



JUBILEE PARTNERS REPORT

Summer 2026

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”

Romans 12:14

We are living through difficult times. The challenges of our times, though, are not worse than those faced by people at other points in history and in other places around the globe. One of the powerful things about welcoming refugees is that you often meet ordinary people of faith who have come through great trials, and who bring with them a wisdom that has been tested by adversity. In recent months, it has been a special blessing for us to get to know one such couple and their children.

Esther and Jean (not their real names) are from central Africa. They had to leave their home country and move to a neighboring country because of political instability and tribal conflicts. Then they left the neighboring country for the United States because of the insecurity they felt as refugees in that country. Like most refugees, they have memories that are very painful to revisit, and so the experiences that they retell are only a part of their story. Still, they were willing to share with us recently about some of their experiences and how they understand those experiences in light of their Christian faith.

In their home country, Esther explained, it is common for people to face discrimination because of their tribal identity. Jean grew up in one region of the country, but his family originally came from another region and belonged to a different ethnic group. His family had changed their surname in an effort to blend in. Jean is hardworking and competent, but when Jean and Esther were a newly married couple, he had difficulty finding employment in his field because of the discrimination. Esther reflected on the reasons for this discrimination. “You feel like somebody coming from a different place is coming to take your rights,” she said. “They are getting what is rightfully yours. I think it’s a sense of jealousy.”

There was discrimination in housing as well. After the house they rented was sold to a new landlord, Esther and Jean started to receive threats, trying to get them to move. Esther remembers the tone of the threats: ““You have to leave. Do you know who I am? Don’t play with me.””

“What have I done?” Esther remembers thinking. She went on, “What saved us is the way my husband has always been a very friendly person, and so people in the neighborhood knew him, and they knew me as well. They knew that I was not a troublesome person. All that is just part of people hating you for who you are.



Esther and Jean with their two boys.

They can cook up stories just to get you in trouble because they don't like the fact that you are of a certain tribe.”

Above all, there was the presence of real violence around them. “A lot of things were happening,” Esther said. “People were going missing. And once somebody goes missing, there’s no investigation that’s going to be done to find out what happened. Very, very few stories do you hear of people coming back okay. Most people would disappear and you’d never see them.” Esther remembered a time when their whole street was targeted with papers threatening an attack. “It just instilled a lot of fear in us. I was scared. There were days I used to dream of wars, you know, running. And I was pregnant.”

Esther’s parents had moved to the neighboring country when she was very young, and she had returned to her home country on her own as an adult. With the threats of violence around them and with Esther in the late stages of pregnancy, they decided that it was best for her to cross the border again and go to live with her mother. Later, after Jean was assaulted at his jobsite, he decided to cross the border himself to join her. That was a challenging transition for Jean because of the cultural and language differences between the two countries. He again faced challenges finding employment. With persistence, though, he was able to pull together work to make ends meet.



Kids are grateful for anyone willing to give them a push on one of our most popular swings!



Esther and her boys water in some freshly-transplanted tomatoes and peppers by their house.

However, the situation for refugees in their new country was tenuous. Immigration agents had been arresting foreign citizens and deporting them back across the border. There were immigration raids targeting church services attended by foreign nationals, and immigration agents had been showing up at schools so that parents were afraid to bring their children to school. Families were being separated.

One evening, there came a knock on the door of Esther and Jean’s home, and when they answered the door a group of immigration agents were there asking for Jean by name. Fortunately, they were able to produce some papers, and the immigration agents left. They felt a new vulnerability, though, knowing that one of their neighbors must have reported them. They decided to see if they could seek asylum in the United States.

That was several years ago. Now they are in the U.S., waiting while their asylum application is processed. As we all know, though, the situation for refugees and asylum seekers is now tenuous in the United States as well. As Christians, how do they carry on with peace and hope in these circumstances? Jean talked about the importance of

keeping his sight on the heart of God the Father. “As I continue to look at God, I continue to see His faithfulness and His love,” he said. “Because if it was up to man or up to me to make things happen ... I probably would have been fed up.”

