



**BECOMING AN
IMMIGRANT WELCOMING
CONGREGATION**

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation: The Journey is Made By Walking



Introduction

We live in a world of people on the move. According to the United Nations, there are over 100 million forcibly displaced people in the world – an unfortunate record in world history. The Bible is full of stories about God’s people being forced to leave their countries: Adam and Eve, Noah, Sarah and Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Naomi, Esther, Jeremiah, Jesus, Mary and Joseph to name some. We in the United Church of Christ find our grounding in God’s Word about how we are to treat the stranger in our midst. We believe we are called to offer an “extravagant welcome.”

In the early 1990’s abrupt changes occurred across the globe from local economics expanding into global economics. Governments around the world began to slowly adjust their immigration policies from welcoming migrants to militarizing borders. Communities across the world began to experience a wave of immigration that challenged society and left many with questions and concerns. Some congregations began to study issues of immigration and its myriad of root causes and contemporary outcomes.

Hundreds of UCC congregations followed a calling to offer direct services such as sponsoring refugees and asylum seekers and offering local community support to migrants joining their neighborhoods. Others engaged in immigrant justice movements, advocating for policy reform and humane treatment of these vulnerable populations. Throughout the history of our denomination, the Spirit has moved us to walk these journeys toward seeking justice for people seeking safety both far and near.

It was through the endeavors of UCC local congregations and interfaith partners to welcome and organize alongside impacted immigrant members of our communities that the Immigrant Welcoming Congregation model was born.

The church plays an important role in the immigration discussion. Our faith tradition and sacred texts are saturated with stories about immigrants. We have a special ability and calling to reach out and love the neighbor---all of our neighbors. Loving those on the margins, who often have cultural and life experiences much different than ours, takes education, courage, and intentional engagement with the sensibilities of our faith. Churches and communities have been asking for a process that would carefully help them study, engage, and encounter immigrants and the issues that they face. This document intends to equip churches to embody the “Immigrant Welcoming Congregation” model and provide guidance for the myriad of ways churches can welcome with dignity.

From hosting migrants in your community, to creating empowerment programs and opportunities for those migrants to thrive, to advocating for a just and humane system of immigration processing, we believe that together we can make a difference. Churches of all sizes and locations are invited to participate in reflection of Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God, where we are called to empower the vulnerable among us. (Matthew 13:31)

Developing a reservoir of resources and knowledge for a congregation to make an informed decision takes thoughtful and diligent work. It is best to keep everyone engaged in the process and part of the dialogue. Church Councils, Boards of Directors and administrative bodies should be encouraged to attend the gatherings as should the youth and young adults. The programs should be aimed at the entire congregation rather than focusing just on a mission or outreach board. At the end of the process, it is hoped that the congregation will affirm an "Immigrant Welcoming Congregation" statement and live faithfully into the promises drafted therein. This statement can include a variety of intended practices for engagement, from prophetic witness in legislative decisions to hosting migrant families in your community. It is important to develop a thorough process that involves wide engagement and education opportunities.

We invite you into exploration and discernment. It is our conviction that a community that challenges itself to embrace the *Immigrant Welcoming* process is a community open to the dialogue God initiates within our current time and context. We also recognize that in each congregation, the nature of this dialogue will reflect that community's unique relationship with God. For this reason, we do not present a one-size-fits-all process. We do not dictate what becoming *Immigrant Welcoming* looks like. Instead, we offer this document as a menu of activities, resources and suggestions which inform what the process *might look like* for your community.

Lastly, we offer ourselves as partners to your congregation as you engage in this discernment. This is our ministry. This is where we see our calling. We are open to learning and teaching, advising and listening, accompanying and cheering your community along on its journey towards affirming itself as *Immigrant Welcoming*. Our prayer is that on this journey we come to a greater understanding of that very abundance of life that we find together in Jesus.

We encourage you to take these materials and ideas to build your congregation's own process of becoming an "Immigrant Welcoming Congregation." Remember to be creative, flexible and engaged. This toolkit has been formed with input of congregations doing this work on the ground.

The following is a step-by-step toolkit of suggestions to explore becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation.

Becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation: A Step-by-Step Guide

1. Form a Core Team

Gather an ad hoc planning group of five to ten people who share your passion for immigrant justice. Your pastor should be consulted before taking this step and should attend the team's meetings. If your congregation has first or second generation immigrants, at least one should be represented on the team. All meetings should begin and end with prayer.

