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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Cool. So I will just start with. Yeah. How are you guys? First, found out about Google. How did you hear of him? Yeah, it's going to. It's all in the details, right?

[00:00:09] **Speaker 2** Yeah. Can I start? Oh, yeah. You had to move into art.

[00:00:13] **Speaker 1** I'll just put it here, if that's okay.

[00:00:15] **Speaker 2** Yeah. That's fine. Yeah. And feel free to use the markers there.

[00:00:20] **Speaker 1** Oh, yeah.

[00:00:21] **Speaker 2** Yeah. Okay, so I. Probably in 2018. Sometime. I went. We both went to, seminar kind of thing at our church and learned about a listening pastor where Lutheran and, she had been a student pastor. And she was from Columbia. Right? Yeah. Yeah. And she had gotten deported. I said, followed her kids home who were data recipients, and apprehended her and her husband. And they had fled Columbia from gang violence. And, they she was a teacher at that time in Columbia. And they said they were going to, unless she got all of the kids in her school to join the gangs. They were going to kill her and her family, so she fled. So anyway, she had lived she came here and her asylum was denied. And, she she the story was just, like, horrifying. And then, she just overstayed her temporary visa, and they just didn't leave after they got, denied asylum. And she had been here for 18 years or something, and she was going to theological school and being a student pastor, and Racine and, ice came and deported them. And so usually when I hear things, I feel bad and I go home and I feel bad and I might write a letter or something like that, and I thought, this is just stupid. We we should really do something about this. It's just not the way people treat each other. So we started an immigration team at our church, and, a friend at church who, who is a retired law school professor, had worked with Aaron Barbera at the UW Emma Immigrant Justice Clinic, and she reached out to him because she had this young man who had gotten released from detention. And when he was released, he was going to go live with his cousin and Bernadine and, her at the last minute, her landlord refused to let her. Bring him to live with her. So all of a sudden, there grounds of his release from detention was that he had a place to live with a U.S. citizen. So, she knew our church had housed homeless people in the past. So she she reached out to her former colleague, Ben, our church member, and said, can you give me your church, help him? Can she live with at church? Or do you know anybody that could help him? And Ben knew that I was doing this immigration stuff. And so he said, well, do you have any ideas? And I said, yeah, I got a couple. One is the Dane Sanctuary Coalition here in town, which is a bunch of different faith communities that that, help immigrants and the other, and then. Ben sent a description from Aaron about Maguire, and it was like this two paragraph thing kind of describing this pretty amazing guy. And it ended. And he's delightful as a human. So when I got home from curling, I had sent it to him and I said, should we just have this guy come and live with us? And I don't know why not. It sounds like he's already been checked out. So he said, we can have him come here. So that's what happened.

[00:04:37] **Speaker 1** Do you remember the first time you met him in person? What was it? Yeah.

[00:04:42] **Speaker 3** Did we pick him up at the parking?

[00:04:43] **Speaker 1** Right? Yes. Yeah.

[00:04:45] **Speaker 2** Well, we met Maggie, and we met the student. My students. Yeah.

[00:04:52] **Speaker 3** And we met him at parking the ride out by, Stoughton Road. And we went to Perkins. And after that, after that, because we were hoping to eat with him, and we started eating, but he wasn't hungry, but. Oh, that's when he came home with us after that. So it was the first time we met him. And the other thing I remember about it was it was just before Thanksgiving and we had planned to be out, actually, I think we went to California, didn't we? Yeah, yeah. To the sorry, our daughter. And, so he was here about two days and then we left. But I think Maggie, the student lawyer, helped take care of him.

[00:05:30] **Speaker 2** Took him to to her house.

[00:05:32] **Speaker 3** Her house or her parent's house. And then, when we got back, then. Yeah, things really started, I guess.

[00:05:39] **Speaker 2** So when we we went, we met him and he was in that Arby's. They let him off this after. After he got released, he went and visited relatives around the country. Scott. Several relatives that are Americans, citizens now. And he had gone on a bus trip to, Ohio near Columbus to to visit relatives. And we had already agreed that he could come and live here. And I it's like he's going to go visit these relatives and then he's not going to come here. And I really wanted them to come. And I didn't know him, I don't know, but but he came back and, and so we were in this Arby's and I said, are you in? And then he taught me how to really pronounce his name. And then I just when I met him, I thought, oh, this is going to be okay. You know, we gave each other hugs. Okay. We're good. Let's go.

