

Blessing the Disenfranchised and Growing your Church

**Through a paralegal ministry to immigrants
available through the Immigration Alliance
and the Free Methodist Church-USA**

Many of the Characters in the Biblical Narrative Were Immigrants

- Abraham
- Immigrant
- Jacob
- Refugee
- Joseph
- Victim of Human Trafficking
- David
- Refugee
- Jesus
- Refugee / Celestial Immigrant

God Recognizes the Immigrant as Particularly Vulnerable, Along with Orphans and Widows

- “The LORD watches over the **alien** and sustains the fatherless and the widow.” (Psalm 146:9)
- “Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the **alien** or the poor.” (Zechariah 7:10)
- “I will be quick to testify against... those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive **aliens** of justice.” (Malachi 3:5)

A Biblical Issue

Christians are Called to Submit to the Law

- “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” (Romans 13:1)
- For the US citizen, there is no conflict between welcoming immigrants and following the law. There is no law that requires us to report undocumented immigrants. In fact, if you call the authorities, unless the person has a warrant for their arrest, the authorities will do nothing about it.

A Missional Opportunity

- Jesus commands us to “make disciples of every nation”
(Matthew 28:19)
- With immigration, the nations arrive at our doorstep, representing an enormous missional opportunity
- Many are already strong believers, who become agents of mission within their own ethnic communities and beyond
- Others arrive with a nominal faith or from entirely unreached people groups & are more open to the gospel than they might be in their home country

A Missional Opportunity

- Research by Dr. Todd Johnson at Gordon-Conwell Seminary suggests that **immigrant congregations are the fastest growing segment of evangelical churches in the U.S.**
- Tim Tennent argues that **“the immigrant population presents the greatest hope for Christian renewal in North America.”**

Who Are These People?

- Immigrants are anyone born in one country but now living in another
- There are about **37 million immigrants** currently living in the U.S., representing about 12% of the total US population
- Of those, approximately
 - 35% are naturalized citizens
 - 33% are Lawful Permanent Residents
 - 2% are in temporary legal status
 - 31% are present unlawfully

Who Are These People?

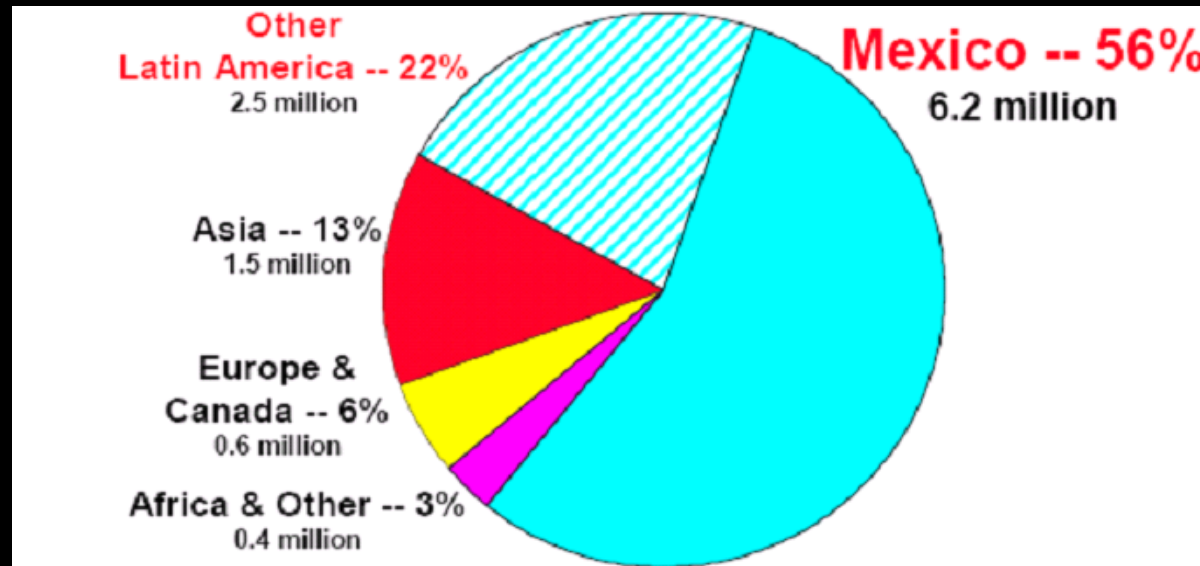
**OF THOSE WHO 12-MILLION PEOPLE WHO ARE HERE
UNLAWFULLY:**