Although this time together should organically and contextually reflect the character of your congregation, the goal would be to begin to envision what the IWC designation for your congregation may look like. Some suggested resources for Core Team Meetings include:

Small Group Reflection:

Faith and Immigration: A theological exploration of immigration and overview of the UCC's General Synod's thinking on this issue, including reflective discussion questions.

http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration_worship_faith-and-immigration

Book Study and Devotional Guides:

- Dying to Live: Theology, Migration and the Human Journey by Daniel G. Groody, CSC
- [Strangers in the Land: A Six-Week Devotional Guide on Immigration, the Church, and the Bible - Kindle edition by R., M. Daniel Carroll, Magazine, Sojourners. Religion & Spirituality Kindle eBooks @ Amazon.com.](#)
- [Choices: Death, Life and Migration - Kindle edition by Rumer, Patricia. Politics & Social Sciences Kindle eBooks @ Amazon.com.](#)
- For Youth and Young Adults: [Refugee - Alan Gratz](#)

More reading choices are available under "2. Learn: Literature, Synod Resolutions, and Films".

Bible Study:

Bible passages about immigration:

http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration_worship_biblical-references-to

2. Learn: Literature, Synod Resolutions, and Films

Our media does not provide a deep analysis of why immigrants are seeking asylum or refugee status in the US. It is vital to understand why migrants are arriving and the forces that push them out of their countries. There is a long history of the United States relationships with countries throughout the world that have led to migrants seeking refugee or asylum status. Through our trade policies, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement or the Central American Free Trade Agreement, multinational corporations are stripping other countries of resources that lead to forcing people off their lands and causing wars. Migrants risk their lives to seek safety and economic security here in the US. Learning about these factors is important for increasing our understanding of why migrants are here and enabling us to then be sharers of that truth with others.

Here are some resources to deepen your church's' understanding of why migrants are arriving:

- What are the Roots Causes of Migration?: [Root-Causes.pdf](#)
- *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants* by David Bacon
- *Survival Migration: Failed Governance and the Crisis of Displacement* by Alexander Betts

Understanding the historical and contemporary international and US immigration system also warrants attention as you build your educational database. Here's some resources on the immigration system and its evolution:

- Rev. Irene Willis Hassan, "[Toward a Future of Asylum and Refugee Processing \(google.com\)](#)" (March 2022).
- *Migrant Protection Protocols and the Death of Asylum* by Austin Kocher
<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3855098>
- *Assigning protection: Can refugee rights and state preferences be reconciled?* by J.C. Hathaway doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1628/jite-2019-0006>
- *50 Years Was Too Long to Wait: The Syrian Refugee Crisis Has Highlighted the Need for Second Optional Protocol to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.* by Y.S. Brakel et al.

Literature: Continued

There are many helpful books written about the immigration. Some of those books detail the policies that the US has put in place which have led to forced migration for millions of people. Others document the often turbulent journeys migrants undergo to seek safety. Some cover the experiences of those without papers and are forced to live in the shadows. You can also read about the contributions that immigrants make to our communities. If you have avid readers in your congregation, you may want to conduct a book discussion based on one of the following books.

- *Faces of Change* by Joan Jarvis Ellison
- *Open Borders: the Case Against Immigration Controls* by Teresa Hayter
- *The Devil's Highway: A True Story* by Luis Alberto Urrea
- *Tailings of War and Peace* by Stephen Law
- *Our God is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigration Justice* by Chad Myers and Matthew Colwell
- *The Politics of Immigration* by Jane Guskin and David L. Wilson
- *The Right to Stay Home: How US policy Drives Mexican Migration* by David Bacon
- *One Family Under God: Immigration Politics and Progressive Religions in America* by Grace Yukich
- *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother* by Sonia Nazario
- *No Longer Strangers: The Practice of Radical Hospitality* by Rev. Wendy Taylor
- *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal* by Aviva Chomsky
- *Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing Jobs Most Americans Won't Do* by Gabriel Thompson
- *They Are Us: Lutherans and Immigration* by Stephen Bowman and Ralston Deffenbaugh
- *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri
- *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid

General Synod Resolutions on Immigration Concerns

In 1981, General Synod XIII passed a pronouncement entitled Justice in Immigration. Pronouncements are a big deal. A *pronouncement* is a statement of Christian conviction on a matter of moral or social principle and has been adopted by a two-thirds vote of a General Synod. This is the strongest statement a General Synod can make. Pronouncements establish programming priorities for national boards and other General Synod related ministries. Saying no to a pronouncement is not an option for these entities. The summary reads:

Justice in Immigration

[This] pronouncement calls attention to global and domestic implications of United States immigration policy (both governmental and private sector) and recommends policies which call for:

- Public and private practices which reduce worldwide pressures on persons to migrate
- A more open, flexible and humane United States immigration and refugee policy
- More humane administration of immigration law protecting civil rights
- Protection of undocumented persons during transition to new policies and laws
- Greater involvement of the United Church of Christ in aiding immigrants in resettlement

Since then, General Synods have passed many resolutions speaking to the church on the vital humanitarian issues that surround immigration justice.

