

2023 Arizona Five-Day: A Mile in My Shoes: Immigration and the Bible

Our presenter, Karen Gonzalez, is the author of *The God Who Sees: Immigration, the Bible and the Journey to Belong* and *Beyond Welcome: Centering Immigrants in our Christian Response to Immigration*. Karen's work is biblically based and if you read her books, you'll be amazed at how she opens up scriptures in surprising ways. Born and raised in Guatemala, she came to the US as a young person, attended seminary and worked for years with immigrants at World Relief. Her insights into scripture remind us how much immigrants are at the heart of the text – the book of Ruth, for example, is all about immigration, but we (I) have seldom read it that way. Take a look and you'll be surprised as I was at how insightful her perspective is.

Because we have such a unique opportunity to engage with immigrants here in Tucson, rather than having two faculty presenters, our week will include two days of immersion experiences. We'll gather on Sunday, October 22, at RRC for opening worship followed by dinner and listening circles, and Monday will be the regular schedule. Tuesday and Wednesday, however, we'll split up into three groups, one heading to Mexico to a migrant shelter there; a second to shelters here in Tucson; and a third to the Tohono O'odham reservation. The purpose of these immersions is to give participants an empathetic encounter with both the pain and the hope of those coming across our southern border. We'll spend time hearing from those who work at the shelters and in legal services, some of the most compassionate and creative people I know. Then on Thursday, we'll be back at RRC to pray and reflect, with Friday's closing service to include dedicating ourselves to Christ in a new way. A copy of the 2023 schedule is attached.

"A Mile in My Shoes." is a quote from a poem written in 1895. Titled "Judge Softly," the poem is a plea for empathy, the beginning of compassion. The journey we began in September with our hiking sticks takes on a new dimension as we will meet people who have walked miles to escape violence and poverty. Plan to join us if you can – the dates are October 22-27, 2023. [Click here to register online.](#)

In closing, take a moment to read Howard Thurman's meditation "Life Is Saved by the Singing of Angels," as a reminder to all of us of the Divine Intent. We are being gathered, shaped, held and celebrated by the Love of God, so take time to listen and be renewed.

Life is Saved by the Singing of Angels

There must be always remaining in everyone's life some place for the singing of angels, some place for that which in itself is breathlessly beautiful and throws all the rest of life into a new and creative relatedness, something that gathers up in itself all the freshets of experience from drab and commonplace areas of living and glows in one bright white light of penetrating beauty and meaning – then passes.

The commonplace is shot through with new glory; old burdens become lighter; deep and ancient wounds lose much of their old, old hurting. A crown is placed over our heads that for the rest of our lives we are trying to grow tall enough to wear. Despite all of the crassness of life, despite all the hardness of life, despite all of the harsh discords of life, life is saved by the singing of angels.
– Howard Thurman

Jerry Haas
Retreat Leader