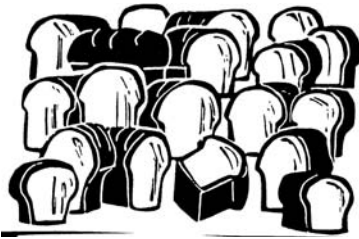


Broken Bread

Newsletter of Social Ministries for Peace & Justice, Des Moines Presbytery
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Something's Different!

Broken Bread has a new look, thanks to new postal regulations and rates. Thanks indeed—for causing us to re-think our traditional format as well as our purpose.

The Social Ministries Task Force will be using upcoming issues of **Broken Bread** to re-introduce readers to the work of the Task Force, and to share ideas and inspiration.

The Task Force is charged...to equip local congregations and sensitize their members to the Gospel's call for God's people to promote social justice and peace through education and advocacy. To that end, we will highlight in each issue one of the areas of social ministry on which we focus our efforts.

We hope you will let us know how we are doing and what we can do better.

This issue: Refugees & Immigrants

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What Is It?

Preached by the Rev. Dr. David Madsen, pastor of Cottage Grove Avenue Presbyterian Church, Des Moines, Iowa, at the 478th Meeting of Presbytery, November 10, 2009

Exodus 16:4-21, Acts 20:7-12

I am a child of Iowa. This means that when it comes to local food, I know about corn on the cob. I know that the best way to eat corn on the cob is to start the water boiling on the stove while you rush out to the garden, select a tender ear, and then race back to the kitchen as fast as you can run shucking the ear as you go, then toss it in the water for no more than 2 minutes, slab some butter and salt on it, and you have a tasty treat fit for royalty. I know what a tenderloin is and I know that a regulation tenderloin must extend beyond the edge of the bun by at least 2 inches on every side. I know what an Iowa Chop is, I know what a corn dog is, and I know that Iowa is the number one state in America for the consumption of Jello. And I

know we call soft drinks “pop” and not “soda”.

As a child of Iowa, one American food I have not eaten very often is grits. I don't know that much about grits. I know there are cheese grits, buttered grits, grits with pieces of crisp bacon stirred in. I know that, like oatmeal and mashed potatoes, there are instant grits and slow cooking.

People who live in the South think grits are like manna. They are both fine, flaky things that are absolutely no good as leftovers. “Each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day,” God told Moses. One day's worth, no more, because manna would not keep. If the people tried to hoard it, it spoiled overnight. In the morning it stank and crawled with worms. When the sun got hot, it melted. So their limit was two quarts of manna per day per person.

The only exception was the Sabbath. Since God meant the people to rest on that day, there was no manna to

be found. God let them gather twice as much as they needed the day before and on that one day a week it lasted two days instead of one. So the people rested on the seventh day and the next day they were back at it again, living one day at a time by the providence of almighty God. There has been a good bit of speculation over the years about exactly what manna was. The Bible says it was "*like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey*" (Exodus 16:31) The name comes from the Hebrew phrase *mawn hu*. What does *mawn hu* mean? Hint, it's the title of the sermon. Manna means "What is it?"—because that is the question the Israelites are reported to have asked one another when they found it on the ground that first morning. Manna was a blessing—abundance at the table.

In America, with all of our abundance, we say God has blessed us. Sometimes I wonder if the word "blessed" is the right word. It seems to me that a blessing implies receiving a goodness which is deserved. In the Beatitudes Jesus said "Blessed are the merciful" because it is a good thing to be merciful. "Blessed are the pure in heart," because it is a good thing to be pure in heart "Blessed are the peacemakers," because it is a good thing to be a peacemaker.

Maybe as a pastor I should not admit this, but there are very few people in the Bible I can identify with. Perhaps the only person I can actually identify with in the whole New Testament is the kid named Eutychus, talked about in Acts 20, who was forced by his parents to go to church because a world famous old windbag named Paul was in town. You Greek scholars know that the name *Eutychus* means lucky -- judge for yourself. Eutychus sat up in the window--to gross everybody out, I guess--and went to sleep on Paul, and fell down three stories onto the ground.

