

MAIN LINE UNITARIAN CHURCH
Small Group Ministry
SGM 263: Migration as a Moral Issue
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Chalice Lighting & Opening words

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

~Emma Lazarus, American poet, 1849-1887, quote appears on the Statue of Liberty

Check-in: What is one important happening in your life at this time?

Focus Reading:

The United States, the European Union, and countless other nation-states and political bodies are struggling to define attitudes and policies towards immigrants and immigration for the 21st Century. This national and global debate usually revolves around economic impacts and the legal status of individual or groups of immigrants.

The ethics of migration are complex. There are many perspectives on why people migrate, how people migrate, what impact migration has on receiving, transit and sending countries, and whether countries should encourage, discourage, or limit migration.

Migration is fundamentally the story of the human race from its origins to the present. Migration is an integral aspect of life on this planet. People move to survive. They move in search of food. They move away from danger and death. They move towards opportunities for life. Migration is tied to the human spirit, which seeks adventure, pursues dreams, and finds reasons to hope even in the most adverse circumstances. Such movement affects the communities migrants leave and the communities that receive these migrants. This movement also impacts communities along the route of transit.

When discussing ethics in the context of migration, it is important to remember first and foremost that migration is about the movement of people. Because the ethics of migration hi-lite the tension between individuals and nations, these discussions should always begin and end with the acknowledgement of the humanity of those who are moving and those who do not move. The human condition is complex, as are the reasons for migration. To simplify and objectify the issues does not serve any useful purpose. Information and discussions on migration should be honest conversations, where the interests, agendas and concerns of all members of the affected communities are addressed in the context of the collective humanity.

There are those who feel migration in the context of globalization is an issue that needs to be addressed on a global scale, while others believe that individual nation-states reserve the right and have the obligation to decide who crosses their borders, as well when and how.

Excerpts from: Lynette M. Parker, The Ethics of Migration and Immigration: Key Questions for Policy Makers, May 2007.

http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/focusareas/global_ethics/migration.html

Focus Questions:

1. Have you or someone you know had to migrate/immigrate? What was the leading motivation?
2. What would it take for you to pick up your belongs and move to another country?
3. What are the benefits and detriments for the receiving country and society?
4. From a moral, not a legal, perspective do you believe someone should be able to migrate to another country for reasons of danger, poverty, and lack of opportunity? Why or why not?
5. How can the seven UU principles guide us in forming our views of migration?
 - The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
 - Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.
 - Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.
 - A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
 - The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
 - The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.
 - Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Checkout: What is one thing you will take away from this discussion?

Closing words and Chalice extinguishing

“Let him who has not a single speck of migration to blot his family escutcheon cast the first stone...if you didn't migrate then your father did, and if your father didn't need to move from place to place, then it was only because your grandfather before him had no choice but to go, put his old life behind him in search of the bread that his own land denied him...”

~José Saramago, “*The Notebook*,” Portuguese writer, 1922-2010