



Respect

By Bishop Wayne N. Miller

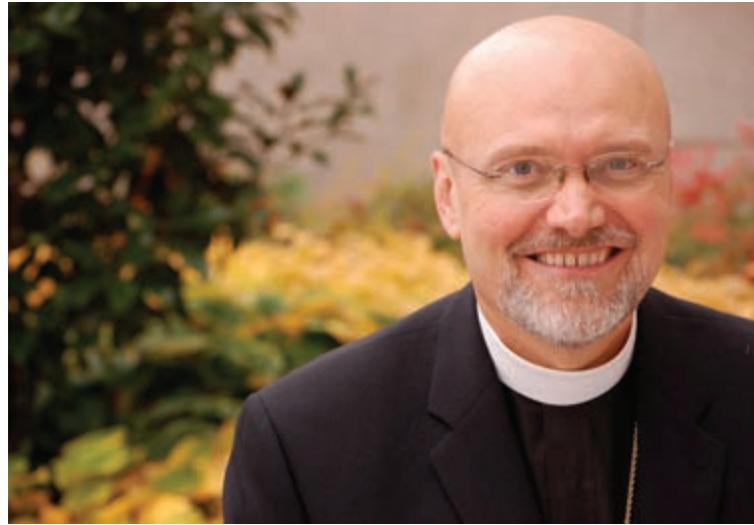
[Then Jesus] straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (John 8:7-11).

Almost exactly 50 years ago, I submitted a modest little essay to my high school English teacher. The assignment was to write a persuasive essay on the subject of what I thought to be the most important human value. I chose to write about "respect." I was recently rummaging through some old scrapbooks and discovered, to my surprise, that my grandmother had saved that essay. On rereading it, I decided that 50 years later, with the exception of a few too many gender-specific pronouns, I wouldn't change a single word if I were to write the essay today.

What I wasn't conscious of at the time was the way in which my understanding of "respect" was formed by years of quietly internalizing the Lutheran understanding of "grace." I've often spoken of grace as having a two-part definition—namely, it is the love of God embracing us completely exactly as we are *and* the love of God calling us to become something more than we have ever been before.

You need both parts, and they must be in the right order. A grace that communicates God's acceptance but omits God's expectation is what German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously described as a "cheap grace" that is powerless to transform anything. But a requirement that we must make ourselves acceptable prior to receiving God's love is an equally cheap moralism that shames us for who we have been and, therefore, calls nothing out of us but fear and denial.

This two-part quality of grace now seems to be almost identical with my understanding of respect,



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which calls us be able to embrace ourselves and one another no matter who we have been and no matter where we have come from. Yet, I'm also called to respect you too much to leave you where I found you. Challenge, encouragement and steadfast belief in a new possibility are inseparable from either authentic respect or authentic grace.

This respect, of course, is in a very precise way what Jesus shared with the woman being stoned for adultery. He found a clear, simple and unequivocal way to embrace her completely as she was—no prerequisites, no moral demands to change herself in order to become worthy of respect. But he also respected her too much to let her continue the destructive lifestyle that was, among other things, annihilating her self-respect.

In this time when respect in public speech and action is in distinctly short supply, I believe the church is being called to express our "something more" by nurturing ministries, attitudes and choices that impart this same grace—this same respect—toward others whom life has deprived of both self-respect and the respect of others. And maybe, through these ministries, those whom we have found worthy of our respect may also discover God's respect for them—a respect the world can't give and can never, ever take away.

And that, sisters and brothers, is grace. **L**

A welcome for refugee families

By Sara Trumm

More than a year ago, staff, faculty and students from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) and nearby congregations and institutions began exploring how to co-sponsor a refugee family in Hyde Park.

RefugeeOne, the largest resettlement agency in Chicago, guided the Hyde Park Refugee Project through the process. Most refugees to Chicago are placed on the North Side, closer to RefugeeOne's offices and resources. With the number of refugees increasing, Hyde Park is now considered an additional area to create community, resources and opportunities for them.

It didn't take long to raise financial support, find volunteer mentors and tutors, gather donated household items and furniture, and identify community resources. The response was so overwhelming that plans were quickly made to co-sponsor a second family.

The first family arrived before Christmas. The second family arrived in mid-February, just after the first travel ban was repealed. Both are from Syria. LSTC, Augustana Lutheran Church, several other member institutions of the Hyde Park-Kenwood Interfaith Council, and the University of Chicago Lab School all share in logistical and relational aspects of the families' adjustment.

Organizers have learned much about providing hospitality and a smooth transition while helping the refugees attain self-reliance as quickly as possible. Those close to the project learned to give the new residents time and space to adjust, to heal from possible trauma, to respect their privacy and sense of security, and to let them establish themselves independently in this new environment.

The cultural adjustment for both refugees as well as sponsors is significant. Both are navigating language barriers, religious sensitivities and countless procedures. For those who are in close relationship with the families, RefugeeOne offers training, guidance, experience and wisdom. For

most on LSTC's campus, the task is simply to be helpful and patient neighbors.

In February, the LSTC community held a fundraising dinner. Leaders shared information about how to best support refugees during the transition to a different political administration in the U.S. They also shared particulars of co-sponsoring refugees and led a conversation about interreligious engagement.

To learn more and support this work, email hydeparkrefugeeproject@gmail.com. ♣



Volunteers prepare the living space for a refugee family housed in Hyde Park.



Participants at the February fundraiser.

