Finding Joy in Sacrificial Love
by Chris Cashen, Refugee Evangelist in Clarkston, GA

As we are now in the Christmas season, many are turning their thoughts to serving, giving and mercy. This, then, is a wonderful time to encourage Christians to get involved in refugee ministry - which is chock full of serving and giving. In fact, as some write about refugee ministry, they remind us that Jesus Himself was, in a sense, a refugee as He fled from Herod. Just prior to His flight, our Lord was ministered to by the magi - who give us a sense of the central object of our ministry to refugees.

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him’” (Matthew 2:1-2 ESV).

While not meeting Jesus as a refugee, these were directly serving Christ as worshipers. They help us to see the kind of service we can offer to our new neighbors from foreign lands, as well as our attitude as we give of ourselves.

The privilege of serving: The wise men had the great privilege of serving the Lord Jesus. They had the time, the funds, the camels, to serve. God had equipped them to serve. He had given these magi not only the funding, but also the ability to understand and interpret the appearance of the star. And then the Lord gave them the desire to follow and to search out this divine child. God graciously gave them the privilege of serving Christ. We certainly see that they recognized this privilege as they rejoice in finding the Child. As my wife and I conclude our time in Clarkston, GA we consider that this was a unique, and thus a privileged, time of serving Jesus Christ.

He clearly gave us all that we needed and sustained us during each and every aspect of our work. The Lord equipped us for this privilege and provided the open doors. At times, we are tempted to reflect on serving or giving as a burden. In actuality, the privilege of serving others in general, and refugees in particular, is the great privilege of serving our risen Lord Jesus. Not all are given...
Gifts of Love at Christmas Time
"Our deacons identify families in need and reach out to get their Christmas lists. We then put these items on tags on our tree. Members can then pick items to purchase and return. Once we hit the deadline, we collect all gifts and then distribute them to the families." — Mark Jurries (Redeemer OPC, Ada, MI)

"At Cornerstone, the organization and promotion of 'Operation Christmas Child' have always been the purview of a volunteer individual or individuals in the congregation. Announcements are made in the Sunday bulletins and the congregation responds accordingly." — Tim Roof, (Cornerstone OPC, Ambler, PA)

The CDM established a new subcommittee, the Refugee Ministry Subcommittee, to aid in growing in our understanding and ability to minister to those who find themselves estranged from their homeland due to circumstances outside their control. Be ready for this committee to reach out to the church for insight from those in the OPC already actively involved in the ministry to refugees.

The CDM received reports on the two active Disaster Response efforts that began since its previous meeting in March. Those efforts are the Midland Flood Response, ministering to the families from Christ Covenant OPC in Midland, MI, and the Isaias Storm Response, ministering to a family from Grace & Peace OPC in California, MD. To date, over $67,000 has been received designated toward the Midland Flood fund and $13,000 designated toward the Isaias Storm fund. Read the full report on OPC-CDM.org.

Read the full report on opccdm.org

Deacon Matt Browning says, "I love getting to serve our church families in simple things like moving house or helping with home repairs. Building a Christian community and culture is so important, and getting down to some physical work together is a great way to build community, especially for dudes who need something to do. The quality time of physical service is its own reward!"

Deacon Matt Posvar was drawn to the local diaconate because he desired to serve the body in any way he could. This started out at first with a more physically-oriented service that was easily visible as sure and obvious needs. He tells us, "It has been a joy to continue to do those things and to 'wait tables' so that the session can do their work, but I do greatly enjoy the more spiritual side of it, too."

Deacon David Vogel speaks warmly of his fellow deacons, "They are godly and humble. They truly exhibit the requirements of 1 Tim. 3 in their lives." He shares that when they come to a difficult matter he has full confidence in these brothers to handle these things with prayer, patience, and diligence.

Read the full column on opccdm.org

Have You Heard?
Due to ongoing restrictions and uncertainties related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee on Diaconal Ministries has regretfully decided to postpone the National Diaconal Summit IV, scheduled to take place June 10-12, 2021 in Wheaton, Illinois. Plans are already underway to reschedule to June 9-11, 2022—with many of the same speakers, praise the Lord!

Don't worry, though, we'll be sending out some ideas on how you can check out some of the highlights of past summits for encouragement and edification.

Read the full column on opccdm.org

Do you get a copy of the Mercy Minute to your inbox? If not, contact the CDM Administrator, David Nakhla david.nakhla@opc.org

For the full edition of this Mercy Minute, visit our website: OPCCDM.ORG/resources/mercy-minute