

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

2 March 2016: Jon Piper, Hope Church



My Family of Migrants

My Grandmother is the daughter of a farmer from rural Italy. She grew up helping on the farm and, as the eldest of twelve children, helped to parent her siblings.

Grandma left Italy in the early 1950s, to seek a better life in the UK. She met my Grandfather, who had been in the Navy in the Mediterranean during the war. They married and my Mum arrived soon after.

My English brother-in-law and his Swedish partner live with her Hungarian son in Budapest. They are about to have a daughter who has a head start in the pastime of nationality collecting!

While my family contains recent examples of this sort of transcontinental movement, Britain and Europe as a whole are full of the descendants of long dead immigrants. The ebbing and flowing of populations have been constant over the past few millennia.

For this reason, when I see the immigration crisis in the news, I find it very important to remember that this is not a new issue. People have been leaving and arriving across our borders for longer than those borders have existed. So when my brother-in-law left the UK and started a family across the continent, he was not the first. When my Grandma crossed a continent for a better life, marrying a man who had fought for the wellbeing of that continent, the issues were not new.

Even millennia before Christ, when the Biblical laws were given, the issue was current. The law says: 'When a foreigner lives with you in your land, don't take advantage of him.' Later, Jesus promises reward for his followers because:

I was hungry and you fed me,
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room,
I was shivering and you gave me clothes...