[00:06:48] **Speaker 1** So it was just kind of that instant connection. Yeah. With each.

[00:06:51] **Speaker 2** Other. Yeah. When we, we went to a Perkins and kind of talked about things and we got here at our house and he liked Hazel right away. And then and we showed him where his room was going to be in all that. And then Maggie and Melinda last students got ready to go. And then Maggie said, oh, he's wondering how you can. This is a Saturday night. This is like 1030 at night. He said, are you going to church tomorrow? And I said, yeah. And she said. What time are you going to go? He said. Can I come with you? Yes. That would be wonderful. He would love that. Because already people at our church family is coming to live with us. And so, you know, we, like, really quickly discover how much, very much more we had in common than had different. You know, obviously our backgrounds are really different, but like values and belief systems and all that. We had so much in common.

[00:08:00] **Speaker 3** So yeah, it's pretty easy. It's a little bit of a tangent, but excuse me, the folks that build this house, we actually are just the second owners in this house, and they had a developmentally disabled daughter. And so there's a room just down around the corner that is, almost like a little apartment. It's got its own bathroom, it's got its own sink and all things like that, and room for bed. So, that was one of the reasons we thought, well, yeah, he did fit in here as well, because she had to move her sewing room out of there for a few years because that's what she turned it into after our kids left. But, so, we're we're pretty well set up for that, so.

[00:08:38] **Speaker 1** Sorry. So have you ever done anything like this before? This is your first time having someone here. What, are you guys ever pensive about that? Were you nervous?

[00:08:49] **Speaker 3** Well, it's the first time we've ever done anything like that before.

[00:08:54] **Speaker 2** We're usually pretty cautious, so we're actually kind of surprised. We just.

[00:08:59] **Speaker 3** I mean.

[00:09:00] **Speaker 1** Yeah, I sure.

[00:09:01] **Speaker 3** The description we got of him was very, was very impressive, and so I wasn't terribly worried about it. He was he was vetted really well and that was really detailed. And we kind of trusted the the UW and Aaron Barbato on being a good person. And so I wasn't, you know, a little nervous about it, but it wasn't you know.

[00:09:22] **Speaker 2** I was more worried about if if he was struggling, would we be able to help him enough. You know, like we knew he had been through huge trauma and terrifying situations and, you know, oh, if he were if he was afraid or scared would be really be able to make him feel safe and at home and all that. And that turned out to be fine.

[00:09:49] **Speaker 1** So yeah, navigate that when, when there's situations that came up or did you ever talk about his his journey from Cameron.

[00:09:57] **Speaker 2** Oh yeah. Yeah. He was really that was one thing that was actually really, good about him is he was really open about what he'd been through, and he, he got used to me asking him to just kind of smile and. Yeah. No, I'm okay, I'm okay. I would ask him, like, are you okay? And I think I came from a caring place.

[00:10:22] **Speaker 3** Yeah, I think it was good for him to talk it out when he was first here. He did. You know, sometimes it'd be a little hard to draw him up once he got called. Like, if we have friends over to eat or something and then ask about, he would really start chattering in a way you guys.

[00:10:36] **Speaker 2** Need to.

[00:10:37] **Speaker 3** Say tell the whole story. So he wasn't, he wasn't reticent about doing it. He would.

[00:10:43] **Speaker 2** Yeah. They tell you not to ask people because it makes them relive what they went through. And it's so hard. But so we've, you know, we said if you're, if you want to talk about it, you know, and he did want to talk about it. So that was good. So when, when we worked with at church with other immigrants, they say, you know, don't demand their story offer when you're ready or if you want to. We would love to hear your story, but only only if you really want to. Because it's hard. Yeah, yeah.

[00:11:27] **Speaker 1** And how often did he talk about his family that was still in Cameroon?

[00:11:31] **Speaker 2** Every day. Every day. It was so hard for him. Yeah.

