praying for a hands on mission for a long time. I think we should do this." And it just stopped

[386] It is very unusual to have an anchor relative approach a church for assistance and have that turn into a formal sponsorship. The original agency that was working on the Raselemane case should have made sure that Hanna could care for her family before assuring the case with the USRP. The local affiliate agency would then have arranged for some sort of support for Hanna and her family. In this particular instance, Refugee Services had to request that the case be transferred to CWS and then to their office. It is not common practice for cases to be transferred between agencies, national or local.

> me cold. And I said, "Well, you be careful what you pray for next time because you are really going to get your prayer answered in a really big, big way." And it was amazing to me that their faith was so much bigger then mine right then. I was just thinking, "You can't find a place to put fourteen people. We can't find housing for fourteen people. It's just not going to work." And they just said, "Oh, we've been praying for something. We need to do this."[387]

Lisa, who was head of the missions committee, had been encouraging the committee to participate in a hands-on ministry for some time. She felt that while the congregation was good at donating money to charities, they were missing out by not being involved with the people these charities were helping. Several members of the missions committee had already heard a presentation I had been invited to give to the women's group at the church concerning refugee sponsorship, and Hanna presented her situation to them, and they called Refugee Services.

Lisa described her thinking at the beginning of the resettlement process:

> It was exciting. And it looked like we would be given enough help. Because we were kind of like babes in the woods. We didn't know what to do. And so there was a lot of structure for us to work with. And I think we all appreciated that very much. We had booklets, we had lists, we had things to do. So we met and organised the committee, and we opened it up to the whole congregation, anyone who would want to be a part of this. And it was very interesting, who would show up. People you hadn't really seen be very active in the church would kind of come out of the woodworks. I think it invigorated our church at a time when we probably needed that.[388]

Preparations

Once the missions committee had agreed to co-sponsoring the Raselemane family with Hanna, they formed a separate Resettlement Committee to handle the sponsorship. Joann had been a member of the missions committee and volunteered to be the Coordinator of the Resettlement Committee. She took the lead in organizing the Resettlement Committee into subcommittees whose members then set to work on their specific tasks.

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[387] Interview, Lynn, 13 November 2003.
[388] Interview, Lisa, 30 October 2003.

Joann recounted organizing the Resettlement Committee during the beginning stages of the sponsorship:

> It wasn't just the mission committee. We opened it up to the membership and invited anybody who wanted to participate to join in which was a great experience because I met lots of people I really didn't know otherwise, on the committee and in the church, that I got to know well. Now we are really good friends. And you really become aware of how many talents exist in the community. It's pretty impressive. And so then we created subcommittees, essentially, so that everybody had specific jobs. The whole thing, as a whole, was totally overwhelming, but when you broke it down into little pieces, then more people were eager to be involved. And it felt like it was all possible and feasible for them to be involved and accomplish just one thing. Everyone had something that was really tangible that they could do. So they had their own agendas and could move ahead. Everything had to happen so fast. The committees could move ahead and had their own set of parameters that they could work within.[389]

As Coordinator, Joann was committed to involving as much of the congregation as possible in the sponsorship. She did this, in part, by keeping the congregation informed as to what was happening with both the family and the Resettlement Committee. She was dedicated to making sure that everyone in the church felt a part of the sponsorship and could somehow participate in the enterprise by whatever small means possible.

Joann described some of her efforts at informing and involving the congregation:

> Before they came, we did a lot to help the adults and youth understand what the mission committee was; what a refugee was; how we became familiar with this particular family; and the demographics of this family, so that they could kind of get to know them without seeing them first. We went around to the adult education group and did a presentation with them. I had prepared maps so that people knew where [the country] even was. And I had done a little bit of looking on the internet on the history. I didn't know anything about the history of [the country] and all the strife they'd been in. So I prepared some information just to help: what were some of the conflicts they've been facing, some of the issues they've been facing and the hardships they were going through as a consequence of all that. So we presented to adults, and we presented to the youth group. With the younger kids we had it really tamed down. We talked mostly about these kids coming over, and why they were coming over and how they were surviving in their country. We didn't have a lot of time before they came. So there was one month where every Sunday we would go to different groups to talk about all of this so that they would be aware of the situation, what was going on, and what we could do to support them [the family]. The youth group themselves, one group in particular, took it on themselves to obtain clothing. They just decided to take up a collection at their school. So they obtained clothing and donations and

[389] Interview, Joann, 4 November 2003.

> contributions from kids in their school in anticipation of the Raselemanes. So people were pretty excited about it.[390]

Waiting and Arrival

The Resettlement Committee did not know how long it would take for the Raselemane family to arrive. It appeared that their case was proceeding smoothly but was then put on medical hold as the father had tested positive for tuberculosis. This resulted in a period of waiting where no one, including Refugee Services, knew when the father would be cleared for travel. For the leaders of the Resettlement Committee, this time threatened to prove a dangerous loss to the momentum they had built up with the congregation regarding the family's arrival. The delay also had practical implications as Lisa and the Housing Subcommittee had located housing for the family with a property owner from the congregation. This was considered a small miracle by the Resettlement Committee. In order to secure the lease on the property, they began renting with the expectation that the family would arrive within a month or two. A delay could result in the congregation spending a great deal of money holding on to the property until the family arrived or losing the property altogether.

Lisa described this time period and the action the committee took as a result of it:

> And we had many meetings. And then we waited, and we waited to get the family out of [the country]. And was difficult. They had been ok-ed, and we kept thinking they were coming anytime. And they didn't come, and they didn't come. We had a place for them to live, which was probably the hardest thing we had to work with at the time since it was fourteen people. We finally made calls to some of the Senators, and we always felt like Senator Dayton helped us because it was soon after he did something that they came.[391]

The family arrived and the congregation began the next phase of resettlement. This proved to be the busiest time for Faith UMC. After getting the family settled in their new home, the many trips to the doctor, the social security office, the grocery

[390] Interview, Joann.
[391] Interview, Lisa.

store, schools, jobs and church began. Transportation quickly became the most difficult task of the Resettlement Committee.

Joann recounted the congregation's participation in the busy-ness and complexities of the first few months after the family's arrival:

> I felt there were a lot of ways for people to get involved. That was our objective. To allow people to feel invested and be able to give to their ability. That's what I thought we should be striving for, and I think we achieved that. Lynn, every Sunday, had some kind of announcement about the Raselemane family. I would always meet her before church started to give her an update: the latest, so what's our focus today, what should you emphasise today. Whether it was transportation, or whether we were going to need help moving on the spur of the moment, or whether we were going to need help cleaning or certain furniture items. So it wasn't just the mission committee; more people got involved. We probably had twenty people involved in the actual nuts and bolts of operations, planning. And then in the donations, oh my gosh, I kept a database of people and their address and what their items were. I kept that updated on a spreadsheet and there were probably forty people on that list. And other people donated things, like other people wanted to donate time, tutoring, driving them back and forth, it was a huge deal. It was fourteen people. Plus going to doctors appointments, oh my gosh, it was a huge organisation of events. Our transportation volunteers, we probably had twenty, they all had very limited times, most of them. Which is not surprising. But they were responsive. A couple of them really committed themselves to the parents. They were the ones who had the biggest amount of health problems. [The father] died in [the summer]. He had congestive heart failure. That was another thing when they came over, their medical records. It was a challenge sorting through their medical records and setting a course to make sure everything got taken care of in an efficient and timely manner. That took a lot of work. Lisa and I tried to keep that coordinated and that was really, really hard. For a while we almost considered having one church member assigned to each family member to get them to appointments because it was just so complicated. And sometimes you get mixed messages. They might not understand what was said or meant. Anyway, they were not as aware of appointments, or what an appointment meant, or even that you couldn't go places without an appointment; you couldn't just show up at the dentist or the doctor's office. So, it was a lot of work trying to get all of their health taken care of. And then we had to get the kids in school. We had a volunteer group just for looking at the schools, and had a person who just looked at all the schools and just decided where the kids would go. It was wild. She did a great job. She had two people that she worked with. So I think we had really good involvement from a lot of different church members.[392]

For such a large family, the resettlement process proceeded quite smoothly. It took a great deal of effort on the part of the church and there were several areas that raised concern or proved problematic. Transportation continued to be difficult for both the church and the family until two vans were donated to the family by members

[392] Interview, Joann.

of the congregation. It was at this point, Lisa explains, that the congregation began pulling away from the Raselemanes. Now that they could transport themselves places, they were not as dependent on the congregation. Lisa saw this as a positive step for both the family and Faith UMC in nurturing the family's independence.

Concerns

All three women discussed the difficulty of discerning the structure of the family. Since both of the parents were elderly, and the mother was obviously not the mother of all the children, there was some confusion over who was actually in charge and made the decisions for the family. Hanna and her children effectively operated as a separate unit, especially since Hanna's children lived with her. For the rest of the family, the eldest son and daughter, after Hanna, acted as the decision-makers for the family and took charge of parenting the younger children. Lisa remarked that this was confusing to some of the members of the Resettlement Committee but at some point there seemed to be an agreement that the structure of the relationships did not matter as much as the fact that they were close and family was obviously important to them.

Housing continued to be an issue but was resolved by the family themselves. Upon arriving, the Housing Subcommittee had located a three bedroom apartment for eleven members of the family, since Hanna's three children lived with her. While thankful they had found suitable housing at all, Lisa admitted that the apartment was small for a family of that size. Eventually, after approximately a year, the eleven family members split into smaller groups and moved into separate apartments all located within a single building. In that way they were still close but had adequate space.

Another concern expressed by the three women interviewed revolved around issues of health care and, specifically, sexual health for the teenage girls in the family since three of the young women became pregnant within the first year of resettlement. Joann, particularly, wished that she had broached the topic of sexual health with the Raselemane women. She would have liked to have had a discussion regarding sexual mores and cultural expectations in the U.S. and given the teenagers an opportunity to ask difficult questions about this topic. Joann was clear that her intention would have been to act as a source of information, not to convey any opinion or judgement regarding the matter. She was sorry to have missed this opportunity and felt that the young women would have been open to the conversation, but Joann did not want to overstep any boundaries or encroach upon their privacy.

Remembering and Reflecting

As the pastor of Faith UMC most closely associated with the sponsorship, Lynn took on a role that was primarily supportive of both the congregation and the Raselemane family. She described her observations of and relationship to the Resettlement Committee:

> I see one of my roles in ministry as removing the barriers from people doing ministry. And it seems like that was pretty much what I did. I gave them permission, helped organize them, just barely, and just ran along behind them trying to keep stuff out of their way. I was amazed. They were mostly women, the men did hardly anything at first. That changed a bit later. The women organized the hell out of it. And I could hardly keep up. I was worried about burnout and we did have some of that. I just tried to make sure that things were communicated well and I would keep track of the leaders and try to encourage them in what they were doing. And if they had a question, try to help them and find resources. Finding resources for people. Actually I spent the first two years of my ministry at Faith facilitating the resources for that work.
>
> A lot of my job was to try and remind people what their job was and what it wasn't. And I spent a lot of time in the beginning part saying, "Be careful so you don't get burned out." And trying to remind our folks when, you know, there was a point at which we had to stop giving money. We really needed the family to be self-sufficient. And we needed to make sure we were not having a paternalistic relationship with them. We wanted to have relationships with them and be part of

> our community if they wished, but we could not impose our values or let them be financially dependent on us.[393]

When speaking of the congregation's work with the Raselemane family, Lynn's voice conveyed enthusiasm and an obvious pride. She took little-to-no credit for the church's sponsorship of the family and attributed what she considers "the good work done" to the efforts of both the congregants and family members themselves.[394] While she was modest regarding her role in the sponsorship, she was very active in supporting the Resettlement Committee and congregation. She was present throughout the entire endeavour, attending most committee meetings and social events with the family. She did not lead these occasions, but by her presence gave support to those who did.

Lynn's regard for the efforts of the congregation was conveyed in the following passage:

> And what astonished me about the whole process was the way people got very personal in their giving. This, in particular, seemed very powerful to me. So there was a dentist who offered to give everyone a free dental check up and, oh, they needed that. They needed that so badly. And that was such a profound gift, for him to take care of their teeth when they got here. And the details, people made sure everybody had a toothbrush. And I think people were really excited that somebody could donate a toothbrush, and it was meaningful; because they knew that somebody needed a toothbrush, and they knew who it was that was going to have the toothbrush. People got a little overenthusiastic donating clothes, especially since we didn't know what size everybody was. And when we finally found housing - it just seemed like a miracle to have found it in that market - and when the women went in and set up that apartment, it was such an act of love. They went and scrubbed the hell out of the place. And they had the toothbrushes there, and the toothpaste. And they had fifty pounds of rice waiting. And they had everything set up nicely. And they called their husbands in to fix the drawers that weren't working right. Just very intimate details trying to get this place ready for these folks. It was really powerful. And the confirmation class was encouraged to draw names for the twelve children and give them each a gift. That was one of my favourite memories of the whole thing. Because we went and picked them up, I had six people in my car, and we all caravanned over to the church. We had this lasagne dinner planned. And the kids in the confirmation class had drawn names and given gifts. And they had been really, pretty thoughtful. [One of the boys] was fourteen and very intense, very studious, and he received a watch. It was as if all time stopped when he opened up this watch and he said, "I was so worried about how I was going to catch the bus for school on time. And now I have my very own watch." He was so moved that he had a watch. And for the kids who gave him the watch, wow. It was so powerful. And

[393] Interview, Lynn.
[394] Language used by Lynn.

> now that I know [the boy] a little bit better, I know how important a watch would be for him. It was wonderful for the church, and it was exciting for me to watch - how personal their ministry became. Because instead of just collecting money to send somewhere where you don't really know what it is going to do, they could see - you have to be careful not to get paternalistic in that kind of thing too – but you could see, very clearly, how this would make a difference in somebody's life.[395]

Joann dedicated a great deal of time and energy to leading the Resettlement Committee through their sponsorship. It is, in large part, to her credit that the congregation was as prepared, informed and involved as they were. She managed to maintain a high level of energy and enthusiasm that did not waver until the family was settled. By her own admission, Joann was exhausted from the experience. She felt that while working with the Resettlement Committee, her time with her family suffered. After the Raselemane family showed signs of being set clearly on the path to self-sufficiency, Joann realized that she needed some time away from being so active in the church in such a capacity. Nevertheless, her memories of the experience are positive, and her feelings toward the Raselemane family warm.

When asked if she had any outstanding memories or interesting stories that she recalled, either fondly or not so fondly, about her experiences, Joann shared the following:

> They were always surprising me with things. They wrote incredibly powerful thank yous. Mostly from [the older sons and daughters]. They were so heartfelt. That was very emotional. And, you know, within weeks of being here, they gave us a card thanking us. And for Mother's Day, they gave me a card, and there were - just - beautiful words in it.
>
> I'd go over there—I loved [the parents]. I loved [the father]. He reminded me of a really gentle giant. And I'd just go over and visit with them, just try and understand them. They would start speaking in [their language] and I would laugh and say, "That's not fair. I don't know what you are saying." Sometimes I could pick out words. And they'd laugh and they would always call me sister. I have a lot of really good memories of walking up the steps to their apartment. And sitting and talking with them. They would always share their food, I loved their food. They cooked all the time. It was a lot of rice and spicy, stew-like foods, curry-kind-of-like foods. Really tasty. Too spicy for me, which they thought was really hilarious. I love spicy, but it was too spicy. So I would always have to have water or pop.[396]

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[395] Interview, Lynn.
[396] Interview, Joann. In the Minnesota, sodas or soft drinks are often called pop.

Lisa had taken on the difficult task of locating housing for the family along with another Resettlement Committee member. With the help of the congregation, they managed that task with a relatively minimal amount of difficulty. Lisa was also involved with helping the family keep track of their medical appointments and understanding their medical problems. The father, in particular, had many health problems including tuberculosis and heart congestion. At the time of these interviews, she was still the Chair of the Missions Committee and had assisted the congregation in the sponsorship of another African family.

Upon reflecting on the congregation's expectations and experiences, Lisa recalled:

> I think we were surprised a lot, as Americans and as church members, by them. You have an idea in your mind: these are refugees coming out of a refugee camp in Africa. And you expect them to come in tattered clothes and maybe barefoot. We were surprised. I think they had probably lived a very good life at one time in their country. And they wanted to continue to live that way. So I think our first thought was that: Oh here we are going to help these poor, poor, people. And they did need our help, but I don't think they needed the kind of help that we originally thought we'd give. They needed lots of information on how to live in this country, and what things were, and how to do things. And so I guess we did provide a lot of that. And, again, there were many, many people involved with that. Some people took the children to school and got them situated there. We had some people that took the girls out and helped them find jobs. We took them shopping and introduced them to the way you shop here, to open bank accounts. Those types of things. Those were extremely valuable. But at the same time, to find that line between the kind of help you should give them was a little difficult at first. And it was difficult later, when you wanted to pull back from all that, because you've kind of adopted them.[397]

In response, I asked Lisa if there was a point where they recognized that they should pull back. She answered:

> Yes, it did happen. It was hard because of transportation, I think. Transportation was such a huge issue and we had quite a few people trying to help with that. When you are trying to get fourteen people to different places that aren't all the same place sometimes, it's just a huge issue. And eventually the oldest son got a license and had a car donated to him from our church. And I think that was the turning point. Because then we realized we didn't have to always be the transportation. So there was a lot of pulling back at that point. I think we felt we needed to because we were so emotionally involved as well as physically involved that it was probably a need waiting to happen. This family, I feel, has adapted very, very well. They are very independent overall. They like being in America and they are very happy.[398]

[397] Interview, Lisa.
[398] Ibid.

With time the Raselemane family became more and more self-reliant and self-sufficient. All three women interviewed expressed a similar sentiment regarding the family's successful resettlement to Minnesota. Even amidst the death of the family's father, the hurdle of housing had been overcome and the various Raselemane children were enrolled in school, working and planning on further education to help them further down the career path. As time passed, the close connection between the family and congregation grew more distant. Relationships between the congregation and the family members began to be defined less by the sponsorship and more by the connections between and among individual persons.

