

Guess Who Is Coming To Worship



May 8, 2022
Ann Barnard Ball
New Hope Community Services

Today we welcome Ann Barnard Ball, director of **New Hope Community Services** in Surrey. New Hope is one of our Fellowship Pacific partner agencies. They provide welcome, hospitality, assistance, and housing to newcomers to Canada. **Click** on the logo below to go to the New Hope website to learn more and view videos.



New Hope owns and operates a thirteen-unit apartment building in Surrey, BC and partner with community agencies to help refugee families access resources they may need.



I have asked Ann to help us think about ways in which we can impact our world through ministry to newcomers

Some further reading from *Refuge Reimagined* by Mark Glanville and Luke Glanville (IVP, 2021)

THE STRANGER IN THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

In this chapter we examine Deuteronomy's urgings of the Old Testament people of God to embrace the "stranger" as kin. Deuteronomy's concern to protect the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow is well known (e.g., Deut 24:19-22). But by the sheer number of the book's references to the first member of this triad, the stranger (the noun appears twenty-two times), it seems that widespread displacement was a particularly pressing social concern of that place and time. In ancient times people who had been displaced, wrenched by war or other crises and hardships from their lands and kinship groupings, were in real danger of exposure and starvation.

Such people were often obliged to offer themselves as the cheapest of cheap labor simply in order to survive. They were often exploited and abused. A Babylonian proverb reflects this reality: "A resident alien in another city is a slave." For these most vulnerable strangers, the only real hope for a future was the prospect of adoption into a new kinship grouping: "The landless and their families needed to be integrated into the clans."³ Renowned Old Testament scholar Nadav Na'aman puts it well:

Traditional society in Judah was based on family solidarity, on the leadership of the elders and notables, and its economy rested primarily on land. Integrating into such a traditional society was a major hurdle for displaced people who had been torn from their own former family structures and had neither land nor means of production to provide them with self-sufficient subsistence.

Israel's very identity as a nation is invoked in what is perhaps the most famous of Deuteronomy's edicts on this matter: "You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut 10:19 NRSV). (page 26



HUMAN MOVEMENT AND GOD'S MISSION

One argument often made in favor of welcoming refugees is that through human migration God is bringing unreached people right onto our doorstep, in the West. While we are used to beseeching God to send missionaries out from the West, God is now sending migrants here – a ready harvest for the gospel. How foolish it is, then, for Christians to sour this opportunity for the gospel by putting up barriers against newcomers!

There is an important truth to this argument, and yet there is also a deeper historical reality. In our lifetime, the axis of global Christianity has shifted completely. Today, around half to two-thirds of Christians live in the Global South and East. In fact, Western nations only contribute 15 percent of the global church today.

Missiologist Lamin Sanneh estimated that the Western church dwindles by 4,300 people per day.⁶ Churches from the Global South and East contribute the majority of cross-cultural missionaries. These churches also tend to be more theologically orthodox than Western churches, which have been corroded by consumerism and secularism.

For this reason, we need to shift how we see diasporic communities: these are often God's own people on the move! And these diasporic communities are being used by God to revitalize the church in North America, Australia, and Europe. Throughout history, God has been renewing and revitalizing the church from the margins. The Holy Spirit is especially active there.

In Europe, for example, Christian refugee communities from the Middle East are being used by God to bring life to formerly stagnant churches. Churches that serve these newcomers are experiencing renewal while churches that ignore the opportunity often remain moribund. As Sam George and Miriam Adeney state, "Christian mission is a boundary-breaking phenomenon, diffusing across cultures and geographies relentlessly."

For this reason, forced displacement has always played a key role in shaping and renewing the church. A foremost historian of mission, Andrew Walls, concludes: "Migration is a more significant factor in Christian history than the Reformation itself." (pages 103-104)