[00:11:36] **Speaker 1** Yeah, yeah. Talk a little bit about how he also supported them, the jobs that he worked and when he was thinking about his family so very well.

[00:11:45] **Speaker 3** Yeah. It took a little while to figure out how to, get money back to them. But, in fact, we tried wiring through.

[00:11:53] **Speaker 2** Well, we tried it through out.

[00:11:55] **Speaker 3** Through the, through the, wire services, and they all thought we were in a scam and they wouldn't let us do it, so. But eventually got worked out through UW Credit Union. We'll give them credit so that you could send money back over. But he was sending money to support his his immediate family. Plus I mentioned.

[00:12:13] **Speaker 2** That's her family.

[00:12:14] **Speaker 3** Her family, her family. Plus, I know at one point he was he was sending, money to an orphanage because there are a lot of children whose parents have been killed over there. And so.

[00:12:26] **Speaker 2** He.

[00:12:27] **Speaker 3** Because of the conflict in the militias that were going around. So he was supporting a lot of people. But once we figured out how to do it, one of the things is, you know, in in charge him to stay here, you know, and we basically, so he I won't say he allowed a lot of extra money, but to but it made it easier for him to get his feet on the ground because he had a place to stay. They didn't have to, like, pay for an apartment or something. And I think it was a result where he was able to send, send some money back. And I don't really know. I think he probably still is, but but yeah, it's. So.

[00:13:04] **Speaker 1** So what did you learn about the immigration system with I.D.?

[00:13:13] **Speaker 2** It's it's just a mess.

[00:13:15] **Speaker 3** It's completely dysfunctional. I actually, I worked at the university as an administrator for 35 years, and I worked with a lot of international students, and I was not the ultimate authority to get them the visas, but helping them through that system and a lot of international staff and even faculty. And so I had some taste of what the system was like. But the, the immigration system now, and especially for a series and things, it's just completely dysfunctional. They don't they don't have enough support to, to actually operate the system the way it's supposed to be done. And I, you know, I don't really want to get into politics too much, but Congress just seems, unable to do anything about it. And, it's just been going on forever, you know, occasionally unwilling to do anything about it. And they've had some, compromises proposed over the years to try to fix the system. One of them just recently. And, because of politics, it hasn't gone through, so I could I could live with an immigration system that only lets in a certain number of people. And this is just my personal opinion. If, in fact, immigration system actually worked, but it doesn't work. I mean, look, he's he's finally settled. I took him and he and he had a lot of health. And it took him over four years to get his family here from when he left is almost five years. And people say, why don't why don't they just come legally? Well, it's almost impossible. And in.

[00:14:46] **Speaker 2** He.

[00:14:46] **Speaker 3** To go ahead. You know more about it.

[00:14:48] **Speaker 2** Yeah. So he did enter legally. He didn't sneak into the country. He crossed the border and asked to come in and, port of entry and all that kind of stuff. And, you know, people who are undocumented who cross between, ports of entry have an infinitely worse time dealing with everything, and it's so hard to understand. And there's nothing fair about it, you know, you say, yes, you can come in and you can seek asylum. Now turn around and we're going to shackle you, and we're going to put you in detention, and we're not going to tell you what's going on, and you're not going to know where you are. And we're, you know, and it was a miracle that he was an English speaker and could understand the guards going down the hall saying, there's some lawyers here if you want legal help, and running down the hall and saying they're two mostly Spanish speakers who couldn't understand what he was saying, you know, and there were there were just so many things that were cruel and inhumane about it that, and I tried really hard to keep up with the law and regulations as it was going because it changed so fast all the time. And, it's so it's still like that. And then, you know, and in any other court system, you have a right to legal representation. And we're so grateful to Aaron's, group for supporting his asylum path. They did so much on his behalf. I just don't know how people get through it. It's really difficult.

[00:16:39] **Speaker 3** When one of the stories that guy told us was that when he was being processed, they would put papers in front of him and say, you need to sign these. And I would go, I'm not signing anything until I read it. And so the immigration officers kind of said, oh, we got one of the smart ones here because he wants to know what he's signing, which was doesn't happen. This team.

