

A Postcolonial Portrait of Migrants as Vulnerable and Resistant

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ABSTRACT

This article identifies migration as an urgent matter for practical theology. The author, locating herself as a Canadian migrant and a Christian practical theologian, invites readers to take the global context of migration as a primary source of theological reflection. Such a reflection might find non-Christian and non-Canadian scholars and practitioners helpful and beneficial. The article analyzes the phenomenon of migration as a postcolonial condition. It, then, moves on to interrogate the ways in which migrants, especially non-Christian and non-white migrants are labeled as victims or villains. The article, countering this labeling, explores vulnerability and resistance as two sides of the experience of many migrants. It offers a biblical interpretation of a text from the Book of Ezekiel as an example of the vulnerability and resistance of people in exile. Finally, with the postcolonial optic, the article argues for interdependent ways of life that properly attend to the complexity of migration and migrant identities.

PREFACE

Canada Reads is a national radio book campaign organized and broadcast by Canada's public broadcaster every year since 2001. *Ru* by Kim Thúy in 2015 and *Illegal* by Lawrence Hill in 2016 were each chosen as book of the year by *Canada Reads* in their respective years, and recommended as reading for all Canadians.¹ The authors of both books are recent immigrants to Canada. Thúy was a refugee from Vietnam and Hill's parents moved to Canada from the U.S. Both wrote novels that explicitly deal with migration, the precarious journeys of refugees and the exodus from homes affected by war and violence due to colonialism and military dictatorship. It is significant that *Canada Reads* selected novels

about migration two years in a row. Migration has captured the interest of Canadians. We live in an “age of migration.”²

INTRODUCTION

We live in an age of global migration, in which migration has become an urgent matter for practical theologians to consider. As a Christian practical theologian living in Canada, I will take the context of migration as a primary source of theological reflection³ hoping that this reflection might resonate with non-Christian and non-Canadian scholars and practitioners as well. First, we analyze the context of migration using a postcolonial critique. Second, we interrogate the ways in which migrants are named and labeled. Contesting the stereotyping of migrants as victims or villains, we explore vulnerability and resistance as two sides of the integral experience of migration. As an example to showcase vulnerability and resistance in exile, we interpret a text from the Book of Ezekiel. Finally, with the postcolonial optic, we explore the notion of interdependence as a helpful way to come to terms with this complex context of migration. Simply put, we will consider ways both migrants and those who encounter migrants need each other. We will conclude by developing a practical theological response to migration by presenting an example of a Christian church sharing worship space with new Muslim migrants.

TAKING THE CONTEXT SERIOUSLY: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL STANCE

Migration is one of the most pressing contexts facing people today. The scale of migration in the 20th and 21st century is massive and global. It affects all of us, albeit in different ways depending on the region in which one lives from and to which one is moving. Its scope is increasing in an alarming rate and its size is unprecedented. Canadian historian Jennifer Welsh shows how the Second World War (1939-1945) was a high water mark in the global history of migration, with a huge number of people crossing multiple national borders.⁴ The data in 2015 shows, however, that we have now exceeded the Second World War levels and that the total number of displaced people across the globe in that year was 65 million. It has reached the highest levels human history has seen thus far.⁵ There is an urgent need for theologians to “engage with this developing migratory context in depth and with nuance,”⁶ if we Christians and the Church are going to be responsive to the world in which we participate. Therefore, a responsive and responsible theological engagement with migration cannot remain at the abstract speculative level detached from careful understanding of the contexts of migration and the actual experiences of migrants. Where this is the case, migration is not only a context that challenges practical theology; it is also a source of practical theological reflection for practical theologians to attend to concrete realities and practices.

ANALYZING THE MIGRATION CONTEXT CRITICALLY: ATTENTION TO POSTCOLONIAL CONDITIONS

One responsible way to engage the 21st century context of migration is to analyze the “catastrophic” phenomenon that we have identified⁷ by asking why migration has become so massive and global. Welsh’s claim is that the Second World War sparked the first great global migration. This first wave occurred when colonized countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America achieved political independence from European colonial powers (British, French, Spanish, Dutch, German) following the Second World War. A postcolonial era began in 1947, when India gained independence from British Empire. Most colonized countries had gained their political independence by the end of the 1960s.⁸ However, political independence was far from the end of their struggles. Most formerly colonized countries faced obstacles of internal conflict and political instability following their independence. While the formal colonial regime had ended, colonial injustices did not; the colonial past has continued to haunt the present. This is what we call the postcolonial condition, a reality of the present rather than of the past, although it cannot be understood fully without considering the impact of historic colonial violence. The prefix “post” problematizes the assumption we live “after” colonialism while postcolonial thinkers continue to shine a light on the way “imperialism continues without colonies.”⁹ Postcolonial notions also problematize pluralistic notions of spatiality, highlighting different geographical struggles and complicated landscapes.¹⁰

