The bartender was reading the newspaper and took no notice of me as I peered into the door. I crossed the street to take a look inside because there was a “1667” sign in the window. I was thirsty for this French beer because it is not easy to come by in my neighborhood. I placed my order and the bartender and I made small talk about my recent arrival in Geneva and her travels to the United States.

The bartender was friendly. She made an offhand remark that was surprising to me. She stated that Geneva was “just like a third-world country.” It was surprising because twenty minutes ago I saw a Hermes storefront and many signs for Rolex and Harry Winston. There are “too many immigrants” she spat out. A few moments later I learned that she came to Geneva as a refugee from the former Czechoslovakia.

The Bible study God’s Unity...Our Journey unpacks the Ecumenical Stance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to help local congregations discern how God is calling them to work for the unity of the church. The third session focuses on the changing patterns of mission and traditions in the church. It explores what it means to say we are members of the body of Christ while acknowledging our difference, particularly in a time where we notice more the migration of people. I was in Geneva to further my own ecumenical formation so that I might be better prepared to help the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) implement our Ecumenical Stance.

Geneva is a home of sorts for many Christians. A few years ago when the Office of Ecumenical Relations hosted an Ecumenical Pilgrimage to explore important sites in the history of our faith, Geneva was one of the stops. John Calvin sought refuge in Geneva during the Reformation period, where he assisted other reformers in teaching and caring for the fledgling church. The Psalms were first sung during Sunday service at the Geneva Church and the Geneva Bible, an important English translation of the Bible, was printed there. Today the World Council of Churches has its home in Geneva and Christians come from all over the world to learn about ecumenism at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

The woman at the bar in Geneva had the same sentiment about migration as some in the United States; all want the gate closed after their safe arrival. The memory of the journey and carrying the hope for a new future has been lost. The country’s history has been forgotten. Instead there is the tendency to see people at the city’s gates as enemies, rather than parts of the body of Christ with gifts to share. Of course all migrants are not people of faith, or even Christian, but Jesus is Risen for the benefit of the whole world and God’s church exists for God’s mission in the world, not just
for Christians. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has even incorporated this belief in its Constitution, or *Book of Order*.

The Great Commandment to go and make disciples of all nations was not just a commandment to Western/European churches, but the whole church, of all times and places. Migrants carry this Great Commandment to minister to their new nation and be a prophetic voice for the need to work together to solve our world’s problems. When migrants settle into a new home, the church experiences new ways of worship and witnessing to God’s presence in the world. We also receive a clearer picture of the image of God we all bear.

Most likely all nations exist in your backyard; go and make disciples and reform your own discipleship while you are at it. In our differences and search for the good life for our families and communities, we find our unity.

You can download a copy of *God’s Unity ... Our Journey* on the [Office of Ecumenical Relations website](http://www.obc.org).