Eutychus makes me think of the role of luck in our lives. Some countries have an over-abundance of food, in other countries, people are starving. What is the role of luck? Like, if you are lucky enough to be born in a clean hospital and well off, and you get a dynamite job starting at 100 thou, that's different from the kid who was born in a Sudanese town where the Muslims are at war with your people—and where food as well as guns become weapons of war. It seems some people have luck on their side and others don't. That is, some people have negative luck, such as being born on the wrong side of the tracks or the wrong side of a border separating two countries. Negative luck is being born vulnerable to religious and

/or racial persecution. Negative luck is being born into poverty, even in this country. Negative luck means born into the middle of a war zone.



One of our elders, Dhan Kueth, wrote an essay about growing up in Sudan:

When I was in my country of Sudan, I went to church four times per week, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday for choir practice and Sunday for worship. As a 12-year-old boy, religious spirituality didn't mean much to me at that time. Soon after, the war broke out in Sudan between the Arabs, Muslim North and the Christian South. The first thing that came to my mind was who can help? And I said, "God." In wartime, whatever I did, I prayed first. In drinking a glass of water, I would pray first, eating any food, going to bed, waking up in the morning, I would pray first. It seems like a lot of praying, but in wartime, it was not a lot of praying. The reason for praying during these times was it was one way I could be sure that I would be able to complete drinking my glass of water without a soldier kicking me if I happen to be outside or

even inside our gate. There was not a way I could be sure the night would go by without a soldier knocking on my house door. There was no way I could be sure the day would pass or I could walk for five minutes without a soldier stopping me and asking me where I was going or where I was coming from in my home town. In my hometown, I could not stand and talk to my friend(s) for more than four minutes without a soldier(s) asking us what we were talking about. Answering the soldiers' questions wrongly might end you in the station where criminal investigations were conducted. Therefore, praying was much needed for safety issue concerns. One thing I remember about the war, and I will never forget, is when my two classmates and another boy tried to escape from our town to the village. Before reaching the village, the authorities caught them and brought them back to the town. My former classmates were 13 at the time and the other boy was 16. They were all beaten and sent to jail. As soon as I saw the boys with the soldiers, I knew something was going to happen to them. I went inside my room, closed the door and prayed. I said, "God, save the lives of these boys." I knew only God could save the lives of these boys. Nobody else could save them. When people lose the hope, the only thing

to remember is God. At midnight, four police officers called the 16-year-old boy out from the jail. The other boys knew something was going to happen to him. In the morning, the next thing we knew was that the boy was bleeding to death and there was nothing anyone could do to save his life. One week before I left [Sudan], four military jets came and dropped eight bombs on our villages. 300 people were killed, 100 of them children. After the four military jets left the villages, I went to the church with other choir members to pray. My prayer was for protection. I prayed, "God, protect me and my people from our enemies who hate us because of who we are and because we believe in you, God."



In contrast to the refugee experience, most of us in this room -- like Eutychus-- are lucky. The irritation for me comes when the lucky ones stand up and thank God for smiling on them while, by implication, God's back is turned on the poor or those born in a foreign country. I think that the unfettered rule of wealth

and the habit of deference to the rule of wealth is a fundamental challenge to Christian people. It absolutely violates the essence of Christian beliefs in the common table, shared abundance, and a place under the sun for every child of God. Given the vast wealth and power that have accumulated in the hands of a small and self-serving corporate elite, which pays itself proportionately more and pays workers proportionately less than in any other Industrialized democracy, I have to remember the words of Franklin Roosevelt in 1939.

My fellow Americans, progress is not measured by how much we add to the abundance of those who already have a great deal, but rather by how much we do for those who have too little.

This should call us to take more time than we usually do to consider our own positions of privilege in the world, positions that are based on nationality or race or sex, or on financial, military or political power. We will then realize that it is more than luck that makes things the way they are, and perhaps we will ask ourselves what we might do to engage the powers that perpetuate injustices in our society and world.

