

Eerdmans). "It is a necessary practice in the community of faith."

Pohl, a professor of Christian social ethics at Asbury Theological Seminary, points out that one of the key Greek words for hospitality, *philoxenia*, combines the general word for love or affection for people connected by kinship or faith (*phileo*) and the word for stranger (*xenos*).

"Hospitality's orientation toward

strangers is more apparent in Greek than in English," she notes. "We, like the early church, find ourselves in a fragmented and multicultural society that yearns for relationships."

In Romans 15:7, Paul urges believers to "receive one another" (NKJV) as Christ has received them.

"Jesus' gracious and sacrificial hospitality—expressed in His life, ministry and death—undergirds the hospitality of His

followers," Pohl says. "Jesus gave His life so that persons could be welcomed into the kingdom and in doing so linked hospitality, grace and sacrifice in the deepest and most personal way imaginable."

"People are hungry for 'welcome,'" she continues, "but most Christians have lost track of the heritage of hospitality."

According to Valorie Burton, a speaker on Christian living, hospitality means going out of your way to be compassionate. "Demonstrating Christ's love means opening our hearts and serving others," says Burton, who has spoken at T.D. Jakes' Potter's House church in Dallas and Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston. Burton adds, however, that people should seek God's guidance and exercise Spirit-led discernment before inviting strangers into their homes.

RICK AND DESIREE GUZMAN have befriended many strangers. Their response, Rick says, is born out of a Spirit-led desire to reach out to people.

"For me, hospitality is summed up by Jesus in Luke 6:31: 'Do to others as you would have them do to you,'" Rick, 27, says. "As a baby, Jesus Himself was a refugee in Egypt. His family had to depend on the hospitality of strangers."

Rick and his 29-year-old wife, Desiree, a teacher, have come alongside several refugee families in their hometown of Aurora, Illinois—visiting with them, having them over for meals, taking them out on trips and even inviting them along on vacations.

Sharing their faith, Rick points out, is a natural progression. They befriend refugee families, many of whom have Muslim backgrounds, not with the "ulterior motive" of witnessing but because Jesus would have done the same.

Neither is the relationship a one-way street. "Our experience helping refugees and just doing life with them has probably had a larger impact on us than it has on them," says Rick, who works for the Illinois Department of Corrections and hopes to attend law school.

He and Desiree launched their own nonprofit group, The Tolbert Refugee Assistance Foundation. They cut back their wedding expenses and

## Open Hearts OPEN HOMES

*One Chicago couple has learned that genuine hospitality opens huge doors for ministry.*



» Rick and Desiree Guzman (back center) with the Kwizeras, a refugee family from Rwanda

requested donations in place of gifts so they could expand their outreach to strangers.

The bond with one family in particular, refugees from eastern Africa, has grown especially strong. Last year, when the mother, Halima, was about to give birth, she called and asked Desiree and Rick to come to the hospital with her. During labor and the delivery, Desiree was at her side while Rick paced the floors "like a nervous dad."

When the baby was born, Halima announced his name: Rick Jabril Musa. Rick and Desiree, members of Community Christian Church in Aurora, were stunned.

"There's little doubt in our minds that the bonds we have

formed are lifelong," Rick adds. "They are more like family to us than anything else."

Although Rick and Desiree do not have children of their own, they bought a minivan fitted with three child seats to transport their refugee friends.

The Guzmans' dream is to buy a boarding house to accommodate refugees and others at a reduced rent. Their idea is to set the rent money aside and later give it back to their renters to help them make a down payment on a house of their own.

Says Rick: "The most important thing, in my view, is reciprocating Christ's love through practicing hospitality and loving others."

### Who Is a 'Stranger'?

A "stranger" can be defined as anyone in need of friendship and Christian fellowship. Hilary Patterson was flustered when her husband, Dwayne, called home to say he'd met a recovering drug addict who had nowhere to stay. Yvette, a 23-year-old from San Diego, had come to Kailua, Hawaii, for rehab treatment and needed shelter.

"It was raining hard, so I told Dwayne, 'Just bring her home,'" recalls Hilary, 30, who co-pastored a Salvation Army church in Kailua with her husband, 36.

"We lived in a small fixer-upper and I was kind of embarrassed about the condition of the house," Hilary told *Charisma*. "I made up a bed in the back room, but the only spare blankets belonged to my 2-year-old daughter and had teddy bears on them."

Yvette stayed with the Pattersons for nine days. Hilary and Dwayne took her to the beach and showed her around the island. "We got talking about life, and I was able to share the gospel with her," Hilary says. "She started to cry and said she felt like she had lost her soul and she had no hope."

Before Yvette returned to California, Hilary bought her a Bible in which she inscribed a personal note of encouragement. The seeds of kindness and hospitality were sown. A few weeks later, Yvette called from San Diego to tell Hilary she was going to