- **Between 40% and 50% of undocumented immigrants entered lawfully, with a non-immigrant visa, but then overstayed;**
- **The rest crossed a border illegally**

Who Are These People?

The 12-Million Undocumented Immigrants...

- Most come from Latin America, but there are also millions of undocumented Asians, Europeans, and Canadians
 - 1 in 5 Korean Immigrants is Undocumented
 - 1 in 6 Filipino Immigrants is Undocumented
 - 1 in 8 Asian Indian Immigrants is Undocumented



Some Common Myths and Misunderstandings about Immigration...

Myth: Undocumented Immigrants do not pay taxes

- Fact: The Social Security Administration estimates that 3 out of 4 undocumented immigrants have payroll, Social Security, and Medicare taxes deducted from their paychecks
- The Social Security Administration has received as much as \$12 billion per year in recent years in withholdings that do not match a valid Social Security number, mostly from undocumented immigrants
- But they are ineligible to benefit from Social Security or Medicare, and from almost all public benefits and services
- Many undocumented immigrants file taxes each year using an “Individual Taxpayer Identification Number” (ITIN)

Some Common Myths and Misunderstandings about Immigration...

Myth: Immigrants are not integrating into our society

- Fact: Immigrants bring strong values and integrate into our communities
 - As compared to native-born US citizens, Hispanic immigrants are:
 - More likely to attend church on a weekly basis
 - More likely to be married and less likely to get divorced
- Immigrants tend to have a very strong work ethic, with labor participation rates amongst undocumented adult males of 96%
- Immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born US citizens, and are significantly less likely to be imprisoned
- Immigrants are striving to learn English; by the second-generation, 88% of Hispanic immigrants are fluent

So What Can WE Do?

- The Free Methodist Church – USA, has teamed with The Immigration Alliance, a subsidiary of World Relief, to offer a “turn-key” program that will allow churches to form and operate an Immigration Legal Ministry.
- An individual does not need to be an attorney in order to practice immigration law. Churches and their volunteers can receive credentialing from the federal Board of Immigration Appeals (“BIA”) and lawfully provide legal advice and assistance through a specific Recognition & Accreditation Process (“RAP”).

The Immigration Alliance

- The Free Methodist Church
- The Wesleyan Church
- Evangelical Covenant Church
- Foursquare Church
- Assemblies of God
- Christian & Missionary Alliance
- Church of the Nazarene
- Anglican Church of N.A.
- Great Commission Churches
- Converge World Wide
- Baptist Convention of New York
- Missionary Church

The Benefits

- The most obvious benefit is that we are serving the disenfranchised and providing for justice to be done.
- There are also benefits to the churches that do this. Churches which have already begun this program are seeing increases in attendance, and new doors opened to share the gospel.
- And churches with immigrants tend to be more engaged in missions and outreach.
- The biggest benefit is that we are obeying our Master, if He lays this vision on His peoples' hearts.

The Program

- It starts with a vision. And volunteers who hear God calling them to meet the need.
- The FMC-USA has teamed with the Immigration Alliance to provide step-by-step guides to churches to become an accredited Immigration Legal Clinic.
- Becoming accredited generally takes 4-6 months.
- What it looks like varies by church, but needs to be carefully spelled out in the beginning.

To Begin...

- **An individual must:**
 - Take a 40-hour course in immigration law (cost: \$500 plus travel if needed)
 - Get 40-hours experience from an established clinic (cost: \$600 plus travel if needed)
 - Take occasional on-going training each year to remain certified (cost: \$100 - \$250 per year)
 - Apply for, and be granted certification by the BIA. (Assistance in all of this is provided by the FMC-USA through the Immigration Alliance)
 - Work for relatively low wages.