When asked to reflect upon how she thought the church was affected by the sponsorship, Joanne addressed the relationships within the congregation:

> I think there is a sense of accomplishment and pride, something we did for somebody else. Kind of an ongoing source of pride, a "we can do it" accomplishment. We did it in a short period of time. A lot of people got pulled together. I think it has changed because it has bridged, a lot of people got to know one another who didn't know each other before. And it wasn't just me getting to know people, they worked together on things and got to know each other. So I think it broke down a lot of barriers. Gave an opportunity for people to become acquainted with each other, more than just saying "Hi" at church. You know when people are sitting down together at a potluck, it really gave them something to talk about, to share.[399]

Lisa's response to the same question focused more on the relationship of the church has with the world around it:

> I saw new energy, I think, a lot more openness to world situations that maybe people would not have addressed otherwise. A little more welcoming attitude to people of other cultures. Like I said we are a rather white, suburban church so this is different for our church. And now it doesn't look quite so strange as it did to see different backgrounds appear in our congregation. I think it energized people. I think it gave them a focus, something to really work on together. So that's the kind of changes I see, as something that was a real outgoing type thing, not just in our own church. We were able to reach out to people.[400]

[399] Interview, Joann.
[400] Interview, Lisa.

Upon reflection, Lynn was the only one of the three women from Faith UMC that spoke of the resettlement explicitly in terms of hospitality:[401]

> I think that refugee resettlement is absolutely an act of hospitality. And if it isn't, you shouldn't do it. Its offering the gifts of grace, resources, a home, without the expectation that you should have to be like us. I think that's how I understand hospitality; it is giving somebody what they need, but not what you need them to have. And not so that they can do what you want them to do. Real hospitality is a gift without asking for something in return. You get stuff in return but it's not tangible.
>
> And there are some people at the church that I always was pretty upset about because they really were concerned about what kind of thanks they got and how good it looked that we were doing this stuff. And I spent a lot of time, that's not hospitality, I spent a lot of time trying to teach them that we do this *not* so we can feel good, *not* so we get thank you-ed. It doesn't matter if they *ever* come to church. We do this because this is what Christ teaches us to do, welcome the stranger. That was frustrating. But there were some people in the church who really developed, I think, some authentic relationships and really cared about them and wanted to see them do well. I think the church thinks of itself a little bit differently now. And I think there is that element of hands-on, relationship ministry that is different than just sending money away. And they understand the power of developing a relationship with somebody when you are giving and how you receive back.[402]

CASE STUDY 2: HOPE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE NDLEDA FAMILY

The Beginning

Hope United Church of Christ (UCC) sponsored the Ndleda family which consisted of two men, the father and his cousin, and two little girls, ages seven and three. They were resettled through Refugee Services as a free case and had Priority 1 status. The father was wounded whilst in Africa and continued to have health problems that affected his ability to work. The family required a full sponsor, and as Hope UCC was the only congregation I worked with that specifically was interested in working with an African family, they seemed a good match. The church was small

[401] At various points in her interview, she speaks of the resettlement of the Raselemane family in specifically theological terms from the context of being an ordained minister. She halso refers to hospitality in connection with the Eucharistic table and of Steve Reich and Berul Korot's performance piece, *The Cave*, that explores the story of Abraham welcoming the angels at the oaks of Mamre from Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspectives. While Lynn's reflections address the topic of hospitality directly, they do not specifically reference the Raselemane family. Therefore I have chosen not to include them.

[402] Interview, Lynn.

but had previous experience sponsoring refugees. This sponsorship proved to be one of the most difficult I have witnessed.

The congregation had been preparing for several months for the arrival of a family from Africa. Originally they were expecting a family from Togo, but as that case had been placed on indefinite hold, and the Ndleda family urgently needed sponsors, they were prepared to welcome them. Janet, who had a positive experience working previously with a Bosnian family, was the Chair of the Resettlement Committee, and Sue, as the church's sole pastor, was supportive of and excited by the committee's efforts. In her interview, Sue remarked that she was initially somewhat concerned that the children were not accompanied by their mother or another woman of the household. Sue had previous experience travelling to the continent and was aware that some African families operated with strict gender specific roles, particularly regarding the raising of children and domestic responsibilities which typically fall to the women. Immediately after their arrival, they stayed with their host family, a UCC pastor and his wife, for close to three months.

Sue described the early days of the church's relationship with the Ndleda family soon after their arrival:

> Anyway, it was a really good group effort by the congregation to bring them into the life of the congregation. They came to church, they said, "Oh yes, we're both Christians, we want to be part of the church." They actually became members: one of them sang in the choir, the music director worked with him so he could start to read music and of course the girls were incredibly involved in the church. One family, the kids are like sisters and brothers really, they've become so close.
>
> And so the family came and there was an instant draw with the two little girls. I mean, this congregation just engulfed them, this congregation loves children. And the two men, right away, we started observing challenges, like the host family said their liquor cabinet was being diminished.[403]

Janet also reflected on the beginning of their experiences with the Ndleda family:

> You know this particular thing has been going on for four years, and I think of it in different phases. Like when they first came, they came to the airport with a

[403] Interview, Sue, 14 November 2003.

> plastic bag with their papers. They had nothing. And because [the father] had [been wounded] and, you know, everyone was just so glad they were here. And it was just incredible to think of where they came from. So, I have a lot of trust in people. So when they all came, everything they said we believed and I believed. And truthfully, in the first six to eight months that they were here, [the father], especially, would talk about his thanks to God. And he was giving credit to God for all that he had done, and it gave me a new sense of faith that I hadn't experienced before. And then the girls [tearful] were just so great, you know, they, I'll see if I can get through this, learned everything so quickly. Of course, we didn't know yet that [the eldest daughter] was actually three years older then. But she was just such an athlete. She learned languages so quickly. She was so charming and curious. Both of them were so curious and energetic and beautiful, beautiful children and they still are. They've gone through a lot. So that's the first phase, where we're meeting these kids and this family and really getting a lot from them.[404]

Janet spokes of the sponsorship in phases. This first phase was akin to what could be called a honeymoon period. The church was excited that the Ndleda family had arrived. They adored the girls, The men were thankful and had joined the church. All appeared to be going well for both the family and the congregation as sponsors. At this point, Bill had not become directly involved with the family. The Resettlement Committee was busy looking for housing and taking the family members to their various appointments and job interviews. Finding affordable and safe housing was proving to be very difficult and the Ndleda family stayed with the host family for a longer period than anyone had anticipated.

Sensing Something is Not Right

Within several months, the congregation was moving into the second phase of their experience. Problems began arising with greater frequency and Janet and Sue both felt that something was not right. Sue described the onset of what would prove to be very difficult times:

> We started to detect fairly soon that they weren't telling us the truth; they weren't being forthright. Well, we understood that. I mean, why should they? And so our goal is always to build up trust, to let them know we're not going to judge them. One of the things that we were suspicious of right away was the age of the oldest of the two daughters. That just didn't seem right. She seemed older than what

[404] Interview, Janet, 15 November 2003.

> they said she was. But we just let it go; we didn't make anything of it. The challenge of it was, it was just at the time when the housing market in the city was, well, there was no vacant housing. So there was this huge, huge effort to find affordable housing. And, of course, there wasn't any. So every month we had to underwrite them the rent. And we committed to doing that for a year. One of the men was able to get a job fairly quickly. The other one, who had some physical disability, we came to understand, also had a speech impediment. And we figured that was actually probably his biggest problem, but he wouldn't accept that as a problem. He said it was about his [disability]; he really used that as a crutch.[405]

Janet recounted her experiences of this period in a similar manner:

> Then these things start creeping in where you know something's not right. For instance, alcohol being on the breath quite often and then stories being different each time you asked the same question. So you think something's not quite right. But then you think, this is cultural; people from Africa might have a different understanding of some of these things. And people will do or say a lot of things to get what they need sometimes. But I think a lot of people cottoned onto it a lot faster than I did. And then it was very difficult to find housing at the time. The rental market was booming, so it was very, very difficult to find a place for them to live. We finally found somebody from a friend of the congregation who had a place for them to live. And we had the kids in school, got them going there. This family was so needy. While they seemed grateful, they also seemed so needy. And they didn't mind imposing on other people for things. With the family from Bosnia, they didn't want to impose at all. They wanted to be independent very quickly. This family seemed to do it the other way round. They kept using you and using you and using you. And then, it was a very, very important thing for this family to get cars and licences even though they couldn't afford it; and even though it was something we didn't recommend. So then when that happened, things just started falling apart. And I think from the church's perspective, there was a real need to take care of the girls, to make sure the girls were okay.[406]

It was around this time that Bill became involved with the family. He was worried that his daughter, Janet, had taken on too much responsibility with the Resettlement Committee. Janet was starting to feel the strain of the demands of assisting this particular family. Driving the men to appointments and helping care for the children was taking a toll on her and she felt as if her family was suffering for it. Bill, a retired doctor, stepped in to help ease the burden of responsibility Janet had taken on.

> Bill explained the beginnings of his involvement with the Ndleda sponsorship: My involvement started by giving them rides to employment interviews and helping them fill out employment forms because I was afraid my daughter was getting in too deep. They had a lot of different interviews at that time. They had them involved with JVS.[407] They would get appointments and I would go with

[405] Interview, Sue.
[406] Interview, Janet.
[407] Jewish Vocational Services

> them, and I began filling out their forms for them. [The father had a disability that made this difficult.] I had their story and their social security numbers memorized. We went to a lot of nursing homes, security firms, janitorial firms. They weren't getting any employment at all. I also did some medical work with them. And also a lot of visits downtown to [their] county economic assistance. I helped them get on the MFIP program right away because they had two little girls.[408] [The cousin] did get medical assistance for a while. I took [the cousin] up to [a] Health Center, my old health center, to get treatment. He had a lot of health issues. I knew they would give him good care and they did.[409]

Grasping the Situation

The relationship between the Ndleda men and their host family became difficult toward the end. The host couple were aware of some alcohol abuse on the part of the two men, They were extremely upset with how both men acted toward the girls, claiming they screamed at them and treated them, particularly the older daughter, like servants. After the family moved into an apartment, they were soon given an automobile by a church-based non-profit in the Twin Cities that fixes up used cars and donates them to needy families. Bill spent a great deal of time with the father, helping him pass his driver's test; it took seven attempts. Shortly after securing his license, the father was arrested for driving while intoxicated (DWI) and lost the license. In the meantime the father was also dismissed from his job as a janitor for making extensive long-distance calls to Africa on the company's phone.

Sue detailed the incidents related to the father's driving offence:

> One of the men passed his driver's license and we found a way to get him a car. And that's when we started to see that drinking really was an issue because within a month he had three DWIs.[410] The girls would be in the car with him and the oldest daughter, whom I trust totally, she was afraid to drive with him. And she would just get on his case. And so, of course, he wouldn't acknowledge that he really had a problem. But we told him that if that kind of behaviour continued, then his children would be taken . I mean, we were very clear about that. That had been an issue starting from when they lived with the host family, and they were told, very clearly, of guidelines and things that had to be done in terms of the girls. But they would leave the girls alone in the house. And we were so afraid that someone was going to call Child Protection. And we were afraid that

[408] Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) is Minnesota's state program that provides cash assistance and food benefits to needy families. It is the state distributor of federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds.
[409] Interview, Bill, 7 November 2003.
[410] I would suggest that Sue meant to say, "within a year he had three DWIs."

> something might happen to them. And so just trying to deal with that cross-cultural difference, that we have these laws here that really do have to be followed; you may not agree with them, but you do have to follow them. So there were all these kinds of issues and we were all watching out for the girls. We would drop in. And like one Sunday afternoon, one of them was supposed to be taking care of the girls, and the oldest one called somebody and said, "Oh no, he went to the bar." So somebody went right over there and picked them up and took them home. And so there was a real commitment from a good cross section of people to do that.[411]

Bill describes his initial reaction to the father's DWI and his growing concern regarding the two men:

> The father got a car that was given to him by a Presbyterian church in [a suburb] that processes old cars and fixes them up and gives them to needy people, not just refugees. Immediately problems began. We found out from the older daughter that he was driving drunk with everyone in the car. And driving fast, and they were just pleading with him to slow down and he would just say, "I'm the boss." Of course he got his first DWI and I went to court with him. I didn't tell anyone in the church about this. I think this is one of the key points, the congregations role must be more than just about individuals. We found out as trouble unfolded. Our congregation learned to share the problems. He was going to different members of the congregation and not telling them about the other troubles he was in. And one of the major lessons, if we ever do this again, is to have more people involved, every step of the way. I tried to protect his privacy with the first DWI and was driving him to work. So we had been driving him out there and back because he wasn't supposed to be driving his car, when we found out that he went out in his car driving anyway. And then he had an accident where he wrecked the tires. That's when we realized we had a serious problem.[412]

Sue explained that she also kept the details of these first serious incidents from the congregation in order to protect the privacy of the family. She explained, "Of course then, I'm the one that's trying to soothe everyone, to make everything look good for the congregation because it's private. You don't want the rest of the congregation gossiping and all that sort of stuff too, so you're trying to make everything look good and sound good and all that".[413] Sue, Bill and Janet arranged for an intervention with the father concerning his alcohol abuse. They hoped he would take responsibility for his apparent drinking problem and take them up on the help they were offering. Several members of the Resettlement Committee struggled specifically with alcohol dependency and were willing to guide the father to appropriate help. At this point,

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[411] Interview, Sue.
[412] Interview, Bill.

not only did the father refuse their assistance but they discovered the men were being duplicitous with members of the congregation.

Sue recounted the dawning awareness of the men's actions and how they abused the goodwill of the congregation:

> It was an issue from the very beginning. One or other of the guys would play good guy/bad guy after church. One of them would be hustling money from the members and then the other guy would be saying "Oh no, you shouldn't be doing that." And so, of course, it was just a game they were playing. And we were always trying to tell every member not to give them any money. "Don't give them any money, that's not what you're supposed to be doing." We had to be very firm with some of the church members because they wanted to help them out if they were really in need.[414]

Bill recalled that it was during this time that the congregation started sharing the problems they were having with the two men and became closer. He described the new perspective he began sharing with the rest of the congregation:

> When you see people like these two men who are very poor, having a hard time, stay objective, even though your heart just goes out to them. They have to do a lot of this themselves. They are capable. They have unlimited needs and as long as we keep fulfilling them, we're keeping them from confronting some of their own problems. And they don't do it very well, but we have to back away.[415]

Meanwhile, the situation with the two men began to worsen. It came to light that the cousin also had a serious problem with drinking, often showing up to work intoxicated. In a somewhat surprising turn of events, the father's wife, the girls' mother, was granted permission to join her family in Minnesota. This came as a big surprise to the congregation and Refugee Services, as it had been assumed the mother had died. It was subsequently never made clear why she did not travel with her husband and daughters in the first place. Both Sue and Bill commented on how young she appeared, especially since a medical exam revealed that the eldest daughter was several years older than the age recorded on her Biodata form.

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[413] Interview, Sue.
[414] Interview, Sue.
[415] Interview, Bill.

Rather than alleviating the circumstances of the Ndleda family at home, the appearance of the girls' mother seemed to exacerbate it. Sue recalls her experience, less than two months after the mother's arrival of receiving a telephone call saying that the father had been beating the mother. Sue went to their apartment and found that the father had pulled out all the telephone cords, but the eldest daughter had managed to reassemble a smashed mobile phone in order to call for help. Sue took the woman and the two girls to an emergency women's shelter. The father found out where they were and began stalking the mother. A restraining order was placed on the father. Eventually the mother and girls were kicked out of the shelter because the mother broke the rules. They moved back in with the father. Soon after this, they were evicted from their apartment and the father was thrown in jail for domestic violence. After being released he moved back in with the women at a different location. The father then had the mother arrested for domestic violence and got custody of the girls. The mother eventually moved in with a boyfriend. Meanwhile, the cousin stole a significant sum of money from Bill by grabbing it out of Bill's hand and running.

Resolve and Recommitment to the Girls

By now, Hope UCC had entered the third phase of their sponsorship wherein they reassessed their situation and chose to make some difficult decisions. The congregation had lost all trust and patience with the father and cousin and had no illusions that they would suddenly become honest, law-abiding residents. They cut off all support to the two men and refused to help them anymore. Bill explains that by this point the men regarded the congregation with animosity, viewing them as meddlesome and interfering. Bill thinks that some of this rancour can be attributed to

the fact that the congregation would no longer serve as a source of revenue. While the men were frustrated with the congregation, the father continued to allow the church to have relations with the children.

As Sue previously described, Hope UCC had, from the beginning, a strong attachment to the two daughters. All three of the interviewees spoke of the girls in glowing, affectionate terms. Bill boasted that they are both very bright, the younger one being a ball of energy and the eldest a soccer star whose team won the state championships. Janet likened the younger girl to Tigger as both had boundless energy and were able to make friends instantly. The interviewees described the various relationships members of the congregation had with the girls. The host family grew particularly fond of them and, even though they moved out of the state, have committed to funding the girls' college education.

Sue related one story of a couple in the congregation, not members of the Resettlement Committee, who took particular interest in the girls:

> For the first year and a half definitely, till [the mother] came, [the wife in this couple] would have those girls every weekend. I mean, [she] was like their Mom, braiding their hair and buying them new Easter outfits. They'd be dressed up to the nines you know. When she moved up here, she had to leave her girls in the South, in Alabama, so this was just wonderful. When Mother's Day came and [the mother] had been here only a couple of weeks, the kids were making cards and they'd made one for her too![416]

Janet recalled a story of the same family and emphasized how the congregation came to focus the commitment of their sponsorship on the two girls:

> One family [in the congregation] took the girls in almost every weekend. And in the summer, when a lot of us were busy, we were struggling with the idea of, well, how much time do we put into this? Are we doing this because it's part of our commitment to them as refugees? No, it's because we love these girls. And we still had some faith that [the father] was going to do the right stuff eventually. So our motivation then was just to make sure the girls were okay. And I still feel bad at this time that we didn't realise how bad things were at home for them, and that we didn't intervene more, sooner.
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> But everybody at church has really enjoyed just being with the girls. We just had a talent show. And there's another couple here, that are really relatively new, and

[416] Interview, Sue.

