

Welcoming the Sojourner

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A Personal Journey

While I was born the daughter of a European immigrant to the US, the first time I had a personal encounter with a refugee, I was in my mid-twenties. It was soon after the fall of Saigon in 1975, and Southeast Asians, mostly Vietnamese, were pouring into the neighborhood in San Diego where I lived. That year, the United States resettled around 130,000 Southeast Asian refugees, of whom more than 95 percent were Vietnamese and almost all the rest were from Cambodia. Like me at the time, they were needy. Though I was grappling to survive, and all I could offer was smiles and acknowledgement of their humanity, that helped me connect with my new neighbors.

A few years later, as a two-year old Christian, I moved to Fort Worth, Texas to attend seminary. I immediately became involved with house church planting. As we knocked on doors to invite people to our church, we discovered many new brand new Southeast Asian refugees. Most seemed really poor, and I discovered that they had been allowed to bring only a few boxes of clothing and personal goods per family. As a struggling single parent seminary student, I had no idea how to help, but I was familiar with the story of Jesus sending out the 70 to share the gospel without taking anything extra with them, so that is what I did. I also began to simply pray for these new neighbors.

Not long after that, the large church that was sponsoring our house church network, had a large church garage sale. I asked them if we could give all of the remaining clothing and household items to these new refugee families. When they agreed, I gathered a box of clothing, brought it to where I knew the refugees lived, and watched them excitedly pour through and grab up those items. Although we could not exchange a single common word, I motioned to them to come with me. We went to the church, and somehow managed to give every single leftover item to these newcomers. I remember a day, right before Thanksgiving, when I was knocking on doors to invite people to church, when a Cambodian refugee man came to the door and invited me in. Though his English was limited, we were able to have a conversation about how his family's journey to America had something in common with the story of the

¹ Dr. Linda Bergquist is a church planting strategist and author with the North American Mission Board, San Francisco Bay Area, USA

pilgrim's arrival to this country. We talked about how, after surviving the perils, those early travelers to the new world took time to thank God for helping them through the adversity.

The following Sunday morning, I visited a church I had never before attended. Much to my surprise, there was a group of around 50 Cambodian refugees there, including the family whose home I had visited a few days earlier. Excitedly, I re-introduced myself to them, and when the pastor saw our interaction, he approached me and asked who I was and how I knew these visitors. When he discovered I was a seminary student, and had already helped start several churches, he told me that the group had told him that they wanted to start a church and meet on the campus of his church. He asked me to help them start that church, and the man whose home I had visited became the pastor.

I served that new Cambodian church for the next year and a half until I graduated from seminary. During that time, we were able to help provide for physical needs, meet newcomers at the airport, help teach English, and just be present. One Cambodian woman, a single mom with five children became a close friend. We visited newly arriving refugees together, prayed with them, and found ways to meet their needs. Her husband had been killed by the Taliban, and she told me that they had cooked his body and eaten his innards in front of the family. All I could do is listen and cry with her. One time she called me to tell me that her eldest had not eaten for days, and was trying to starve herself to death. I went to their home, and just sat for a long time with this girl, silently praying in her presence. Then God impressed on me that she had been raped by soldiers, and felt she did not deserve to live. I told her the story of Jesus, whose body had been tortured and shamed by soldiers, and that this was the story of the One who had died to set us free from sin and shame. Miraculously, a few minutes later, the girl simply stood up, left the room and went to eat. This event so affected this girl's mother that when I left seminary, she sent her daughter with me back to California to help me start a Cambodian church there.

Once we were back in San Diego, this teenager helped me find where the Cambodians lived. A member of my church who was a grocery store manager, offered me surplus groceries, and we brought them to a large, mostly Cambodian apartment complex to distribute. We started a children's Bible club there, and within a few weeks, over 100 Cambodian children and adults gathered weekly in the courtyard to hear the story of Jesus. A church was born out of that simple venture. What did I learn? I learned to pray, listen, be present, meet needs, and to be a good neighbor. I learned that it did not take a huge amount of church planting know-how, strategy, or resources to really help people or to start a church. I discovered that many people are receptive to the gospel when they have been through traumatic times, and when they have left family behind in their countries of origin, or suffered tremendous loss.