[00:17:01] **Speaker 2** With.

[00:17:02] **Speaker 3** You know, Spanish speaking people that can't read it. That's what happens. But the other thing I wanted to mention, though, even though I've gone on on this is another volunteer thing I do, is I drive people to Milwaukee and Waukegan and to Chicago for immigration hearings and location check ins and things, and every, contact I've had with the immigration officers that work there has just been really good. I personally think those people are. Heroes because they're working in a system which is almost impossible. It's backed up for years and years and years, and yet they're sitting there. I was just in sat through an immigration, asylum, hearing just a week or so ago. And the judge was doing her best, to be fair to the person who was trying to get asylum. And I think they're just working in a dysfunctional system, and I don't fault the people that are working there.

[00:17:52] **Speaker 2** And there's not enough people.

[00:17:54] **Speaker 3** Them there's not near enough of them. And, they're working hard, but it just needs to be fixed. Whether it ever happen, I hope in my lifetime, who knows? I'm getting up there in age.

[00:18:06] **Speaker 2** Yeah.

[00:18:07] **Speaker 1** Yeah. And I remember war telling me also that he didn't even know he was in Wisconsin. Oh, gosh, he was here.

[00:18:15] **Speaker 2** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:18:15] **Speaker 1** So this is.

[00:18:16] **Speaker 2** Yeah.

[00:18:17] **Speaker 3** I mean, yeah, just put him. He was in the Dodge County Correctional Facility in Juneau, Wisconsin, which is, you know, up the road towards green Bay always. But.

[00:18:27] **Speaker 2** So when they called his cousin Bernadine, who he was forced to live with, was a citizen, he said he was telling her, I'm in Dodge County. She said, God, I think it in Wisconsin. He said, what the hell is Wisconsin? He said he was in Chicago the whole time. He thought he was in the prison in Chicago, so. But he said all the transport vehicles and everything, the windows are always black. So you can see where you were going and.

[00:19:03] **Speaker 1** Yeah. Yeah. He said it was it was probably the most difficult part of the journey emotionally for him getting to Wisconsin in the first time, being in shackles or being handcuffed. Yeah, right. Yeah. We've been through everything. He's been through that. It was the mess of.

[00:19:18] **Speaker 2** That was so humiliating. Yeah, yeah. Denigrating it.

[00:19:24] **Speaker 1** Yeah. So what would you say to anyone considering sponsoring someone in a situation like noise? What would your message be to them?

[00:19:37] **Speaker 2** Well be ready for just about anything. We. You will be doing a huge, huge. You'll save somebody's life. You'll give them a chance at freedom and and safety. You can't imagine what they've been through. I mean, we have so much here we can share a little bit, right? I would say do it if it doesn't work out. Whoever brought them to you, send them back, you know. But, yeah.

[00:20:14] **Speaker 3** It's it's hard to tell how it's going to come out, but, I mean, having in our life now has been a real blessing to us. You know, we've inherited another family, if you will, are found from your family. And I would also say, do it. I think that, you know, again, we were lucky that he was vetted so well by the UAW. Plus, he's such an outstanding person, too. And I'm not sure that everybody is going to be in a situation like that. But on the other hand, so many of these people that are coming here are in such bad situations back in their home countries, so just want to make a better life for themselves. So the interaction I've had with other people in this situation, they're just trying really hard to make a new life. They're working really hard. Yeah, they're doing whatever they can to support their family. And by and large, I'm, I'm sure there are some people that some that come that are not, desirable. But the vast, vast majority are great people. And they're just, you know, they they work their tails off watching my language.

[00:21:23] **Speaker 2** Yeah.

[00:21:24] **Speaker 3** It's hard to make a life here in the U.S. and what what they've been through and what they're going through is just a hard thing. And so, you're really helping someone out if you're able to do this. Yeah, yeah.

[00:21:35] **Speaker 1** Yeah. This is a question I had early, too. I forgot to ask. What? I don't know if you guys heard about the Biden policy that he passed and the one. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. What was your guys's reaction to that? Well.

