

FIRST AND CENTER
Pastor's Blog
December 18, 2018

I have several colleagues who traveled to the U.S. border near Tijuana last week. They were there to observe the situation, to protest the way migrants and asylum seekers are being treated by ICE, and to provide some assistance to those churches and agencies who are trying to help desperate people. I have contributed money, but have not yet decided to go to the border.



They have told me many stories. What continues to amaze me is the power of hope. Those fleeing violence, gang threats, and the complete collapse of civil and economic systems in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador know that they are not meeting welcoming arms when they cross the border. Why, you wonder, would people come to a place whose government, military, and immigration officers make it so clear they are not wanted and will not be well treated on arrival? It's like going from the frying pan into the fire, as my mother used to say, but for them, this fire is less intense than the fire from which they came. Because they hold to hope.

At this time of year, we remember the reading that we usually skip reading on the Sunday after Christmas because it is too sad and scary. Jesus' parents learned that King Herod was going to be killing all children under two who had been born in Bethlehem to try to eliminate the one predicted to grow up to be king. So, they gathered what they could carry and fled to Egypt on foot. Look at a map. It was not a short walk. They did not know what their reception would be on arrival, and they probably knew no one there.

This is a story lost to us. We don't know who helped them in Egypt, a land whose religion and society differed significantly from theirs. I like to imagine they were received into a town where people welcomed Joseph's skills as a carpenter and brought Mary and her toddler into the community of women.

I would hope the same thing for these desperate families at our border. If you want to go, I can connect you with the New Sanctuary movement (<https://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>) or you can contribute to their efforts to bring love to the border. And pray.

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Minister