A Journey Through Scripture

In those days, I had not yet developed a clear theology around welcoming the sojourner. I simply knew that God was love, and "since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:11) The words of Jesus in Matthew 25: 37-40 had impacted me already, "I

was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Mt. 25:35) I knew that the apostle Paul had encouraged Christians to “not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Gal 6:9) As a very young Christian, I had been both challenged and amazed that “someday at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil 2: 10-11). This, to me, was thrilling, and I felt that by loving, serving, and starting churches among all kinds of people, I would be able to participate in God’s incredible plan for humanity.

Over the years, however, I have longingly researched Scripture to discover what else the Bible says about welcoming sojourners of all kinds. The noun *ger*, from the verb *gur* (to dwell) is use 92 times in the Old Testament. (Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, p.157-158) It means sojourner, or a temporary inhabitant, a newcomer lacking inherited rights of foreigners in Israel, though conceded rights. As written in other places in this volume, it is translated most often as alien or stranger, but sometimes as foreigner, immigrant or sojourner. Here are some of the Scripture passages that became most meaningful to me in this journey of knowing and welcoming the *ger*.

“If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you.” (Lev.25:35) It seemed a given that the Israelites already knew they were to care for the foreigner, and they were to extend that respect to their own people as well. Mostly, it seemed to me that church people knew better how to care for their fellow church people and not the outsider. The scriptural call to love and care for the foreigner, became clearer over time.

“He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 10:18-19) I have already cited several times when God directed me to give food and clothing, but how was I to be about the business of *defending their cause*? In the mid to late 1990s when the civil war in Somalia broke out, many Somalis arrived in the United States, including some that moved to the street where I was living at the time. It was difficult at first to meet them because they were fearful and ran away from people different from themselves. One day, I simply chased them down the street (not advisable) and knocked on the door of the apartment they had just entered. When some men answered the door, I could see inside. There was a room full of people sitting on the floor, and no furniture. I introduced myself as their neighbor and told them that my church could help them.(I simply knew they would!) One of the many ways my church helped was to send women to go with women to gynecologist offices. They went to defend women who were victim to female genital mutilation (FGM), which involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other kinds of injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. We imagined correctly that many physicians would not be familiar with this practice and were able

to help inform them that this was a cultural practice, and not a reason for them to call the police.

Berkeley, California based 1951 Coffee Company is a non-profit coffee company that exists to promote the well-being of refugees in the United States. It was cofounded by a former seminary student of mine who worked with refugees as a theological field study class. 1951 Coffee provides job training and employment to refugees, asylees, and special immigrant visa holders while at the same time educating the surrounding community about refugee issues. It is named after the UNHCR's 1951 Refugee Convention, a gathering that defined and set forth guidelines for the protection of refugees. It works with justice issues that stem from finding training and employment solutions for these newcomers.

For some, a major immigration justice issue is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Initiated in 2012, it is a policy aimed to protect almost 800,000 young undocumented immigrants from deportation who were brought to the U.S. by their families when they were children through no fault of their own. It is the only home they know, and many are unfamiliar with the language and culture of the countries their families left behind. Rescinding DACA seems unimaginable for most.

Another way the story of the refugee became real to me was as I began to string together the motif of displaced persons in the Bible. I read that Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, and Abraham traveled from Ur to the area of present-day Iraq, then into Syria, then to Egypt finally back into Canaan (Israel). There was Israel's journey to Egypt, their time of desert wandering, their exile in Babylon, and more. The book of Deuteronomy calls God's people to include the stranger (this noun appears 22 times in Deuteronomy) as kin, and presents us with the responsibility to reconsider this kinship factor in our current global context. (Glanville, Mark and Glanville, Luke. *Refugee Reimagined: Biblical Kinship in Global Politics*. Downers Grove: IVP Academics, 2021. p 26) Jesus' own family fled to Egypt so Jesus would not be killed by Herod, and his adult life and ministry was one of wandering. Jesus's call to go into all the world to make disciples, Paul's missionary journeys, and the diaspora picture of the early church began to string together for me. Could this ongoing story of displaced persons actually be part of God's plan for His Church and His plan for the world?

This journey with scripture is very real in this present day. "No stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler." (Job, discussing his devotion to God) in Job 31:32). "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." (Jesus teaching his disciples in Matthew 25:25-36) The most recent surge of new refugees to the United States and Canada are from Afghanistan. Fremont, California, has been a hub for Afghans for several decades, and nearby Sacramento is home to an even larger population to

new arrivals. Even when not officially resettled into these northern California cities, many Afghans find their way because this is where they have families and friends.