To Begin...

A church must provide...

- A private room for counselling & a secure space for locked files
- A legal library, via internet and a few books (cost, \$250 - \$500)
- At least two computers ... one for personnel and one for use by clients (the library)
- Staff or volunteers ... at least the certified paralegal, but some office assistance in making appointments, greeting clients would be good
- Some finances. The church must charge a nominal fee (usually around \$200) for all who use the services. The church cannot make a profit, and is required to contribute at least a small amount to cover costs.

To Begin...

- A church must provide liability insurance
- The church must also apply for certification of facilities by the BI
- And pay for legal oversight with a group of attorneys provided by the FMC-USA through World Relief
 - (cost: \$1,500 per year, although the FMC-USA will pay \$500 of this cost the first year for the first 10 churches to open clinics)

The Concept in Action

- This can be as big or small as the church feels called and God provides.
- For instance, a person who obtains accreditation could do this full-time, or set their own hours. A mom with kids could do it 9 am – 2 pm while the kids are in school. Or someone could do it 3-6 pm. Or whatever hours work.
- “If you build it, they will come.” Once word gets out, people will make appointments. You can determine what you’ll charge, although – again – you cannot make a profit. So one of the first things you’ll want to do is build a budget. The FMC-USA, through the Immigration Alliance, will help you with this.

What Church Clinics will Be Doing

An authorized clinic will...

- Be authorized to give legal advice on immigration-related matters
- Assist individuals in determining the eligibility for opportunities under U.S. immigration law
- Prepare applications for legalization or other immigration benefits
- Represent clients before the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Provide informational sessions on general immigration legal issues
- Provide other relational ministries that connect immigrants to the local church

Do Not Attempt This At Home

- Different states define the practice of immigration law differently. In some states, even filling out an immigration form for someone else can be considered “practicing law”.
- Unauthorized practice of law can have serious consequences for a church and for the immigrant being advised.
- Only attorneys, paralegals, law students working under the supervision of an attorney, and **accredited individuals working for a non-profit organization that has been recognized by the BIA (this program)** can practice immigration law.

Count the Cost – Year One: \$4,500

(Not including any personnel costs)

Individual:

- Training \$ 500
- Shadowing \$ 600
- Ad'l Training \$ 250
- Total costs \$1,350

Plus travel for to locations for training and shadowing

Church:

- Tech Legal Fee \$1,500
- Initial Library \$ 500
- 2 computers \$ 900
- Program Software \$ 300
- Total costs \$3,200

Assuming office space and furnishings are already available

Count the Cost – Subsequent Years: \$2,050

(Not including any personnel costs)

Individual:

- Ad'l Training \$ 250

Church:

- Tech Legal Fee \$1,500
- Program Software \$ 300
- Total costs \$1,800

Benefits to The Local Church

- The church need not be Latino church to do this. In fact, the majority of churches to respond to this need through the Immigration Alliance, so far, are not primarily Hispanic churches.
- The average non-profit legal service clinic handles approximately 250 cases each year. (250 cases x \$200 = \$50,000)
- Based upon an average of just 4 people per case, that would be 1,000 new people introduced to the church, not counting their friends and extended family members.
- The FMC-USA, in its partnership with the Immigration Alliance, can provide information on demographics of foreign-born individuals in each geographic area, and the location of any other church-based clinics.

Conclusion

- According to the 2010 U.S. census there are 40-million foreign-born individuals in the U.S. 22-million of them are non-citizens. Estimates are that 12-million of them are here illegally.
- There is a great need and demand for these services.
- Because they are of such high importance to those who need them, our churches have a unique and powerful opportunity to bless these among us, and to introduce them to our churches and our Savior through the relationships built in this process.
- The FMC-USA is excited to come alongside those churches called to this ministry, and provide coaching, systems, and the required legal team for on-going equipping through the Immigration Alliance.