



September 2017

Welcoming Places

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 13:2

FOCUS MINISTRY

Marc and Kim Wyatt

fellowship!

“Welcome House, Welcoming Home.”

Fall 2017

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abigail Pratt currently lives in Richmond, Virginia, where she serves as the Associate Pastor of Youth and Mission at Central Baptist Church. Abby graduated from Wake Forest University School of Divinity in 2014 and was ordained by Peace Haven Baptist Church (also in Winston-Salem, N.C.). With roots in Missouri, North Carolina, and Virginia, Abby is a fan of KU Basketball, the Kansas City Royals, CookOut Milkshakes, and tacky Christmas lights.

Alongside immigrants and many others seeking refuge in the United States, CBF field personnel Kim and Marc Wyatt are partnering in renewing God’s world through Welcome House, a community dedicated to holistic ministry among displaced peoples.

With support from the CBF Offering for Global Missions, the Wyatts are forming together with local churches and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) to cultivate beloved community with displaced families and individuals as they work to establish a safe home, get settlement assistance and find bridges into the larger community. Noting that the world now witnesses the highest levels of displacement on record, Kim Wyatt said, “the call to offer God’s radical hospitality among immigrants has never been more clear.”

- **ENGAGE:** Students will go through the church assessing the degree to which the space is welcoming. This invites students to start thinking about what it means to follow God’s instructions to be welcoming.
- **EQUIP:** Students will study Hebrews 13:2 learning about how Early Christians were instructed to form welcoming communities and not be exclusive of people who “don’t belong.”
- **EXTEND:** Students will read the story of a refugee, learn about refugees in the world today, and pray for refugees and welcoming places around the world.
- **MISSION PROJECT:** Students will have the opportunity to join in local ministry with refugees or take on leadership in the church through working towards making our churches more welcoming places.



Welcoming Places

LEARNING GOAL

Students will engage in conversation about our Christian calling to be welcoming and will respond by asking if we (and our church) are creating welcoming places and how we can do a better job of living out this Christian calling.

GETTING READY

1. Read the article “Welcome House, Welcoming Home” on pp. 14-17 in the Fall 2017 issue of *fellowship!*
2. Print or ensure access to the pictures of Marc and Kim Wyatt found at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/thefellowship/sets/72157630821281296/>
3. Gather or print maps of the world.
4. Research refugee ministries in your community or have a conversation with the leadership of your church about being a welcoming place.

ENGAGE

Welcoming Asset-Mapping

Send groups of students around your church building to “assess” the ways in which your church space is welcoming. Ask them to observe using the following questions below.

When they return have each group share what they found.

- How would you feel if this was your very first time in the church?
- Are there signs to help you get around the building(s)?
- Are there friendly people to greet and help you find where you are going?
- Is the space/decor warm and inviting?
- What else do you see that is/is not welcoming?

Share with students that in the book of Hebrews and throughout both the Old and New Testaments we find instructions and callings to be welcoming. As Christians, we are called to welcome those who are new, welcome those who don't seem to belong, welcome those who are in need of forgiveness and re-acceptance, and welcome those who are immigrants and refugees. In today's lesson, we are going to learn about how Christians today are creating welcoming places through living out their faith.

CBF field personnel Marc and Kim Wyatt are living this calling through the Welcome House in Raleigh, NC. The Welcome House is a community of individuals, churches and refugees who together are working to establish safe homes for refugees, offer settlement assistance, and help refugees to network and make connections within their larger community. Pictures of Marc and Kim Wyatt and the Welcome House can be found at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/thefellowship/sets/72157630821281296/>



EQUIP

Read Hebrews 13:2

Say: Within the book of Hebrews, the Christian community is given many instructions on how to live a Christian life. The text we just read is part of these instructions and specifically located in a section about living a Christian life in a Christian community. Within these instructions we find that this community was told not to be exclusive. Christian communities are to be welcoming to all those seeking to be included. The Christian community to whom the book of Hebrews is written is given the reminder and maybe even incentive to welcome strangers into their homes and community because in doing so, some have entertained angels.

This idea of entertaining angels can be traced back to Abraham and Sarah, Lot, Gideon, and others in the Old Testament. You can reference such stories found in Genesis 18 and 19 and Judges 6 and 13. They received messages from God through the strangers (angels) whom they welcomed into their homes. These house guests were not ordinary visitors, while their identity was hidden they were divine messengers sent by God.

While the Christian community would have known these stories and found great value in them, I wonder if they also got the message that God calls us to welcome the stranger in front of us, no matter his or her appearance.

Ask students to share their feelings about welcoming new people. Have them consider what it feels like to welcome someone and also what it feels like to be welcomed. Ask them about the risks and rewards that come with welcoming new people (this could consist of welcoming someone into the youth group, a group of friends, or an extracurricular activity). Does welcoming look the same for all these groups? Does welcoming feel the same for all these groups?

EXTEND

Read to students or have students read Elias Isaiah Erick's story found in "Welcome House, Welcoming Home" in *fellowship!*

Share with students that Elias Isaiah Erick is just one of the 22.5 million refugees around the world today who are seeking safety and a home. While we hear a lot about refugees on the news and through Social Media, it is helpful to also hear the definition of a refugee. According to the United Nations, a refugee is someone who has fled his or her home because of persecution (types of persecution include: race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion).

Ask students to share their reactions to Elias Isaiah Erick's story and how the definition of a refugee changes or enhances their previous understanding of refugees. Remind students that just like the Christian community in the book of Hebrews, we are called to be welcoming places for all those seeking inclusion.

Print or bring in a map of the world large enough for your group to gather around (if needed, print multiple copies for multiple groups).

55% of all refugees are from three countries:

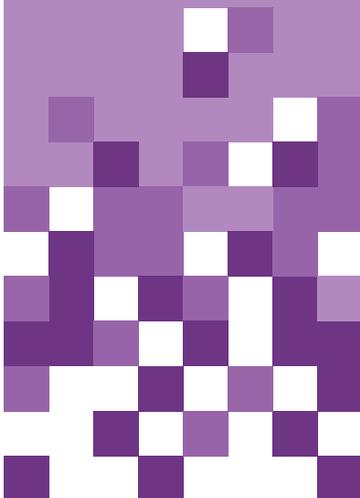
- South Sudan (1.4 million)
- Afghanistan (2.5 million)
- Syria (5.5 million)

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The top places welcoming refugees are:

- Ethiopia (791,600)
- Uganda (940,800)
- Islamic Republic of Iran (979,400)
- Lebanon (1.0 million)
- Pakistan (1.4 million)
- Turkey (2.9 million)

Locate these 9 places on the map. As one person in your group places a finger on the country, pray as a group for those who are having to leave their homes and those who are welcoming these people. Pray for safe travel and pray for new beginnings. End by placing a finger on your home and another finger on North Carolina. Pray for the Welcome House and Marc and Kim Wyatt as they seek to continue to be a welcoming place. Pray that your community and church will continue to be a welcoming place.

MISSION PROJECT

Explore if and where there are churches/organizations in your community doing ministry with refugees. Contact these places and ask if there is a way to connect with or serve as a part of their ministry. If you are in need of ideas, you could collect headphones or assist in making resources for ESL classes, purchase children's books that help refugee children transition to their new home, or collect items for groups like the Welcome House.

If this is not a possibility, set aside time for youth and adults to work with the leadership of your church to make your church more welcoming. This could include updating or adding signs, making a plan for greeters, or cleaning up/rearranging spaces. This could also include having a youth-led forum with the church to discuss how to be more welcoming.