Of course the abundance of food is only a metaphor for the abundance of living

bread that Jesus offers us. We grow obese on earthly bread. What courage does it take to eat heavenly bread? I enjoy taking photographs of people at the church which I print and give to them as gifts. An older man in our congregation asked me if I would take a picture of him during worship; he wanted to send it back home. I said, "Sure, I would be glad to." But I did ask him why he wanted to send a picture of himself in worship back home. He told me that several years ago while he was in worship, the soldiers came in, dragged him out to the street and beat him. He was then taken to the jail where he was imprisoned and tortured for a few years! He wanted this picture of himself in worship to send home to tell the people "I am still in worship. I am still at the table." Now he is in the house, now he is at the table, now he shares in the abundance of the table.



Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the

bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."



Who Are the New Iowans?

Adapted from The New Iowans, A Companion Book to the PBS Miniseries The New Americans, 2003, Iowa Center for Immigrant Leadership and Integration, University of Northern Iowa

Welcoming immigrant and refugee newcomers is an Iowa tradition. Iowa is a state of immigrants, and without immigration there would be no Iowa as we know it today.

Refugees are forced to leave their home countries because of war, environmental disasters, political persecution and/or religious or ethnic intolerance.

European immigrants settled in Iowa in the 1800s and early 1900s and created its communities, churches, mosques, synagogues, schools and social institutions. They were also the workers who made Iowa one of the world's most

important agricultural and manufacturing economies.

Immigrant and refugee newcomers in Iowa often came from European countries like Denmark, Norway, Germany, Italy, Greece and the former Czechoslovakia. There were also influxes of African Americans in the early and mid parts of the 20th century. But by 2000 most immigrants and refugees came from other parts of the world—especially Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Balkans. In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, we welcomed Tai Dam and other Southeast Asian refugees. In the 1990s, the number of Latino newcomers in Iowa grew rapidly. Iowa has also experienced growth in its Bosnian, Sudanese and Somali refugee populations.

Immigrants contributed to Iowa's population growth between 1990 and 2000. Iowa's population grew by 5.4 percent to nearly 2.9 million. About two-thirds of this growth was due to immigration, particularly by the arrival of Latino newcomers. In the 1990s the Latino population grew by 153 percent to 83,000. By 2000 Latinos became the state's largest minority population, outnumbering African-Americans by more than 20,000.

Iowa's Growing Foreign-Born Population

The majority of Iowans were born in the United States,

and most were born in Iowa. However, the number of residents born in other countries more than doubled between 1990 and 2000.

- In 1990 there were 43,316 foreign-born people in Iowa or 1.6% of the state's total population. By 2000 there were 91,085 (3.1%) foreign-born residents.

- Only 19,273 Iowa residents entered the U.S. between 1980 and 1990, but 52,335 Iowa residents came to the U.S. over the next decade.

- In 1990 there were 23,324 non-citizens residing in Iowa. In 2000 there were 61,134 non-citizens.

- Between 1995 and 2000 alone, the Census Bureau estimates that more than 28,000 foreign-born people arrived in Iowa directly from their home nations.



Where Do the New Iowans Come From?

There has been a dramatic shift in terms of the home regions of newcomers in Iowa. In the 1990 census, 42.8 percent of foreign-born Iowans came from Asia, such as Tai Dam and Vietnamese refugees, and only 13.9 percent came from Latin America. But in the 2000 census, 36% of

foreign-born Iowans were from Latin America. In Iowa's Hispanic/Latino population (which includes Hispanics born in Iowa and the United States) the largest group (61,154 or 74%) came from Mexico. Others came from Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama and other Latin American nations.

According to the Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services, refugees settled in Iowa came from Sudan, Ivory Coast, Somalia and other African nations, Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, Vietnam, Cambodia and other parts of Southeast Asia, Iraq, Haiti, Cuba and Bosnia and other places in the Balkans. Between 1975 and 1999 nearly 22,000 refugees were settled in Iowa. Between 1997 and 2002 alone 7,441 refugees were settled in Iowa with the most (5,383) coming from the former Yugoslavia. Several thousand more refugees came to the state as "secondary migrants" who were initially resettled in other states but then moved to Iowa.



