

POSTINGS

ARTICLES FOR CHURCH MISSIONS LEADERS

You Gave Me Food and Visited Me

AS YOU DID IT TO
ONE OF THE LEAST OF
THESE MY BROTHERS,
YOU DID IT TO ME



Volume 21 / Issue 2 / February 2026



Matthew 25 may be one of the most uncomfortable chapters in the gospels. It graphically describes people with needs—the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, incarcerated—and Jesus' expectations for how His people will respond.

"How you treat them is how you treat Me," He says.

It makes us squirm. He meant it to.

And so we must turn and face the complex, emotionally fraught situations involving millions of vulnerable newcomers who qualify as "the least of these." Global media coverage may center on clashes in the US, but every country faces hard questions about how we as followers of Christ will respond—will we serve the "strangers in our midst" or will we ignore them, essentially sending them away to someone, or somewhere, else?

Many Christian leaders are calling for the Church to respond biblically not politically. This is clearly an important admonition, but what does that actually look like? What responsibilities has Jesus given us as local churches and as individual Christians in our city, our town, or our rural area to serve the least of these whom Jesus called His brothers?

For simplicity, throughout this article we will use the term, “vulnerable immigrant,” to include those designated as refugees and asylum seekers as well as immigrants in various legal stages of acquiring long-term status. “Vulnerable” here

will refer to anyone who came to your nation because their lives or livelihoods were at risk in their home country or prior temporary location, or they are being threatened now because of policies or people.

While not condoning disregard for immigration laws, we cannot forget that those who have no documented status are also made in the image of God and deserve to receive God’s love through His Church. At the same time, we pray that our government leaders can find an equitable way to resolve their legal status.

To define some practical beginning points, *Postings* talked to Daniel Yang and Matthew Peace of World Relief. We focused primarily around initial steps of involvement within reach of almost any local church or individual.

Q & A

A conversation with two church engagement leaders

Postings: The needs of vulnerable immigrants are complicated, and many congregations include believers who hold opposing perspectives on the immigration issue and current government policies. How would you respond to church leaders who elect to just stay uninvolved?

Matt: As a former pastor myself, I sympathize with pastors who are leery of “poking the bear” and want to avoid generating another round of angry emails by calling the church to engage with vulnerable immigrants. We also recognize that church leaders are under many pressures these days. There’s already so much to do just to

keep current ministries and programs running well. But Scripture is clear that God cares about the foreigners in your midst and He has a purpose for bringing them to your community.

Daniel: Rather than assume that care for vulnerable immigrants requires another program, my advice is to, instead, focus on one family. I borrow Andy Stanley’s motto, “How can we do for one what we wish we could do for all?”

Identify an immigrant household in the vicinity of your church and just take an hour or two to visit and listen to them. Don’t ask questions

Sometimes
pastors just
need to see a
demonstration
of what helping
looks like.

about their status; just find out what their struggles are. Most are extremely anxious, even if arrests and deportations are not happening often in your community. They may be afraid to go out even for groceries; maybe they have stopped going to work because they are fearful of being arrested at their job and therefore don't have money for food or other basic necessities.

Can you deliver groceries to them? You don't need to add a new item to the church budget or recruit a committee to do that. Just take some money from your benevolence fund and buy them some food. Even small gestures will mean that for your people impersonal terms like "refugees," "asylum seekers," and "immigrants" will acquire faces, names, and real-life stories. Getting to know just one vulnerable immigrant family can begin to shift attitudes and open hearts across your congregation.

Postings: The idea of starting small is encouraging. What else could churches do to find out about the vulnerable immigrants around them and initiate meaningful involvement?

Daniel: Start by finding out a bit about who lives in your community. You could call it mapping, but don't try to gear up for a lot of research as you begin. Just start on a very basic level. One way is to ask God to open your eyes as you drive through your area. You may suddenly realize, "There's that Bhutanese restaurant I pass all the time. I wonder if it is

owned and staffed by vulnerable immigrants who might be very scared right now. Maybe we could encourage our people to support the owner and staff by eating there and during their meal they can intentionally strike up conversations to share encouragement in this stressful time."

Matt: Proximity is key. Almost everybody works with a vulnerable immigrant, lives near one, goes to school with children of vulnerable immigrants, etc. Even if these immigrants have been here legally for decades, they may suddenly be overwhelmed with fear. Some will begin to relive devastating past traumas.

Daniel: We often use the acronym, GAPS, to describe the seasons of churches' ministry to vulnerable immigrants.

GIVE ADVOCATE PRAY SERVE

Churches may see the need for each of these and feel guilty if they don't address all four. Larger churches likely can do that. But it may be more practical to think of it as seasons.

In one season, your church may be called to be advocates with political leaders, but more often your advocacy may focus on helping other churches

Walk alongside immigrant pastors who are caring for their very frightened congregation while perhaps also facing their own fears about being wrongly detained.

engage. Or it may be advocating for vulnerable immigrant children at your local school or securing help for a vulnerable immigrant family from other service agencies. In another season, your church may be called to fill gaps through prayer or through giving. Don't feel you must do all four at once.

Postings: We hear from individuals who feel like they are the only voice in their church calling for compassionate responses for vulnerable immigrants. What advice do you have?

