

CRISIS AT THE BORDER

2014-2015 MISSION FOCUS
AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

February 2015:
"...Love them as yourself"



Poland Reliquary of Saint Valentine

The Stranger Who Sojourns with You

February is usually a month with a heart drawn around it. There are several stories around who the original St. Valentine was and what he did that began a tradition of demonstrating one's love to another on a particular day. These competing origin stories, however, all have a common element: the original Valentine took great risks in the name of love. (The Valentines who have been named as possible origins for the tradition were martyred either because of their love of Christ or due to actions taken on behalf of others.)

Regardless of the origins, it is, indeed, a day to celebrate love. This year, it's notable that Valentine's Day falls just a few days before Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent in the Christian church. A celebration of love just before entering into a time of deep reflection and increased devotion to Jesus Christ and the way of

the cross: This is truly a time for us to explore more deeply ways we can show our love of Christ through love of others. Yes, that love brings risks. And yet it is exactly the love we are called to live out as Christ's followers.

As you enter into your Lenten reflections, pray over Leviticus 19:33-34 (NIV): "When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." This decree comes as part of a long list of ways God commands the Israelites to show their devotion to God; after each set of commands, God re-states, "I am the Lord your God." It is because God is who God is that we are to love the foreigners living among us; it is because we are God's people, once strangers in a strange land ourselves, that we are to love the strangers among us *as we love ourselves*.

Yes, you're hearing it too, aren't you? There's that same commandment Jesus Christ gave us in the Gospel of Matthew: "So in everything, do to others *what you would have them do to you*, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets," (Matthew 7:12, NIV). Or, to hear it in *The Message*, "Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. Add up God's Law and Prophets and this is what you get."

Grab the initiative. Do it for them. This is our commandment, that we love them as ourselves.

This year, on Valentine's Day, think of how you can grab the initiative to show your love for those who are now living among us. And during Lent, pray for God's guidance about what risks you are being called to take on behalf of those living among us.

Reflections

Questions for reflection or discussion:

- Read [Leviticus 19:33-34](#) in several biblical versions.

Spend some time journaling about the variances in wording from one translation or paraphrase to another, and how those variations affect your interpretation of that text in your own life.

- Read [Hebrews 13:2](#). Have you had an experience in which you realized later that someone's presence in your life had carried with it an unexpected message from God? How could you better prepare yourself to be ready to receive these unexpected messengers in the future? Define "hospitality" in a way that opens doors for God's messengers into your life.
- On Valentine's Day, take a few moments to **pray for those who are sojourning in a foreign land**, and for clarity of heart and mind as you continue to learn about the complex issue of unaccompanied children coming into the United States.

Virtual Mission Encounter

"Crisis at the Border: What Could I Do"

Virtual Mission Encounter for Women

March 2-6, 2015



A virtual mission encounter is a unique learning opportunity you can do from the comfort of your own home and within the demands of your daily schedule.

Receive daily emails with suggested activities around a theme; join in evening conference calls with special guests and build community with other participants; have conversation with one another through the private blog set up just for this event.

This virtual mission encounter will help you: Explore the stories of refugees and immigrants in the Bible; understand the difference between refugees and immigrants and see why that forms the crux of the dialogue around the unaccompanied children at the border; learn about life in the countries they are fleeing; understand better their needs once they arrive here in the United States; and learn about possibilities for advocacy and involvement.

For information, including guest speakers and links to register online, visit www.abwministries.org/vme. Registration is open until February 26, 2015.

Next Issue: Resources

In March, we'll look at resources that are available for you and your congregation to study this issue together.

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