

Introduction

Leaving the comfort of your home, being uprooted from all your loved ones and from all that is familiar, and venturing into the unknown: such an experience can only be adequately fathomed by one who has traveled that path. I left my beloved and deeply troubled motherland, Zimbabwe, in 2004, relocating to South Africa. Fortunately for me, I was moving into an academic institution for further studies and had the privilege of enjoying support from the university community and from other Zimbabwean friends. What we saw in June 2009 among the refugees at the Central Methodist Mission in downtown Johannesburg was the result of very different and extremely difficult circumstances. I know that the refugees' sense of uprootedness, homelessness, and despair appears to be a permanent phenomenon, and I can only but glimpse into their experience. I do not claim to have "walked in their shoes," but I write as an "insider-outsider," one who lives in the Diaspora and witnesses the pain, stress, and trauma suffered by those who have not been as fortunate as I have. This chapter will explore the struggles that Zimbabwean immigrant encounter in a foreign land, challenge the Zimbabwean churches to address the causes of this current humanitarian crisis, and urge the South African churches to embrace the immigrant community and be involved in works of healing, restoring, nurturing, and caring for life—as reflected in the struggles of the Central Methodist Mission. And the churches of the immigrants themselves need to answer Bernard Boyo's call in the prior chapter for a theology of: ; immigration—one that urges believers at the point of departure to press for justice, those who receive the refugees to practice radical hospitality, and those who are the church in exile to walk together with those who suffer.