Esther spoke of trusting God by letting go of her expectations. “In my lifetime I’ve moved a lot, and I hope I can call here home,” Esther told me. “I belong where God places me, I guess. I think I’m coming to accept that, and believe that God is leading my path and wherever he places me is where he needs me to be at that particular time. I’ve removed expectations, because expectations have disappointed me a lot in the past. So I just say, ‘Lord, what’s your will? What direction do you want me to take? What do you require of me right now?’”

One cause for deep grief right now is the shift toward immigration policies in the U.S. that make deliberate use of intimidation and fear. Sweeping raids, mass deportations, removals to third countries, demeaning descriptions of immigrant communities, the separation of families. These policies are directly opposed to the commands that God gave for a holy nation: “Treat the foreigner the same as a native. Love him like one of your own.” (Leviticus 19:34) The fear of having your family and your life torn apart is very acute for many immigrants right now. Esther has known that fear for her own family, and it stirs compassion for others in her. She says, “because of the life experience that I’ve gone through and what I’ve seen, it pains my heart when I hear stories of people being separated, children.”

What do we do as Christians when faced with this kind of injustice? In our noon devotions one day, Esther raised up two messages from the letters of Paul: bless those who persecute you (Romans 12:14), and pray for those in authority, that you may live in peace (1 Timothy 2:2). When asked to say more about these verses, Esther explained: “If God says we should pray for those who are in power so that we may live in peace in that land, he foresaw this. He knew that there will be leaders who will come and they are selfish, and they will be driven to do all these things. We’re contending with spirits. The Bible says we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Whatever character these people are portraying, they are not attributes of God — God is love, God is kind. Whatever they are portraying is the attributes of the enemy.”



Saturday night at the Koinonia House—Games and ice cream!

Because this is a spiritual battle, Esther says, Christians must begin with prayer. “We have to start fighting it in the spirit before we can do it physically. The battle is won in the spirit before it is won physically. Yes, God does what he does,” she says. “But then there is a part that we have to play, and that is to pray.”

Prayer aligns our imagination with the purposes of God, which makes truly transformative movements possible. That’s the renewing of our minds that Paul writes about in Romans 12. We are thankful for Esther and Jean’s encouragement to find our direction and our strength in God through prayer. Paul has another message for Christians in Romans 12: practice hospitality. Whatever the people in authority may be doing, each one of us is able, with God, to bring our immigrant neighbors a message of love and welcome. We are very grateful for this work, and grateful for your partnership.

from the people of Jubilee



Above: Heidi and Eliza prepare fresh hot tortillas at the local farmer's market.

Right: Sue made a stunning starry chocolate pastry to bless the coming of baby Juniper (who arrived safely on the next page).



Last fall, a family from Latin America came to live with us here at Jubilee after their daughter was born with medical complications that require ongoing surgeries and treatments. They had been living and working in the Atlanta area until the disruptions due to their daughter's health crisis caused them to lose employment and housing. It has been an inspiration to see the loving dedication of these parents for their two daughters. In these pictures, this father and Jean both enjoy some moments of tranquility at Jubilee's fishing ponds.

Jubilee Partners is looking for volunteers!
Our resident volunteer program welcomes people to spend 3-12 months living and working at Jubilee, with starting times in January, May, and August each year. Resident volunteers receive food, housing, and a modest living allowance. Housing for families is limited, but we have enough housing for singles and couples. For more information, check out the volunteer section of our website (www.jubileepartners.org) or email volunteer@jubileepartners.org.



Above and below: The ponds, rivers, and streams are a never-ending playground for the record number of children currently frolicking in the community.

Left: Isaiah and Matthew collect, clean, and color-code our eggs.



Who we are

Jubilee Partners is a Christian service community in rural Georgia. Our primary work is to offer hospitality to refugees who have experienced violence or persecution. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization; donations are thus tax-deductible. Your donations and support of our work are most appreciated.

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View Jubilee's newsletter in color online at www.jubileepartners.org!

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Everyone holds their breath to see if the piñata will be smashed open...
We celebrated several birthdays in one evening, ranging from 4 to 85!