There is a new Afghan American Church in Fremont that has been reaching out to the Christian community around them, and found support from both churches and individuals. They have established an Amazon wish list for personal and household donations, collected and distributed backpacks for school children. Others are teaching English and helping them find jobs. Some newcomers have come to know Christ and have been baptized. Some individuals and churches, especially the leadership team, have filled out paper work and paid the fees to officially sponsor new Afghan family members as well as Christians who are fleeing the country. They have opened their doors to these travelers and provided for their needs as in the above verses of scripture.

Ongoing Learning

To date, after ministering among over twenty different ethno-linguistic groups from many countries, it is still a learning experience. Here are a few things I have been learning:

I. Obtaining Helpful Information

Obtaining good information about sojourners in one's own vicinity is actually not difficult. Here are a few resources I use most frequently:

The US Census Bureau has some good resources. One is the B16001 table that details languages spoken at home by persons 5 years and older. For example, ten different South Asian languages alone are listed. Another is the B05006 table that shows the countries of birth for residents. These two data sources are available annually for states, large counties, and cities, and every five years for smaller places. The Canadian Census Bureau also provides detailed data tables of country of birth. For the 2016 census, see: bit.ly/3FEInOW

Peoplegroups.info, provided by the International Mission Board, describes itself as “an exciting way for Great Commission Christians to Embrace, Encounter, and Engage Diaspora People in North America, especially those who reside right next door in your community.” It is still a work in process, but many people groups, and places where they may be encountered are on this site. Peoplegroups.org is a place to find this information globally.

Zabihah.com has an international list of halal restaurants and markets, including the kind of food served by country of origin. Some friends recently intentionally ate at an Afghan halal restaurant. They told their server that they were praying for Afghanistan, and she broke out in tears. Their prayers and concern was so appreciated. When I visit these restaurants during times of their religious observances, I greet workers accordingly. **Eid Mubarak** is an [Arabic](#) expression that means “Blessed feast/festival”. The term is used by Muslims all over the world during Ramadan. Sometimes at the end of Ramadan, I leave a larger than expected gratuity, with a note that says “Mubarek Kareem,” meaning *a generous Ramadan*. That will generally cause a stir, but also helps strengthen relationships and build trust.

Salatomatic.com is a site that lists mosques and Muslim prayer spaces, plus the community of people they serve. These are usually located near the communities where those groups live. An internet search is also an easy way to do a search for Sikh gurdwaras, Buddhist temples and more. Before visiting Shanghai, China a few years ago, I determined to find Uyghur people there. The Uyghur are a persecuted Turkic Muslim people, mostly living in Northwest China. Their numbers are growing in the San Francisco Bay Area, which I discovered mostly by watching the growing number of Uyghur restaurants on zabihah.com. Before traveling, I was able to find a Uyghur mosque, several restaurants, and even a Uyghur street fair located in Shanghai. I determined that visiting those places and taking photos would help me grow the relationships we were establishing with the local Uyghur community. It is also easy to discover local Buddhist and Hindu temples, Sikh places of worship (gurdwaras) online. Most gurdwaras serve free vegetarian meals called langar, and some offer free meals every day, all day long. One way to bless your Sikh neighbors is to bring a box of fruit or vegetables for them to serve at the langar. If you are female, try to sit on the floor with other women and help cut up the food you brought

The Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World
Diaspora Overviews analyzes a number of ethnic groups that have been either voluntarily or forcefully displaced. It also discusses the impact and assimilation that the immigrant cultures experience as they move from home to host cultures. There are multiple 60 portraits of specific diaspora groups in specific locations.

II. Welcoming People Through the Lens of Love Languages

Using the ideas behind Gary Chapman's book, *The Five Love Languages* helps me to better love refugees, asylees, and other sojourners. These *love languages* or *ways* of expressing and receiving love are: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. These are applied quite differently across cultures. For example, words are important to everyone, yet for some people they are absolutely essential. Think of a time someone gave you a compliment. How did that make you feel? Has anyone ever complemented you because of the neighborhood, city, nation where you live? What does scripture say about our words? "Dear Friends, may we always remember that 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.'" (Prov. 18:21) "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver." (Prov. 25:11) "Kind words are like honey – sweet to the soul and healthy for the body." (Prov. 16:2) "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." (Eph. 4:29)

How can one use words of affirmation to welcome sojourners? Offer words of blessing over a people and their place. Speak words of peace, hope, joy, kindness. Show appreciation through words. Imagine a positive future in their new countries with them. Point out beauty in their cultures and customs and discover what is beautiful to them. Learn a few words in their

language such as *hello* and *thank you*. Cambodians living in coastal California bought independent donut shops. Even today, when I enter a donut shop that appears to be run by Cambodians, I clasp the palms of my hands together and say *au kun* which means thank you. It often earns me an extra free donut, but more importantly opens the door for relationship.