Struggles and hardships in certain geographical landscapes today, usually landscapes of former colonies, often lead people to leave their homes. The result is a change of space and time, namely, the massive flight of formerly colonized people into former colonizer nations and the repeat of past colonial patterns in a new way. A British theologian, Jenny Dagers observes, the postcolonial era is “a time by reverse migration from former colonies into the British metropole, so creating the rich ethnic and religious diversity of the contemporary United Kingdom.”¹¹ While her multicultural approach to migration may be limiting if one only looks at the celebratory aspect of receiving migrants, her observation in Britain can be similarly made in most countries. One should note, however, that more massive movements are happening within those formerly colonized nations. In the case of Syrian refugees, for example, it is the neighboring countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan that have received far more refugees than European countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Hungary, even though the latter countries draw a lot of attention and are praised for their humanitarian efforts in the media. Overemphasis on Europe’s changing landscape due to crisis of refugee migration is further evidence of the colonial legacy of Euro-centrism.

While the impact of migration is unequal, the West is not immune to its pressures as the current refugee influx and colonial cosmopolitan cities demonstrate. Edward Said predicted this phenomenon more than twenty years ago explaining that even metropolitan centers of the First World would need the rest of the world for survival.¹² The well-being of Europe and the First World are bound to that of migrants and refugees who are from non-West. That is the vulnerability of the West. That is why Musa Dube, a postcolonial biblical scholar from Botswana, rightly criticizes the developed world’s illusion of independence. The dilemma and the promise of the postcolonial condition, she says, has been created out of “the modern history of imperialism, beginning with the process of colonialism, through the struggles for political independence, the attainment of independence and to the contemporary neocolonialist realities.”¹³ The phenomenon of migration is, to some extent, caused by unfinished and violent colonial relationships. That is also why Kwok Pui-lan has stressed that postcolonial work must go through a double

process. This involves not only a process of “deconstructing Western dominant regimes of knowledge” but also of “examining the interdependence of the cultural terrain traversed by both the colonizers and the colonized.”¹⁴ To properly engage this double process, we require an ability to decisively connect the past with the present, and to meticulously view our particular reality in light of the wider and global realities. Dube calls this “a global ethical commitment to liberating interdependence that emphasizes interconnectedness of relationships that recognize and affirm the dignity of all things and people involved.”¹⁵

PROBING CANADA AS CONTESTED SPACE

In full acknowledgment of the unequal position of migrants and the different impacts affecting different places globally, those of us, including established white settlers in North America and Christians who easily identify as the ones who belong must acknowledge our own vulnerability at what cost we belong. Speaking of Canada’s experience, those first-generation European migrants who settled on the land that was inhabited by indigenous people are faced with this particular question. History has revealed the numerous ways that this settlement made use of systematic violence against indigenous people.¹⁶ The colonial violence was so brutal that the 21st century Canada is still experiencing its aftermath. It is a history that Canada, as a country of migrants, will need to struggle with for a long time. That is one example of a cost of belonging.

Canada’s national identity, its origin, and its own worldview have been determined and shaped by migration. Canada is a country whose history includes many various waves of immigration. Canada enjoys a reputation throughout the world for being the most multicultural nation and also the most welcoming to immigrants and refugees. It is true that Canada was the first country to create an inclusive immigration and citizenship act, establishing multiculturalism as its official government policy in 1971. But unfortunately, this positive assessment of Canada’s accomplishments is not the whole story.

