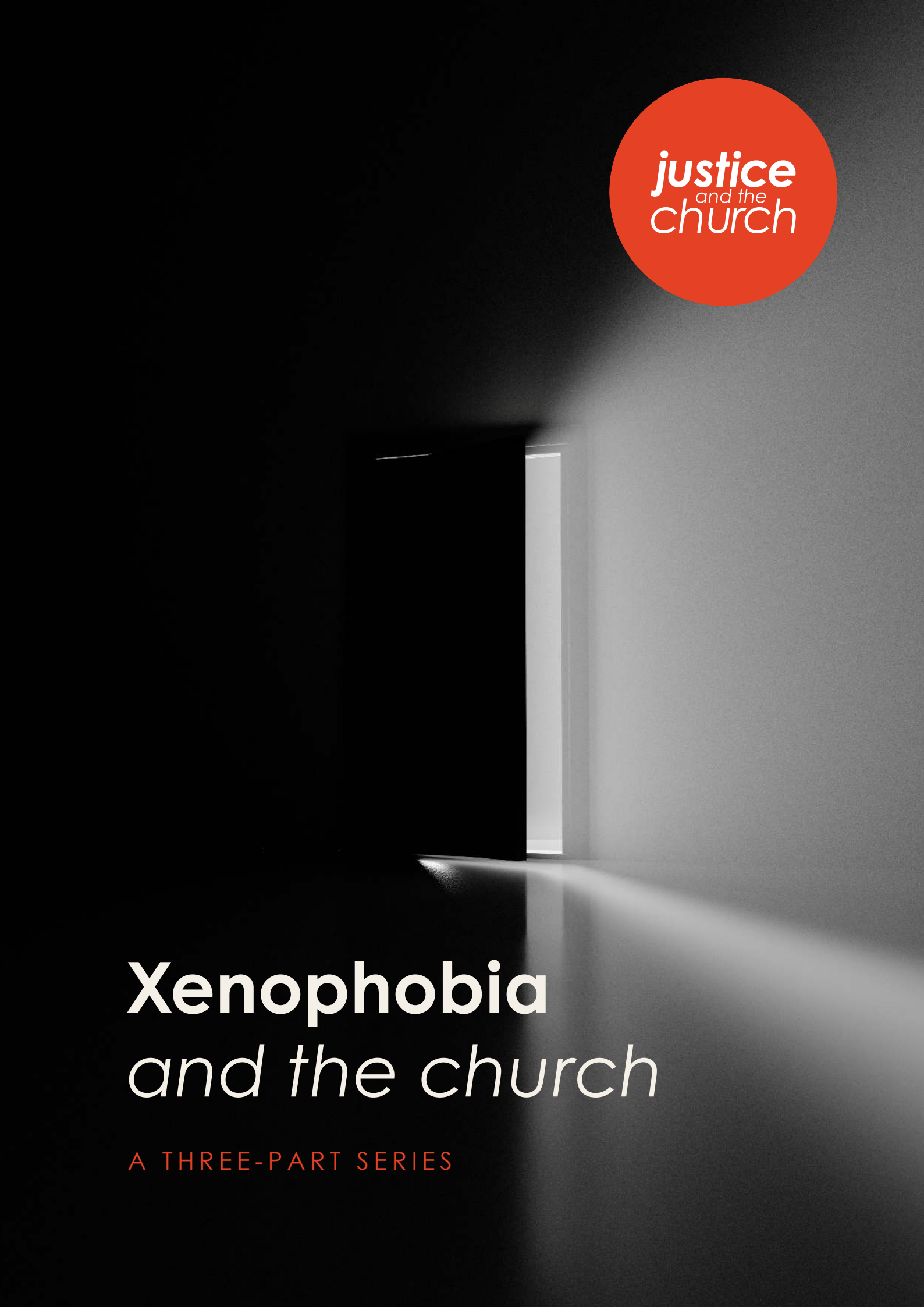




justice
and the
church

Xenophobia *and the church*

A THREE-PART SERIES

Part Three

THE GOSPEL ALWAYS PRODUCES MOVEMENT

We return to the road to Jericho. In the first article we asked Jesus's question: who is my neighbour? Here we ask a different one: will we stop?

