



## Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

### Focus Article:

📖 Waves of Blessing, Waves of Change  
(*Immigration*, pp. 74-83)

### Suggested Article:

📖 Immigrant Churches  
(*Immigration*, pp. 54-62)

### What do you think?

Was this study guide useful for your personal or group study? Please send your suggestions to  
[Christian\\_Reflection@baylor.edu](mailto:Christian_Reflection@baylor.edu).

### Christian Reflection

Center for Christian Ethics  
Baylor University  
One Bear Place #97361  
Waco, TX 76798-7361  
Phone 1-866-298-2325  
[www.ChristianEthics.ws](http://www.ChristianEthics.ws)

© 2008 The Center for Christian Ethics

# Waves of Blessing

Surf's up, brothers and sisters! We can ride this wave of migration to America by seeing that God is in the current, adopting mutually dependent ministry postures alongside immigrants, and realizing their contribution to the vitality of the church and the transformation of secular society.

### Prayer

**Scripture Reading: Leviticus 19:34**

**Responsive Reading: Psalm 107:1-7<sup>†</sup>**

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.

**Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story –  
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,  
those he gathered from the lands,  
from east and west, from north and south.**

Some wandered in desert wastelands,  
finding no way to a city where they could settle.

They were hungry and thirsty,  
and their lives ebbed away.

**Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he delivered them from their distress.**

**He led them by a straight way  
to a city where they could settle.**

### Reflection

The "Second Great Wave" of immigration to America is a complex crisscrossing of many smaller waves. Randy White lives in California where "more Mexicans live in Los Angeles than in any city of Mexico, with the exception of Mexico City and Guadalajara. More Cambodians live in Long Beach than in Phnom Penh. More Filipinos live in Daly City than anywhere outside of Manila. Fresno is the Hmong capital of the world outside of Laos, and Central California is the center of Sikh life in the United States." These diverse newcomers are bringing many changes to North American cities and congregations. And White is convinced they will bring a great blessing.

We can begin to glimpse the wonderful possibilities of this "world in motion," White says, when we ask:

- ▶ *How is God at work within this immigration?* Large-scale political and economic migration somehow "creates a spiritual longing and a thirst for God," White notes. As "people intuitively gravitate toward the city in their vulnerability" they bring "belief systems into close contact in a manner that is illuminating. For many [like the Hong and Lao people] coming from animist cultures this provides concrete and liberating examples of another way to view their own lives."
- ▶ *How can we participate in this aspect of God's Kingdom-building?* Churches not only can address newcomers' immediate needs with ESL classes, training courses, childcare, etc., but also give long-term support by "adopting families and providing economic development, working connections, and networking for the benefit of the immigrant community." As we work in schools, the small businesses we own, the legal profession, the Welfare



## Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Robert B. Kruschwitz, the author of this study guide, directs the Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University. He serves as General Editor of *Christian Reflection*.

© 2008 The Center for Christian Ethics

Department, or the Police Department, we can offer hospitality to immigrants. The basic thing we can do is to correct the “misinformation and erroneous assumptions [about immigration] which are based on politicized and polarized sentiments within the wider culture.”

- ▶ *How must mono-ethnic middle-class congregations alter their outreach strategies?* White echoes Sharon Stanley’s call to “allow immigrants to determine the forms and the strategies best suited to both meet their needs and encourage their potential.” This may include “contextualized worship, interdependent financial relationships, and shared leadership retreats.” Middle-classes can build Christian leadership in immigrant congregations by sponsoring the education of bi-vocational pastors who serve them.
- ▶ *How do immigrants bring theological vitality to the church and transform secular society?* White says, “God loves the culture-centric, segregated, consumerist, comfortable Western church too much to leave it that way,” and brings immigrant “‘voices from below’ to vitalize and renew it.” New Catholic immigrants’ “high view of God” and “reverence” is reshaping a more casual American Christianity, and their “expressive theology and worship [are] heating up more cold and formal versions of faith and practice.” Latino immigrants place a high value on family unity. Immigrants from animist cultures and Pentecostal Christian traditions call the secular culture “to consider the life of the spirit and the presence and relevance of an invisible, nonmaterial world.”

### Study Questions

1. From what countries do immigrants in your community come? What brings these newcomers to your area?
2. In what ways have recent Christian immigrants been a “blessing” to congregations in North America? How can your congregation best support immigrant congregations?
3. How are immigrants transforming North American secular society in a positive way?
4. What amazing contributions did the “First Great Wave” immigrants make to church architecture in Texas, according to Heidi Hornik’s “Immigrant Churches”?

### Departing Hymn: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (verses 1, 2, and 3)

From all that dwells below the skies,  
let the Creator’s praise arise;  
let the Redeemer’s name be sung,  
through ev’ry land by ev’ry tongue.

Eternal are your mercies, Lord;  
eternal truth attends your word;  
your praise shall sound from shore to shore,  
till suns shall rise and set no more.

