

Migration and the Global Church: A Proposal to Challenge the Narrative Around Migration and the Gospel Through Propagating Receiving Faith vs. Rejecting Fear.

Today, over 1 billion people are on the move. The total estimated 281 million people living in a country other than their countries of birth in 2020 was 128 million more than in 1990, and over three times the estimated number in 1970. Europe and Asia each hosted around 87 and 86 million international migrants, respectively – comprising 61% of the global international migrant stock. These regions were followed by North America, with almost 59 million international migrants in 2020 or 21% of the global migrant stock, Africa at 9%, Latin America and the Caribbean at 5%, and Oceania at 3%. The United States has been the top country of destination for international migration with the number of foreign-born quadrupling from 12 million in 1970 to 51 million in 2020. (International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Migration, *World Migration Report*, 2022). In addition, approximately 89.4 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced. The war in Ukraine has caused 7.2 million people to leave the country and another 7 million to leave their homes within the country. (UNHCR, Regional Bureau for Europe, *Ukraine Situation Flash Update #29*, Sept. 2022). Finally, over 800 million internal migrants moving from rural areas to large metropolises for employment and education.

North American Context

Based on Title 42 being revoked, a Covid public health order that turned away 1.7 million asylum seekers at the southern U.S. border the past couple of years, we have seen approximately 2 million migrants to approach the U.S.-Mexico border in 2022. This has created the 4th major migrant border crisis since 2014.



Problems: Opposition to migrants, rejection, fear, ethnic hostility, border instability

With millions of migrants crossing borders and seeking refuge and asylum from persecution, violence, war, and also economic hardship, the reaction against migration is growing. Conflict is escalating between people groups and between nations. What can the church do to help receive newcomers and welcome those from other nations? What can the church do to help slow migration flows, assist the reestablishment of order, and help people relocate in healthy ways? These questions will grow more vital over the next decade and currently. National governments do not have answers, but, the transnational church can come alongside to assist.

Solutions: create/identify pilot projects in one theater (North American context to begin with) that can be developed, reproduced, and multiplied around the world. Through linking an interconnected ministry approach of reception/hospitality, legal and spiritual counsel, material help, trauma healing, biblical evangelism and discipleship, and communication with destinations or to encourage migrants to turn back when appropriate, an approach to the church's interaction with and ministry to migrants and refugees can be proliferated around the world. More than just physical care, a system of receiving people and providing care and counsel on their journey can help restore dignity and agency to the migrants/refugees as they travel and seek safety.

Hospitality Houses along migration routes co-located with local churches: identify churches in Tijuana on the U.S.-Mexico border and the Tapachula area of Chiapas in Southern Mexico that are forming reception centers for migrants aligned with their churches. Provide physical and material help as well as legal counsel, spiritual direction, prayer, and trauma healing through gospel storying.

Border Ministries along the U.S.-Mexico border in San Diego/Tijuana, El Paso/Juarez, and Brownsville/Matamoros that provides material help, spiritual and legal counsel, helps identify job skills/training, and provides trauma healing. As migrants pass through the border, identify their destinations and connect with ministries/churches there to receive them.

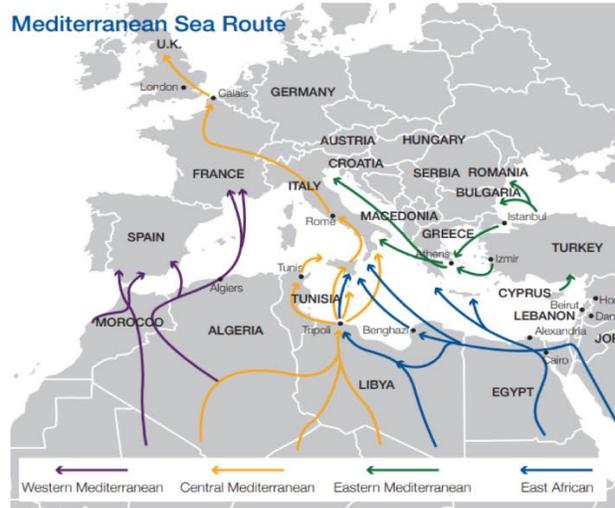
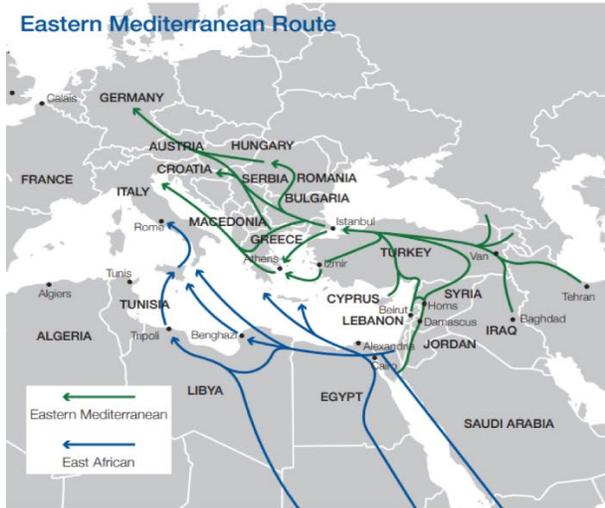
Refugee Resettlement destination ministries in San Francisco Bay Area and Clarkston, Georgia (outside of Atlanta). Set up partnerships between refugee families and local churches for aid, support, and community building so new refugees can more quickly integrate into their host communities. Match jobs with skills and provide integration opportunities.

Media Presence: through a web-based journal, social media, and podcasts, identify and lift up stories of how the church is engaging with migrants/refugees along the way, how they are being received in destination countries, what contributions they are making, and what obstacles they are facing. As the migration/refugee journey is humanized with direct church/ministry involvement, solutions will arise to help restore order at borders and along the way. Seeing migrants/refugees as a mass threat only increases a sense of chaos and disorder. Seeing them as human beings in need (which the church can help promote), enables local and national governments to better engage migrants/refugees according to their God-given dignity and potential contributions. Millions can be reached through this approach.

Policy Advocacy: activate network of churches/ministries and stories through media to advocate for better treatment of migrants/refugees according to human needs and potential and for good and humane border solutions that encourage order, security, and proper, lawful processes for migration. Order/security is needed for human flourishing along with humanitarian/ministry emphasis that treats migrants/refugees with dignity.

Resources Needed: projects are ready to be built, supported, and activated now by infusing funds with program outcomes and metrics for observation. As each site is identified and/or established, data will be used to refine approaches and develop outcomes that protects and creates order out of chaos. Any financial or human resources can be used to facilitate this work.

Global Context



Multiplication Around the World: The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how interconnected and resilient our world has become. Travel restrictions resulting in unprecedented immobility around the world were only temporary and events such as the Ukrainian and Afghan crises are reversing that trend, with refugees from these countries potentially to raise the stock of international migrants and refugees to around 286 million in 2022. There is the need to also identify and implement similar projects in other regions of Africa, Asia, and Europe. (World Bank Group, KNOMAD, *A War in A Pandemic*, 2022).

