

Jill and I had a very restful week at Massanutten (yellow arrow), with the main event being a three-day journey on Skyline Drive, beginning with Afton Mountain in the south and ending at Front Royal in the north. Birding was not particularly successful on the trip, but I did encounter one Turkey Vulture who was willing to sit for a portrait session along the way. I enjoyed worshipping with other congregations, and look forward to being back with you this Sunday!



On a less salubrious note, I'd like to think with you a bit about the refugee crises currently in the news. . . .

According to the United Nations High Council on Refugees (UNHCR), as of January, 2014, there were nearly 12,000,000 refugees in the world, over 1,000,000 asylum-seekers, 24,000,000 internally-displaced persons, and nearly 3,500,000 other persons who were functionally stateless (see attached map). Numbers vary among sources, but some of the major refugee crises of the last thirty years include the former Yugoslavia (2.7 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million), Darfur (2.5 million), Rwanda (2.3 million), Syria (2 million), Iraq (1.4 million), and Liberia (640,000). There are and have been many others.



Of the twenty-two developed nations that resettle the persecuted, the United States accepts more than all the others combined. During the twenty years from 1992-2012, the U.S. accepted 380,000 refugees from the former Soviet Union, 192,000 refugees from Vietnam, 169,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia, 106,000 refugees from Iraq, and 104,000 refugees from Myanmar, to name just the top five.

While I am certainly no expert in these matters, I do have some personal experience with refugee families. When I was a teen, our church in Atlanta resettled a Cuban refugee family and employed the father as our Custodian.

None of the family spoke English when they arrived, and my Mom decided that she was going to teach them to speak English. Not only did this greatly help our new friends, but that project launched what really became her vocation (after parenting, of course), in that she was actively involved in literacy work for the rest of her life.

Many years later, in Louisville, Jill and I played a fairly major role in the resettlement of a multi-generational Bosnian family who were escaping the destruction of Yugoslavia. While perhaps not so life-changing as my Mother's experience, our participation was a very rewarding project for several years, with another happy and successful ending.



With respect to the present refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, my guess is that nearly all of us have said or thought at some time, “Why doesn’t somebody DO something?!” And, of course, the answer to the question is “Well, I AM somebody. What does God want ME to do?”

The Story of America is the story of people seeking a better life. I doubt that any of us are more than a handful of generations from an immigrant or refugee past. Many of us are first-generation Americans, born in other lands; and many of us are the children of families who came north in The Great Migration that began a century ago.



Is it possible that God has some specific part for us to play in the immigrant and refugee opportunities of our own time? Is it possible that God has something for YOU to do?

Dave

P.S. I’m going to see *War Room* tonight. I understand that many of you have already seen it, with powerful effect. If you haven’t gone yet, I encourage you to support this film and to be blessed by it.