> they have been taking the girls to soccer league. And they helped [the girls] be in the talent show a lot, and so it was really fun.[417]

Janet went on to describe her own and her family's relationship with the two girls:

> We still have sleepovers. I see them every Sunday. I pick them up every Sunday and take them to church. Now they're kind of going to another church, I'm kind of interested to see where that goes. But our kids are still close. And as it turns out, [my son] and [the eldest daughter] are not one year apart, but three or four years apart. But yet they still have a great love of sports and so [they] play soccer together and baseball and stuff like that. [The little girl and my daughter] are the same age, and we can tell they're the same age because they're losing a tooth at the same time. And the dynamics between them, they butt heads a lot. They aren't the best friends all the time, but yet when they see each other they run up and hug each other. My children have benefitted and learned a lot from seeing all the things that [the girls] have gone through. I think they can be much more understanding about the hardships that people in this world go through because they've seen what [the girls] went through.[418]

All three of the interviewees expressed their continuing commitment to the welfare of the two girls. Sue relates a conversation she had with Janet: "After they'd been here like four or six months, I said to Janet, 'I think we'll be sponsoring this family until [the youngest girl] graduates from High School.' And she hadn't started kindergarten yet. And Janet just said to me not too long ago, 'I think you're right!'"[419] Bill has also considered that there is a good chance that the girls might end up in foster care. He says if this happens, someone from the church would volunteer to be their foster parents.

Observations

The resettlement process of the Ndleda family did not occur as the members of Hope UCC had expected or hoped. The Resettlement Committee, particularly Janet, Bill and another member of the congregation, became deeply involved in the lives of two men who were not only dealing with the traumas they had encountered as refugees but who also brought to their experiences the extra burdens of addiction and

[417] Interview, Janet.
[418] Ibid.
[419] Interview, Sue.

dysfunction. I am not suggesting that the men's problems with alcohol and abuse were unrelated to their traumas as refugees; both can be considered psychological issues or afflictions and are most likely interrelated. Nevertheless, the two conditions are not mutually exclusive. Compiling issues of addiction and abuse with the traumas of not only becoming a refugee but with those of being resettled into an extremely foreign country would exacerbate any resettlement effort.

While most sponsorships are difficult for at least a few members of any congregation, the challenges provided by the Ndleda family were shown to be exceptionally frustrating, trying and exhausting for members of the Hope UCC Resettlement Committee. As a whole, this sponsorship proved to be very different from their previous experience with the family from Bosnia. While the resettlement of the Bosnian family was predominately a positive experience, the more difficult set of experiences associated with the Ndleda family gave the Resettlement Committee a different perspective on the resettlement of refugees in Minnesota.

When asked if there was anything in particular they learned from this sponsorship, Sue responded:

> One of the things that was really clear to us as a congregation was to have seen the way the overall community, the city, welcomed the family from Bosnia. I mean, doors flew open, things just fell in place. But that was white as opposed to black African. And now how we just were up against the wall of racism over and over again. No doors opening. We had to push them open and hold them open while they tried to squeeze through. So that was very interesting for us to see that counterpoint.[420]

Janet made similar comments concerning issues of poverty:

> Another thing is understanding how difficult it is for people in poverty to get through the system that we have here. It's just an incredible experience, learning how people who can't speak the language and, when there is no interpreter, have to figure things out. How many mistakes are likely to happen in our welfare system. And then once a mistake is made, how detrimental it is to the people concerned.[421]

[420] Interview, Sue.
[421] Interview, Janet.

One issue raised by all three interviewees concerned the parenting styles of the two men and how much responsibility was placed with the older daughter. As the congregation got to know several other Africans from the same country as the Ndledas, both Sue and Janet remarked that parenting seems to be more of a group effort with adults taking care of each other's children. Both women were concerned with the amount of responsibility given to the eldest daughter in terms of caring for the house and for her little sister. Janet realized this was partly due to a difference in culture but, even so, thought the men relied too much on the girl. She also felt that the men were overly strict with the children, an opinion echoed by Sue's account of the host family's frustrations with the two men.

Reflections

While the sponsorship of the Ndleda family was difficult for the Resettlement Committee, many in the congregation were either unaware of or not directly involved with the problems encountered by members of the Committee. It is clear that Bill and Janet were both burned out by the resettlement process, and Sue experienced a great deal of stress. Nevertheless, their enthusiasm for the two girls, and that of the congregation at large, never waned.

Sue described the effects of the sponsorship on different members of the congregation:

> There has been lots of joy in the process. They brought gifts with them. One of the songs we sing now here, one of our sung responses is, "I've decided to follow Jesus." They helped us to put it into [their language]. So when they were a part of the congregation, they were embraced warmly and lovingly. And the negative stuff that has happened, has happened just to a small number of people. And the girls continue to bring joy. In fact, one lesbian couple who recently joined the church, who just really want to be involved, this summer, the girls were invited to go to who they call their Grandparents, the host family they originally lived with, who are now in Ohio. They drove them all the way to Toledo, Ohio and then went and picked them up again! That's just awesome that they were willing. I would never have asked that. They volunteered. Someone stood up in church and said, "Is anyone driving to Chicago? [The host family] will meet you in Chicago.

> We did that last year so their girls could go and visit them." But, that's important for the girls to have the sense of grandparents and the love that [the host family] have for them.[422]

Besides being ordained as a UCC minister, Sue had also been an oblate at a Benedictine monastery for five years. She described her first visit to the monastery and the impact that experience has had on her relationship with Hope UCC:

> The first time that I went as a guest there, they opened the door and they welcomed me in and I felt like I was at home. I mean, it was just incredible with that idea that you see everyone as Christ. And so that's what I have tried to do here with this congregation. And based on responses I hear from people who come here, they see that, and a lot of churches just haven't figured out how to do that. They're a club; and we clearly are not a club. Or if we are, there's always room for more. The club can keep expanding. And so we know the people who are in need of a safer place to live, whose homelands can no longer provide for them. Yes, let them come to our community, we have room for that. They have something to offer us.[423]

Of the three interviewed, only Sue made specific reference to hospitality:

> I do believe in the concept of hospitality. That, to me, is so crucial when you think about the foreigner, you know, who were strangers in the land. I think about the fact that my grandparents all came to this country as strangers. And you know they came of their own free will. They were immigrants, not refugees. But they were welcomed; and they made a home here; and it became our home. We need to be always doing that for the next generation. I so believe that. It is not like, "Let's just close the doors now, we're here." So I am really clear about that with folks. And one of the reasons why I love where I live is that cross cultural dynamic of seeing people trying to live together and get along together. It's just so rich; it's just so wonderful. And if the Christian church doesn't do that, then I don't understand the Christian church. I mean, who are we following? Who do we say we are following?[424]

While Hope UCC had a very difficult experience with the adults of the Ndleda family, all three interviewees focus on the children as the most positive outcome of their sponsorship. Their experience with this family was a far cry from their previous sponsorship with the Bosnian family, and those most closely involved with the two men will very likely not be interested in sponsoring another family anytime soon. Yet the commitment to the girls remained strong. With all of the difficulties ensuing from their relation with the Ndleda men, the three interviewees were able to articulate

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[422] Interview, Sue.
[423] Interview, Sue.
[424] Interview, Sue.

the positive aspects of the sponsorship clearly, particularly with regard to the two girls.

> The experience with this family was probably more rewarding to this church, and to myself, and to a lot of people individually because of the difficulties that we had. A lot of really, really good long-term things are going to come out of it. This is why I like teaching because you make a difference. But you have to know that it's going to be small and subtle, and you may not even realise it now; but in the long run, it's going to be a really, really good thing for a lot of people and a lot of good stuff is going to come out of it. Even more so than helping the Bosnian family, which now seems like a piece of cake compared with this one. You know what, even if [the girls] end up going back to [their country of origin] and they really make a difference in that country or here, my kids will have this experience and something good will come out of that. And I'm a teacher now, maybe partly because of that. So I just think, in the long run, it was a good thing.[425]

It was clear through the interview that Bill still harboured frustrations and anger toward the two men. He had spent a great deal of time with them, teaching them to drive and helping them acquire jobs. At one point the cousin had actually stolen money from him. I asked Bill if he thought the sponsorship of this family had been too difficult for himself or the congregation and if he regretted their decision to sponsor the Ndledas. He replied:

> We've talked about this a lot. We think it was the right thing to be sponsors. We see that they had a greater need than the Bosnian family did. There was a huge need here and the need is for the two little girls to be protected. We have to write off the alcoholics, they are going to have to take care of that problem themselves. We can't do that for them. But those girls are a wonderful ongoing mission that, Pastor Sue said we will probably have till the girls go off to college. I said, "I think it will be a little longer than that." This has brought the people in the church together, as I told you. We feel that this is important to see that those girls have every chance to turn out well. We are a very liberal church, and we believe that we should be doing things besides just talking.[426]

I followed up by asking what most positive part of the sponsorship was for him, and he replied:

> Of the whole thing, I think we are most proud of those two girls. And I think we are proud of how open our congregation was, and how naïve, in a really nice way, we were. I think we can be proud of that. Everyone in the church was really welcoming to them. We can be proud of our initial approach. And now we sing the last song of the service in [their language]. And we have other [people from the Ndleda's country as] members in the church now.[427]

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[425] Interview, Janet.
[426] Interview, Bill.
[427] Ibid.

Janet's sentiments echoed her father's thoughts. She also had a very difficult time as coordinator of the Resettlement Committee. Her time was stretched to the limit and assisting with the sponsorship put a strain on her family. When I asked if she would she do it again knowing what she knew now, she responded:

> Yes, because of the girls. If you knew the girls, enough about them, oh yeah, I would. That's a tough question. In my opinion, I would have busted [the two men] a lot faster. I am a recovering alcoholic myself, and I believe the sooner you get to the bottom of it, the less damage there is to people around you. But, yes, I would do it again.[428]

Sue felt that in the end, when considering the specific problems these two men had along with the particular experiences, gifts, and talents of different members of the congregation, they were the right combination of the right things for this sponsorship. She described Hope UCC as a welcoming congregation with a unique openness to people who have been marginalized in their community. She attributed this openness to the hardship and loss experienced by many in the congregation who had been marginalized themselves. When reflecting on the efficacy of the sponsorship she said, "Yes, yes, we were probably the right church for this family".[429]

CASE STUDY 3: PEACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND THE KUKAME FAMILY

Preparation and Motivation

Peace Presbyterian Church (PC) helped to sponsor Amana's family, the Kukames, for resettlement. The Kukame family consisted of a mother and father and nine children, five daughters and four sons whose ages ranged from 21 to 6. Amana worked full-time and needed assistance with all of the various components of sponsorship but especially with transportation and housing. Going into the sponsorship, the congregation was aware that the family's particular practice of Islam

[428] Interview, Janet.
[429] Interview, Sue.

might preclude their participation in certain events taking place at the church, such as a worship service. Fully aware of these particulars, the Resettlement Committee at Peace PC met with Amana and prepared for the family's arrival.

Pastor Paul related his thoughts on the congregation's motivation for choosing to sponsor the Kukame family:

> We were looking for opportunities for ministry in the larger community. And I think that someone from the Minnesota Council of Churches contacted us, how we got on their list, I don't know, but they did. And so our mission committee considered it, "Oh, this is something we can do. We think we can find enough families to get involved and help this family get settled." So we felt, I think, good about ourselves and this opportunity. That this is the kind of thing that we see as carrying on Christ's mission, to make strangers feel welcome.[430]

Julie acted as co-chair of Peace's Resettlement Committee along with Beth. Her reflections corresponded with Pastor Paul's regarding the congregation's decision to sponsor:

> Peace started as a mission church. You've probably heard that. And it prides itself, really, on saying that mission is a big focus. But over the years that's waxed and waned. And there were a lot of people who were feeling like Peace was not pulling its weight in terms of direct support to the community. I guess that's one thing I thought, the committee thought, it was just a perfect opportunity for Peace to be directly involved rather than sending money somewhere to help with what some other group was doing. To actually be a part of that. And to bear witness to what we preach and we teach.[431]

Julie described her role on the Resettlement Committee:

> I was one of the chairperson(s) of the committee. And what I did was to recruit people to be in charge of different areas. There was somebody who really collected actual kitchen items and furniture items. And who worked on clothing. We had a subcommittee that was focused on housing. And another teacher and I ended up going to meet with the kids once a week doing tutoring. So some of it was communication and management of transportation, sort of being a clearinghouse for information with the family and Refugee Services. And writing up communications for the church, you know, writing up articles for the newsletter. And I guess, I felt really responsible. I thought there was plenty of support at Peace if you could do the leg work to get it. Sometimes it is simpler to do it than to try and involve others. But that's not the purpose. And Peace, as a whole, took it on.[432]

Julie ended up taking on the greater part of the role of chairperson for the committee as Beth began focusing more and more on housing. Julie also spent a great

[430] Interview, Paul, 6 November 2003.
[431] Interview, Julie, 8 November 2003.

deal of time tutoring the older children of the family, reading with them and helping them with their schoolwork. Tutoring the high school-aged kids was a task that she enjoyed. In addition, she arranged for a friend to work with the younger children.

Beth recalled the planning stages of the sponsorship process:

> We knew that some activities related to the resettlement would happen during the day. We made sure we had people available who either had flexible job schedules or were not working so that we had some people who would be available during the day because several of us on the committee had daytime jobs. So we recruited people with the thought that they might have to drive people to appointments, that's what we put out there—that there would be several steps and we'd need help getting people set up in temporary housing, they'd need furnishings, clothes. We'd need people who might drive them to appointments or the grocery store. And we'd need people who could do paperwork, whether it was to make appointments or to check with the housing or whatever. So we kind of viewed it as different categories with different people working on those tasks.[433]

Housing

Beth concentrated her efforts on finding suitable housing for the family. At the time of the sponsorship, Refugee Services had partnered with another congregation which provided a house that was used as transitional accommodation for newly-arrived refugees. It was intended that the Kukame family stay in this house upon their arrival. Unfortunately, the family occupying the building refused to leave at the time arranged between themselves and Refugee Services, leaving the Kukame family without a place to stay. This put tremendous pressure on Amana, Peace PC and Refugee Services to locate housing for this large family much sooner than was anticipated. In the meantime, the family was sheltered temporarily in another transitional house that required payment for their accommodation. The accruing cost of this arrangement put added pressure on finding housing quickly.

Beth explained how difficult this task was for the Committee and what effect it had on Committee members:

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[432] Ibid.
[433] Interview, Beth, 10 November 2003.

> I think in all honesty that the people who worked or were involved with the committee, even the ones who were involved behind the scenes, I think it was educational and eye-opening for them because we had so much of a struggle with housing. Housing was such a huge issue, partly because of the size, partly because of the lack of affordable housing. But anyway, I think that the people that were involved really had their eyes opened to the reality of affordable housing in the Twin Cities at that time. I mean it's got a lot better since then, but it's something you hear about all the time—affordable housing, yeah yeah we heard that, but I think it really brought it home to them about just what it's like and how hard it can be to find a *decent* place to live, we're not even talking elaborate or exotic, just plain and decent in a safe neighbourhood or even a not dangerous neighbourhood, a borderline neighbourhood. I think that those people were in some cases maybe even profoundly affected by the experience.[434]

As the search for housing became more desperate, a member of Peace PC came forward with a proposal. This man was an estate agent whose company was in possession of a dilapidated house that he suggested the church fix up for the family to use and eventually buy. The house was abandoned and needed a great deal of work. The Director of Refugee Services worked closely with the congregation and the estate agent to make this happen. Work teams from the congregation, Refugee Services staff and Refugee Services volunteers put in many hours fixing up the building to make it habitable. The family eventually moved in.

There were significant problems with this arrangement both for the church and for the family. First, the house was located a substantial distance from the church, with the drive between the two buildings taking approximately an hour. The difficulty of travel for the congregation to make visits dramatically affected the relationship between the congregation and the Kukame family. The complexity of public transportation in the Twin Cities metro area made travel by the family to the suburb in which the church was located essentially untenable. Members of the congregation had significantly less contact with the family after the move.

The pressure on the family to purchase the building also led to further complications. While owning property has certain advantages, it is also a serious

[434] Ibid.

undertaking, one for which the family did not feel ready. There was also some concern regarding the purchase of a piece of property that still needed a great deal of work. Members of the congregation and the Director of Refugee Services encouraged the family to purchase the property, but the decision rested with the Kukame family. Peace Presbyterian Church raised over $25,000 to assist the family with a down payment, but the family decided against the purchase. This led to some frustration with members of the congregation, particularly the estate agent who put forth the property.[435]

Julie reflected on her experience with the family's housing:

> Housing was the most stressful part. That experience. It had nothing to do with the family. Housing was a problem the whole time because it was a very big group, eleven. We were not sure whether everyone was going to be living together, but still there were a lot with the kids. So they started out at the [temporary accommodation] in that big room upstairs. And I do remember perfectly the first time going up there to meet them. What a shock that had to be for them, I think. It was snowing. We were bringing bags of clothes. But the problem of the housing had to do with whether they could go into transition housing. They needed it but there were people not moving out. And people were desperate. We were desperate to find a place for them. So, we kept thinking that transitional house would open any day, and nobody would really communicate and that was hard. So then, when the family moved into the house in [a different neighborhood, and well, for someone with no housing, it was a good house. For us, looking at what we hoped for them, it was kind of frustrating because we didn't want to be part of helping them live someplace that we wouldn't want to live. And so there were lots of issues with insulation and heating costs and electricity.[436]

Julie recognized the point where there was pressure placed on the family to purchase the house. She commented on the respect she felt regarding the family and their decision:

> And the pressure kind of came to the point where they were there long enough, do they want to buy or move. And that was one of the places where I developed a great respect for the family because, I think, pretty clearly, Joel, several of us at Peace and [the estate agent] were thinking, this house is probably your best

[435] I, personally, never thought this was a good idea and expressed as much to the Director of Refugee Services. To put newly-arrived refugees who barely had a grasp on the language in the position of making such a significant decision seemed inappropriate. While in light of the housing market at the time, this situation could indeed appear to be a wonderful opportunity for a family starting a life in a new country, I would suggest that the opportunity came too soon. It may have made more sense for a more established family who had a greater understanding of their options.
[436] Interview, Julie.