Welcoming the Sojourner

By Nan Arnold, Intern at the Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church (USA), November - December 2009 newsletter

...the strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. - Leviticus 19: 33-34

Throughout the scriptures God consistently reaffirms the idea of strangers being welcomed into heart and home. Indeed, in the New Testament as well, Jesus says that we must welcome the stranger, for "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me" (Matthew 25:40). The God of the displaced, the exploited, the down-trodden, the oppressed, the undocumented, and the migrant calls on Christians to welcome the strangers among us.



In fact, the 218th General Assembly passed several resolutions and actions that will contribute to the church's role in seeking justice for the sojourners within our midst. As Congress gets closer and closer

to passing comprehensive immigration reform, this deep understanding of welcoming the stranger will be vital to the Church's discussion concerning the issue.

Immigration laws determine who may enter and reside in the United States, how long each person may stay and when they are required to leave. Current US immigration law states that any immigrant residing in the country under permanent resident status or who has naturalized citizenship can apply for visas for their immediate family members (spouse, children, siblings, parents). Yet, under this current system, a backlog of petitions has developed and has resulted in a slow and inefficient process, with families sometimes being separated for decades.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has joined a broad group of other denominations, religions, and faith-based organizations to develop an Interfaith Platform on Humane Immigration Reform. Its principles are embodied in the Reunited Families Act (S. 1085), introduced in May 2009, and co-sponsored by Sens. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), and Charles Schumer (D-NY). The late Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) was also a co-sponsor. The bill was introduced because, unless there is substantial reform

of the immigration system in this country, the situation will only worsen as families continue to be separated and the backlogs increase.

The Platform supports family unity by advocating: a procedure for undocumented migrants to earn legal status and citizenship; protecting workers' rights; offering ways of entry for new migrants; facilitating immigrant integration into American society; restoring due process protections and reforming detention center policies; and aligning the enforcement of these immigration laws with humanitarian values.

S. 1085 would:

- Recapture immigrant visas lost to bureaucratic delay, by allowing unused employment-based visas and family-sponsored visas from 1992-2007 and in future years and letting them "roll over" to the next year. This would reduce the current visa backlogs and would exempt immediate relatives from the cap on the number of immigrant visas;

- Reclassify spouses and minor children of lawful permanent residents as immediate family;

- Change per-country immigrations limits from 7 to 10% of total admissions to address the fact that some countries have long backlogs of visa applications;

- Increase the government's discretion and flexibility in dealing with provisions that bar particular individuals from leaving and re-entering on a visa, therefore encouraging family unity;

- Allow immediate relatives, family-sponsored immigrants, and recipients of employment-based visas to collect on a filed visa petition or be able to adjust their status on the basis of a petition that has been filed before the death of a sponsoring relative; and

- Exempt certain Filipino World War II veterans from the immigration visa limit.

Ultimately, this bill would help foster strong communities within the United States as families increase the success of assimilation and quality of life, by allowing immigrants to add more fully to the social and economic development of this country.

The Postville Story

From the plenary message by Sr. Mary McCauley BVM, at Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Washington, DC, March 19-22, 2010

I carry within my heart the 389 men and women who were arrested, as well as everyone else affected by the immigration raid that took place at Agriprocessors, the kosher meat

packing plant in Postville, Iowa on May 12, 2008.

My deepest hope is that the Postville Story will have the power, not only to transform hearts, but ultimately to transform our current immigration laws.

A passage in the Book of Revelation points us in this direction: *Whoever has ears ought to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.* (Rev. 3: 22)

My firm conviction is that the Spirit is speaking to us through the Postville Story, as well as through countless other heart-breaking stories of our immigrant brothers and sisters.

The Postville Story is the story of a long and difficult journey of people from Mexico and Guatemala, who left their countries in order to feed their families, educate their children, provide medicine for seriously ill parents and/or children, and ultimately bring life and wholeness to people they loved.

The Postville Story is a story of hope and love; of disappointment and fear; of imprisonment and waiting; of courage and compassion. It tells of a journey that began in hope and ended in tragedy. My hope is that the journey that seemed to end in tragedy will lead to transformation.

A few days before the raid we heard rumors that there

would be one at Agri-processors. At 10:03 on Monday, May 12, 2008 I received a phone call from our St. Bridget Hispanic Minister. His words are imbedded in my memory: "It's no rumor... the helicopters are here."