Jewish Canadian historian Irving Abella contests Canada’s positive reputation. He writes,

It is one of our great national myths that Canada has a long history of welcoming refugees and dissidents, of always being in the forefront of accepting the world’s oppressed and dispossessed, of being receptive and hospitable to wave after wave of immigrants...yet as the recent literature in Canadian history has shown, the Canadian record is one of which we ought not to be proud. Our treatment of our native people as well as our abysmal history in admitting blacks, Chinese, Japanese, Indians and during 1930s and 1940s Jews, should lay to rest [this] myth.¹⁷

In order to keep Canada a white nation, the government in the early 20th century implemented an immigrant policy based on racial profiling. They discouraged Blacks, Asians, and Jews from coming and settling until the 1960s.¹⁸ Criticism in the 1966 “White Paper on Immigration” prompted the Liberal government to conduct a further review of immigration policies, which led to the creation of a new immigration act that

would eliminate the remaining elements of discrimination from the Canadian immigration policy.¹⁹ Racial homogenization and segregation policies had created fear and insecurity. That is another cost of belonging. The border was created to keep certain groups out for the sake of security. Yet, despite efforts to keep people out the border has never been totally secure. Canadian activist and migrant from India, Harsha Walia argues that border security is imperialistic because it reinforces Western rule in the context of a global empire, and maintains the unequal relationships of political, economic, cultural, and social dominance over its previous colonies.²⁰ Indeed some see national borders in the 21st century as contributing to the phenomenon of modern day slavery.²¹

FOREGROUNDING PROBLEMS OF NAME-CALLING AND LABELING

The journey of undoing border imperialism towards interdependence is bumpy. While the West is not unaffected by the reality of migration, most of the difficulties of migration are often encountered by migrants than by those who receive them. Many migrants, before they leave their homes, have experienced persecution, imprisonment, and poverty. Most of them, while crossing borders, experience hunger, violence, rejection, hostility, exploitation, loss, and various other struggles. Even after they have settled in a place, their hardship continues because their lives are to some extent a life of exile. The late Edward Said, Palestine American, who himself lived in a kind of exile from the home of his family, called exile, “a cruel punishment of whole communities and peoples, often the inadvertent result of impersonal forces such as war, famine, and disease.”²² These experiences of migration are the experiences of victimization at the hands of political, social, and legal systems. *Ru*, the book that won the 2015’s *Canada Reads* competition, literally means a small stream in French. In the book, Thúy uses this image to signify a flow of tears and blood. Reflecting on her migration from Vietnam, Thúy captures the flow of this precarious, vulnerable, yet resilient life journey, which should be neither dismissed nor romanticized.

Not every migrant experiences deadly hardship during the process of migration. Some are educated and wealthy. Migration can be a happy choice for those who come freely and look for job opportunities. On the other hand, many migrants who enjoyed a comfortable standard of life back home were also forced to leave their stable life behind due to conflict and political upheaval. In other words, we should not approach migrants as if they are all the same. There is a danger of totalizing migrants as victims or villains or good and hard workers. We need to beware “the danger of a single story,” as Chimamanda Adichie, a migrant from Nigeria living in the United States, points out.²³ The portrait of migrants is far from homogenous.

In order not to fall into the danger of a single story, we require a postcolonial interrogation of the problem of representation of migrants. Judith Butler’s insight is of some help in this. “We are called names and find ourselves living in a world of categories and descriptions,” she says, “way before we start to sort them critically and endeavor to change or make them on our own.”²⁴ Postcolonial critic Gayatri Chacravorty Spivak, also a migrant from India living in the United States, thought-provokingly asked, “Can the subaltern speak?”²⁵ Some people are spoken of, even spoken for *before* they can speak.²⁶ If we

don't listen for the migrants' own voices, how will we ever understand them?

The representation of "Asian woman" is another example of a label that can impede such understanding. A personal anecdote may serve to illustrate. As a Korean migrant, I was never identified as "Asian" until I came to Canada. The label "Asian" was applied to me before I was able to articulate what that meant for myself. I was forced to accept this category as my identity. The label "Asian woman" is only applied to a woman when she is *outside* Asia usually *before* she identifies herself as such. This label is the product of a Western colonial gaze. It is a name-calling of females who migrate into or who are subsumed by the colonial space.²⁷ Name-calling as a form of representation of others implicitly describes some people as out of place. It is a process of othering, pointing out that they do not belong.²⁸ Nam Soon Kang, a migrant from Korea living in United States, makes a self-critical point that Asian feminist theologians themselves reinforce this kind of name-calling, falling into the trap of representation in their theological writing as they portray, Asian women as "victims from starvation, rape and poverty."²⁹ Then, she explains, they also fall into the glorification of themselves as the ones who "liberate themselves with heroic power."³⁰ Such generalizations applied to Asian women falsely assume that their particular experiences are universal. The representation of Asian women as heroines is equally dangerous because viewing Asian women's struggles as heroic makes it seem as if their acts are independent of others and fails to see their interdependent and tangled relationships with others.

