

The Enduring Message of “Love Is Spoken Here”



When I was younger, I was on staff at an Episcopal summer camp. There was a priest, Fr. Byrd, who had been involved at the camp for decades and was a kind of guiding light. He would show up throughout the summer, typically to celebrate the Eucharist and share a brief word of encouragement. He would often repeat a phrase throughout the summer. Each homily would layer stories, prayers, and hopes onto that phrase. By the end of the summer, that phrase had become the summer’s motto; a kind of spiritual tattoo that had sunk down deep into each of our hearts. As I share about the realities facing refugee and migrant siblings, I find myself reflecting on one of these phrases: “Love is Spoken Here.”

When Love Is NOT Spoken: The Realities Facing Displaced Persons

The wounds of this world have displaced more people today than at any point in human history. A greater percentage of the human family has fled their homes due to fear of danger than ever before recorded. Violence, war, & persecution drive people from the communities in which they were born, that raised them, that they belonged to. We are displacing one another faster than we are finding solutions for those who are displaced. Even for those refugees who are selected for resettlement^[1] or who are granted asylum,^[2] that safety is still too often a far cry from “Love is Spoken Here.” Our discourse in this country around [refugees and asylum-seekers](#) has, at least in my lifetime as far as I am aware, never been less loving or more xenophobic than right now. To be an immigrant, of any variety, is now to be subjected to an almost constant barrage of headlines, talking heads, tweets, threats, new policies, and even comments in the grocery store or at the bus stop that disparage your background, dehumanize your personhood, mischaracterize your motivations, threaten your rights, and create conditions where, decidedly, love is NOT spoken here.

Creating Belonging for Refugees: The Power of Personal Connection

At a Memorial Drive Ministries Onsite Partners meeting not too long ago, we took a few moments to reflect on and discuss a poem together. There were teachers, administrators, nonprofit staff, pastors, board members, and facilities staff in the room; both foreign-born and native born, most all of whom are directly involved in services to resettled refugee families in the greater Clarkston area. In reflecting on the poem, almost everyone in the room articulated the importance of calling others by their names – and what it means for immigrants and refugees to come to a place where they are seen, known, & loved. In my head, I heard Fr. Byrd’s voice echoing, “Love is Spoken Here.”

When I was young, I thought that Episcopal priest was teaching how to be a camp counselor and casting vision for the camp. But as I’ve gotten older, I realize he was sharing about how to be a person and casting a vision for all society. Where can you, today, resolve that Love Is Spoken Here, especially for your foreign-born friends and neighbors?

[1] A life-saving system that has, at the time of writing April 17, 2025, been indefinitely suspended by the current administration. <https://cwsglobal.org/blog/daily-state-of-play-trumps-indefinite-refugee-ban-and-funding-halt/>

[2] Amnesty International has recently determined that the right to asylum does not exist at the US southern border. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/02/the-right-to-seek-asylum-does-not-exist-at-u-s-mexico-border/>



David is the Executive Director of [Memorial Drive Ministries](#). He has been involved with refugee services across the Southeast and is a graduate of Emory University's Candler School of Theology. He is passionate about seeing the Memorial Drive campus filled with dynamic worship, transformational relationships, and innovative community services. David is from South Carolina and is married to Kathleen and they have two children.

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