

MIGRATION AND HIV IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

The Role of Faith Leaders and Communities

Welcoming the Stranger: A Response of Faith and Theology



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MIGRATION AND HIV: THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE

Theology provides language to help us understand the nature of God (the divine), our beliefs, and how this knowledge and our experiences can impact our lives and relationships.

Clearly, migration and the movement of peoples across and within borders and cultures is increasing at such a rate, that some are stating that this is the “age of migration.”

We need to examine both a ***theology of migration*** AND ***spiritual (pastoral) care of migrants***. These two concepts are related but distinct.

In light of the “age of migration,” how can our sacred texts help us understand the “signs of the times?”



12 World Religions and "The Golden Rule"



Christianity

In everything, do to others as
you would have them do to you;
for this is the law and the prophets.
Jesus, Matthew 7:12



Buddhism

Treat not others in ways that
you yourself would find hurtful.
The Buddha, Udana-Varga 5.18



Hinduism

This is the sum of duty: do not do to
others what would cause pain if done to you.
Mahabharata 5:1517



Islam

Not one of you truly believes until you
wish for others what you wish for yourself.
The Prophet Muhammad, Hadith



Judaism

What is hateful to you, do not do to
your neighbour. This is the whole Torah:
all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.
Hillel, Talmud, Shabbath 31a



Taoism

Regard your neighbour's gain as
your own gain and your neighbour's
loss as your own loss.
Lao Tzu, T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien, 213-218



Bahai'i

Lay not on any soul a load that you would
not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for
anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.
Baha'u'llah, Gleanings



Sikhism

I am a stranger to no one;
and no one is a stranger to me.
Indeed, I am a friend to all.
Guru Granth, Sahib, p.1299



Zoroastrianism

Do not do unto others
whatever is injurious to yourself.
Shayast-na-Shayast 13.29



Native Spirituality

We are as much alive
as we keep the earth alive.
Chief Dan George



Jainism

One should treat all creatures in the
world as one would like to be treated.
Mahavira, Sutrakritanga 1.11.33



Confucianism

One word which sums up the basis
of all good conduct: loving-kindness.
Do not do to others what you do
not want done to yourself.
Confucius, Analects 15.23

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Yet despite this universal ethical/spiritual guidance, when we gather to better understand migration and migrants, we often focus only economics, politics, geography, sociology, psychology, law, history, anthropology, environmental studies and other academic disciplines.

Theology is almost never mentioned.



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I propose that theology offers not just “more” information, but a new imagination, one that helps us reflect what it means to be truly and fully human before God, and live together in community with **harmony, dignity and mutual respect.**

Daniel Groody, one of the few theologians reflecting on migration, speaks of three theological themes or concepts from the Christian tradition that may help us grow in our understandings and our response to migration, migration and health, and migration and vulnerability to HIV:

The Image of God

The Word of God

The Mission of God



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The Image of God:

For many world religions and “people of The Book,” Genesis gives us the truth that we are created in the *image and likeness of God*. This is central to our understanding of the innate dignity and worth of every human being—Divine attributes that are part of *every* human life.

Yet, for so many migrants a common denominator of their experience is of **de**-humanization. Our theology can shape a world view to understand the innate dignity of *every* person.

This concept of **innate human dignity** helped to shape the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. This, I believe, must also shape our own discussions and action plans.



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The Word of God

As a Christian, I share theologian Daniel Groody's belief that a theology of migration reflects on the Incarnation of Jesus—the belief that God migrated to humanity, so that we can migrate back to God. This theology proposes that the very nature of God is migration, movement. Almost all traditions call deepening one's path, a spiritual *journey*.

The Word migrated and became one of us to bring God's healing love to a broken world. The Word migrates to the earth to reconcile us to the Creator, and each other, for a renewed humanity and a new creation.

God, always crosses over the divisions we create in order to help us find a right relationship with God and each other. As we develop and increase our understandings of migrants and migration, I believe we will grow in our understanding of God (and vice versa).



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The Mission of God:

The third (and final!) theological concept articulates the action or movement or mission of God. Pope Paul VI said, “the Mission of the Church is to proclaim a God of life, to make our world more human by building up a civilization of love.”

The MISSION of God is to restore the image of God to every person through the work and redemption of the Word of God.

A central dimension of Jesus’ life and ministry is reconciliation, overcoming any human constructions that divide us. By word and action Jesus demonstrates that welcome, compassion and mercy require us to give primary consideration to meeting the basic human needs of migrants, including health.



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From theology to pastoral and spiritual care with migrants:

A theology of migration can help to maintain dignity, compassion, mercy and welcome. We end the division of “us and them” and acknowledge that there is only “us.”

Adopting a true **bio-psycho-social-spiritual** model of assessment and care means acknowledging that every person, every migrant has spiritual needs that can and should be addressed and supported.

“Spirituality is a dynamic and intrinsic aspect of humanity through which persons seek ultimate meaning, purpose and transcendence and experience relationship to self, family, others, community, society, nature and the significant or sacred. Spirituality is expressed through beliefs, values, traditions and practices.”
(Puchalski, et al. 2014)

God migrates into world that is broken and divided, not because God finds something good in this estrangement, but because precisely in this place God can reveal hope, through ourselves, to all who experience rejection and alienation.



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The practical implementation of theology and spiritual care at EDARP (Eastern Deanery AIDS Relief Program):

- The three staff “rules”—spend time with God, take care of each other, take care of the patients, never change the order, and repeat.
- Over 30,000 HIV positive adults and children in treatment, including 500-900 migrants and refugees at any given time. 93% viral load suppression.
- An ethos of welcome (*karibu*) for ALL. Clinic and community links.
- Comprehensive assessment, care and treatment using the bio-psycho-social-spiritual model: differentiated treatment.
- The dignity of every person who comes to EDARP for care and treatment—seeing the presence of God in each person who comes through our clinic doors.

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“Do not neglect hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13,2)



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angels_Unawares



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Final thoughts and recommendations:

- We need more reflection and writing from our theologians and our students on a theology of migration to add wisdom, deeper understandings and a more compassionate response to the reality of migration.
- Theology helps us articulate that God's Love, Compassion and Mercy inhabit every place and space and knows the pain of betrayal and misunderstanding. Theology contributes to our understanding and experience of reconciling love and mercy and compels us to welcome the stranger as our neighbor and sister and brother.
- Our sacred texts compel us to a more humane and ethical response where every human person is treated and cared for with dignity and respect.
- Our theology can improve our understandings of comprehensive care and treatment creating not only health care systems, but caring systems of health.



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Thank you! Asanta Sana!

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