> deal.[437] And we could raise this money and do this. It seemed reasonable. They are the ones who really said, we are not comfortable with that kind of risk. And I think they were right.[438]

Pastor Paul remembered this incident as positively reflecting the priorities of the church:

> We were getting the house moved, the furniture, bringing whatever they needed to do to get the home ready for occupation. Paying the cost of that. We raised $25,000 or $26,000 in about a month's time, at one point, to help with it. At that point we were hoping that the family would make a down payment and actually live in that house. It didn't turn out that way, but I was impressed with the response that we got in relatively short notice. I think that was at the time we were looking at the new building.[439] Nonetheless the people said, "This is the real power, helping someone who needs a home. It has a higher priority than our own comfort with our new church building."[440]

While both Julie and Paul highlighted several of the positive aspects regarding the Kukame's housing situation, Julie also echoed Beth's sentiments pertaining to the shortage of available housing and how that affected their sponsorship. She explained her frustration at their inability to find a home for the Kukame family in or close to their neighbourhood:

> The fact is that we really don't have affordable housing in our community, so the chance to have them live near us, and the fact that the sister lived, well a million factors. Where our church is, is where a lot of us live, it's not a very welcoming place. And it's kind of a slap in the face while you are saying you want to do this work, but you're living in a place that makes that happen elsewhere.[441]

Parenting/Family Roles and the Importance of Language

While housing proved to be the most difficult task for the congregation, the family was busy adjusting to life in Minnesota. Upon arrival, the family spoke very little English, the eldest daughter being the most proficient in the language. While Amana was able to act as translator for the family when present, the language barrier between

[437] Joel refers to Joel Luedtke, who was Director of Refugee Services at the time.
[438] Interview, Julie.
[439] Pastor Paul is referring to money that needed to be raised for the church building.
[440] Interview, Paul.
[441] Interview, Julie.

the congregation and the family was challenging to overcome.[442] Issues of parenting and the roles of the family members also added to the difficulties of communication between members of the family and of Peace PC.

Beth recounted bringing her son over to play with the Kukame children:

> The family had an older set of kids, and then they had this younger set of kids. There were the older teenagers, and then there were a bunch of kids who were at elementary school and not much in between. My own kids, I had a young one in elementary school as well, but my two older kids kind of fell between so I never really did much with my older two kids with them. But a couple of times I took my younger son over there to hang out with them and he would sort of play with them. It got easier once their kids started school and started learning English. Then they were able to communicate better than the first time when they all just sat and sort of looked at each other.[443]

Julie had an experience that she explained was very difficult for her:

> I have a godchild who, at the time, was probably five or six. And we were getting together on Saturday and there was something I needed to drop off for the family. So she went with me. And here she is this little blond little girl. And we walked into the house and she was overwhelmed because she had seen people that looked completely different. She probably never had walked into a home where all the people were black. But the little boy had been naughty; he had behaviour problems with him running away. And they had him tied, with twine, to the radiator to keep him there. And his wrists were tied together and he had been struggling a bit so they were at least scraped, they weren't raw. And I remember feeling, are we responsible for giving this kind of picture to this little girl? And really concerned about him. I talked with the family about it. Gosh, how long that we spoke about how in the United States that it really wasn't, that we don't allow them to tie up kids even though I could understand that they were really frustrated.[444]

Julie struggled with how to respond to this situation. She felt that because it happened, she had a responsibility to report it to Child Protection. She hoped that they could assist the family with advice on parenting in the U.S. When she returned home she called the Child Protection offices to make them aware of the situation. She was told that they could not do anything because she had to be calling from inside the house where the child was. Julie explained, "And I did feel like, well, I made the judgement, the family weren't out to hurt him, and if this is the way our system

[442] Translators were available for the family at most of their various appointments with doctors, social services and Refugee Services.
[443] Interview, Beth.
[444] Interview, Julie.

worked then so be it". Julie later talked with Amana who took the boy home to stay with her for a while and spoke with his school about possible Attention Deficit Disorder.

Beth had spent many years working with the refugee community in the Twin Cities metro area teaching women skills that would assist them in gaining employment. Through her job, Beth worked closely with women from different African countries. Many of these women were refugees whom she met at the beginning of their life in the U.S. When asked to comment on this particular incident, she replied:

> I know a lot more of the parenting was done by the older daughters than was done by the mother, and I think that was partly because of bad health and maybe language difficulties. But I wonder if that would have happened if they were back home. I mean he was a very, very rambunctious, sometimes out of control child. But I think it's important to view that in the cultural context, in the sense that if they were still in [Africa] they were living in a compound, either in the city, in a neighbourhood that they'd lived in for a long time or in a village, or a camp, he would have had the freedom and the boundaries to go out and be himself. Here there was an environment where, you know, this woman was home alone with this kid that she can't control and he wants to go outside in a neighbourhood that she knows nothing about. And she can't speak the language, and she can't think of any other thing to do but to tie him down so he can't leave the house. I mean I think it's important to see it in that context, in that, would she have done that if they were in their hometown in [Africa]? Maybe, I don't know, but maybe not, because she wouldn't have had to be afraid of what might happen to him if he went outside. Maybe it still would have happened, but I question that.[445]

Both Julie and Beth were also concerned about the mother of the family. While the father had a little facility with English, the mother had none. Both women were worried that the mother may have felt isolated. Upon considering the age differences among the children and that the mother was Amana's birth mother, it is unlikely that the 53 year-old-woman was the birth mother of the younger children. Julie mentioned that she seemed more like the grandmother of the family than the mother of the smaller children. Both Julie and Beth expressed that while the entire family struggled

[445] Interview, Beth.

with communication, the mother had the most difficult time. She depended upon Amana, her husband and her children to translate for her. Julie remarked:

> I think it was easier for them [the children] than the adults. Especially the mom. I think she had the hardest time. I don't know if she had always been isolated, but in this situation she was pretty isolated. She was used to being in charge of the kids, but they know English, they watch TV, they rule the roost. She lost a very powerful role, I think.[446]

Amana acted as translator for the family whenever possible. She had been in the U.S. for over five years, having fled her country as an asylum seeker, and had an established life in Minnesota. She was fluent and literate in English but had a full time job that made it impossible for her to be with her family all of the time.

Julie described her feelings regarding her relationship with Amana:

> I did feel really, really lucky that we were getting to have that relationship with Amana. She is wonderful and she speaks English so well so that communication was made so much simpler. Her ability to do that and she is just beautiful on the interior and exterior. It was just thrilling to get to know her and to be walking with all these people that she loves. That was a wonderful thing. Sometimes it became difficult as time went on because we would be communicating with her but really we should have been talking with the family. And she did talk with the family but she had her own life too. Sometimes that triangulation was a little bit strange. It was never really a bad thing though.[447]

The language barrier did not inhibit all communication between the congregation and family. Although communication was difficult without Amana at hand, or later without the children, who learned English much more quickly, Julie and Beth were able to have meaningful interactions with the family. Beth recalled a time shortly after the Kukames arrival when she and Julie visited the family specifically in order to spend time with them and get to know them. Beth described playing a card game with the children on that occasion:

> Then one time, and I think that was when I was there with Julie [and some friends] and we taught them to play UNO [laughter] which was really kind of fun. We had actually done that when we went to Guatemala on a fishing trip with our church together and she had taught some kids there in the village. And she and I had both together had played UNO together with the kids because you don't really have to speak the same language. It's about colours and numbers and if you can

[446] Interview, Julie.
[447] Ibid.

> communicate that you have to match the colour or the number, then you've got a game. That was fun.[448]

Julie explained how much the family's English had improved after they had been in Minnesota for a year. She made a connection between facility of communication and the family's ability to become independent from the church and established in their new home:

> When they had been there a year, we had a dinner at Old Country Buffet, and lots of people who had been directly involved with them were there. It's thrilling to see how well the kids have adapted. Their English skills were marvellous. The food, they knew the food. Then there's the mom. Just watching the big difference, in language skills. They are now able to tell you things. And just stories of [the eldest son] going off and working and taking control. I think they did a good job of taking care of their own lives, which may not be very easy when you have people coming in and helping. I think they were pretty clear about saying thanks for your help, we can do it. And I admire that. I feel confident that if they really needed something, they know they could come ask us. Although it was really rewarding to me to be personally involved with them, I also felt that they were taking off on their own and it was a little bit artificial to keep going there because I was still in that helper role, even though I do consider them friends as well. I think there was a power difference that they didn't need, and I don't need it either.[449]

Reflecting Religiously

When the Resettlement Committee prepared for the family's arrival, special consideration was given to how, as sponsors, they might best respect the family's religious traditions. They discussed with each other and with the larger congregation how the Kukame's particular practice of Islam might bear upon the family's presence in the church building and at other functions. The Committee was quite clear that there would be no expectations placed on the family to participate in any activity that might infringe on their beliefs or make them feel uncomfortable. Amana assured the Committee that this would not be a significant problem and several family members did visit the church.

Beth explained her experience regarding the topic:

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[448] Interview, Beth.
[449] Interview, Julie.

> I think that the fact that they were open to us as a Muslim family, in my own experience having worked in the refugee community for eleven years, they are a pretty liberal Muslim family. I mean, I don't know what their political views are but in terms of how they observe their religion: the way they dress, they don't wear the most severe hijabs, they would wear headscarves, but not the tightest, most restrictive clothing. I don't know much about their eating habits, I don't know if they ate pork or not, but certainly in their dress they didn't appear to be as constrained as many of the others. It was great for us that not only were they okay with being helped by a Christian church but were willing to come to our church and meet people and let people meet them in a more convenient location. You know, in any country or any culture you'll have people who'll have different viewpoints on things and the same with Christianity. You may have the liberal influence or conservative, and Islam has liberal and conservative, and culturally people have different attitudes as well.[450]

Julie described her reaction to the family's openness toward participating in functions at the church:

> I really loved getting to know them. I loved hearing about their stories. I loved when the dad would stop and say, "You know, Muslim and Christians are not that far apart. We both believe in Abraham. We both believe in one God. There's so much in common, it's silly to think there is a problem. No, we have no problem coming to your church and sitting through a service." I just loved that. Loved the connection he made. I loved the opportunity to get to learn about a whole other culture. Never had I met anyone like him.[451]

At another point in the interview, Julie told of a visit by Amana and her father to adult education class:

> They were really grateful. They were thrilled to be here. They were really clear about being thankful. One of my favorite times was when the dad came to do an adult education, actually Amana and the dad, came to do an adult education at Peace Presbyterian when they first got here.[452] And she described her experiences and then described some of the family's experiences there. And when he got up, in his halting English, and said how grateful he was to be here. Thankful to Peace Presbyterian. There is only so much of that that is necessary. They were more thankful than what was necessary.[453]

In preparation for the resettlement, the Resettlement Committee and I discussed how they might best approach sponsoring a practicing and devout Muslim family. I explained that in very real terms this meant there was to be no overt evangelizing of the family or withholding goods and services in exchange for participation in worship

[450] Interview, Beth.
[451] Interview, Julie.
[452] Adult education is the equivalent of Sunday school.
[453] Interview, Julie.

or prayer.[454] The Resettlement Committee appeared to share this position with respect to the sponsorship and I heard of no occasions where this convention was overlooked. Nevertheless, I asked Pastor Paul if he had witnessed or heard rumour of the desire to evangelize the Kukame family by any of the congregation members. To this he replied:

> Most people in the Church would think in terms of, we need to convert these people or else they are going to go to hell, or we need to convert these people because we are superior, or that the status of women will be improved if they become Christians.[455] That maybe true. Our denominational or confessional position says, Christ is the way of salvation and yet we are open to learning from other religions. And we need to establish that dialogue especially at this time in history, with what's going on in this world. And trying to take more of a humble view of the great commission; what with the kind of world we have and the unholy alliance between the missionary movement and colonization that took place. We are trying to distance ourselves with that whole mentality. The big shots helping out these poor pathetic pagans, in reaction still to that dynamic. It is more like we are bending over backwards to be understanding and generous hearted and open minded learning from them. And so not that we would say there is not a role for evangelism, but that *they* are going to have to ask.[456] We are not going to bring the subject up. We'll wait for the people to ask, "What is it that you really believe in?" When people start asking that, it is great, but we are not going to try and impose or look for opening and sneak in the Gospel word.[457]

While Pastor Paul spoke of hospitality in terms of welcoming the stranger, he did not relate it directly to the resettlement of the Kukame family. Julie also utilized the phrase welcoming the stranger but connected it directly with the sponsorship. She understood the task of sponsoring a refugee as literally welcoming a stranger into the community of their church, into this part of Minnesota, and into the United States. While Julie was speaking of what she thought of the congregation's experience of the sponsorship, she said:

> There was a page in the folder of information we got [from an event held by Refugee Services], there was, I think, a blue page that was full of all sorts of scripture verses related to refugees and suggestions of how we could use that in our church. And I thought that was really wonderful because there are so many times that that's what you hear read out of the Bible; that's what the sermon is; that's what you read. And then to, very directly, be welcoming the stranger,

[454] This had been known to happen infrequently in CWS congregations but more frequently with other Christian churches in the Twin Cities metro area.
[455] The tenor of Paul's discourse suggests that when he uses the word "church" he means the Church at large, not the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or Peace Presbyterian Church.
[456] Paul emphasized the word they.
[457] Interview, Paul.

> clothing the naked. It's more profound than I really know how to describe. … The prevailing wisdom of the culture makes that radical. Makes it radical to be welcoming the stranger. It is counter-cultural.[458]

Differences in Perspective

One of the main distinctions between Julie and Beth's interviews was their perception of the wider church's participation in the sponsorship. Beth was particularly disappointed with what she considered a lack of participation on the part of the congregation. Conversely, Julie considered the church to have been highly involved.

Beth described her viewpoint on this issue:

> One of the things that I was disappointed about in our church in general was that we didn't have a bigger group of people. I mean we had our committee, but it never got much beyond the committee in terms of other people being involved. When we moved the family we did involve other people outside the committee; the church showed up to help with that. But beyond that there wasn't a lot of involvement besides people who helped on the committee. I was a little disappointed by that, but perhaps it was because once they got settled they were in [a distant neighbourhood], so if they'd stayed in [closer to the church] perhaps more people would have made some contact with them and gone to do things with them. Because it wasn't *that* far, but it wasn't close.[459] But I think it was far enough. And there are a lot of older people in our congregation that didn't want to drive to that part of [the Twin Cities metro area]. It wasn't the best part of [the Twin Cities metro area] and that probably put some people off.[460]

Julie conveyed a different sentiment regarding the congregation's involvement:

> We put in [the church newsletter] and made announcements in worship services that this is a new project the mission committee was undertaking and we needed to develop, really, a sub-group that had special interests in this area. And there were lots of people. Maybe twenty years ago, Peace was involved in the resettlement of a Laotian family, and so there were people who had been part of that that were thrilled to get involved again. Some of them happy not to be lead, but this time to get to be supportive. And lots of people who don't want to really just sit around on committees but who are *happy* to get involved with something they think truly matters.[461] For everybody in Peace, I think this really mattered, whether they were directly involved or just read about what was happening. It was a big deal.[462]

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[458] Interview, Julie.
[459] Beth emphasized the word 'that.'
[460] Interview, Beth.
[461] Julie emphasized the word 'happy.'
[462] Interview, Julie.

The two women disagreed along the same lines when asked to comment on the church's experience as a whole. Both Julie and Beth agreed that those involved in the sponsorship were affected by the experience. They also both wished more people had participated in the process. Nevertheless, while Beth seemed to feel that not enough people were directly involved to make an impact, Julie appeared to suggest that the sponsorship affected the entire congregation.

Beth expresses her perception of the church's experience as follows:

> The church as an entity, I don't know that it had a significant effect. I don't know that anything has changed significantly in the congregation as a whole because I don't think enough individuals were involved to make it have a bigger impact. The whole, raising that 25,000 dollars, got more people involved. In some way it perhaps raised their awareness. But the people who were more hands-on, how are you going to view change of the perspectives of a dozen people in the church? That's just a dozen people.[463]

Julie demonstrates a different interpretation of the sponsorship:

> I think it was a very positive experience for the church. I think that it was more so for people more directly involved. And it would have been nice to have more people directly involved. The next time that someone makes a move to decide that's a project Peace would do, I think there will be people really interested in that because of how positive it was this time around.[464]

As a follow up to Julie's response I asked her if she would want to be involved if the church decided to sponsor another family. She replied in a cheerful tone of voice, "I want us to do it again in a second. I don't know if I want to be the one who is in charge, but I could be a hard worker".[465]

CONCLUSIONS

The sponsorship of the Raselemane family by Faith UMC provides an example of what could be considered a positive and successful experience of refugee resettlement. Even though the family was very large, they adapted well in their transition to life in Minnesota and became independent of the church's assistance

[463] Interview, Beth.

fairly rapidly. The subjects interviewed reported having an overall enjoyable experience with the family even when the process was difficult, and that their feelings reflect those of the greater congregation. Housing was difficult to find and the Coordinator of the Resettlement Committee was overworked and exhausted. Nevertheless, all three women interviewed were overwhelmingly positive regarding the experience for themselves and for the congregation.

Hope UCC had a far different experience with their sponsorship of the Ndleda family. Even before their arrival, the resettlement of the Ndleda family was expected to be difficult, particularly with the absence of a mother for the two young girls. Hope UCC had sponsored before and were experienced in the difficulties that resettlement can present. The Ndleda family proved to be far more difficult that anyone could have expected. Both men in the family abused alcohol and the father was arrested on domestic abuse charges. All three interviewees spoke of how exhausting and difficult the sponsorship was. Bill, in particular, was still angry with the two men. At the same time, all three interviewed spoke of the great affection they had developed for the two daughters and their commitment, as well as the commitment of the wider congregation, to them. They each spoke clearly of the positive aspects of the resettlement even though their overall experience on this occasion was negative.

Peace Presbyterian Church had yet a different experience with their sponsorship of the Kukame family. Their sponsorship had both positive and negative aspects to it. While, overall, the experience appeared to be positive, the issue of housing was extremely difficult for the family and the congregation. When the housing issue was resolved, the family ended up living a great distance away from the congregation,

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[464] Interview, Julie.
[465] Ibid.

putting a strain on their relationship. One of the considerations going into the sponsorship related to the family's particular religious practice of Islam and whether that would make it difficult to accept assistance from a Christian congregation. All three interviewees related that not only was the difference in religion not a problem, it was considered a positive inter-religious experience. Overall, the interviewees considered sponsorship a positive experience, even with its particular problems and challenges taken into account.

The final chapter will examine the experiences of the interviewed subjects from within a framework of hospitality as occasioned by Jean Vanier and reflect on the wider implications of such an enquiry for both the church and for future considerations of hospitality. These three case studies provide a concrete set of experiences, uniquely situated in the congregational setting of the specific church. By using this material as the basis for my research, I hope to give an account of hospitality that establishes the subject as a set of tangible actions and activities that, together, are necessary for the functioning of the Body of Christ or, in other words, the church.

