



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

TIME FOR JUSTICE!

Migrants as Neighbours

God's people are always on the move, both physically and spiritually. God's people have been sojourners, resident aliens, wanderers in the desert and exiles. God identified with such wanderers and strangers. Luke tells us that Jesus had no place to lay down his head. (Luke 9:58)

Some people migrate to continue their education or to improve their economic situation. Others migrate because of poverty, violence, unstable political situations.

Global migration compels us to ask who my neighbour is and how to effectively minister to the needs of migrants. Showing hospitality acknowledges needs that are physical, emotional and spiritual. Do we receive the strangers with suspicion, even fear? Or do we welcome them with friendship and hospitality?

Showing hospitality to newcomers in the name of Christ transforms fear and suspicion into hope and solidarity. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) In Christ we are one community.

Time for Justice! is based on the report of the International Affairs Committee to the 133rd General Assembly, June 2007. The full report is found in Acts & Proceedings 2007. **Time for Justice!** may be read as a Minute for Mission, or printed as a bulletin insert or newsletter article to inform members of the international concerns of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and ask for their prayerful consideration of these matters.

TEXT: D. Kraay and J. Hilliard PRODUCTION: K. Masterton PRAYER: W. Paterson



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Prayer for Migrants as Neighbours

Leader: We come together in prayer, remembering the migrants who live among us. Scripture tells us that God's people, including Jesus, have always been wanderers and exiles.

People: TODAY, PEOPLE ARE MIGRANTS FOR MANY REASONS AND NOT ALWAYS BY CHOICE.

Leader: Migrants live and work in many Canadian communities.

People: BUT THEY ARE OFTEN TREATED WITH EXTRA CAUTION AND SOMETIMES EVEN FEAR.

Leader: We forget what Jesus taught us about being neighbours and welcoming the stranger in our midst.

People: WE JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS AND SOMETIMES HAVE DIFFICULTY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT BOTH FRIENDS AND STRANGERS ALIKE HAVE, AS WE DO, FEELINGS AND NEEDS.

Leader: Transforming God, teach us again to be good neighbours, welcoming and accepting of newcomers.

People: GIVE US A SPIRIT OF HOSPITALITY. OPEN OUR EYES TO THE WORLD AROUND US, THAT WE MIGHT HEAR THE VOICES OF OUR GLOBAL BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND SHARE THE HOPE WE KNOW IN YOU.

All: WITH ONE VOICE, WE PRAY TOGETHER. AMEN.

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Migration: a matter of choice?

While some migrants choose to move, others are forced to move. The line between choice and necessity, however, is not always clear. If migrants are displaced within the borders of their homeland, they are called Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs). If a migrant crosses an international border and cannot return home for fear of persecution, they are called refugees.

Armed conflicts force people to migrate. Work opportunities decline with the deterioration of institutions and political instability. Human activity and natural environmental disruptions also cause migration. People leave traditional habitats when disruptions affect food security, shelter and access to clean water. Development-induced migration occurs when people, even entire communities, are displaced for purposes of "development." The World Bank estimates that dam construction, urban development, transportation and other infrastructure programs alone displace approximately 10 million people globally each year.

The UN Convention Relating the Status of Refugees offers explicit protection for refugees. IDPs are not protected under international law but are the responsibility of their government. Despite international laws, migrants are vulnerable people. They face exclusion, racism and poverty. Some face great risks during their journeys in search of greater security.

Migrants seek homes and communities in foreign lands, even if it is only for a short period of time. The Christian community is called to be mindful of the plight of migrants. We follow the example of Jesus who so identified with the outsider he said "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matt. 25:35).

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Prayer for Migration: a matter of choice?

Leader: God of the exiled, God of the sojourner, hear our prayers today for those who are away from home by no choice of their own.

People: WE PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN FORCED TO MOVE FOR POLITICAL REASONS, ENVIRONMENTAL DISTURBANCES, LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT, ARMED CONFLICTS, OR SHELTER, FOOD, OR WATER SCARCITY.

Leader: People and animals lose their homes when large, new development projects such as dams take over in the name of 'progress'. Some migrants are internally displaced within their own borders. Refugees are forced to leave their home countries and cannot return for fear of persecution. We pray for all migrants who cannot be at home.

People: WHAT CHALLENGES THEY FACE! WHAT COURAGE THEY MUST HAVE! GOD, HEAR OUR PRAYERS FOR ALL MIGRANTS AS THEY SEEK A SAFE AND SECURE PLACE TO LIVE.

Leader: Give us hearts of compassion to welcome and include these vulnerable sojourners.