Some migrants are also labeled as illegal criminals and sometimes as potential terrorists. This creates a different kind of problem of representation. Since many migrants and refugees today are Muslim, this kind of name-calling is often the fruit of Islamophobia. The use of these names becomes a challenge to religious pluralism, and can be perceived by some Christians as a threat to the religious norm of their society. As soon as migrants are associated with the labels "criminal," "illegal," and "terrorist" they are perceived as non-human. Sara Ahmed, Australian-British scholar, suggests that "we can only avoid stranger fetishism . . . by examining the social relationships that are concealed by this very fetishism. That is, we need to consider how the stranger is an effect of processes of inclusion and exclusion, or incorporation and expulsion, that constitute the boundaries of bodies and communities, including communities of living (dwelling and traveling) as well as epistemic communities."³¹ In this regard, we agree with Ahmed that our ontologies of the stranger, or the victim, or the villain produce constructions of the self that rely on differentiating between some others as stranger other, between migrants as victims and villains.

Name-calling or labeling of migrants as a problem of representation is pervasive and prevalent in the media. As a result, it has become a part of our own conscious and subconscious psyche. Practical theologians must help to raise awareness and correct this dominant view. One way to help this is to emphasize the everyday reality of life in a society of migrants without falling into a trap of negative stereotyping or overly positive exceptionalism. Celebrating migrants' contribution to the economy is practically a dangerous strategy.³² Instead, each one of us must perceive and treat migrants as who they are. They do all what everyone else does. They eat, love, play, consume, cry, suffer and die.³³ They have smartphones as most of us do. Smartphones are a necessity for migrants, as a reporter of *New York Times* put it, "A 21st-Century Migrant's Essentials: Food, Shelter, Smartphone." Thus, smartphone charging

stations are something they cannot live without. Smartphones, along with social media like Facebook, twitter, google hangout, and skype become essential tools to find routes, avoid border control and arrests, and stay in touch with their family and friends.³⁴ Yet, if we fall into this false labeling of migrants as victims, and singlehandedly represent them as poor, uneducated, uncivilized and powerless victims, it is easy to misunderstand their possession of smartphones as a sign of a luxury or privileged life and fail to see their actual needs are like us. Practical theologians must pay attention to the concrete activities and ordinary as well as extraordinary lives of migrants. The focus on particular and embodied activities is an important methodological choice for doing practical theology. It is also critical to note that if theology does not have relevance for everyday faith and life, then it has little or no meaning.³⁵ Thus a theology that addresses migration must deal with the relevance for the everyday faith and life of migrants. That is another way to say that migrants are human. It is also to realize that “humans are not illegal, actions are.”³⁶ No migrant is illegal.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE: SEEING MIGRANTS AS VULNERABLE YET RESISTANT

To change our perception of migrants, we need to learn to see them connectively. To see them connectively is not to see them verses us. It requires a self-critical lens for those of us who are Christians who identify ourselves as the ones who belong. Even if positive efforts have been made in certain Christian circles to challenge the view of migrants as a threat to society and a burden to the economy, most Christians are still stuck in a response that treats migrants as little more than objects of charity. It is a convenient stance because we do not need to admit our vulnerability, or worsen our own our complicity in the conditions that contributed to the cause of migration. Our posture becomes detached, looking at migration as someone else’s problem. The theological and ecclesiological discourse on migration continues to focus on how the Church should help migrants to settle in new places.³⁷ It is laudable that some explore key theological concepts of neighbors and strangers associated with migrants, even to identify Jesus as a migrant and stranger.³⁸ However, this perspective often remains triumphant and fails to expose the layers of colonialist habits in our thinking and practice. Most of all, it fails to expose our own vulnerability as settler Christians in North America.³⁹ As long as migrants, especially non-Christians, are regarded as victims or villains, or model minority, we run the risk of patronizing, penalizing, and praising them, unable to see their vulnerability, agency, decency, and most of all, humanity that is tangled with our own vulnerability, agency, and decency.