I immediately left my desk at St. Patrick's in Monona, one of the other parishes I served and drove 15 miles to Agriprocessors. What I thought I could do I do not know. I simply wanted the people to know that we cared about them and that the St. Bridget's Faith Community was here for them. Did I see any of them? Of course not...all I saw were helicopters, ICE agents armed with guns, State Patrol Officers, Sheriff Cars, local police, journalists, plus a number of very concerned and frightened Postville residents.

I was told that had I been inside the plant I would have heard people shouting, "*La Migra! La Migra! Immigration! Save yourself, if you can!*" Some ran. Some tried to hide. Others stood paralyzed and followed the harsh directives of ICE. They heard

themselves called "rats." They were searched, shackled on their wrists, ankles and waist, lined up and tied to fences. Fear and anguish pervaded their minds and hearts. They had to be thinking *Will I ever again see my children or spouse? And what will happen to my family now that I will not be able to provide money for food, rent or medical bills?*

After an hour of standing outside the plant I returned to St. Bridget's Church to discover a group of women huddled together with their children. A young boy approached me and said: "*Can our friends come too?*" My spontaneous response was: "*Of course they can ...tell anyone who is afraid or alone to come to St. Bridget's.*"

Little did I know what those words would mean. By 7:00 that evening over 400 men, women and children were pouring into St. Bridget's. They came to be with friends and family members. They came to see who had or had not been detained. They were too afraid to be alone for fear that ICE officials might come to their homes. They came trusting that the Church and the Postville community would guide and help them at this most horrible time in their lives.

Despite the trauma of the day, to be at St. Bridget's on that Monday evening was to

see humanity at its best: people bringing food, blankets, pillows, games, toothbrushes. To be there was also to see what happens when the law of the land does not provide a means for our 21st century immigrants, to “*regularize their status in our country.*” We accept their labor—we need their labor—but we do not accept their presence. Instead we call and treat them as criminals. The tragedy of Postville screams for our compassion, our attention and our involvement in immigration reform.

To understand the horror and the power of the Postville Story it helps to know the people. The first person I’d like you to know is Pedro, who was 12 at the time of the raid. On the Thursday following the raid I met him and said: “Pedro, How are you?” He responded, “I am sad, very sad because they have taken away my mother.” This is the same child who described the day of the raid with these words: “*That day scarred my heart forever!*”

I’d also like you to be aware of the 42 women and 3 men who following the raid walked the streets of Postville with GPS devices on their ankles. They were arrested on the day of the raid but were released with electronic tracking devices so that they could care for their children. They were

not able to work and were totally dependent on charity in order to feed and care for their families. Each week they came to St. Bridget’s, often with tears in their eyes, and asked to have their rent, utility, phone or medical bills paid. They did not want to ask for charity. They wanted to work.

On the days immediately following the raid these women were so embarrassed and humiliated that they did not want anyone to see that they had tracking devices on their ankles. They would pull their slacks down so no one could see...but on the Sunday following the raid when we joined many other concerned people for a prayer and walk in Waterloo, where the interrogations had taken place, they rolled their slacks up, stood tall and carried signs that read: *We are not criminals...We came to work...We came to feed our families...We are mothers.* I call these women the “Rosa Parks” of our broken immigration system.

Another story is that of a young man named Jesus, whom I first met the day that Rigoberta Menchu visited Postville. He offered testimony describing his experience of the raid and his five months in jail. It was difficult to listen to him tell of the harsh treatment he received from the ICE officials; of how he was

kicked to the ground and beaten; of how they were often called rats, made fun of, shackled and searched, the latter causing great humiliation every time he was moved from one jail to another.

He described the anguish in his heart when he feared he would never again see his wife or 3-month-old daughter. He told about being in solitary confinement for ten to twelve days. He told about sharing a jail cell with murderers, burglars, rapists. He found this very hard for he knew his only offense was to work without proper documentation.