In Luke 10, a man is beaten and left for dead on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. A priest sees him and crosses to the other side. A Levite sees him and crosses to the other side. The road to Jericho is well maintained by people who see the wounded man clearly, feel the inconvenience of stopping and keep walking with entirely clear consciences. They are not cruel men. They are busy men. Men with responsibilities, schedules and reasons.

The Samaritan stops. He does not ask how the man got there. He does not calculate the cost in advance. He sees, he is moved, and he acts. The Gospel does not permit us the comfort of the priest and the Levite. The Gospel, properly received, always produces movement. It does not leave us static. It does not allow us to feel deeply and do nothing. It sends us, as the Father sent the Son, into the places of greatest need.

This third article is written for you. Not primarily for an institution, a committee or a leadership team, but for the individual reading this on a screen, wanting to know what faithfulness actually looks like on Monday morning, in your own home, your own street, your own circle of relationships.



Xenophobia in South Africa will not be solved by strategy documents alone. It will be addressed, person by person, by ordinary believers who decide to live differently.

The framework below, Relief, Rehabilitation, Development, Transformation, is not a programme for someone else to implement. It is a way of thinking about your own engagement, whatever your context or capacity. Not everyone will begin in the same place. What matters is that you begin somewhere.

Relief: The First Obligation

Relief is the immediate, instinctive, neighbour-seeing response that any believer can offer. It is what the Good Samaritan did before he thought about anything else. When a crisis occurs, when violence displaces families, when someone you know arrives with nothing, the first question is not "How did they get here?" It is "What do they need right now?"

In the current moment, with thousands of Malawians displaced in Durban and anti-foreigner marches continuing in Gauteng, relief is not hypothetical. It is urgent. For you, relief might mean checking in on a foreign national you already know, contributing time, money or goods to a relief effort already underway through your church or an organisation like Jesuit Refugee Service, the South African Red Cross or Gift of the Givers, or simply being present and available the next time a crisis breaks out near you.

Relief is not a permanent solution. But it is the non-negotiable beginning. A believer who cannot respond to the person bleeding in front of them has no credibility when they speak of justice.

Rehabilitation: Walking with People

After the immediate crisis passes, a different and slower kind of care is required. Rehabilitation is the ministry of accompaniment, walking with someone through the long process of rebuilding their life. It does not require a title or a programme. It requires consistency.

Trauma is rarely visible on the surface. Many migrants and refugees have experienced violence, loss, bereavement and family separation, often before they arrived in South Africa. A xenophobic attack compounds all of that. For you, rehabilitation might mean befriending someone who has been displaced, learning their name and their story, staying in their life beyond the news cycle, or simply being the person who checks in months after everyone else has moved on.

Rehabilitation is one person saying to another: I am not going anywhere. I will still be here next month and the month after. Your healing matters to me because your life matters to God.

Development: Long-term Flourishing

The Gospel has a vision for human flourishing that goes beyond survival. It speaks of shalom, the comprehensive peace and wholeness that God intends for all of his image-bearers. Development means not only meeting someone's immediate needs, but working toward the conditions in which they can truly thrive.

For migrant communities in South Africa, the greatest barriers to flourishing are often structural: lack of documentation, language barriers, exclusion from formal employment and educational systems. For you, development might mean using your own skills, your network or your business to open a door for someone who has none, connecting someone you know with legal advice through organisations like the Scalabrini Centre or Lawyers for Human Rights, or simply offering to mentor or tutor someone who is trying to rebuild their future from nothing.

Development is the longest game. It requires patience and the humility to acknowledge that structural change takes time. But it is precisely here that your commitment to the stranger proves itself to be more than seasonal charity.

Transformation: A Different Way of Living

Relief, rehabilitation and development are responses to xenophobia. Transformation is the prevention of it. Transformation is what happens when you, in your own life and relationships, become a small embodiment of the alternative community that Jesus announced.

A life that is genuinely open across cultural lines, not just polite but relationally invested, is a standing argument against xenophobia. It does not happen by accident. It is cultivated through practices that form you over time: the open table in your own home, friendships that cross language and nationality, a refusal to let casual xenophobic comments go unchallenged in your presence, and a willingness to keep learning rather than assuming.