[00:21:49] **Speaker 2** I know that we have to get control of the border. I went to the border in January on a trip that my church sponsor. And it is pretty overwhelming to see people. I was in El Paso and Las Cruces, New Mexico. It's also just amazing and inspiring to see the work that the people there are doing to help the migrants as they're coming in. I know we have to get control of the border. I don't believe that limiting asylum is the right thing to do. I mean, I think there has to be. I know we can take everybody, but I think there has to be some reasonable way to give people who actually meet the criteria for asylum, which are really narrow. I totally met them, but not that many people do. There has to be a reasonable way in a process, and we don't have that yet. And we're not there yet with what what has been proposed recently.

[00:23:06] **Speaker 3** And that's why we really need to have a functional system. I mean, I'm going off on a philosophical rant. I mean, this country was virtually everybody is immigrants, right? At least a generation or two back. And, and our birth rate is going down. We need additional people in this country. And again, I stated, most of the people that are coming in our hard working just want to make a life for themselves. We need to make a functional system so that we can handle the people that are coming in. We need to have the people that are running the system need to have enough resources. And again, this has to come from the political world to do it. That's you know, overall we have the resources. We could do it in the country, but it just needs to be done. So. So getting back to, the Biden thing, you know, I don't like to see, limitations on asylum or especially on legal immigration, but this system has to be fixed in some way. And maybe it's a little bit of a start. Who knows?

[00:24:10] **Speaker 2** I mean, Congress needs to. As a border policy. The, the Biden administration can make all the, the rules they want. But until Congress actually passes a policy, then it's not the law of the land, and it can be undone.

[00:24:31] **Speaker 3** So you can do all the executive orders he wants based on that. And and you're probably aware of this. They had a compromise and we know why it got shot down. Just because someone running for president wants to make it. Wanted to use the immigration as a political tool to get elected. And so, you know, I don't know that it necessarily liked everything that was in that bill, but nevertheless, this was a compromise and it was moving forward. So, I won't even say the names.

[00:25:03] **Speaker 1** Yeah. And I think too, that it's also impacting people like The Wall or. Oh yeah. Yeah. How many people who didn't meet those criteria are being negatively impacted.

[00:25:15] **Speaker 2** What's what's going on. That's right.

[00:25:16] **Speaker 3** Right. Yeah.

[00:25:17] **Speaker 2** I mean one of the big disappointments is you can't control the border without people, but you won't find enough people to do it. You won't fund enough lawyers. You won't fund enough border agents. You want. One of the things I learned when I went in January was that the mentality, depending on who who is currently in the president's office, the mentality of the Border Patrol agents changes completely. It's whether you're, recruiting a bunch of people who want to. I, I heard this from somebody who was working in a welcome center down there. Do you want border agents who just want to be Rambo, or do you want border agents who follow the rules and treat the people with dignity and respect? You know, and, depending on who's the president, that changes dramatically. That's not right.

[00:26:23] **Speaker 1** Yeah. Is there anything else you guys wanted to add about your experience meeting? Well, having him live here, but the immigration process, I.

[00:26:34] **Speaker 2** Well, like Meyer said, Meyer said. For us, it it's been just and and a huge blessing. And we have new family members and we're forever grateful for that. We really hope that our country wakes up to see the values of the of bringing people here and enriching our culture and, and that amazing humanity that is coming.

[00:27:10] **Speaker 1** And then I guess the last thing I have is do want to show off your shirt to the show?

[00:27:15] **Speaker 3** Just stand up here. Okay. So this was a, shirt that was given to me by Bagwell on his family. And what a show. I don't know where they got it, but it shows. These are the camera, the colors of the camera room flag. And it shows roots in Cameroon, growing India, the United States, where, of course, the red, white and blue. So that's a special shirt that I only wear on special occasions. So be safe.

[00:27:41] **Speaker 1** That everyone say.

[00:27:42] **Speaker 3** Okay. Yeah. Kind of like being. Yeah.

[00:27:44] **Speaker 1** So sorry.

[00:27:45] **Speaker 3** Well, no, it's just the cord is kind of pulling, but.

[00:27:49] **Speaker 1** So. Cool. Awesome. Other questions you had? Or. No. Okay, cool. That's good. Thank you. Yeah, I just that's.