In this day in which we live, the love language of Words of Affirmation is language of reparation across cultures. Too many newcomers, and even people born in the United States that are not Caucasian, have had people tell them to go back home to their country. Too many have heard Covid 19 referred to as the “China Flu” or someone say they are taking jobs away from “Americans”. Remember: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” (Prov. 18:21) A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.” (Prov. 25:11) Kind words are like honey – sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.” (Prov. 16:2)

Time is another important factor when relating to people across cultures. Edward Hall famously addressed this concept in his essay, “[The Anthropology of Manners](#).” He noted how time and personal proximity was a matter of culture. My own western culture views time as linear, with a definitive, certain beginning and end. Time is seen as limited, and there is. A belief that “time is money” so most Western peoples structure their lives, businesses, and educational ventures according to milestones and deadlines.

Around the world, different people live their daily lives at different tempos, and observe a different pace of life. Some non-western cultures are more likely to perceive time as flexible, cyclical and limitless or endless. Sometimes there is a cultural preference toward past, present, or future thinking. Future-orientated cultures tend to run their lives by the clock Past-orientated cultures are much more laid back in the way they look at time. Dutch interculturalist Fons Trompenaars wrote about sequential versus synchronic cultures. In sequential cultures, time is dealt with in a specific logical order. People from sequential cultures prefer to have a detailed agenda for meetings, as well as goals and milestones throughout the project’s existence. In synchronic cultures, people have a more flexible understanding of time. People are not as beholden to deadlines and time frames. (Trompenaars, Fons. *Business Across Cultures*. West Sussex, England: Capstone Publishing, 2003, p.5,31,77.)

I teach a weekly leadership class online to Nepalese Christians who live in different cities. One pastor is always early for our sessions. He has lived in the US long enough to understand how we value time. Others are always late by at least 15 minutes. One lives in Nepal, and frequent power outages affect his capacity to join us online. Some Silicon Valley Churches, as well as churches across North America and beyond, have a visible pre-service countdown for their worship services. I often wonder if that seems offensive to some of the cultures of people who attend these churches? It is helpful to remember that Jesus came to earth and gave his time to people, and that patience, one of the fruits of the Spirit, requires living with a thoughtful understanding of time.

Acts of Service is another love language we can use to welcome newcomers among us. The Bible has much to say about this. “Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:28) “And he sat down and called the twelve. and he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35) Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 2 Cr. 9: 13. How can we extend this love language to others? First, just listen. Ask Questions. People don’t always need what we think they need. Do we care about what these others care about? What is appropriate, thoughtful, kind in the context of that culture? Do they need help enrolling their children in school, would they be open to receiving flu shots, is a doctor’s visit in order, do some need help learning English, or can you help them know how to get around on public transportation, or help them get a driver’s license? What do they really need?

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned meeting new refugees from Somalia. There was a day when my husband and another church member took some furniture to that Somali apartment complex. That other church member was an older man who had been born with only one hand. While these two men brought a couch inside, a half dozen young Somali men stood against a wall and watched, as if the movers were servants. Historically, Somalia demonstrated a system of socially stratified caste system, and these early arrivals came from an upper class. My husband later told them that the man with one hand was a PhD, and they began to learn that social systems in their new country may work differently than they expected. I remember, too the first Southeast Asian refugees. The first persons to leave their homes were usually persons that had more money for the journey. They settled down, bought business, and then newer arrivals with less money took service jobs, and even “under the table” kinds of work. Many of these newcomers are surprised when Christians, who are commanded to serve others, to love their neighbors, and help persons in need, actually treat others as their equals and help as they are able.

Another love language is giving gifts. It, too is a biblical posture: “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38) “A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great.” (Proverbs 18:16) “For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.” (2 Corinthians 8:12) would not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Across cultures there are a number of formalities regarding gift giving. In some cultures, it is inappropriate to open a gift in private. In others, it is considered unlucky to give a clock, or anything in multiples of four. Sometimes a gift of scissors or knives symbolizes severing a relationship, and should not be given as a gift. Giving a gift with two hands instead of one is important in some cultures, and even how a gift is wrap can matter. Is gift giving considered an act of kindness, or is it obligatory, and an expectation within a culture? My daughter was raised in a mostly Asian context. When she started school, her Chinese friends all received red envelopes from their parents, filled with crisp bills for the lunar New Year. We began giving her

red envelopes, too, and to this day, have continued the practice, even though she is almost 30 years old.

