

United States and Mexico. If the U.S. Congress passes certain immigration laws under consideration, millions of people who work under the minimum wage and contribute in a substantial way to the U.S. economy will be considered criminals. Many are here for others, working to support wives and children back home.

You may not be aware of how much this new reality has affected our Hispanic churches. Many people have stopped coming to church for fear of being deported.

We need to start with a Word that we consider above any human laws—a Word that places the well-being of human beings above any human regulation, a Word that calls us to consider the *moral* responsibility we have before the *legal* issue.

The Law of God made provisions for those who could easily be abused because of their vulnerability before the laws of the land. The Torah made of aliens the touchstone and concrete demonstration of neighborly love (Ex. 22:21, 23:9; Lev. 19:33, 24:22; Num. 15:13-16; Deut 1:16-17, 10:18-19, 24:17-22; Ezek. 22:27-29). As Psalm 146:9 says, God “watches over the alien.”

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens,

No hagan sufrir al extranjero que viva entre ustedes. Trátenlo como a uno de ustedes; ámenlo, pues es como ustedes. Además, también ustedes fueron extranjeros en Egipto. Yo soy el Señor su Dios.

When foreigners reside among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigners residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

—Leviticus 19:33-34, TNIV

for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt (Deut. 10:18-19).

Jesus opposes the attitude of his contemporaries (“Hate your enemy”). He summarizes the heart of the law: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 19:19). For Jesus, love must be indiscriminate, without boundaries, or it is not love at all.

Jesus identifies with the aliens: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matt. 25:35-36). Jesus is the alien, and in loving the alien we love Jesus our Lord.

Should not the words of Jesus be a waking call to practice justice, compassion, and hospitality and thus live as Christians in this world?

Today, if we want to celebrate Pentecost in a way that really honors our Lord, we need to ask ourselves if we are under obligation to the law of God that calls us to love, protect, do justice, and practice hospitality to the millions whose great sin is to defend and dignify, even at the cost of their own lives, one of God’s highest gifts and core values: human life.



Rev. Mariano Avila is assistant professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Reflecting the Heavenly Vision

At Pentecost, the Spirit empowered the disciples to miraculously communicate the gospel in different languages to a multicultural crowd. In a sense, Pentecost is about the reversal of the tower of Babel.

According to the story of Babel, the whole world used to speak a common language. However, in response to their prideful attempt to build a tower that would reach heaven, God scattered the people of the earth into different and often antagonistic linguistic groups. The coming of Jesus and the continuation of his presence in the Spirit, however, changes all that. Starting at Pentecost, the Spirit works to bring all of God’s people back together.

In John’s revelation, we see the heavenly culmination of the Spirit’s work. Gathered around the holy throne are “people from every nation, tribe, people, and language”

此後，我觀看，
見有許多人，沒有人能
數過來，
是從各國各族各民各方來的，
站在寶座和羔羊面前，
身穿白衣，
手拿棕樹枝。

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

—Revelation 7:9

of the earth. If heaven is a multicultural mosaic of worship, shouldn’t the church on earth reflect that? After all, we ask in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Our worship should be a rehearsal of that heavenly reality.

This kingdom reality of being a multi-ethnic place of worship has provided the vision for The Tapestry, a Christian Reformed congregation in Richmond, British Columbia. Like a rich, colorful tapestry, we aim to weave people of different colors, backgrounds, and nationalities into the fabric of a Christ-centered community. In our first Pentecost service, we read Scripture in six different languages, prayed in Dutch, heard a message in English, and worshiped at other points in Swahili. We had a wonderful time celebrating both the diversity and oneness of God’s people.

This vision is not confined to individual churches but applies to the entire denomination. As neighborhoods change, interracial marriages increase, and immigration continues, the kingdom vision found in Revelation 7:9 needs to be embraced by Christian Reformed churches across North America. As Pentecost shows us, despite differences in language, ethnicity, and backgrounds, we are one in Christ. ■



Rev. Albert Chu is pastor of The Tapestry in Richmond, British Columbia.