

Can We Share?



ANDREA JOHNSON/Editor

I have had the privilege of serving in a multicultural church for the past seven years. The relationships with my brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews from other backgrounds

are enriching and irreplaceable.

Knowing they are missionaries wherever God has placed them, they have taught me to pray with warrior-like intensity, especially for lost souls. They never greet me without asking about my family. We laugh at our differences. They don't need to tan. I worry about blinding people if I wear capris. I gained new appreciation for my freedom when I shared their first Fourth of July in America.

The cultural setting of many Bible stories comes alive when I hear stories like that of Mary, a Malawian woman forced to live with her brother-in-law upon the death of her husband, as commanded in Old Testament times. The description of the men of Issachar, "who understood the times and knew what Israel should do" (1 Chronicles 12:32), took on clearer meaning after speaking to a woman "from the islands" whose dad was the one from the village responsible to "know the times." He knew when the fishermen should go out, when to bring the boats back in, and when a storm was coming. Our congregants rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Funerals, weddings, graduations – all are well attended.

Yet my friends have faced staggering challenges. Some have fled wars (barely ahead of the soldiers) and lived in refugee camps. In America, with their atypical accents and demeanor, "fitting in with the crowd" is impossible. Although they know several languages, English may not be one of them. Can you imagine keeping up with

your classmates when studying in an unfamiliar tongue?

Stepping out onto snow or ice for the first time nearly always results in a quick, hard lesson in gravity – funny for the young, but frightening and humiliating for adults. In their home countries, many of our congregants held professional positions. Here, they work two jobs (usually not in their chosen fields) just to make ends meet.

One of the more frustrating challenges is trying to keep their immigration status legal and current. Peter was one of our favorites. If we were short an actor for a drama, he'd take a break from his studies to help. If we needed help cleaning up after a church potluck, he pitched in, always with a smile. Yet two years ago Peter spent Christmas in jail because he had inadvertently worked too many hours for his type of visa. His cell mates and even the police who arrested him were incredulous. Weeks later, when Peter was finally released, they teasingly chided him, "Don't come back until you commit a real crime!" Unable to resolve the immigration issue, he moved back to Ghana. We lost a good citizen and fellow laborer. I miss him.

We struggle to find nursery workers. People are petrified of background checks, not because of intentional wrongdoing, but out of fear someone will discover an error on their paperwork. Understandably, we cannot allow people to purposely invade our borders illegally and exploit our governmental and healthcare systems, yet changes are past due.

Like Abraham, America has been "blessed to be a blessing." I hope we would want to share our faith and our freedoms with those coming to our great nation and be prepared for the blessings God has for us through them.

Andrea Johnson,
Managing Editor

4 THE STRANGER AMONG US

By Paul Canfield

Learn what Open Bible is doing to reach out to immigrants coming into the United States and why the timing is so important. Could these brothers and sisters ignite the next revival?

6 WHY COME TO AMERICA?

By Mike Rasavanh

Having arrived in the United States as a teenager in 1975, Mike reveals his family's struggle to find freedom and his determination to help others searching for the same.

7 COMING TO AMERICA: THE SEED MULTIPLIES

By Dyrrie Francis

An immigrant herself, Dyrrie Francis documents numerous examples of ministers, originally disciplined in their birth lands by American missionaries, planting and pastoring churches here in the United States.

9 WALKING THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

By Nick Venditti

Discover the outcome when Nick Venditti, realizing his near-death episode was a spiritual attack, opted for prayer over surgery.

12 FIRST AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE

By Vince McCarty

Read about this monumental event, bringing together for the first time in Open Bible's history, all of our African field directors.

Plus Much More!