Be careful about complimenting items in the homes of people from some cultures, for example, Afghans. When you do, then out of politeness, they can feel like they need to offer it to you as a gift. Then, if you accept, it is possible that they are actually giving you something they really wanted to keep. On the other hand, it is customary to be offered coffee or tea and possibly sweets as refreshment. It is very important to accept these offerings as a sign of friendship.

Finally, meaningful (and appropriate) touch is a love language. Remember that Jesus touched people to bless and heal “...after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak.” (Mark 5:27) “And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.” (Luke 6:19) “And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them.” (Luke 18:15) “Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” (Matthew 8:3)

Be aware of how various cultures relate to the gift of touch. Hold, touch, bless babies and children if appropriate. In my early days of working among Cambodians, I made a lot of mistakes. For example, I remember touching the head of a Cambodian child and people gasping. I had no idea that they believed that a person’s head was the dwelling place of spirits and I should not touch it. They knew I loved them, and they forgave my indiscretion, but I never made that mistake again. Hug widows and widowers, if acceptable. Shake hands, take a hand into yours, according to culture, but be careful of male/ female roles. . I know that as a female, I should not reach out to initiate shaking the hand of a Muslim man. Some cultures hug one another, kiss each other’s cheeks, and more frequently touch one another during every day conversations, and is a strong indicator of nonverbal conversation. For Christmas, I gave a warm, fuzzy throw to a Congolese woman. Her cuddling it and holding it to her face during the remainder of our time together gave me a hint that she had a strong sense of touch, and when she left that day, we hugged deeply.

One additional area that is a possible love language involves food and eating together. We see this in scripture in the following ways:

- Sharing the Lord’s supper— Jesus is the bread
- Jesus eats in many people’s homes, regardless of their reputation
- God provided manna in the wilderness
- Jesus multiplying loaves and fish
- The Passover Seder as remembrance
- Jesus sent out the 70 and told them to eat in the homes of people to whom they would minister

Some examples of how we can see food as a potential way to engage with immigrants is through their own restaurants. Restaurants are a first business of many new immigrants. Choose restaurants to visit that reflect the cultures around you. Pray with and for the owners and workers when you visit. Recently someone suggested that a strategy for reaching Chinese in the SF Bay Area would be to start churches in ways that are compatible with the hours of people who work in restaurants. Use the website zabihah.com to find halal restaurants anywhere in the world. Zabihah is how we knew that we had Uyghurs among us and that the population is growing.

We have also done Thanksgiving celebrations with new refugees and compared their experience to that of the pilgrims, and explained to them how this is a good time of year to celebrate and thank God for their safe arrival to their new land.

Practicing Cultural Intelligence

We are familiar with IQ capacity (intellectual intelligence), and with EQ, (emotional intelligence), but today there is a growing awareness of cultural intelligence (CQ) that offers assistance in knowing how to welcome and love the stranger. An individual possessing cultural intelligence is not just aware of different cultures – they are able to culturally adapt and effectively work and relate with people across a variety of cultural contexts.

The field of Cultural Intelligence is a solid knowledge base that helps teach values that enable individuals and groups to better facilitate cross cultural communication. It helps peoples know how to better and more honorably relate to one another. CQ is defined as an individual's aptness in creating effective collaboration with people who think and act differently from themselves in culturally diverse situations. Cultural humility, an outcome of CQ, is the "ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the person." (Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., Owen, J., Worthington Jr, E. L., & Utsey, S. O. (2013). Cultural humility: Measuring openness to culturally diverse clients. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 60(3), 353.) Understanding Cultural Intelligence helps us in our journeys to better practice cultural humility while ministering to diaspora peoples.

The three dimensions of CQ correspond to the classical division between emotion, understanding and action:

- The emotional dimension – intercultural engagement
 - The cognitive dimension – cultural understanding
 - The action dimension – intercultural communication
- (www.culturalintelligence.eu/theory.html)

Nobody is ever perfect at the practice of CQ. but the below graphic is useful. The student of culture starts with a sense of drive to relate to persons of other cultural backgrounds. That urges them to gain knowledge, then to develop a strategy and then put that strategy into action. The cycle continues to repeat.