*Isaac Watts (1674-1748), alt.*

*Tune: DUKE STREET*

† Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, TODAY’S NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. TNIV®. Copyright© 2001, 2005 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan

# Waves of Blessing

## Lesson Plans

| <i>Abridged Plan</i>  | <i>Standard Plan</i>      |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Prayer                | Prayer                    |
| Scripture Reading     | Scripture Reading         |
| Responsive Reading    | Responsive Reading        |
| Reflection (skim all) | Reflection (all sections) |
| Questions 1, 2, and 3 | Questions (selected)      |
| Departing Hymn        | Departing Hymn            |

## Teaching Goals

1. To reflect on how God is at work in the current wave of immigration to North America.
2. To consider how recent immigrants are contributing to the vitality of the church and the positive transformation of secular society.
3. To introduce the work of the Immigration Service and Aid Center (ISAAC) Project in assisting congregations to start and sustain an immigration ministry.

## Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 10-11 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Immigration (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article and suggested article before the group meeting. For the departing hymn “From All That Dwells below the Sky” locate the familiar tune DUKE STREET in your church’s hymnal or on the Web at [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org).

## Begin with an Observation

The life of literature teacher André Jacques (1925-2006) changed forever in 1968 when he accepted a call to lead a student center for refugees and migrants in France. Later, as secretary for migration at the World Council of Churches, “he anticipated many of the challenges which are now seen on the global agenda,” recalls WCC general secretary Samuel Kobia. “He was a defender of human rights and an indefatigable campaigner for the rights of refugees and migrants whoever they were and wherever they came from.” In 1985, Jacques wrote:

Establishing true partnerships with [migrants and refugees] means recognizing and respecting their identity and their capacity. It means helping them to help themselves whenever possible, often by assisting them with the formation of organizations of their own where they can better identify their priorities and find solutions. In other words, it means allowing the uprooted to develop fully, wherever they are, as individuals and as communities.

The individual and collective responsibility of Christians toward aliens is to take measures to enable them again to be *subjects and not objects* of history. By welcoming strangers, which implies considering them as partners, and by taking action in the public arena, the church makes its struggle for justice, God’s will for all, more authentic and credible.

## Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Provide time for each person to pray silently. Conclude by asking God to reveal how he is active in bringing good from the transitions caused by both political and economic migration

## Scripture Reading

Ask a group member to read Leviticus 19:34 from a modern translation.

## **Responsive Reading**

The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

## **Reflection**

The “water” metaphors for immigration—“a Second *Great Wave* of immigration,” “a *rising tide* of immigrants,” “more newcomers than the country can *absorb*,” etc.—usually connote danger and destruction. Randy White cleverly turns them in a positive direction with the metaphor of ocean surfing, where a “great wave” is complex, challenging, and potentially valuable. White’s article focuses on the amazing opportunities God is bringing to the church in North America through recent immigration. Heidi Hornik’s reflection on the “painted churches” of Texas reminds us of the long history of God’s working through the lives of immigrant Christians.

## **Study Questions**

1. Reflect on the country of origin profile of immigrants in your town, region, or state. The United States Census Bureau’s American Community Survey gathers this data for each state and region; this information is presented in useful charts by The Pew Hispanic Center in *A Statistical Portrait of the Foreign-Born Population at Mid-Decade* (2005), available online at [pewhispanic.org/reports/foreignborn](http://pewhispanic.org/reports/foreignborn). Are immigrants drawn to your community because of proximity to their country of origin, transportation corridors (airplane, boat, or automobile routes), historical ties of their people to your region, work in particular industries, etc.?
2. Randy White mentions contributions such as their more joyful and less formal styles of worship, reverent attitudes toward God, appreciation for spiritual community, deepened awareness of the role of suffering in the Christian life, living out their faith without dependence on wealth, and so on. Encourage members to discuss the contributions of specific Christian immigrant communities in your area.  
Are there many foreign-born members in your congregation? If so, what drew them to your Christian community? Does your congregation sponsor an immigrant church if differences of language and customs of worship are a barrier to common worship? Discuss how your congregation might cooperate with other churches and Christian organizations to encourage the immigrant churches in your region.
3. White mentions that Latino immigrants place a high value on family unity, and that Pentecostal Christian immigrants and people from traditions that are animist strongly believe in the nonmaterial world. You might discuss Amitai Etzioni’s view (quoted in *Immigration*, 73): “A large number of immigrants, many from Mexico and other South American countries (and to a lesser extent from Asia), are making the United States more communitarian than it has been in recent decades by fostering a stronger commitment to family, community, and nation, as well as respect for authority and moderate religious-moral values.... Their high intermarriage rates serve as but one example of this positive modification, for through intermarriage Hispanic and Asian immigrants help insure that the most intimate ties—those of family—will prevent American society from breaking down along ethnic lines.”
4. Heidi Hornik describes Saints Cyril and Methodius Church in Shiner, Texas. About the remarkable “painted churches” in Texas she writes, “Their sanctuaries adorned with a surprising profusion of color, these houses of worship are part of the valued and continuing legacy of the Czech and German immigrants—mainly Catholic, but also Brethren and Lutheran—who settled frontier towns like Ammansville and Dubina, High Hill and Praha, Schulenberg and Shiner, West and Fredericksburg, stretching from the Gulf Coast inland to the Hill Country of central Texas.” The Czech immigrants who established Saints Cyril and Methodius Church were in the “First Great Wave” of immigration to America in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The building that Hornik studied—their parish’s second house of worship—was constructed thirty years after the community was founded.  
Have immigrants in the Second Great Wave made similar contributions? Or will these emerge as their immigrant communities become more established in the United States?

## **Departing Hymn**

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison or silently and meditatively as a prayer.