Judith Butler addresses this us vs. them dividing problem, the dualistic dichotomy when she develops the connection between vulnerability and resistance. There is discomfort and anxiety around the positive affirmation of vulnerability, and understandably so in a society that values agency and advocacy. What is more, when we think of vulnerability it is often as something that is in terms of a need for protection.⁴⁰ But this particular thinking assumes that as political beings we should only be about acting, without recognizing that we are also being acted on. “If nothing acts on me against my will,” Butler explains, “then there is only sovereignty, the posture of control over the property that I have...Is this not

the masculine account of sovereignty that, as feminists, we are called to dismantle?”⁴¹ For Spivak, this masculine account of sovereignty appears as “ego” which could refer to a powerful male individual but also could resonate with the North American settler ideal, the First World, the North, or Europe in the global drama of migration. This “ego,” she says, “rejects the incompatible idea *together with the affect* and behaves as if the idea had never occurred to the ego at all.”⁴²

What Butler and Spivak help us to rethink is that the condition of vulnerability is not exclusive to resistance. On the contrary, there is always vulnerability in resistance. We are vulnerable when we resist because our lives are interdependent. This helps us to see that migrants who are vulnerable are not entirely powerless, but actually in a position where they are exercising their power through resilience and resistance. One example of their power in resilience and resistance is found in their religious identity. Their religious presence in the public sphere challenges a perception of religion as private and makes religion visible in secular society. James Walter, chaplain to the London School of Economics and Political Science, has noted that migrants on the university campus make visible “Western academia’s embarrassment or hostility toward religion.” Migrants, often practicing religions other than Christianity, seek to express their religious identity and open up religious discourse in relation to higher education, suggesting a need for “the integration of religious perspectives with secular disciplines.”⁴³ Migration, as an experience, gives us insight into forms of political resistance that rely fundamentally on vulnerability, which affirms Butler’s position that “[v]ulnerability can be a way of being exposed and agentic at the same time.”⁴⁴ Then, what is the theological implication of Butler’s contribution on vulnerability in resistance? A text in the book of Ezekiel may offer a clue.

A BIBLICAL EXPLORATION OF MIGRANTS’ ACT AS VULNERABLE AND RESISTANT

Jean-Pierre Ruiz reads the text of Ezekiel 12: 1-20 in a way that interprets the peculiar, perplexing, even foolish actions of the prophet as a call to the people to recognize their vulnerability and resistance. Ezekiel, an eccentric prophet (2:10), must prophesy the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Judah, an event that will necessarily send his people into exile.⁴⁵ Ezekiel utters his prophesy with a detailed instruction: “Mortal, eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and with fearfulness” (12:18). This injunction seems strange to the contemporary audience, says Ruiz, but it resonates with the experience of deportees forced from their home who are indeed trembling and fearful. The instruction is an affirmation of the migrant life. This affirmation of their lived experience in the form of command is comforting in terms of its embodied explicitness of the daily struggles most migrants experience. Ruiz regards this recording of the mundane and daily experience of the migrant as a prophecy of Ezekiel to “announce what was yet to befall Jerusalem, the eventual fall of the city to Nebuchadnezzar’s armies and the second deportation of its population.”⁴⁶

A point of connection between Butler and Ruiz is Ruiz’s claim that Ezekiel’s prophesy should be understood in terms of its performance of vulnerability.

Therefore, mortal, prepare for yourself an exile’s baggage, and go into exile by day

in their sight...; you shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight; and you shall go out yourself at evening in their sight... Dig through the wall in their sight... In their sight you shall lift the baggage on your shoulder, and carry it out in the dark (12:1-6).

This bodily act of moving and carrying baggage, a physical experience of migration and exile, constitutes a form of resistance on behalf of the God of justice against the rebellious people. This vulnerability enacted before the people is a “practice of deliberate exposure” and constitutes an example of “non-violent resistance” of the kind for which Butler advocates. She describes non-violent resistance in terms of bodily vulnerability that is used “for the purposes of asserting existence, claiming the right to public space, equality, and opposing violent police, security, and military actions.”⁴⁷

Exposure of the precariousness of migrant lives unmasks the instability of the nation state. “Nations exist insofar as they are capable of differentiating in/appropriate bodies.”⁴⁸ The borderline only works as long as it differentiates between which bodies belong and which bodies do not belong. The nation state can uphold the legality of citizenship as long as it can say who deserves or does not deserve to be a citizen. Legality only exists as long as it is used against those who are deemed illegal. In the book *Illegal*, Lawrence Hill brings the experiences of refugees crossing borders into focus through the life of a boy. He is a marathoner, literally and figuratively running for his life. In the story, the boy’s exceptional ability to run fast helps him cross the finish line before anybody else in a race held in a country where he is living illegally. When it is time to give the medal to the first-place runner, his citizenship is questioned. Ironically, the nation that was trying to expel him as an illegal suddenly changes its tone and wants to grab his medal winning ability. His body as a runner is appropriated by the nation that had made him an illegal. So, we are left with the question: *who belongs and who doesn’t?*