CHAPTER 5

WELCOME HOME

In truth, our century is marked by displacements on the scale of continents. Armenians, Kurds, Muslims, Hindus, Bosnians, Rwandans: political and economic refugees, victims of religious persecutions, ethnic cleansing and racial oppression. Never before have so many human beings fled from so many homes.

Elie Wiesel[466]
Longing for Home

Refugees are survivors. They are signs of an ending, but also a new beginning. Their presence among us is an expression of hope being searched for, of hope being realized. Refugee resettlement is hard work, and there will probably be problems along the way. But refugee work is also a great gift. Refugees bring resourcefulness, family strength, the capacity to accept risks and motivation, and 'survival mechanisms' that we Americans sometimes have trouble seeing. Refugee ministry at its deepest level is not only a means to share life (which our Lord invites us to do in His name) but also to see, receive and experience new life through others. These others, in surprising ways, are often refugees.

The Rev. John Huston[467]
Former Director of the Washington Association of
Churches Resettlement and Job Program

Hospitality is not an optional extra for the church. Rather, it is a fundamental and necessary activity through which the church itself is constituted. While contemporary theologians have approached hospitality as a concrete activity of the church, there has been little research taking an account of hospitality in the day to day life of churches. While hospitality can take a variety of forms, my research focuses specifically on the experiences of congregations as they reach out to welcome refugees into the U.S.

Hospitality understood as a set of actions is best described as an interaction between or among people. It is thoroughly relational and occurs as a fourfold

[466] Elie Wiesel, "Longing for Home," in *The Longing for Home*, ed. Leroy S. Rounder (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 19.
[467] *Refugee Services Sponsorship Manual*, 4.

movement. The first two parts of the movement arise out of the act of welcoming another into one's home. (1) The home of the host is opened up, and (2) the guest, or stranger, is welcomed in, providing the space necessary for the guest to communicate his or her real need. This sets in motion the giving a gift that moves from the host toward the guest.

The second half of the fourfold dynamic occurs as (3) the gift is received by the guest and (4) as the guest gives back to the host. It is the reciprocal movement from the guest toward the host. Just as the host's gift is unconditional, the guest's gift is unexpected. The final movement is manifest as the home, the network of meaning that arises out of our shared experiences of the world, is transforms. Hospitality, as such, involves a complex set of variables situated temporally as pertaining to relationships between and among persons. Thus, the occasion of hospitality is best described by a person's own experience of it.

Welcome

This and the following section, Giving the Gift of Home, will examine the first half of hospitality's fourfold dynamic as demonstrated specifically by the three congregational case studies. This examination will include a consideration of the dynamics of welcome and gift giving. The movements associated with these acts are a reaching out to welcome another into the personal space of the home and the giving of a gift by the host to the guest. This consideration will be undertaken with special reference to Vanier's and Pohl's work on hospitality as discussed in Chapter One, particularly as it pertains to CWS's model of refugee sponsorship.

Built into the USRP is the mandatory requirement that all refugees being resettled in the U.S. have sponsorship. Part of this mechanism is the process by

which churches can be assured as sponsors or co-sponsors of a refugee or refugee family. What this translates into, practically speaking, is a decision-making period wherein a congregation formally decides to act as a sponsor. Whether the congregation has been informed to a sufficient depth as to the responsibilities of sponsorship or not, at some point a representative of the congregation signs what is called an affidavit of assurance, committing the church to assist a particular family. This assurance signifies the congregation's intent to welcome these particular refugee strangers. Members of the refugee family will be persons the congregation will have never met, although they may have become acquainted with their family members already living in the U.S.

In this manner, CWS acts as a mediator of sponsorship between its constituent congregations and the refugees the USRP has committed to resettle. It is the responsibility of CWS to prepare its congregations for sponsorship. They do so via the staff at its affiliate offices and through the denominational offices that CWS represents. Working together, affiliate staff members and denominational offices apprise their constituent congregations about refugee sponsorship as well as other forms of refugee ministry. Both help prepare congregations to make an informed decision regarding the commitment to sponsor.

These beginning stages of refugee sponsorship reflect the initial movements of hospitality pertaining to welcome. As stated in Chapter One, welcome requires that a host invite her guest into a space from which the welcome can occur. It is a double movement extended outward in order to bring another in. In the case of sponsorship, a group of people are making the decision to invite a refugee family into the life of their church. It is important to remember that this does not necessarily mean into the worship life of the church, but rather into the lives of the congregation members.

Built into sponsorship is a framework by which the process of welcome can occur. By being asked for a formal commitment to sponsor, churches are obligated to proceed through whatever channels are established in their particular congregation in order to make that decision. This usually entails receiving permission from a church council or a missions committee before being able to commit. This necessitates the sharing of the decision-making process within the congregation. In this manner, the sponsorship is shared by the entire congregation, not just one or two members.

In the beginning, the desire to sponsor is often heralded by one or two enthusiastic persons. These persons then have to convince other members of the church and the necessary, varied committees to support or join in the endeavour before proceeding. It is at this point that affiliate staff can assist those individuals in educating and informing the rest of the congregation as to what might be reasonable to expect. An important tool in assisting congregations make the decision to sponsor is the *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship*. It is the responsibility of CWS and, in this case specifically, Refugee Services staff to ensure that the congregation make as informed a decision as possible.

The Necessity of Time

The space for welcome is created through the combination of time needed to consolidate congregational commitment and the actual sharing of interest and concern for the sponsorship among specific persons in the church. As time passes, the sponsorship becomes more real for the congregation, and particularly the Resettlement Committee, as they slowly learn more about the family they are to welcome. Details such as their names and ages, where they are from and what is happening in their home country help the Resettlement Committee realize the

significance of their decision. The anticipation for the arrival of the family is a shared phenomenon among the congregation and becomes more tangible as the family's arrival nears.

Of the three congregations represented by my case studies, Peace Presbyterian had the most standard period of preparation time before the arrival of the Kukame family. They had adequate time to make their decision to sponsor and appropriate support from Refugee Services. The group that eventually became the Resettlement Committee even had time to meet Amana before making their decision to sponsor. Their waiting time was typical and they began preparing what they could for the Kukame family's arrival. The Resettlement Committee was enthusiastic but worried, with justification, concerning their ability to house the family, as there was little affordable housing in their area.

Faith UMC also experienced a fairly typical period of preparation for the Raselemane family. The distinguishing aspect of their decision-making process lay in the manner by which they initially came to sponsorship. It is not atypical for a congregation to specifically assist one of their congregants in resettling a family member who is a refugee. What is unusual is that Hanna approached the congregation *after* her family had already been accepted for resettlement through an agency other than CWS with Hanna as the assured sponsor. In order to facilitate the support of Faith UMC, the Raselemane case was transferred to CWS and then designated to UMCOR and Refugee Services. Hanna had not been a member of Faith UMC for very long. In some ways, the connection through Hanna assisted the Resettlement Committee to feel close to the project. The congregation prepared for the Raselemane family's arrival with great enthusiasm.

Hope UCC had difficulties with the resettlement of the Ndleda family from the start. Originally assured to sponsor a different family entirely, the congregation had preparations well underway for this first family when they received word that they would not be allowed to travel for an indefinite period due to health reasons. This was difficult in several respects. The congregation had already developed a certain bond for this original family. They had learned their names and more about the country from which they came. When word came that they might not be able to travel at all, a decision had to be made regarding how long they would be willing to wait. They waited for some time, but members of the Resettlement Committee were concerned about waning enthusiasm when the Ndleda family's case was presented. Refugee Services asked the congregation to take the case knowing they were ready, in a practical sense, and had previous experience with resettlement. Not wanting to lose the enthusiasm and interest already generated in the congregation, the Resettlement Committee deftly shifted to planning for the Ndleda family's arrival, a family they knew to be in great need. I believe they made the best decision in these circumstances as they understood that what they had to give, the welcome they had generated, was timely. They agreed to sponsor the Ndleda family with the best intentions possible.

The Home

Another specific way that congregations make a space for welcoming the families they have agreed to sponsor is to set up homes for them. Much of the preparation time before the arrival is spent collecting furniture and appliances, locating and renting an apartment or a house, and stocking the closets and cupboards with all the small items necessary for managing a household in the U.S. A great deal of effort is then needed to move the collected items into the new residence. Towels

and linen need to be folded, dishes and food placed into cupboards, furniture arranged and beds made. Congregations, quite literally, attempt to create homes for their sponsored families by filling and personalizing empty apartments and houses. While these homes will most likely continue to feel different and strange to newly-arriving refugees, not like home at all, they are significant in that they represent what it means to have a home in the U.S. It is a first step, a beginning towards feeling at home in their new surroundings.

Only for Faith UMC did this process of homemaking proceed smoothly. Through a member of the congregation, Lisa and the Housing Subcommittee located a number of apartments, in the same building, suitable to house a family of fourteen. This was considered a small miracle. All three of the interviewees describe this as an exciting and busy time. Lynn tells stories of the special care that went into this process, down to small details such as making sure each family member had toothbrushes and toothpaste. She spoke of the congregation being involved at all levels, even the children, who took up special collections for the Raselemane children. Joanne recounts how busy they were and how much effort it took to coordinate each aspect of such large-scale preparations. The congregation was successful and the family was able to sleep in their new beds on the first night of their arrival in Minnesota.

Without detracting from the tremendous efforts contributed by the members of Faith UMC, in some ways they were lucky in finding accommodation so quickly in the midst of the severe housing crisis affecting the entire Twin Cities metro area at the time. They utilized the resources at hand in their congregation well. That is not to say the Peace Presbyterian and Hope UCC did not do the same. Both congregations made housing the priority during the preparation period and after the arrival. As time

passed, frustration on the parts of both congregations grew until they were clearly desperate for any decent accommodation. Refugee Services joined in the efforts of both congregations, but to little avail.

Peace Presbyterian had the unfortunate circumstance of being located in an area where affordable housing simply was not available. While they were aware this was the case, they had harboured hopes of finding housing nearby. With the family staying, and eventually living, far from the church building, relationships among the family and congregation were not able to develop as they might have had they been nearer each other. The congregation worked exhaustively on remodelling and raising finances so that the Kukame family would have the chance to own a home, but the family were not ready at that time. In the case of Peace Presbyterian and the Kukames, the space for welcome was limited by physical geography that affected their relationships. While the congregation's commitment to assist the family never waned, the lack of face-to-face contact lead to a shift from building relationships to helping the family with their continued housing problems.

Hope UCC was located in an area where affordable housing was prevalent. Unfortunately, intense competition for such housing meant that there was none available when the Ndleda family arrived. The two men and the little girls were able to stay with a host family until the Resettlement Committee located accommodation. In many respects this is an ideal way to welcome refugees who are being resettled far from home as they are, literally, being welcomed into people's homes. By enlisting the assistance of a host family, Hope UCC furnished not only a physical space into which the family could enter, but they provided a means to understand that space through the care and attention of the host family. When considering the makeup of the family which consisted of two grown men and two little girls, it stands to reason

to expect that the men may not adapt to running a western household as quickly as women and might need extra help. The host family was able to provide intensive orientation and tutelage for the Ndleda family and served as an extension of the welcome Hope UCC offered the family.

The Airport Greeting

A third important component of welcome pertaining to refugee resettlement occurs at the airport where members of the congregation meet the family as they arrive at their destination. This moment is akin to welcoming another, or the stranger, into the prepared space of the home. The invitation has already been extended outward in the form of assuring a commitment of sponsorship. In the same way, the airport greeting realizes the first meeting between the congregation and the family. It is the moment of encounter wherein these particular individuals, who have each in their own way been anticipating the unknown, finally meet. In a very tangible way, the congregation members present will be opening their arms in greeting to welcome these exhausted, jet-lagged and thoroughly confused persons into their home.

The airport greeting can be an emotional time for both parties. The most obvious reason for this rests with the refugees. Taking into account the accumulated stress and trauma of their recent and past experiences of terror, being forced to leave home, possibly losing loved ones and the diminishing of hope that they will ever return home again, the persons who alight from the plane experience a whole new set of perceptions that elicit emotions ranging from further and exacerbated trauma to excitement and hope. Regardless of these extremes, the refugee family will be tired and jet-lagged after what is most likely several days of travel. Many persons feel ill from strange food on their journey or from the plane itself. For many African

refugees, the western airport is an unfamiliar or new experience. For Africans arriving in Minnesota, walking outside into the wintertime snow may be a new and overwhelming experience in itself. Resettlement Committee members are reminded that the refugee family will probably be too tired to remember names or faces and to keep their expectations low.

The experience can be emotionally overwhelming for sponsors as well. If the congregation is the sole sponsor of a refugee family, this can be the moment when the seriousness of their commitment to sponsor becomes a reality. Realizing that a group of persons is dependent upon you for some very basic aspects of survival can be daunting for even the most enthusiastic sponsor. Vanier addresses the need for awareness of the responsibility that accompanies welcome. "When we welcome people who are deeply wounded, we have to be fully aware of the seriousness of what we are doing. This welcome implies that we accept them as they are, imposing no ideal on them".[468] The first meeting between the family and Resettlement Committee can be intimidating or even frightening for congregation members who are unsure of how to act or communicate with these foreign people. These feelings are often coupled with those of excitement, curiosity and compassion.

When a congregation acts as a co-sponsor to a refugee family, this experience has a slightly different nuance. Rather than being confronted with a huge sense of responsibility, co-sponsors tend to experience more of a sense of awe or respect as the meeting is focused upon the reunification of family members. In these instances, fewer Resettlement Committee members are encouraged to be in attendance at the family's arrival to give them privacy. They are encouraged to come as helpers, picking up luggage and driving the refugee family to their destination.

[468] Vanier, *Community and Growth,* 280.

The Ndleda family was the only free case among the three refugee families. This meant that the only people meeting them at the airport were Hope UCC Resettlement Committee members and Refugee Services staff, their case worker and refugee ministry organizer. Hope UCC had the foresight and initiative to invite members of the local community who came from the same country in Africa to attend the family's arrival. These individuals were able to assist with translating and provided an aspect of familiarity to the arriving family. The other two families were reuniting with Amana and Hanna. Because they were both large families, many members of both Resettlement Committees were in attendance to assist with driving and getting the families settled.

Giving the Gift of Home

Once a stranger is welcomed into the home of the host, an exchange takes place. It is predicated on the unconditional giving of a gift from the host to the guest. The nature of this gift is determined by the guest herself. It cannot be predetermined by the host. When this gift is given, the guest, in turn, gives back to the host. This captures the reciprocal dynamic of hospitality whereby the giving of the host's gift is mirrored by a gift given by the guest. In turn, both the homes of the host and the guest are transformed.

At this point one might challenge the notion that refugee resettlement, as understood by CWS and outlined by the *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship*, is a form of hospitality at all. The *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* clearly sets out a series of tasks that are designed to assist refugees in their resettlement process. Many of these tasks take the form of *giving* various items to the refugee family, such as furniture, clothing or food. If the tasks themselves are understood as the gifts given by the host, then it

can be reasonably supposed that these gifts are predetermined and, thus, not hospitality.

I disagree with such an assessment. I would suggest that the tasks themselves do not necessarily constitute the gifts given by the congregation. Rather, the tasks create a structure or framework within which the actual needs of the guest can be communicated. The tasks outlined by the *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* are practical in that they are things every refugee needs or needs to do. The focus at this point is on the designation *refugee*. It is true that every refugee needs to sign up with social security, visit the doctor and find a place to live. These tasks are prescriptive. When considering sponsorship in terms of hospitality, the focus of concern shifts to the *person* who is the refugee, the person behind the designation. Just as Vanier stresses that he lives and works with persons with mental handicaps, it is critical to remember that refugees are persons who can be considered refugees. The act of hospitality is concerned with meeting the needs of the person. In the case of refugee resettlement, meeting the needs of the *refugee* becomes a vehicle for meeting the needs of the *person* who is a refugee.

I would suggest that this sheds light on why Pohl's emphasis on sharing meals as requisite to hospitality is slightly misplaced. Instead of supposing the shared meal to be the culmination of welcome, I suggest it should be considered as a vehicle by which hospitality can occur. Actions that can be considered as vehicles for hospitality are as potentially boundless as the imagination. Sharing meals, giving a person a place to sleep, carrying someone's groceries for them, visiting people in the hospital, are all examples of different ways one can go about offering hospitality to others. They are ways of reaching out to welcome others into our shared worlds of meaning. That is not to say that each act of inviting a person to share a meal will result in the

mutual exchange of gifts and transformation of our homes, but each act has the potential to do just that.

In this way the tasks outlined in the *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* can act as tools or vehicles for the exchange of gifts between hosts and guests. Simply put, these tasks provide the time and space necessary for relationships to develop. This is essential to hospitality as a person's particular needs can only be communicated via the medium of relationships. Whether the need be as simple as needing a safe place to lay one's head, or more complex, as needing help with a deep-seated fear associated with not being able to work in one's trained profession, listening to and discerning what is of concern to another requires time and space to unfold.

The *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* equips the Resettlement Committee with an array of different tasks by which the congregation can participate in welcoming persons who are refugees. These tasks both fulfil basic needs and serve to provide the time and space necessary to discern personal needs. At the same time, the variety of tasks presented allows congregants to choose their manner of participation in the sponsorship. They may choose tasks that accentuate their particular gifts or talents, or they can decide to try something new or different as a way to grow and explore their capacities. Some people may wish to play more of a supportive role, while others desire personal interaction with the refugee family. Because sponsorship is a collaborative effort on the part of the entire congregation, its members work together to form their welcome. While some individuals will form closer relationships with the family members, those relationships are made possible by the cooperative work of many.

Giving Time and Space

Pohl spends a section of *Making Room*'s final chapter considering, specifically, how the act of welcome is communicated from one person to another.[469] In doing so she reflects upon her own experiences and those of her research subjects. In response to this consideration, Pohl quotes one of her primary sources, Edith Schaffer, one of the founders of the L'Abri Fellowship: "The most precious thing a human being has to give is time".[470]

At the heart of refugee sponsorship is the gift of time. For example, Resettlement Committee members spend a great deal of time on a single task such as transportation. Consider how much time it takes to drive someone to a minimum of three doctor's visits. Add in how long it takes to fill out forms and wait for the appointment to be over and multiply that by fourteen, as in the case of the Raselemane family. That example does not exhaust the time given to the task of transportation. Consider how much time it takes to teach another person how to drive, or how much tutoring it takes to help someone pass a drivers test when English is not their first language. Bill taught the father of the Ndleda family to drive and accompanied him to take his drivers test seven times before he passed. When public transportation is an option, it still takes some time to teach family members how to take the bus and how much to pay the bus driver, how to know when to get off, how to transfer. It is also important to consider how much time it takes to find volunteers who are available to drive or assist the family and coordinate their schedules with the family's appointments and needs.