Daniel: If your church isn't ready to get involved, begin by taking the initiative yourself to meet one such family and find out how you could help. Maybe they need someone to pick up their medication at the pharmacy, purchase groceries, assist with filling out a form, or help to understand a school requirement for their children.

Try not to do things alone; instead ask God to give you one other person to go with you on a visit and together begin to build a relationship. Eventually you may be able to expand into a team by adding a couple of additional people who can serve in different ways.

Sometimes pastors just need to see a demonstration of what helping looks like. Perhaps you will feel led to tell your pastor that you did this in the name of your church. Describe the needs and fears the family is facing as well as the impact of a simple act of kindness. Ask if the church might provide funds to buy groceries for this family next month or for another needy immigrant family nearby.

Your pastor and church leaders may be happy to bless what you are doing if it does not require them to organize, promote, or find extensive funding for yet another church program. Consciously avoid any intimation that your pastor should feel guilty about the church's previous lack of involvement. Be positive!

Matt: Is there a local ministry you could volunteer with, say an ESL program that needs more classroom assistants? As you get involved, tell others about the eagerness of students to learn, the challenges they face, etc. Invite your missions team members to come visit a class to see for themselves.

Daniel: A woman in my own congregation had a burden to

help our local ESL program, so last year she began volunteering there and then would report back to our missions committee. They loved what was happening and told her, "That's great! What can we do to help you?" She became the front runner for our church's involvement. This year in partnership with both our church and World Relief, she is building a team of people from our congregation to better serve vulnerable immigrants in our community.

Postings: Many of our readers are saddened as they learn of vulnerable immigrants legally in the US who have been detained or deported. Are there practical things that a church or individuals can do to address these newcomers' fears and the new round of trauma they are suffering?

Daniel: You can help vulnerable immigrants to know their rights. For those here in the US, World Relief has some resources on our website that you can share with your vulnerable immigrant neighbors and friends (see list at end of this article). Taking

these steps will not guarantee that they will not be detained, but they are still helpful if such a crisis occurs.

There are other protocols to follow if a family member has been detained. In some cases, American friends have volunteered to care for children should both parents be detained. They have also provided travel funds for detainees released far away from their family without any financial resources to get home.

Realize that people in your congregation could be detained even if they have been in your country legally for extended time. Talk to them in advance about how you can support their family if something happens to them. For example, visiting detainees in detention is a huge morale booster and may impact how they are treated.

Another very practical way to show compassion is to accompany

vulnerable immigrants to doctors' appointments, meetings with immigration, etc. Your presence will not guarantee they will not be detained, but it is a huge encouragement to have you with them, and it could influence the situation.

Matt: We also need to walk alongside immigrant pastors who are caring for their very frightened congregation while perhaps also facing their own fears about being wrongly detained. Showing solidarity with these pastors is a wonderful way to help.

Daniel: A bigger step is accompanying vulnerable immigrants or their families to court. Not everyone is ready for this step, and it is important to have some preparation. World Relief is piloting training for this type of ministry in

Chicago, and we are trying to scale it, but we currently have a presence in only a limited number of cities.

Helping vulnerable immigrants to get legal advice and, if necessary, representation, is another service. Unfortunately, there are not enough immigration attorneys here in the US to serve all those who currently need help. World Relief has a training program to prepare people in churches to become certified as legal service providers. Our current classes are full, but we will be continuing this program, so look for future announcements.

CONTRIBUTORS



DANIEL YANG is currently the senior director of global mission and church movements at World Relief. He has coauthored two books and served as a pastor, church planter, and church-planter trainer, as well as director of the Church Multiplication Institute at the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center.



MATTHEW PEACE is church partnership manager for World Relief's churches of welcome initiative. A former pastor and founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance's short-term missions Envision program, Matt brings a pastor's heart and global experience to his efforts to better engage churches with vulnerable immigrants. **Contact Matt** if you have questions about how World Relief could help your church effectively engage.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOUR CHURCH PURSUE NEXT STEPS

.....

- **The Evangelical Immigration Table's "How to Support Immigrants in Your Community"** provides practical ideas for beginning your walk alongside vulnerable immigrants.
- **World Relief's resources for responding to immediate needs** will help US churches and individuals identify some practical steps to take in the current crises.
- **World Relief's US Immigrant Resource Hub** offers multiple resources in multiple languages for vulnerable immigrants trying to navigate the US government's maze of changing requirements.
- **World Relief's Advocate Page** suggests arenas where your voice can have an impact on ongoing government policy and practice regarding vulnerable immigrants.

Watch God multiply your loaves and fishes

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the size of the need and never attempt anything. But remember the question Daniel shared at the beginning of this article: How can we do for one what we wish we could do for all?

What is one step, or the next step, that you as an individual, a missions leadership team, or a congregation could take to serve a vulnerable immigrant in Jesus' name? Just take that first small action step and watch God multiply it as He did one young boy's very modest lunch so long ago.

How can we
do for one
what we wish
we could
do for all?



© 2026 Catalyst Services, Inc.

Catalyst's *Postings* e-newsletter is a free, monthly publication of practical articles highlighting what churches and agencies are doing to mobilize untapped potential for global impact. SUBSCRIBE at catalystservices.org/postings. ACCESS all past *Postings* articles at catalystservices.org/postings-gallery-of-archives.