Sara Trumm is program coordinator of A Center for Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

ELCA World Hunger:

Making a world of difference

By the Rev. Ron Gluskamp

Editor's note: *The Rev. Ron Gluskamp, director of Always Being Made New, the Campaign for the ELCA, told this story of an October 2016 trip to Senegal and Gambia. As the synod continues its ELCA World Hunger Challenge, we are pleased to share this aspect of the program's work.*

We landed in Dakar, Senegal, where the people are 95 percent Muslim, and 5 percent Christian and other. We then went into the countryside. You know how, if you come to a fork in the road, there's a nice road over here and then there's a rickety-rackety bumpy road going over there—where do you think the Lutherans have property?

We went to this small village in a part of the country where there are 21 mosques and one Lutheran church. We were sitting in the front yard of this Lutheran health center, which is funded by

One of the four areas in which ELCA World Hunger and SLDS partners is the support of community-run Health Huts that benefit about 25,000 people. The huts provide primary health care services in rural areas for prenatal needs, malaria, women's health, pharmacies and HIV support groups.

ELCA World Hunger and our partners there, the Senegalese Lutheran Development Service (SLDS), and it was impressive to see and hear about the work.

For me, what was most touching was that there were 10 guests there, nine women and one man, and they all told us



that they were members of the Association. This is a group of 125 people who are HIV-positive, so you can imagine the kind of shame, blame and stigma that enters into all of that.

We heard the stories of the women. They were speaking in Wolof, a native dialect, which was translated into French and then into English. One of the women, who was very poised and composed, said, "If it wasn't for ELCA World Hunger, I would be dead."

I wish we had been filming because it was so powerful, so poignant. On the other hand, I'm glad we weren't because it was such an intimate, private moment. For you the reader, what's really important is this: Sometimes we wonder, do my gifts matter? Does my \$5 matter? Does my \$10 matter? Does my \$100

go where we want it to go? I would say, yes, it does matter. ... It makes the difference between life and death and new life, the promised life we have in Jesus.

So on behalf of the members of the Association and all the people who receive care from our ministries funded by World Hunger, I want to say thank you and God bless you and please continue giving. It makes a world of difference, halfway around the world.

Contact ELCA World Hunger at 773-380-2616, hunger@elca.org or visit elca.org/hunger. ✚

LSSI expands hospital-based screenings

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) took a bold step 23 years ago to create Project IMPACT (Immediate Multidisciplinary Pre-Screening Assessment Crisis Team) at Chicago's Swedish Covenant Hospital. Located inside the emergency department, the project provides crisis intervention and health screenings to individuals struggling with mental health episodes.

Based on its success, two more sites were unveiled in Chicago: IMPACT@Community First Medical Center and Project IMPACT at Methodist Hospital.

Project IMPACT allows ER staff to provide better service to patients in a cost-effective way. It screens, assesses and refers for:

- Psychiatric hospitalization.
- Outpatient counseling.
- Alcohol and drug treatment.
- Domestic violence treatment and emergency treatment.
- Detoxification programs.
- Crisis housing and shelters for the homeless.

IMPACT@Community First was made possible through a community partners grant from Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Illinois' Community Health Initiative. Project IMPACT at Methodist Hospital was made possible through support from a family foundation.

"Many people aren't aware that mental health or alcohol/drug treatment is available outside of the emergency department. Project IMPACT can help people get connected to care in the community," said the program's director Manoj Patel.

Community First Medical Center has seen the benefits since IMPACT opened in August 2016. "Our community is very diverse. We see many types of patients," said Kristen Debits, emergency department director. "Our psychiatric patients have been referred to facilities quicker, and we're providing better outreach to patients with alcoholism."

For Methodist Hospital, "it is a very exciting time ... as we venture into partnership with [LSSI]," said

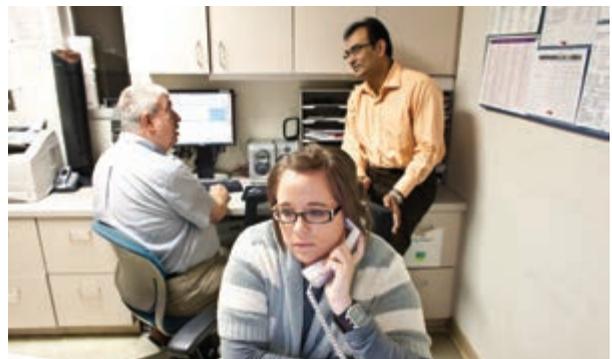
Lovelyn Paddock, director of behavioral medicine. "It is our hope that with this joint effort, we will be able to meet the increasing demands in psychiatric services and follow-up care of the community and the population that we serve."

Depending on their individual needs, Project IMPACT patients also can be referred to mental health services at LSSI's Portage Cragin Counseling Center, 4840 W. Byron, or to LSSI's outpatient substance use treatment program, 5825 W. Belmont, both in Chicago. Additionally, LSSI established a walk-in outpatient mental health counseling service across the street from Swedish Covenant Hospital in 2015.

For more information visit LSSI.org. 



The IMPACT@Community First Medical Center team: Valentina Gasparro (left), assistant supervisor; Kristen Debits, emergency department director; and Manoj Patel, director, Project IMPACT, have seen benefits to the Northwest Side community since it opened in August 2016.



The staff at LSSI's Project IMPACT, including Frank Jeffers (left), supervisor; Melissa Prusko, crisis counselor; and Patel, work to help people in crisis.