

On the Outside

Synopsis:

Canada has one of the highest immigration rates per capita in the world, welcoming nearly one quarter of a million immigrants annually. Immigration is altering the religious landscape in our country and contributing to the increase in religious diversity. Not only is the size of religious minority groups increasing, but the ethnic composition of well-established Canadian religious groups is also on the rise. Immigrants do not simply transport their religious beliefs and practices from their country of origin, but are actively recreating their lived religious practices and contributing to the reshaping of religion in Canadian society.

Religion can play an important role in the process of immigrant settlement. Religious practices can offer comfort and hope during times of trial. People in religious groups can assist newcomers in their host society such as finding affordable housing, registering their children for school, opening a bank account, and accessing government funded language services. Religious groups can be a source of social support to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness.

This photo essay depicts some of the challenges that a new immigrant woman encounters. With immigration everything changes and even day-to-day practices become difficult. Originally from South Korea, Eunsoon feels that literally every doorway presents a challenge. Will she be treated with respect when she encounters people on the other side of the threshold? Or will she be discriminated against because of her accent, her appearance, or her foreign education and work experience? Who will take the time to smile, reach out and lend her a helping hand?