(Livermore, D. Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The New Secret to Success. (New York: Harper-Collins. 2009 p. 25-37)

Some benefits of practicing cultural intelligence are:

- Encouraging fellowship & unity among all Christ followers, regardless of culture
- Learning how to make all peoples feel welcomed, safe and included
- Practicing the values of equity and offering justice to all peoples
- Blessing and encouraging people in the context of diverse communities
- Learning how to share Christ's love effectively with all peoples
- Moving towards a day when every knee bows and every tongue confesses Jesus as Lord

III. Realizing That North America is Not the Only, and Not Only a Missions Sending Base

Understanding that North America is not only a sending base, but a receiving base for Christian mission helps us to posture ourselves with humility, and to know God better. Dr. Sam George is the Global Catalyst for Diasporas with the Lausanne Movement. He was born in India, but has lived, studied and taught all over the world, and has written extensively about diaspora peoples. His current research focuses on helping the global Church globally to understand why migration is important to Christianity and mission. Dr. George lives in Chicago and is helping the Church in North America to reimagine its future through the lens of diaspora Christianity.

The Human Genome Project, launched in 1990, was an effort to identify, map, and sequence all of the genes in the human body. It was an international scientific project that intentionally included people from many cultural backgrounds and worldviews. The belief was that with this vast array of perspectives, it would be possible to map genomes more quickly and more thoroughly. I remember being stunned at this perspective, and began asking, “what if Christians from multiple cultures and worldviews assumed a humble learning posture to learn better from each other who God is and how to work together towards His reign?”

I have seen some of this already happening. Several years ago, I met a middle-aged man from Kenya. He had come to the United States to reach Japanese. His English was excellent, but he feared that he was too old to begin learning Japanese well enough to live in Japan. Having heard that two of the three remaining Japantowns in mainland US were in the San Francisco Bay Area (San Francisco and San Jose), he decided this was the best place to live to follow God’s will for his life. A Korean church in the Bay Area has sponsored new work among Hmong, Afghan, Latino, multi-ethnic groups, and more. A book Korea

IV. The Church is Becoming Both More Local and More Global

The Covid 19 era has helped the diaspora Church to become both more global and more local. This is an era when many churches have been called on to love and serve their immediate communities. Locally, they have helped provide food, assisted local businesses to receive government grants, given away school supplies, Christmas gifts and more. But they are also increasingly more global. Two brothers from India, both H1B special visa workers, are starting an multiethnic, English speaking church in the Silicon Valley. Their father started and pastors a church in Hyderabad India. In the early days of Covid, when churches moved to mainly online worship services, these brothers preached and led worship online in their father’s church in the Telugu language of India.

At the same time, an asylee from the DR Congo started a Congolese church in California, and his five children, still in Uganda, led worship from their home in Uganda. A Nepalese man has started an orphanage in Kathmandu, Nepal, the wife of an Ethiopian makes trips to Ethiopia to care for children living on the street and bring them clothing and other supplies. A man from Hong Kong has developed contextualized church planting and evangelism training to be used anywhere in the world where there are Cantonese speakers. A pastor from Argentina and his wife from Peru lead a Spanish speaking church in California, while at the same time engaging in frequent missions to various Latin American countries. All of these persons are living in ways that help them appreciate, respect and welcome the newcomers in the cities where we live.

Today, as I am finishing this chapter, my husband was just helping a neighbor who recently had a mild stroke. Every day, he helps him get down the stairs of his home, and sometimes walks with him around the block. This afternoon, our neighbor, who is of Japanese descent was telling my husband about the hygienic practice of ear cleaning in Asian cultures. In Japan there is a strong cultural and maternal practice of ear cleaning where a mother sets her

children in her lap and regularly cleans their ears with a tool called a *mimikaki*. This nurturing practice is part of what creates a physical bond between parent and child. One after effect of the stroke was that the ear that needs the most cleaning has reversed. It is interesting that in the process of daily time spent with this neighbor, after sixteen years of living in the same home, this man opened up to my husband about a cultural nurturing process that we never heard of before. For Christmas, this family gave us a poinsettia, and we gave them some homemade mango jam and freshly baked persimmon bread. For New Years, they told us they will be bringing us some fresh sushi. Cultural give and take, honoring one's neighbor, building trust all take time. Even years. May God give us the patience, love, persistence, and openness to truly love our neighbors from every background and culture.