Another story is Rosanna and her 2-year-old daughter, Estefana, who was born in the United States. Rosanna described the raid this way: “*They pointed a gun at me....they told me not to move. I cried and thought of my daughter, wondering what would happen to her.*”

In order to care for her daughter Rosanna was released with an ankle bracelet, then deported to Guatemala. In a brief film made a year after the raid she sadly notes: “*Since returning to Guatemala I see how my daughter has stopped growing. I had no way to get money so I had to stop giving her milk.*”

Recently I saw a play about the Postville Raid performed by six men who were

arrested, served their five months in jail and then were required to remain in the Postville area to serve as witnesses at forthcoming trials. After the play a woman asked:

What advice would you give to other Guatemalan people who desire to come to the United States in order to make enough money to feed their families or to build a house or to pay for medical bills?

A twenty-one year old single man replied: *"I would tell them not to come. It is too dangerous, too risky and I would never want any one of my friends or family members to experience the pain and humiliation that I experienced in the United States."*

Other immigrants (especially those with families) have responded differently. They say, *"Conditions in our home country are so bad. There is so much poverty that I would tell them to risk it and to come. When your children are starving you have to do whatever you can to help them to live."*

What is the Spirit saying to the Churches? Do we have ears to hear? Do we have the courage to act?

These stories illustrate only some of the layers of heartaches connected with the Postville Story.

- one heartache has to do with the circumstances that

forced them to come to the United States in the first place;

- another involves the way some were treated when they got here;

- another with the way they were treated at Agriprocessors;

- another with the alleged abuses they experienced during the raid (physical, verbal and mental);

- another with the original charge of aggravated identity theft, a felony that they did not understand;

- another with the abuses during the pre-court detention in Waterloo and how they were forced into their plea agreements;

- and another with the dropping of the immigration charges against Sholom Rubashkin, the manager of Agriprocessors, hence preventing the witnesses to tell their story in a court of law.

All their stories are stories of people seeking wholeness, seeking life, seeking justice, seeking equality. All of their stories are sacred; all of their stories have the power to transform.

While Pedro and Jesus and Rosanna were living their stories we who were responding to those affected by the raid were living our story. We received both support and criticism. The support came in the form of

people. They brought food, prepared meals, played with the children; doctors, nurses, counselors, teachers and lawyers came to offer help and many sent financial aid.

We also received criticism. People tried to warn me that I could be in serious trouble for *"harboring illegals."* In all honesty I was never afraid. I never second-guessed myself nor did anyone else on our staff for we were doing what we knew was right. We were responding to people who were traumatized and terrorized. We were trying to give them a safe haven when our government, because of our flawed and outdated immigration system, was treating them as criminals.

News reporters often asked: *Do you support the breaking of a law?* My response was and continues to be: *I do not support the breaking of a law but I wholeheartedly support reviewing a law when it is not in accord with the values of our country or it is no longer meeting the need of the day* for I knew that the law of love and justice deep within the human heart must at all times direct our thoughts, words and actions.

A number of passages from Scripture gave us courage and direction. In particular a verse from Psalm 105, *"Look to God's strength... seek to serve God con-*

stantly,” was always on our lips and in our hearts. What else could we do? There was no blueprint to follow for a response to the needs of 389 people, their families and friends who had been arrested in one of the largest, gravely unjust and harsh raids that had occurred to date in the history of the United States. There was only one thing to do. We had to follow our hearts; trust the presence of our God; and be confident that we would be given the wisdom and courage we needed in order to “*defend the rights of the little people.*”

As the days and weeks progressed we were also very aware of the words in Deuteronomy. (Dt. 24:14): “*Never exploit a poor and needy wage-earner, whether one of your community or a foreign resident living in your town.*”

Many of the people who came to Postville in search of a better life were in fact exploited. One woman reflected: *My name is Elida. I am from Guatemala. I have two children...We came here to make a living. We came to work, but when we worked they exploited us. We did not have an option, we could not complain because we needed the money. They need the work of our hands and then they do this to us.*

Exploitation emerges repeatedly in the immigrants’

story. For example, in the documentary film entitled: “Guatemala: A Tale of Two Villages” we hear the story of man arrested on his very first day of work at Agri-processors, charged with identity theft, jailed and deported. Reflecting on his experience he said: *This is a sad story. It never ends. You can never forget the day they catch you. When you return home with your family more in debt than when you left you feel you have failed!*

I can’t help but ask: “*Has he failed or have we failed?*”

We cannot permit the Postville Story or any other story about our struggling immigrant brothers and sisters to become mere footnotes in our history books; rather they must become dynamic forces for change.