Working on the question of who belongs and who does not, theologian Michael Nausner shares his personal migrant experience in the U.S.: “I know that it is not *my* homeland; or more accurately: It is and it is not my homeland. I have my livelihood here, even though my legal designation is ‘non-resident alien.’”⁴⁹ Like Nausner, the boy in *Illegal*, and most of us belong and do not belong at the same time. We inhabit double or more spaces, which are often in tension. The police beating of Rodney King that sparked the Los Angeles riots in 1992 is a case in point. This violent event was a result of Black/White tension in the United States. Yet for Korean American communities in Los Angeles this event awoke them to the fact that they are “always located somewhere,” but actually “elsewhere” or nowhere.⁵⁰ This event resulted in the destruction of many Korean businesses. Korean migrants in the United States were made aware that they cannot rest comfortably in their silo diaspora communities, but must become involved with issues of racism in the county where they reside, interdependently working with other ethnic groups.⁵¹

In short, to lift up the vulnerable yet resisting existence of migrants is neither to minimize their struggles to belong nor to romanticize their painful and dangerous border crossings. Their sufferings are often excruciating. Their losses are often enormous. But such vulnerability is also a form of resistance. It can be a sign of undoing border imperialism.⁵² The very existence of migrants, and their constant movement across borders, claims a space of belonging and demonstrates that there is a renewal of popular sovereignty outside, and against, the state.⁵³

TOWARD AN INTERDEPENDENT LIFE TOGETHER

On September 3, 2015, a three year old boy Alan Kurdi from Syria was drown while crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The disturbing photographs of this boy's dead body washed up on the Turkish shore shocked Canadians and others around the world. It became one of the stories of 2015 that changed the global response to the Syrian refugee crisis.⁵⁸ Alan died with his mother and his older brother on a migration journey. They are survived by his father Adullah Kurdi. This story was particularly tragic for Canadians because this family was heading to Canada where Adullah's sister Fatima lives and she is the one who invited them and worked so hard to bring her family to Canada.

It is true that this tragic story told in a photo refocused a sense of moral responsibility in Canada and helped create the political will required to take action. It definitely affected the federal election that led to the victory of the party and its party leader Justin Trudeau who promised to bring in 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada by the end of 2015.⁵⁹ However, the plan to resettle tens of thousands of refugees cannot be delivered unless each individual, each faith community, and various sectors of society take a concrete step toward an interdependent life, a journey of co-dwelling among migrants, settlers and indigenous people who share the land.

As Christians, and people of different faith traditions, where can we practice this co-dwelling life of interdependence as we face the reality of migration? An Anglican Church of Canada in Southwestern Ontario is an example.⁶⁰ A small farming community of Leamington, a place known for tomatoes and a Heinz ketchup factory, received 24 families from Syria in 2015. The church invited these new families along with other Muslims to a picnic and learned that the place they were renting for their prayers was getting too small⁶¹ due to these new families joining the prayers. By the month of Ramadan, St. John Evangelist Anglican Church decided to open its doors to Muslims who need an appropriate space of prayer for their holy season. Opening the worshipping space is more than a rental business for the church. It takes a certain vulnerability on the church's part. A Christian clergy kneeling inside a mosque praying with fellow Muslims is a concrete practice that we, though religiously, racially, linguistically, and culturally different, must pray together and walk together. This can be a performance of resistance against Christian Islamophobia. This visible yet vulnerable act of sharing a worshipping space with Muslims may provoke a profound question for members of St. John Evangelist Anglican: "What is church?" and "Who belongs to this church?"

The practice of opening doors is a spiritual discipline of opening to the Spirit. People of faith ought to be open, willing to be challenged and changed by these intentional encounters and mutual engagements. The prejudice against each other will be challenged, while ignorance will be exposed. With inevitable mistakes and errors, we learn to appreciate each other's religious practices and different ways of life. With gratitude, ultimately, we re-discover the life of migrants, while our own lives. With humility, we may be able to appreciate a nuanced portrait of migrants who are vulnerable, resilient, and resistant.

A migrant journey is not only for migrants. A journey of migration is a path of interdependence; it is a journey in which Christians and Muslims, indigenous people, old settlers and new migrants, all humans and living beings must walk together for peaceful and respectful co-existence.

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