At first glance, transportation could appear to be a simple matter. In truth it is time-consuming and potentially exhausting for Resettlement Committee members if

[469] See particularly the section of Chapter Nine titled, "Communicating Welcome," in Pohl, 177-182.
[470] Edith Schaeffer, *L'Abri* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1969, 1992), 28, quoted in Pohl, 178.

the family they are sponsoring is large or does not have access to public transportation. In the case of Faith UMC, the Resettlement Committee eventually solicited the donation of a van, which soon became two vans, to help solve what was beginning to become a wearisome task of transporting fourteen people to appointments, jobs, schools, church and shopping. Hope UCC also received a donation of an automobile for use by the Ndleda men, but that soon evolved into another set of complex problems of DWIs, suspended licenses, accidents and fears associated particularly with the two girls riding with an intoxicated father. In the case of Peace Presbyterian, the long-distance to travel in order to visit with the family shaped the nature of their sponsorship experience.

While transportation can be time-consuming for members of the Resettlement Committee and congregation, it is also one of the best ways to build relationships with refugee family members. Multiple car rides and long wait at social security offices or doctor's offices afford a great deal of time for people to get to know each other. The most intensive period for transportation needs typically occurs just after the family's arrival. This coincides with, again typically, the point in time when the family members' English skills are most basic. It is not unusual then for people who have volunteered to drive family members to appointments to end up serving as ad hoc translators or helpers in assisting family members understand the nature of a particular appointment. Transportation volunteers can potentially become very close to the refugee family. These volunteers are typically not members of the Resettlement Committee but have been recruited by the transportation subcommittee, providing an excellent example of how the Resettlement Committee can help the wider congregation become more deeply involved in the sponsorship.

Bill from Hope UCC recounted how it was concern for the amount of time his daughter was spending on the sponsorship that helped him become involved with the Ndleda family. He spoke of the number of medical and employment appointments to which he accompanied the men. He described how, with time, he had memorized their stories and social security numbers and could practically fill out their various forms himself. It was through these tasks that Bill's involvement in the sponsorship shifted from wanting, primarily, to help his daughter to caring about the Ndleda family and particularly the two girls. Significantly, it was also through the relationship facilitated by these tasks that Bill was the first to discern the true nature of the men's problem with alcohol addiction. As both a physician and someone who shared in that particular struggle, Bill was uniquely capable of understanding and offering help to these two men. He was also aware of how their addiction could affect the two little girls.

I would suggest that the wealth of experience Bill and others in the congregation had concerning addiction was one of Hope UCC's greatest gifts to the Ndleda family. The men of the Ndleda family obviously had many serious issues that required professional attention. At one point the members of the congregation brought the father to the Center for Victims of Torture for assistance. The Center for Victims of Torture is one of a handful of non-profit agencies in the U.S. professionally equipped to assist, physically and mentally, violent conflict and torture survivors. While the father would have benefited from the services provided there, he could not enter the program without first seeking help for his addiction. Instead, the men continued drinking, were arrested, were fired from jobs, stole money from Bill and lost the apartment the church had found for them. While the congregation eventually ceased to assist the two men, without the astute understanding of the

mechanisms of addiction on the part of some of their members, the congregation may have given up hope for the two girls also. Instead the care and affection for the two girls grew and has turned into what is possibly a lifelong commitment.

Listening to Stories

Another important way of giving, related to the gift of time, is through listening. Refugees often have stories to tell about the lives they left as they left their homes, stories about the journey of leaving, and stories of the hopes they hold for their futures. Giving time to listen to another person is a way of taking part and sharing in her world as well as giving and sharing a part of one's own. The gift of listening is a way of extending a sense of belonging through the willingness to share in another person's experience. By sharing in another's world, she becomes situated in our own. Through listening, we welcome other persons into our homes.

When speculating on the importance of listening, it is clear how the tasks of sponsorship help facilitate situations and scenarios where listening becomes possible. For example, consider the simple question of how one gains access to the stories of strangers. If I were to encounter a woman I did not know well, it would be awkward for me to approach her and ask or demand to hear stories about her life. In fact, that action or gesture would most likely be considered rude and inconsiderate. When I am aware that the woman in question has recently undergone a severe trauma, the intrusive manner of such probing becomes offensive.

Sponsors are correct to assume that the persons they have welcomed into their homes have experienced considerable trauma. They are most likely vulnerable and fragile to some certain extent. At the same time, many refugees have shown great strength and courage handling the challenging circumstances they continue to face.

The gift of listening can assist in the healing process for such persons. Listening is a way to accompany refugees as they tell stories of their trials and travails. Listeners can also acknowledge the courage and wherewithal refugees have shown in the gravest of situations. The act of listening can also help to strengthen emerging relationships between sponsors and family members. Listening requires time in the form of patience, waiting for refugees to feel comfortable enough to let their stories emerge. Listening also involves space, or proximity between the sponsor and refugee as this waiting happens.

Julie from Peace Presbyterian took great joy listening to the stories of the Kukame patriarch and his daughter Amana who, co-sponsored the family. The sponsorship of the Kukame family was unusual, or special, in several respects. First was the size of the family; eleven is a large number for any sponsorship. The second, and more unusual, was the family's religious affiliation. The family were strict, observant Muslims from a particular part of Africa whose people, as refuges resettling in the U.S., were generally disinclined to associate with Christian churches. As generalizations can occasionally be accurate, the congregation was told to have low expectations regarding the family's willingness to associate with the worship side of the congregation's life or even to be comfortable in the church building. It was to Julie's delight, and that of the rest of the congregation, that the family was not only willing to be physically present at the church but were open to participating in some of the congregation's educational opportunities.

For Julie, getting to know the Kukame family was a wonderful experience. She recalled, with particular affection, the father of the family, who spoke a little English. Julie was pleased that he and Amana came to the church and spoke with the congregation in the context of an adult education forum. She was fascinated by his

understanding of religion and the differences between their two different traditions. With the help of Amana as a translator, Julie felt that as she went about helping the family become accustomed to life in Minnesota, she learned a great deal about a culture different from her own. With time, the Kukame children's English improved and she was able to hear, firsthand, their stories about how well they were doing with work and school. Julie spent a great deal of time with the family, both as Coordinator of the Resettlement Committee and as a tutor to the children. She gave them time and her physical presence, both of which allowed her to listen.

Some stories are more difficult to hear. Both Lynn and Janet were party to stories told by two of the youngest children their churches sponsored. They are related here, respectively:

> I just think of the trauma that they saw. We were in confirmation class one day and our youth director was asking a question, "Have you ever been hungry?" to the kids. And [the youngest boy] raised his hand and he said, "Yes, when we were walking in the bush in [my country], we were hungry." And I knew what he meant. They were on the run for a long time. They walked from one end of [the country] to the other, carrying an old man and running away from the guerrillas. The kids probably had some vague idea that, "Oh yeah, you are hungry in Africa." That's not really what he was talking about. He was talking about being a victim of war.[471]

> Mostly [they tell] good stories about uncles and aunts that took care of them. [The younger girl] will talk about what she used to play with, and how she would try and rescue ants, and very cute little stories about what they used to do. They don't really tell sad stories. Once we were walking across a baseball field, this is a sad story, and there was an icky smell because of the way the ground was rotting. And she said it reminded her of somewhere she had been walking and there were a lot of dead people around. So every now and then something will come out that says how much they've been through, but mostly they have good stories.[472]

Both Lynn and Janet had already heard the more general stories concerning each family's escape from their home countries. They were able to put these children's stories into a broader context and therefore were able to have insight, however slight, into interpreting the significance of their words. As women who have grown to care deeply for these two children, both found stories such as these difficult to bear.

[471] Interview, Lynn.

Listening to the stories of refugees is not always easy. Attempting to assimilate accounts of another person's radically different experiences into one's own understanding of the world takes a great deal of effort. As Lynn pointed out, the other children in the class could not bridge the gap between their own experience of hunger and the Raselemane boy's. This was partly due to the fact that they were children, but also the gap was simply too wide. Lynn could not bridge that gap either, but through knowing the family's stories she was able to have somewhat of an understanding. By listening to each other our worlds can begin to intermingle. The tasks of sponsorship provide the time and space for this to happen.

Gifts that Meet Another's Needs

In hospitality, gifts provided by hosts are given to meet the specific needs of their guests. These gifts can include things such as time, space to feel comfortable, a meal, a bed to sleep in or a ride to a job interview. At the same time, a significant aspect of hospitality is understanding that the needs of the guest are determined by the person who is the guest. In other words, whatever meets that person's specific need is the gift. Considering both of these concepts together can be potentially confusing and could lead one through the manner of tangled questioning that beleaguers Pohl in her understanding of the stranger. Before heading down that path, I recommend a return to Vanier's conception of the Gospel's paradoxical character as providing a framework for understanding the nature of the gift.

Simply stated, the gift is both things at once. It is everything the host gives to the guest: a meal, time, a place to sleep, a listening ear, a gentle touch, space to be alone, a new suit, the things he hopes will fulfil his guests needs. Likewise, the gift is

[472] Interview, Janet.

whatever meets the guest's needs: the familiarity of a gesture, a place to sleep, having someone to talk to, a cup of coffee, feeling like someone cares about her circumstances, a hand to hold. The gift is paradoxical in nature, often self-contradictory and refusing to be pinned down or predetermined. It is often surprising and unexpected to both the host and the guest. It can also be predictable and familiar. In the same way that Palmer suggests that we know hospitality by our experience of it, we know the gift once it has been received.[473]

In a very real way, persons who are refugees need many of the things provided by the tasks associated with sponsorship. They need a place to live; they need help setting up a home and getting oriented to it; they need furniture; they need help understanding how to handle money in the U.S. and how the health care system works. Refugees need personal and direct assistance with their transition into life in a new country and a new culture. These examples are each indeed gifts, but they cannot be isolated from the welcome through which they are given. In this way, one could ask, what is the greater gift? The cooker that is donated by a congregation member, or the time a person takes teaching the mother of a family of eleven how to use it. I would suggest that both are important and cannot be separated from each other. The gift is not one or the other but both together. Therefore questions regarding the relative importance of particular gifts do not serve a useful purpose.

Lynn provides a powerful example of the surprising nature of giving. She tells the story of how the confirmation class at Faith UMC had decided to draw names and give each of the twelve Raselemane children a personal gift. The children in the confirmation class would have been in their junior high or high school years.[474] One of the Raselemane boys was given a watch. Lynn describes the experience, "It was as

[473] Palmer, 68.

if all time stopped when he opened up this watch and he said, 'I was so worried about how I was going to catch the bus for school on time. And now I have my very own watch.' He was so moved that he had a watch. And for the kids who gave him the watch, wow. It was so powerful".[475] What is significant about this particular experience is not so much that all teenage refugee children need watches, rather, that this particular fourteen-year-old boy needed a watch. Lynn explains that as she got to know him better she found him to be a studious and serious boy and only then realized what a significant gift a watch had been for him. That child receiving a watch is a striking example of hospitality, one that cannot be separated from the larger actions of the church working together to welcome the entire Raselemane family.

Lisa, also from Faith UMC, describes the unexpected nature of the gifts she only later realized the family needed. "And they did need our help, but I don't think they needed the kind of help that we originally thought we'd give. They needed lots of information on how to live in this country, and what things were, and how to do things". [476] She talks about how surprised the congregation was by the Raselemane family. She said their expectations included a more stereotypical image of an African refugee, poor and tattered. The Raselemane family turned out to be fairly well educated and immediately showed signs of wanting to pursue work and continue with schooling. Lisa's expectations were not unrealistic, particularly since she had experience treating many Africa refugees in the clinic in which she worked. Her surprise was not that the Raselemane had needs, but what kind of needs they actually were.

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[474] Junior high and high school are equivalent to the last half of primary school and secondary school in the U.K., respectively.
[475] Interview, Lynn.
[476] Interview, Lisa.

Expectations and Unconditional Gifts

Implicit to welcoming others is that gifts given are offered unconditionally. With refugee sponsorship it is often difficult to separate what congregation members expect to give to refugees from what is actually needed. As Lisa mentioned, many of the Raselemane family's needs were different from what the people of Faith UMC were expecting. Compounding this tendency is a difficulty in grasping the notion that gifts from the congregation to the refugee family are expected to be unconditional. Again, this statement contains elements of paradox in that there is an expectation for the congregation not to have expectations, to give freely without expectation of return.

As pastor of Faith UMC, Lynn held the specific position of supporting the congregation as they went about the tasks of sponsorship. This gave her a unique perspective of the overall activities of the congregation and insight into differing perceptions of its members. While the Resettlement Committee of Faith UMC was preparing for sponsorship, the topic of expectations was raised specifically in terms of the family's potential participation in the life of the church. The Resettlement Committee understood that the congregation should have little-to-no expectations that the family would participate in the worshipping life of the church. Even so, this understanding did not reach all of the congregation members, some of whom did expect the family to attend church and to express their thanks. Harbouring these kinds of expectations is a difficulty common to many congregations and one that is most effectively addressed directly.

Another example of a gift tied to expectation occurred with the members of Peace Presbyterian and the Kukame family. While the congregation and, significantly, the director of Refugee Services considered remodelling the house offered to the family for purchase to be their best option at the time, the family disagreed. The gift offered on the part of the congregation was extremely generous. They worked hard to restore the home and raised enough money for a down payment. In many ways it was a wonderful opportunity and would most likely have been a wise long-term investment. As remarkable and generous as this gift was, the family themselves did not feel they were in a place where they could accept it. Whether this decision was in the family's best interest is not at issue here. What is noteworthy is that a gift offered graciously and with the best intentions did not meet the needs of the persons involved at the time. Issues over the house resolved relatively smoothly. Peace Presbyterian's pastor, Paul, was proud of the congregation's efforts to help the family and Julie expressed that with time she affirmed the decision the family made for themselves.

For Hope UCC, their sponsorship of the Ndleda family challenged even the most basic expectations they held regarding sponsorship. The gifts they earnestly offered to the family were mistreated, rejected and exploited. With any sponsorship, there is a reasonable level of expectation that is appropriate and of benefit to both the congregation and the sponsored family. In this case the men of the family abused the welcome and hospitality offered by Hope UCC. They repeatedly lied to members of the congregation, stole money from Bill, were violent and verbally abusive and endangered the lives of the two girls. Members of the Resettlement Committee were hurt and angry to have had their simple and sincere generosity rejected in the manner that it was. These feelings are reasonable and justified in many respects. What is

striking in this account is that even though the sponsorship did not proceed in the manner any member of the Resettlement Committee had hoped, in their interviews, Sue, Janet and Bill each expressed their affection and care for the two young girls. Through their experience they had grown attached and committed to the well-being of the girls, Ndleda this commitment extended to include a willingness to take fiscal and legal responsibility for their welfare. The gift they ended up giving to the two girls was not what they had originally expected.

Risks of Hospitality

The last chapter of *Making Room* attends to some of the more difficult aspects of hospitality and offers suggestions for handling those situations.[477] Vanier and others have referred to these challenges in terms of risks associated with reaching out and welcoming others into one's home.[478] This section will briefly reflect on the topic of risk as it pertains to the three case studies with particular consideration given to several of Pohl's examples and suggestions.

Pohl acknowledges that reaching out to strangers is not always easy. Hospitality takes time and energy, often both physical and emotional. As part of her research she conducts interviews with people she considers to be *practitioners* of hospitality. These are people for whom hospitality plays a central and vital role in the context of living as a part of intentional communities committed to helping others. For many of these individuals, hospitality is not only an important aspect of their vocational lives, but as that vocation is lived out in their physical homes, it becomes a constant in practically all aspects of their lives.

[477] See Pohl, Chapter Nine, "The Spiritual Rhythms of Hospitality," 170-187.
[478] Pohl, 14, 93-8; Derrida, *Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility*, 71; Ogletree, 4, 6-7; Palmer 68-70; Vanier, *Community and Growth,* 266; Ogden, 86; Haughton, 208.

Experiences of hospitality as accounted for by Pohl's chosen research subjects will differ from the hospitality as described by congregational sponsors in several significant respects. The individuals and organizations Pohl has chosen to study have, in most cases, made long-term or even lifelong commitments to living out their chosen Christian vocations in definitive manners. Many of the individuals Pohl interviews or references have already spent a lifetime engaging with hospitality both in terms of theological understanding and as a critical component of their everyday lives. These are persons who, in a sense, specialize in hospitality, each in their particular way and specific domain.

By way of contrast, congregational sponsorship involves a commitment that has a specific time limit. Sponsorship is designed to assist refugees in becoming self-sufficient as quickly as possible. Therefore it is understood to be short-term endeavour, even if the relationships that develop from it become permanent. Sponsorship is also undertaken by congregations, most of whom have little to no experience with refugee resettlement or even with refugees themselves. If they have previous experience it was typically years ago, even decades in the past. Additionally, many congregants have had little-to-no experience with hospitality as either a specific theological tenet or in terms of a definitive vocational commitment. For most congregants, Christian hospitality is simply not *recognized* as an explicit part of their daily lives.[479]

While these differences are worth noting and contribute to shaping our respective research, the essential subject matter remains the same. Therefore it is a useful enterprise to observe when those experiences are in accord with one another. Pohl's sources attest to the difficulties associated with hospitality. People with a great

deal of experience regarding hospitality provide useful insights that can form a basis from which to compare and contrast others' experiences of welcome. Pohl herself contributes to these insights with stories of her own experiences.

One of the most common dangers associated with hospitality is the phenomenon of burnout, or simply wearing down from a particular commitment to welcome. This phenomenon is applicable to both long-term and shorter commitments of hospitality. Pohl relates the story of her own church's experience of burning out. At one point, her congregation had made a concerted commitment to prioritize hospitality in the life of their church, after which they proceeded to extend welcome to hundreds of refugees, poor people and homeless persons as part of their regular activities.[480] She explains that after a few years the church had "collapsed under the weight of the ministry, the leaders worn out from the unrelenting numbers of needy strangers, the parishioners wary of any further commitments".[481] As a result, Pohl affirms the voices of others as they address the necessity of basic boundaries, even when the notion of boundaries appears to clash with the basic tenets of hospitality.