We who have ears to hear...let us listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

WATCH
“Guatemala:
A Tale of Two Villages”
on line at

www.iptv.org/video/detail.cfm/4724/row_20090808_guatemala_tale

Reforming Family Immigration

*Lutheran Immigration and
Refugee Service Fact Sheet*

In recent years heightened immigration enforcement has caused hardship on American communities and families, often separating young children from their parents. In addition, hundreds of thousands of family members are waiting in line for visas to reunite with their close family members. In some cases, close family members may wait more than two decades for visas.



How does the immigration system unite families?

The current immigration system permits U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to petition for their close family members to join them in the United States. Based on the closeness of the family relationship and whether the petitioner is a U.S. Citizen or legal permanent resident, waits can be as little as months or as long as 22 years.

How many visas are available for families?

Every year the government can allocate as many as 480,000 family visas, but it cannot exceed this cap. As a result, it is estimated that there are over 4 million people waiting to receive family visas.

How does our immigration system separate families?

The Department of Homeland Security regularly apprehends individuals through immigration enforcement actions, places them into detention, and deports them to their country of origin. Many deportation actions impose tremendous hard-ship on families that could be grounds for leniency. But

federal immigration laws and policies limit the ability of immigration officials to give due consideration to such cases.

How can we improve the immigration system to protect family unity?

An increase in the availability of family visas would ensure the timely reunification of families and more flexibility in immigration laws to help keep families together. Legislation such as the Reuniting Families Act (S.1085/H.R.2709) and the Humane Enforcement and Legal Protection for Separated Children Act (H.R.3531) include family unity reforms that should be included in comprehensive immigration reform.

Families by the Numbers

22.75 years

Current wait for family visas for siblings of U.S. citizens (Department of State, 2009)

6.5 years

Current wait for visas for spouses and minor children of legal permanent residents (DOS, 2009)

4.9 million

Estimated number of U.S. citizen children who have non-citizen parents (Urban Institute, 2009)

108,000

Number of parents of U.S. citizen children who were deported between 1998 and 2007 (DHS, 2009)

GRAINS OF TRUTH

FEEDING SHEEP

He said, "Feed my sheep."

There were no conditions:

Least of all, Feed my sheep if they deserve it.

Feed my sheep if you feel like it.

Feed my sheep if you have any leftovers.

Feed my sheep if the mood strikes you.

if the economy's OK...

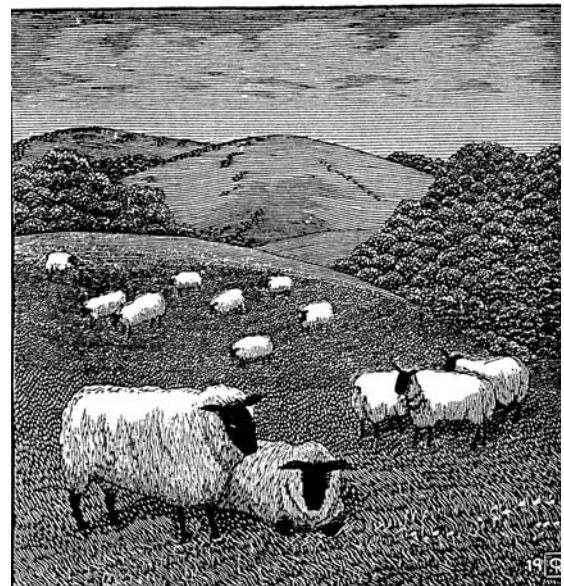
if you're not too busy...

No conditions...just, "Feed my sheep."

Could it be that God's Kingdom will come when each lamb is fed?

We who have agreed to keep covenant are called to feed sheep

even when it means the grazing will be done on our own front lawns.



Broken Bread

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