All: WE PRAY IN THE NAME OF THE ONE WHO REACHES OUT TO ALL NEWCOMERS AND STRANGERS, JESUS THE MIGRANT. AMEN.

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A Portrait of Migrants

In 2005 approximately 100,000 documented temporary foreign workers entered Canada, about 65% of whom are seasonal and domestic workers. These migrants enter Canada seeking hope and employment, often because they cannot find employment at home.

Migrant workers are a part of many of our communities. Many migrants are seasonal agricultural and live-in care givers. There are undocumented workers employed in the construction and garment industries. They are among the most vulnerable of Canada's poor.

Migrants provide needed services and contribute to the local economy through the goods and services they buy and the taxes they pay. Many support families at home through financial remittances. In 2005 global remittances totaled \$232 billion of which \$167 billion was sent to countries in the global South. This figure represents more money than is offered by the global North to the global South in official development assistance.

We can welcome migrants in our community by:

- Providing a safe place for migrants to become acquainted with Canadian culture and local facilities and opportunities.
- Supporting efforts for migrants to make connections with others of their own language and nationality.
- Offering advocacy and support as they become established, particularly in the areas of housing, employment, education, medical care, legal rights and other social supports.
- Extending hospitality and offering a spiritual community of belonging.

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Prayer for A Portrait of Migrants

Leader: Listening God, we humble ourselves before you remembering people in our communities who do not feel they belong.

People: WE THINK OF MIGRANTS WHO COME TO CANADA AS DOMESTIC AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS, OFTEN FILLING POSITIONS THAT CANADIANS REFUSE TO TAKE.

Leader: We acknowledge the vulnerability of undocumented workers in Canada.

People: THEY LIVE IN FEAR OF BEING CAUGHT AND SENT BACK TO A PLACE WHERE THEY MAY NOT BE ABLE TO FIND A LIVELIHOOD.

Leader: Loving God, we are grateful for the contribution these seasonal and long-term workers make to Canadian communities and the economy.

People: WE ACKNOWLEDGE MIGRANTS WHO ARE SUPPORTING FAMILY MEMBERS AND LOVED ONES FROM AFAR. INSPIRE US, LORD, TO TAKE PRACTICAL STEPS TO LISTEN TO, SUPPORT, HELP, AND ENCOURAGE OUR GLOBAL BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

Leader: Show us how to help them find their way in a new land.

All: IN THE NAME OF JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, AMEN.

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Protecting the Vulnerable: The Migrant Workers' Convention

Migrant workers' rights were first considered by the United Nations (UN) in the 1970s when concerns regarding illegal trafficking in labour were identified. The UN's Economic and Social Council expressed alarm at human trafficking practices and the exploitation of workers. In 1980 a UN working group was established to develop a Convention to address the vulnerability of migrant workers. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families was the fruit of this labour. The Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1990. December 18th is International Migrants' Day.

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families largely reaffirms rights enshrined in other conventions and enhances the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families. In 2005 approximately 100,000 documented temporary foreign workers entered Canada, about 65% of whom are seasonal and domestic workers. Many of these workers are engaged in labour-based employment that nationals will not do. Migrant workers provide needed services in the Canadian work force.

The Migrant Worker's Convention identifies a vulnerable segment of our population and works to ensure that migrant workers are accorded a dignified living. The Moderator of the 133rd GA (2007) wrote to the Government of Canada urging the ratification of the Migrant Workers' Convention. Congregations are asked to remember in prayer December 18th.

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Prayer for Protecting the Vulnerable

Leader: God of the poor and oppressed, we pray today for migrants who are mistreated and taken for granted.

People: WE CONFESS THAT WE ARE NOT ALWAYS MINDFUL AND CONCERNED ABOUT THE WELFARE OF THE OUT-SIDER AND MARGINALIZED IN OUR SOCIETY.

Leader: Thank-you for those who work to protect vulnerable people, and organizations working to increase the protection of vulnerable migrant workers.

People: WE PRAY THAT THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS RATIFYING THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL MIGRANT WORKERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES.

Leader: God of vision, give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to respond to the needs of people in our communities who are living and working far from home.

People: HELP US TO KNOW ALL PEOPLE AS YOU DO AND LOVE THEM AS YOUR CHERISHED CHILDREN. SHOW HOW TO DO JUSTICE, LOVE KINDNESS AND WALK HUMBLLY WITH YOU.

All: MAY WE SEE OURSELVES AS ONE FAMILY, VALUING, RESPECTING AND PROTECTING ONE ANOTHER FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS, IN WHOSE NAME WE PRAY. AMEN.

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