One of the basic purposes behind the *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* is to help congregations avoid burnout. The responsibilities of sponsorship are spread out over the varied tasks and shared across the Resettlement Committee and congregation. As Refugee Ministry Organizer, I was constantly confronted by this issue. Even when the topic had been thoroughly discussed with the Resettlement Committee and appropriate warnings given, oftentimes members would not even realize they were burned out until after it had already happened. There is always a danger that one person ends up carrying more than their share of the committee's responsibilities.

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[479] I believe the key word in this sentence is recognized. Every person, to some degree, engages in offering hospitality to others in a myriad of ways. Whether these actions are recognized as hospitality or not, does not make them any less acts of hospitality.
[480] Pohl, 128.

That person typically ends up being the Resettlement Committee's Coordinator thus the reasoning behind Refugee Services' recommendation that the committee appoint two to work in tandem.[482] That said, burnout can occur in any aspect of sponsorship.

Of nine people interviewed for the three congregational case studies, I would suggest that five suffered from burnout. This is by no means a criticism of these individuals or the suggestion of some sort of failure on their part. Rather, it is often those who care most strongly about the family and the sponsorship that work hard enough to get burned out. In the case of Hope UCC I would suggest that all three persons I interviewed suffered from burnout. The resettlement of the Ndleda family was exhausting for everyone involved, including Refugee Services staff. To suggest that Sue, Janet and Bill were wearied by the experience is entirely warranted and to be expected considering the circumstances. There was no way that they could have anticipated just how disturbed and destructive the two men would be. An added drain on the three was that for a great deal of time they kept the men's problems hidden from rest of the congregation out of respect for the men's privacy. With time they realized the enormity of the problems the men presented and needed the support of other congregation members.

Joann, the Resettlement Committee Coordinator at Faith UMC, also experienced burnout from the sponsorship of the Raselemane family. The resettlement of the Raselemane family occurred amazingly smoothly, particularly for such an enormous family. A large part of the credit for this can be attributed to the tremendous amount of energy and organizational work volunteered by Joann. While housing could have proved an equally wearing task, it proved not to be as overwhelming as everyone expected. Joann, though, remained cheerful and energetic

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[481] Ibid.

throughout the sponsorship, making it difficult to notice just when she had crossed the line of exhaustion. Lynn had been particularly vigilant in watching for signs of exhaustion within the committee but was not able to catch Joann in time. Joann excelled at organizing the Resettlement Committee. It was the first time she attempted such an endeavour. She did it well, but her success came at a personal cost.

The last person who I would suggest was burned out by the experience of sponsorship was Julie, but not in as obvious a way as the previous examples. I believe Julie suffered from an emotional weariness that was compounded by the efforts of resettling such a large family. From the beginning of the sponsorship Julie was energetic, organized and extremely hopeful that this experience would prove beneficial to both the Kukame family and the people of Peace Presbyterian Church. What proved to be so difficult in this resettlement was the issue of housing. First, the fact that the family was unable to stay in the temporary housing promised by Refugee Services creating an immediate and real crisis. Then when the congregation and Refugee Services came up with a solution to this problem, namely finding a house, fixing it up and raising money for its purchase, the family could not commit to buying it at the time. The house was also located over an hour's drive from the church building. All of these things combined to create a real sense of frustration for Julie and the congregation. Julie bore more than her share of responsibility regarding this sponsorship and took on a great deal of emotional weight as well. After the family became established, she was exhausted but still able to remain positive.

Pohl points out that hospitality can be difficult because in many ways there is no means to measure or quantify success.[483] This is not quite the case with refugee sponsorship. In many ways, successes are tangible as families become self-sufficient.

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[482] This is stressed in Refugee Services' *Guide to Refugee Sponsorship*, 7, but not in CWS's *Manual for Refugee Sponsorship*.

One can witness, first-hand, what is typically an enormous transition. Consider the person who exits a plane, speaking little English, with hardly any possessions and knowing few or no people in his or her new context. Within six or eight months it is quite likely that person will have a job, a fully-stocked apartment, a bank account and a community of people who care about her. Hospitality with refugees can be particularly rewarding in that way.

Pohl also addresses the topic of having expectations which, if left unfulfilled, can lead to disappointment.[484] We have already discussed expectations at some length as part of the previous section. What I would like to underscore is that expectations are a basic part of everyday life, just as is the human tendency to categorize. Expectations are natural and, in many ways, necessary to make sense of life. Expectation is also associated with an understanding of hope. While expectations can indeed be false or misleading, they can also assist in helping to set boundaries that preserve and protect us from harm.

In this spirit, Pohl advocates the setting of boundaries and limits not only to help sustain continued efforts of welcome but also for the protection of hosts and guests.[485] Many times impulses associated with hospitality include giving as much as possible, as often as possible or in as many ways as possible. While these sentiments often accompany the best of intentions, they can eventually do harm to both hosts and guests. Pohl quotes Edith Schaffer from the L'Abri Fellowship, "Because there are more people than we have time or strength to see personally and care for, it is

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[483] Pohl, 170.
[484] Ibid., 171.
[485] Ibid., 132, 134.

imperative to remember that it is not sinful to be finite and limited".[486] Acknowledging and affirming limits helps to sustain the efforts of everyone involved.

The *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* is designed to protect both congregational hosts and refugee guests. It is critical to remember that the ultimate priority of CWS, Refugee Services and any congregation committing to sponsorship is assuring the wellbeing of the refugee himself. Therefore, the *Guide for Refugee Sponsorship* is directed primarily toward that purpose. While this is the ultimate goal, it was also written specifically for churches. One of its primary functions is to assist the Resettlement Committee in developing limits and boundaries though the ordering of well-defined tasks. This, in part, helps to establish that no one person takes on too much responsibility and the sponsorship is shared across the congregation. It also assists congregations in their giving, assuring that congregations do not give too much or inappropriately.

Pohl suggests that boundaries and limits are also useful in protecting hosts from guests who can potentially take advantage of or harm those who offer welcome.[487] While the notion of guests exploiting or misusing hosts is a troubling aspect of hospitality to consider, it is always an unfortunate possibility. Members of Hope UCC, and particularly Bill, are examples of hosts who were taken advantage of by their guests. With time Bill, Sue and Janet were forced to come to terms with the painful reality that the Ndleda men would only continue to abuse their welcome if it were offered. Working together, they were able to establish strict boundaries between themselves and the two men, effectively cutting off their relationship. What is almost miraculous in this situation is that the congregation's relationship with the two little

[486] Edith Schaeffer, *What is a Family?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975, 1994), 201, quoted in Pohl, 132.
[487] Pohl, 145.

girls thrived and continued to flourish. Even the men who had abused the church's hospitality could recognize its benefits for the two girls and allowed it to continue.

Pohl stresses the need for communities engaged in hospitality to nurture and support each other during the process.

> Christian communities – whether churches, intentional communities or a small group of families – can reduce the demands, share the burdens, and increase the joys of hospitality. It is important, a long time worker from L'Arche explained, to make sure that no one feels overwhelmed, that people can pace themselves and divide up the work, and can turn to others when they need rest and respite.[488]

While hospitality, and particularly refugee resettlement, can be difficult and exhausting work, with support and encouragement even the most arduous efforts can be sustained. Pastors and ministers are particularly important in this respect. Not only are they skilled at recognizing symptoms of such things as burnout or a lack of necessary boundaries, they are often trained in handling them. I would suggest the best support comes through a combination of pastoral maintenance, sharing tasks and responsibilities and through the nurturing of fellow congregation members.

Reciprocal Giving and Transformation

In the previous sections we have discussed the first half of the fourfold movement of hospitality as it pertains to the experience of refugee resettlement. This next section will examine the second half of that fourfold movement. This second half of hospitality is located in the giving of a gift by the host and the reciprocal gift from the guest. The reciprocated gift requires the host to re-open his or her home. Re-opening the home can be best understood in terms of re-orientation. The host's home is opened up to the new, the different or the surprise through the guest's gift. It is opened up to the world in a new way. Thus the home can be said to be re-oriented in the world.

In this section I will look at each church's experiences of sponsorship one by one. In doing so, I will specifically consider the gifts they have recognized themselves as receiving, along with several I suggest myself. By placing these gifts in light of the dynamics of hospitality, I will reflect on their significance for the individuals involved as well as for the congregations as a whole. In this manner I will attempt to account for the re-orientation of the home as it pertains to the shared lives of these particular congregations.

There is no way to anticipate or predict what the outcome of any particular sponsorship will look like. One guarantee is that those who offer welcome to refugees will encounter the unexpected, and their experiences will be filled with surprises. As a particular expression of hospitality, it is also widely accepted that as hosts "you will receive more than you give".[489] In keeping with this spirit, it is often unclear what the gifts given and received actually are. As Pohl befittingly quotes from Henri Nouwen, "we will never believe that we have anything to give unless there is someone who is able to receive. Indeed, we discover our gifts in the eyes of the receiver".[490]

Faith UMC

Lynn had just started her job at Faith UMC as Associate Pastor when she was approached by Hanna for assistance with her family's resettlement. Lynn had not anticipated getting involved in a project of this magnitude at that point and was equally surprised by the congregation's willingness to act on Hanna's request and become co-sponsors. The congregation continued to surprise Lynn with their

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[488] Pohl, 183.
[489] Ibid., 186.
[490] Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Image Books), 87, quoted in Pohl, 180.

tremendous energy and the scope of effort they put into preparing for the arrival of the Raselemane family. She was impressed with how personal the congregation's giving was, even down to the dentist who provided the family with check-ups and free dental care.

For Lynn, what was surprising and unexpected regarding the sponsorship did not spring directly from the Raselemane family themselves, but what they elicited from the congregation. It is understandable that as a pastor Lynn's interview focused on her observations of the congregation. Her experiences reflect her particular role in the sponsorship, that of tending to and supporting the members of the church. What is significant about Lynn's interview is the sense of pride and amazement she felt with the congregation's efforts. Lynn recognized that this was a gift from the Raselemane family, the opportunity for the congregation to help them.

Joann was also proud of the church's efforts. She was largely responsible for keeping the sponsorship organized, the church informed and the congregation enthused about helping the family. In many ways, the relative ease of the Raselemane family's resettlement could be credited to Joann's strident efforts. In no way am I implying that Joann took excess pride in her work, but the opportunity to be a leader in such a large project helped her to realize some of her own gifts. She has excellent leadership abilities. She is a good organizer and is able to motivate others. Her experience accurately reflects Nouwen's words, "…we discover our gifts in the eyes of the receiver".[491]

Joann also developed a close relationship with the family. She was touched and surprised by the depth and sincerity of the family's continued forms of thanks. She was especially touched when the Raselemane children gave her a Mother's Day

[491] Ibid.

card. Joann threw herself into this experience. She went from knowing very little about the Raselemane's country of origin to teaching others about what was happening there. She spent time with the family, listening to their stories, sharing their food. She worked with them particularly as they managed their health in the complicated medical system of the U.S. She learned a great deal from the family and for that she was very grateful.

Joann also felt that one of the benefits of the sponsorship was how it allowed people in the church to get to know each other better. She observed this not only of herself but of others as well:

> A lot of people got to know one another who didn't know each other before. And it wasn't just me getting to know people, they worked together on things and got to know each other. So I think it broke down a lot of barriers. Gave an opportunity for people to become acquainted with each other, more than just saying "Hi" at church. You know when people are sitting down together at a potluck, it really gave them something to talk about, to share.[492]

She was grateful for the opportunity to work together with others in such a direct and meaningful way. The sponsorship allowed for the building and strengthening of relationships, not only with the family but within the congregation.

Lisa went about her participation in the resettlement by working more in the background of the Resettlement Committee's efforts. It was due in great part to Lisa that the congregation became involved with the family in the first place. As head of the Missions Committee, she had been looking for a hands-on project for the congregation. When the possibility of working with the Raselemane family presented itself, she saw it as a great opportunity for the congregation. She took on what was expected to be one of the most difficult tasks of the sponsorship and volunteered to lead the housing subcommittee. By working more in the background, Lisa was not

[492] Interview, Joann.

afforded many chances to get to know the family. She did so by working with Joann on the family's health care situation.

Lisa was also surprised by the sponsorship, but in a different manner from Lynn or Joann. She was impressed not so much by what the congregation accomplished, but was struck by the relative ease with which the sponsorship unfolded. It was still an intense process, but Lisa had been assuming it would be more difficult than it was. Even finding housing was not as problematic as everyone assumed it would be. She was also surprised with the family themselves. She had expected that they would be needier in many ways than they were. She was impressed with how well they adapted to life in the U.S. and how quickly they became self-sufficient.

Lisa saw the entire sponsorship as a gift to the church. It was quite literally what she had been praying for in terms of congregational ministry. Working with the Raselemane family gave the church a way to reach out into the world and connect with people.

> I saw new energy, I think, a lot more openness to world situations that maybe people would not have addressed otherwise. A little more welcoming attitude to people of other cultures. Like I said we are a rather white, suburban church so this is different for our church. And now it doesn't look quite so strange as it did to see different backgrounds appear in our congregation. I think it energized people. I think it gave them a focus, something to really work on together. So that's the kind of changes I see, as something that was a real outgoing type thing, not just in our own church. We were able to reach out to people.[493]

Hope UCC

As previously depicted, to say that the sponsorship of the Ndleda family was difficult for Hope UCC would be an understatement. Through a series of events whereby the two adult men of the family abused and took advantage of the welcome extended by the congregation, it is reasonable to question whether the family had

[493] Interview, Lisa.

given anything at all to the people of Hope UCC besides grief. Paradoxically, out of the three congregational case studies conducted, the most easily recognized gift received by any congregation is the one received by Hope UCC. Their gift from the Ndleda family incontestably exists in the relationship the congregation has formed with the family's two little girls.

It is of some concern that the damaging actions of the two men and the resulting abuse suffered by Hope UCC could warrant removing this sponsorship out of the realm of considering it hospitality altogether. If the family consisted of the two men alone, I would be inclined to consider this as an option. Nevertheless, the sponsored family consists of four persons, two of whom have brought only joy to the members of the church. While it was clear at the time of the interviews that the pain experienced by Janet, Bill and Sue was still fresh, all three clearly articulated how important the girls had become, not only to them but to the whole congregation.

When considering the gifts the girls have brought Hope UCC, one only has to listen to the stories of those interviewed. Janet talks of the relationship that has developed between her own children and the two girls. She tells of how significant that relationship is, not only to her children but for herself as a mother. She has grown to love the Ndleda girls and is highly committed to their present and future welfare.

At the beginning of the sponsorship, Janet was impressed by the little girls, by their energy, their charm and how quickly they adapted and learned English. She also expressed feeling great compassion for the two men, particularly the father, who had sustained serious injuries through his experiences as a refugee. As her affection for the girls grew, so did her antipathy toward the men. Janet explains that, with time, she came to the realization that her feelings toward the girls did not arise out of the fact that they were refugees. She realized that she, and the rest of the congregation,

continued to care for and take care of the girls because they loved them. Her experiences with the Ndleda girls were so meaningful and significant for Janet that she claims they helped prompt a career change, from being an engineer to being a teacher.

Sue also speaks of the joys the family brought the congregation. At the beginning, the congregation was enthused and warmly embraced the whole family. Without any pressure applied on the part of the congregation, the men as well as the girls joined and attended the church, sang in the choir and became active members in the congregation's activities. Sue attests that at the start the entire family's presence was a gift to the worshiping life of the church and they specifically incorporated elements of worship life from the Ndleda's country of origin into their liturgy.

With time, the actions of the men proved unacceptable and intolerable to members of the congregation. Meanwhile, the commitment to the girls only grew. Sue tells of the congregation members who assured that the girls made it to church every Sunday. She describes different members of Hope UCC and their particular relationships with the girls. While clearly exhausted and somewhat disillusioned from the experience of sponsoring, Sue can only describe in positive terms what the girls have brought to the congregation. She describes it as joy.

Bill was arguably the most directly ill-treated by the two men, perhaps because he is also the person who was probably the most patient and forgiving with them. Being familiar with the particular challenges and struggles that accompany addiction, he was most likely more understanding toward the two men than most would have been. While he admits that he wished he would have cut off relations with the two men sooner, I speculate that the time and energy Bill continued to give to the two men may have provided the congregation with the time and space to truly

become attached to the two girls. In his interview Bill says that only by realizing the men were capable of handling themselves was he able to step away.

All three persons interviewed maintain that there were positive aspects of the sponsorship as a whole. Janet claims, "The experience with this family was probably more rewarding to this church, and to myself, and to a lot of people individually because of the difficulties that we had. A lot of really, really good long-term things are going to come out of it".[494] Sue also admits that with the particular talents, gifts and experiences of the congregation, they were most likely the best match for this particular family. Bill attests to more immediate effects of the sponsorship, "This has brought the people in the church together, as I told you. We feel that this is important to see that those girls have every chance to turn out well. We are a very liberal church, and we believe that we should be doing things besides just talking".[495]

As I have suggested previously, the ability of these persons to be so positive regarding such a difficult time is only a testament to the sincerity of their intentions. There were many points in this sponsorship where the church would have more than every right to walk away from this family. Nevertheless, they persisted and with time established the boundaries to protect themselves, boundaries no one had anticipated would be necessary. Throughout this time the congregation remained committed to the girls and thus they have, to a certain extent, shared these experiences with them. Their relationship is such that the girls will always, or certainly for the foreseeable future, have a place in the lives of this congregation. They have, I would suggest, have found a new home together.

Peace Presbyterian Church

[494] Interview, Janet.
[495] Interview, Bill.

Peace Presbyterian Church presents yet another perspective on refugee resettlement. While the congregation did not have as an easy time of sponsoring as Faith UMC or as difficult, in may ways, as Hope UCC, Peace Presbyterian Church's sponsorship of the Kukame family demonstrates qualities of both. The congregation was generous with the Kukames and the family was very grateful. The church, in kind, received gifts from the family and the experience. I would suggest that the gifts given could best be described in terms of opening up people's perspectives, giving the members of the congregation an opportunity to view various aspects of their lives in a different light.