Transformation is the most demanding of the four responses because it requires you to change, not just the people around you. But this is exactly what the Gospel produces. A people who look, increasingly, like the new humanity that Jesus inaugurated, one relationship at a time.



Ideas for Response

The following are not prescriptions. They are possibilities, offered as starting points for anyone who wants to move from conviction to practice. Discern what fits your life, your relationships and your season. The goal is not to do everything. The goal is to do something, and to do it with intentionality.

THIS WEEK

- ✿ Ask yourself two honest questions: who do I know by name who was born outside South Africa, and what would I do if violence broke out near me this week? Let your answers shape what you do next.
- ✿ Reach out to one migrant or refugee-serving organisation in your city and ask them a single question: what is the most useful thing I could do for your community right now?
- ✿ Share one of these articles with a friend, a family member or a small group, and use it to start a real conversation rather than letting it pass by on a feed.
- ✿ If you attend a church, ask your leadership whether anything is already being done, and offer to help rather than waiting to be asked.

RESPONSES THAT GO DEEPER

-  Host or attend a shared meal that intentionally brings together people from different national backgrounds. Start small. One table. A few families. See what happens.
-  Identify one migrant family or person already in your own life, your street, your workplace, your school run, and invest deliberately in that single relationship.
-  Connect someone you know with legal advice, documentation support, employment pathways or skills development opportunities, either directly or through organisations like the Scalabrini Centre.
-  If you have influence within a church or organisation, use it to advocate for this work to begin there too, but do not wait for permission to begin it yourself.

LONGER-TERM COMMITMENTS THAT SHAPE YOUR LIFE

-  Commit to a multi-year friendship with someone from a migrant background, treating it not as a project but as a genuine relationship that will change you both.
-  Identify people from migrant backgrounds in your circle of influence who carry gifts and leadership potential, and invest in their development intentionally.
-  Make hospitality across cultural lines a normal rhythm of your home, not an occasional gesture.
-  Keep learning. Read, listen and stay close to the realities migrants in South Africa face, so your compassion is informed rather than sentimental.

Reflection Questions

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1 When did you last learn the name of someone who came from another country? What do you know of their story?
- 2 Where in your life does fear of the other shape how you think, speak or act?
- 3 Which posture do you more naturally occupy: the Pharisee who gives thanks he is not like those people, or the tax collector who can only say, God, have mercy?

FOR SMALL GROUP OR CONVERSATION:

- 4 How do the people around you, your friends, your family, your small group, currently think about the relationship between justice and the Gospel?
- 5 What are the specific barriers in your neighbourhood that make life difficult for migrants or refugees?
- 6 If you were known as someone in whose life strangers become family, what would need to change first?
- 7 Which of the four responses, Relief, Rehabilitation, Development or Transformation, are you best positioned to begin with, and what would the first step look like?

30 DAY CHALLENGE

In the next 30 days, commit to one action that takes you one step across a cultural border. It might be a meal. It might be a conversation. It might be a single new friendship, deliberately begun. Name the action, name the date, and tell someone else what you intend to do, so there is accountability.

The challenge is simply this: do not finish this series unchanged. Let the theology move into the body. Let conviction become action. Let the stranger become, in your hands and your home and your relationships, a neighbour.

Because this is what the Gospel does. It does not leave us on the other side of the road. It sends us across.

A Closing Prayer

Lord of every nation and tongue,

Forgive us for the ways we have looked past the stranger, crossed the road, or remained comfortable in our distance. Forgive us for the times we have called our fear discernment and our avoidance wisdom. Forgive us, too, for the times we have stood in judgment of those whose sin looks different from our own, forgetting that we too are entirely dependent on your mercy.

Give us eyes to see as Jesus sees: the image of God in every face, the dignity of every story, the weight of every name. Give us the humility of the tax collector and the courage of the Samaritan.

Make your Church in South Africa, and each one of us within it, a place where the dividing walls come down, where the table is wide enough for everyone you have made, and where the new humanity that Jesus announced becomes visible and embodied in our daily lives.

Send us. We cannot love people we refuse to see. Help us to see.

In the name of the One who crossed every border to find us,

Amen

justice@commongood.org.za | commongood.org.za

JUSTICE & THE CHURCH | AN INITIATIVE OF COMMON GOOD