For this section I will be focusing primarily on Julie rather than spending much time with Beth or Paul. Neither Beth nor Paul address this question to any great length. I suspect that because Paul was not very involved with the sponsorship, other than in a generally supportive way, he did not have much to contribute regarding his own personal experiences of the sponsorship or those of the Resettlement Committee. I will reference Beth but have found her interview to be oddly impersonal at times and dismissive, her answers brief. She describes events and experiences clearly, but when she reflects on how she or the congregation were effected by them she speaks in terms of *they* and *them*, referring to the rest of the committee or congregation and not herself. She has also stated that she did not think the sponsorship affected more than a dozen people who were more or less directly involved. She does not offer much in the way of reflection and therefore does not provide much material for this section.

On the other hand, Julie was very involved with the family and, by her own account, deeply affected by the experience of sponsorship. I would like to address my reflections on her particular experiences by looking first at her relationship with the family themselves and then at how the sponsorship helped her to see her own world

with a more critical eye. In a very real sense, the Kukame family opened up Julie's world in ways that were not always pleasant for her but which she appreciated in the end.

Julie obviously enjoyed getting to know the family. She was close with some of the children and enjoyed the company of the Kukame patriarch as well as that of Amana. She listened to their stories of life back in Africa and of Amana's stories about coming to the U.S. She was attentive and interested in learning about a different culture. She saw these opportunities as gifts and was grateful. This is illustrated as she speaks of Amana, "She is just beautiful on the interior and exterior. It was just thrilling to get to know her and to be walking with all these people that she loves. That was a wonderful thing".[496] She was surprised at how quickly the family learned and became independent. She was also impressed that the family was able to communicate the point at which they felt they no longer needed the congregation's direct assistance.

While the relationships formed with the family and everything Julie felt she learned from them were positive, she also learned more about her own home, about the neighbourhood where the church was located. There was no denying that housing was the most difficult aspect of this sponsorship. The congregation had hoped to locate housing for the family somewhere reasonably close to the church. This proved to be too great a task and the family was housed in a not-so-nice neighbourhood far from the church. Julie saw the eventual need to house them far away as reflecting on her neighbourhood. She states, "Where our church is, is where a lot of us live, it's not a very welcoming place. And it's kind of a slap in the face while you are saying you

[496] Interview, Julie.

want to do this work, but you're living in a place that makes that happen elsewhere".[497]

The house where the family stayed was located in a neighbourhood quite different from the one surrounding Peace Presbyterian Church. The neighbourhood housed people of a lower income bracket, crime was higher, the population was ethnically mixed and some of the houses were boarded up. The house the family moved into, in fact, had been sitting empty for some time before the church and Refugee Services began refurbishing it. Both Beth and Julie reflected on the significance of moving the Kukame family into that particular house. Beth addressed how this experience effected others on the Resettlement Committee:

> I think it really brought it home to them about just what it's like and how hard it can be to find a *decent* place to live, we're not even talking elaborate or exotic, just plain and decent in a safe neighbourhood or even a not dangerous neighbourhood, a borderline neighbourhood. I think that those people were in some cases maybe even profoundly affected by the experience.[498]

A similar comment by Julie reflects what this means for both herself and the committee: "For someone with no housing, it was a good house. For us, looking at what we hoped for them, it was kind of frustrating because we didn't want to be part of helping them live someplace that we wouldn't want to live". [499]

Julie's perspective on the sponsorship resonated with her theological understanding of what the congregation was doing. She saw that their work with the Kukame family was a way of living out the passage regarding welcoming the stranger in Matthew 25.[500] This passage became real for her as they literally went about welcoming strangers into their lives. She spoke of the profound impact the act of sponsorship made on her, particularly set against a background of what she refers to

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[497] Ibid.
[498] Interview, Beth. Emphasis hers.
[499] Interview, Julie.
[500] Ibid.

as "the prevailing wisdom of the culture".[501] Whether she was referring to U.S. culture, Minnesotan culture or the culture she was accustomed to is not clear. What is clear is how significant getting to know the Kukame family was for her; she understood the sponsorship as a way for her to directly live out the Gospel.

Theological Implications and Conclusions

This thesis is ultimately concerned with the church and therefore with the congregations that comprise it. Questions posed thus far have included, what is hospitality and what is its significance for the church and its churches? I have argued that hospitality is not an optional extra for the church but rather that hospitality, as a set of actions instituted by the person of Christ, is constitutive of the church itself. The church is constituted and re-constituted as we, as persons situated in time and place, live out those actions that Christ has instituted. Hospitality, in this sense, is as necessary to the church as other actions Christ has instituted specifically for us, including celebrating his Holy Supper and prayer, to name but two examples.[502]

What does it mean then for Christian churches when they are not realizing Christ's actions? What does it mean when they are not visiting the sick, clothing the naked or feeding the hungry? Is it a matter of churches being isolated from communities where needs are more apparent? Are members of congregations intimidated or afraid of what they might encounter if they were to reach out beyond what is familiar? What is the significance when congregations do not offer hospitality to the stranger? Does it mean they think they cannot, or will not? Is

[501] Ibid.
[502] I chose these two examples specifically to make the point that considering what Christ has instituted requires that we include both those things we consider as sacraments and those we do not, but which are nevertheless activities we regard as necessary to the life of the church. I have no desire to engage in a discussion about what actions are of greater importance to the church. Rather, I would argue that hospitality is as necessary as other acts we presume are necessary such as celebrating the Eucharist, which is considered a sacrament, and prayer, which is not.

hospitality not considered important enough to donate time and energy to when the church's priority is to meet its budget in the next stewardship campaign or to purchase new hymnbooks because the current set looks tatty? What happens when ministry is understood merely in terms of financial contributions to other organizations that work with elderly persons, homeless persons or children with learning disabilities?

These are important and even critical questions when churches in the west are either in danger of decreasing in number and membership or where new church growth appears to be occurring alongside the continued expansion of homogenous and affluent suburbs. The first situation witnesses churches that may be struggling for survival, and the second, churches that are isolated, cut off from people different from themselves. How are congregations in these disparate types of circumstances able to engage in Christ's actions so that we may grow in relationship and in love for one another? How are churches able to break down barriers that are presumed or assumed to be intractable in order that they might welcome the stranger into their homes?

For churches struggling with issues such as decreasing membership, working with a restricted budget or even the onset of a despondency that accompanies a slowly dying congregation, starting new programs or ministry projects can appear too daunting for consideration. Congregations in these circumstances worry about such matters as funding such an endeavour, finding enough people to commit to it or what the priorities of the congregation should be at that moment. Offering hospitality to others when the church itself is struggling to survive is often given a low priority.

Conversely, churches that may be fiscally well-off, have growing memberships and donate generously to a variety of service projects may be dealing with a different set of difficulties when it comes to considering hospitality. Many times these congregations are filled with individuals who are very interested in

becoming involved with welcoming the stranger, who have tremendous resources and talents to share or give. Members of these congregations might be sequestered in suburbs or neighbourhoods without overt poverty, prisons or homeless shelters. While they would like to engage with different kinds of hands-on ministry, they do not know where to begin. They may ask themselves how they could provide food to a person who is hungry when they see no hungry people in their community.

Often individuals and small groups volunteer with non-profit organizations and charities specifically so they may participate in and experience service with others, or service extended to the stranger. While many times these experiences can be rewarding both for the persons involved and the organization as a whole, they are often one-time occasions or very short-term commitments. In many respects this can be an ideal way for people to serve and encounter others. It can help introduce individuals to a variety of ways of serving others and fulfils a need on the part of charities who often depend on volunteers as a significant portion of their staffing. While volunteering with organizations and agencies is invaluable work, it is geared more toward the individual rather than a congregation as a whole.

Refugee sponsorship is one practical and tangible way for churches to offer hospitality to the stranger from within the congregation itself. The model for sponsorship utilized by CWS and other affiliated agencies provides congregations a vehicle by which they can participate in refugee resettlement, welcoming persons who have literally lost their homes to a new life in the U.S. Sponsoring refugees is an historic activity of the church. Congregations that engage in offering such a welcome not only have the support of their denomination but of the affiliate agency managing the family's case for the USRP. Therefore, they will not be acting alone, nor will they have to design a ministry program themselves. They have a vast array of different

resources to assist them with their sponsorship, including the accumulated wisdom of thousands of churches who have done the same thing. Sponsorship also has the advantage of being a relatively short term commitment, six months to a year, as opposed to a permanent ministry.

Hospitality in the form of refugee resettlement re-orients the persons involved to the world in a new way. As a congregational activity, the entire church participates in this re-orientation or transformation. As its members form relationships with people they have never met before, people who are different, who come from a different place and culture altogether, the congregation is re-oriented to what is already here in the world. They are able to perceive things differently, in a different light. For example, whereas a person may not have cared much about what was happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo, when that person meets a refugee from the DRC and they form a relationship, suddenly that whole part of the world takes on a new meaning. She might now pay more attention when violence erupts there, worried about her friend's grandparents and sibling whom he had to leave behind when he fled.

Hospitality as refugee sponsorship re-orients congregations to what is already there in their midst. Working together in order to extend a welcome and receiving back the gifts new relationships bring helps congregation members to renew the relationships they already share with one another. New friendships are formed with familiar persons, old relationships rekindled. As people take on different roles and tasks, their skills and talents are brought to bear and congregation members see themselves and each other in a different light. Even as difficulties surface in the resettlement process, as they most likely will, church members are able to share in

responding to those challenges. In a real way, sponsorship re-orients congregation members to each other.

Through hospitality with refugees, the congregation itself is reoriented in its relationships with the larger community, how it is situated in its own denomination and how it relates as part of the global church. Through the experiences of sponsorship, church members can see their own neighbourhoods differently. They know who has acted graciously toward their sponsored family and who has not. They have a new awareness of how the larger community reacts to people who may be different or are strangers. Often, the church's broader work across the globe takes on a new level of importance, particularly when this work relates to refugees. Many congregations relish the fact that they have been part of something larger than themselves, that they have taken part in acting in Christ's name on a global level.

The experiences of these three congregations have revealed how refugee sponsorship quite literally functions as Christ's example of and mandate to welcome strangers. Each congregation and each person experienced hospitality differently. Some experiences were more difficult than others and their reflections demonstrate that diversity. At the same time they were able to recognize the patterns of hospitality working through their experiences: the welcoming in, the opening up, the listening, the receiving back of gifts. Each person recognized changes.

Hospitality occurs through relationships between persons. Christ promises that he is present in those relationships. How lives are re-oriented by hospitality is a mystery. What we will encounter as we meet each other day-to-day is guaranteed to be unexpected. Through the Holy Spirit, the church is constituted here and now as we perform the actions that Christ has instituted. The church as it manifests the Body of Christ is here to feed us when we are hungry, to comfort us when we are sick or

afraid, to shelter us from what threatens to harm us. The church is here to welcome each of us home.

CONCLUSIONS AND THEOLOGICAL POSSIBILITIES

This thesis is concerned with the church and the church's activities in the world. It is concerned with people and the relationships that occur between and among actual persons. It presumes that the church as it has existed through time is contingent upon the activities of both the Holy Spirit and the persons that comprise it. It assumes that the church acts as the Body of Christ in the world.

As a contribution to the discipline of Christian theology, this thesis also assumes that human experience provides a valid basis for theological reflection, particularly when considering the concrete activities of the church. The use of the word *activities* in this instance can refer to several broad categories of actions commonly associated with, but often not exclusive to, being a Christian, activities such as belief, service, love, charity or having faith. Of course being a Christian reorients these words in a specifically theological way, with a particular reference to God.

Hospitality is another category of activity associated with, but not exclusive to, Christianity. Other religious traditions, including Christianity's closest relatives, Judaism and Islam, also lay claim to the word. At its origins and throughout western accounts of history, hospitality has been associated with ancient desert societies from whence the three main Abrahamic traditions sprang. In this context, hospitality referred specifically to the treatment of travellers, sojourners, aliens and/or guests according to various culturally-situated expectations and guidelines.

Therefore, it is not surprising to find a contemporary recovery of what

Pohl terms the tradition of Christian hospitality commencing its questioning with a consideration of early Christian experiences of hospitality. While such an exercise would be considered a valued contribution to research into the subject, it also presents several challenges for the broader discipline of ecclesiology. It opens up questions that pertain to a particularly contemporary approach that tends to privilege the experiences of the church of the past over the church in the present.

This position elicits significant theological questions. The first asks why one should privilege the experiences of the early church when God's revelation is understood to be continuous and the church is considered the Body of Christ manifested through his Spirit? The second asks how we are to understand the relationships between the church then and the church now, or the church at any point in time or location in the world? The larger question is, even if we can grasp what hospitality meant for the first Christians, how can we relate that understanding to Christian experience now? How can we find meaning in it?

Attempting to answer these questions can be nearly impossible or, if one employs Vanier's understanding of theological paradox, it can be quite simple. I would suggest that by applying Vanier's principle one could conclude that the experiences of the early church do have special significance for Christianity. At the same time, one could also argue that the early church did not have any special access to God that would privilege it over the church as we know it now. It is one and the same church, and yet it was and is different. Understood as a mode of being, the church is experienced in an infinite number of ways and is at the same time, perhaps paradoxically, one church, one Body.

Taking Vanier's lead, this thesis also posits that hospitality is an activity

contingent upon relationships between and among persons, including the human person of Christ Jesus. Therefore, our understanding of hospitality is shaped by our experiences of it. It is also informed by accounts of other people's experiences of it. In this way, we are able to derive and share meaning: regarding what constitutes a particularly Christian approach to hospitality across space and through time.

Using Vanier to inform our theological framework opens up the discipline of ecclesiology so that it may take up and utilize the experiences of persons in real and pragmatic ways. Instead of trying to recreate hospitality as experienced by the early Christian church, it allows us to see hospitality as it is continually acted out in the contemporary world. Vanier's approach encourages us to recognize many of the various forms hospitality takes and challenges us to imagine new ones.

The possibilities for future research on this topic are wide-reaching and multifarious. This thesis has only touched the surface of the possible avenues for scriptural work on the topic utilizing basically one passage and one theme. The already substantial body of research exploring biblical themes of hospitality has much room to welcome further work on the topic. The most prominent of biblical stories, including such obvious examples as Jesus' last supper with his disciples, the road to Emmaus, the prodigal son, and the feeding of the 5,000 each provide ample opportunity to address hospitality with concrete biblical footing. I would suggest that the entirety of Christian scripture could be read through the lens of hospitality as well every example of hospitality read with reference to Christian scripture.

Another potentially inexhaustible avenue for research on hospitality

concerns the sacramental nature of the church's daily liturgical life. Whether involving the seven sacraments of the Roman Church, the two sacraments of most Protestant churches or the Sacred Mysteries of Orthodox churches, hospitality is essential to a Christian understanding of such celebrations as those of Holy Communion and Holy Baptism. Futhermore, as the liturgical life of the church reaches beyond the doors of sacred buildings, hospitality can be seen as a way of extending the sacramental life of the church into the world.

Whilst writing this thesis I have been meticulous regarding how and when I have used the word *practice*. As stated in the introduction, I agree with Nicolas Healy in that I am not certain that hospitality is best described in terms of a practice, as several contemporary discussions purport. Therefore, I do not use the word *practice* in reference to hospitality. Some theologians have suggested that hospitality can be reduced to one set of clearly defined actions that distinguish it as a practice. Yet, it is not at all clear that there is *a* practice of hospitality or even *one way* to practice it if there were. Hospitality is distinguishable as a category of the church's activity or action, but not in the manner Pohl and others suggest.

While hospitality itself may not be most appropriately described in terms of practice, I would suggest that there appear to be practices *of* it. In other words, there are sets of actions that could sufficiently be described as both practices and forms *of* hospitality. What Pohl describes in her text, *Making Room*, can be said to be an account of one form of hospitality, specifically as demonstrated by intentional Christian communities offering shelter to people. Her work itself can also be seen in light of Jean Vanier and the L'Arche communities, the inspiration of much contemporary understanding of hospitality as well as a model for many intentional Christian communities.

A more reserved, but possibly more accurate, direction Pohl's research could take would be to re-designate her findings as representing one form of hospitality or as a particular practice of it. In this way, what is specific and original to her work could serve to illuminate what is, in fact, both a far more complex and more simple phenomenon than she describes. Detailed alongside other examples of the church's concrete *practices* of hospitality, her work could contribute more precisely to the exploration of what will, essentially, remain a mystery at the heart of Christ's Gospel.

Refugee resettlement is one particular form of hospitality being practiced by the church in the west today. It is a concrete activity of the wider church, rooted in history and experienced by specific congregations. For churches in the United States affiliated with the National Council of Churches, and thus specifically Church World Service (CWS), this practice has been distilled and described in terms of a model for refugee sponsorship.

Throughout this thesis, I maintain that refugee sponsorship provides congregations with a tangible means of offering hospitality in the world. By using the guidelines provided by CWS, congregations are able to extend hospitality specifically to people who have been driven from their homes and their countries in fear for their lives. Refugee sponsorship can be taken up and utilized by congregations as a way of being in the world. It is practical means for churches to engage in welcoming the stranger. Sponsorship can be embarked upon by almost any congregation willing to share what is needed most in the resettlement process, namely, the openness and willingness to extend outward what constitutes the personal space of our homes in order to welcome in others who bring with them difference and strangeness.

Refugee sponsorship functions as a form of hospitality as it serves to re-orient the church via the means of real relationships between and among real people. It is relevant now, in this current climate of globalized mass displacement, warehousing and statelessness. Millions of people across the world have lost their homes as well as family members, friends, livelihoods, careers, family farms, possessions and positions within society. They have lost a sense of belonging, and they have lost hope. What is more, these people have not merely lost these things but have had them stripped away in what is arguably the most horrifying way possible, through human violence.

During my interview with Joel Luedtke, he repeated an adage that he voiced frequently during his time as Director of Refugee Services: "When a Christian church in Minnesota helps a Somali family to resettle here, they know about it back in Somalia." In a simple and direct way, this sentiment reflects the transformative capacity of hospitality. The basic act of welcoming another person into our lives allows for the formation of relationships that can extend even across the globe, relationships that connect real people in new and different ways, sharing meaning across continents. In this way, the hospitable actions of a single congregation can be understood as changing the world, re-orienting lives to the simple hospitality of Christ. Through this action, which is Christ's action, the church is re-constituted here and now. We are welcomed home.

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