- In Support of Salvadoran Refugees (GS XIII, 1981)
- Affirming the Dignity and Self-Worth of Immigrants (GS XX, 1995)
- Border justice issues (GS XXII, 1999)
- Emergency resolution to end the death of migrants on the United States-Mexico border by offering water in Christ's Name (GS XXIII, 2001)
- Call for a more humane US immigration policy; end immigrant deaths; support immigrant communities (GS XXVI, 2007): border enforcement strategy is inhumane and ineffective, guarantee rights to immigrant workers.
- Resolution Supporting Compassionate Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the Protection of the Human Rights of Immigrants (GS XXIX, 2013)
- On Becoming An Immigrant Welcoming Church (GS XXXI, 2017)

Films about Immigration

- **Harvest Of Empire: The Story Of Latinos In America.** Based on the landmark book, Harvest of Empire” by award-winning journalist Juan González: a feature-length documentary that reveals the direct connection between the long history of U.S. intervention in Latin America and the immigration crisis we face today.
- **Papers** - Stories of Undocumented Youth. Interweaves the history of immigration in the United States with the stories of undocumented students from several nations. 88 minutes (can be adapted to 63 minutes, shorter version recommended).
- **Which Way Home** (2010; the 2010 Emmy Award For Outstanding Informational Programming The Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award). Which Way Home shows the personal side of immigration through the eyes and stories of children. These are stories of hope and courage, disappointment and sorrow.
- **Lost in Detention: The Hidden World of Immigration Enforcement (2011):** more than one million immigrants have been deported since President Obama took office, deportations and detentions have reached record levels. The get-tough policy has brought complaints of abuse and harsh treatment. This PBS Frontline film investigates Obama's enforcement strategies and

journeys into the secretive world of immigrant detention, with a penetrating look at who is being detained and what is happening to them.

- **Brother Towns:** a story of two towns linked by immigration, family, and work: Jacaltenango, a highland Maya town in Guatemala; and Jupiter, a coastal resort town where many Jacaltecos have settled in Florida. A great 'first film' that explores why people come and the different responses of people in Jupiter, Florida to the immigrants in their community.
- **Escape From Kabul (2022):** Features never-before-seen archival footage of the historic confrontation at Kabul airport, from the U.S. withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan through the subsequent evacuation of Afghan citizens after the Taliban seized the city.
- **Lost Boys of Sudan (2003):** is a feature-length documentary that follows two Sudanese refugees on an extraordinary journey from Africa to America. Orphaned as young boys in one of Africa's cruelest civil wars, Peter Dut and Santino Chuor survived lion attacks and militia gunfire to reach a refugee camp in Kenya along with thousands of other children. From there, remarkably, they were chosen to come to America. Safe at last from physical danger and hunger, a world away from home, they find themselves confronted with the abundance and alienation of contemporary American suburbia.
- **For Sama (2019):** is both an intimate and epic journey into the female experience of war. A love letter from a young mother to her daughter, the film tells the story of Waad al-Kateab's life through five years of the uprising in Aleppo, Syria as she falls in love, gets married and gives birth to Sama, all while cataclysmic conflict rises around her. Her camera captures incredible stories of loss, laughter and survival as Waad wrestles with an impossible choice— whether or not to flee the city to protect her daughter's life, when leaving means abandoning the struggle for freedom for which she has already sacrificed so much.

3. Worship and Prayer: Introducing Immigration Concerns to the Broader Congregation

Worship is an intentional communal thin spot. It is a place where we prepare ourselves to encounter God. Within the worship experience lives transform, questions reframe, priorities reorder, and purposes realign to God's purpose through the power of the Holy Spirit. Communities which explore their connections to their immigrant sisters and brothers within the context of worship will naturally form deeper connections with the people and the stories they uncover there.

For this reason, we found it important to include resources that congregations can use to facilitate worship planning. These resources are available through the United Church of Christ and our ecumenical partners.

Biblical References to Immigrants and Refugees

http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration_worship_biblical-references-to

Prayers, Litanies, and Liturgies

- Immigration Justice Worship Resources, United Church of Christ
http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration_worship_index This page contains prayers, litanies, complete liturgies, and sermon examples compiled over the last decade.
- Responsive readings, prayer and scripture resources:
<http://www.welcometheimmigrant.org/worship/>
- Worship Tools (Prayers for the uprooted, refugees and asylees) [LIRS | Prayers for Immigrants and Refugees | Welcoming the Stranger](#)

Hymns from the New Century Hymnal

- Tú has venido a la orilla (You have come down to the Lakeshore), (173)
- De Colores (Sing of Colors), (402)
- We are Marching in the Light of God, (526)
- We Are Not Our Own, (564)
- Lead Us From Death to Life, (581) Based on 2 John 1:3; Isa. 2:2-4
- Through all the world a hungry Christ (587)
- How Beautiful, Our Spacious Skies (594) Affirmation of the Americas, indigenous and immigrant peoples
- This is My Song (591) Hope for lasting peace & justice among nations, peoples and cultures
- O for a World (575) Based on Acts 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; 1 Pet. 3:8-12
- Profetiza, Pueblo mío (You Shall Prophesy, All My People) (578), Solidarity with the oppressed and the call to build a loving, just society
- For the Healing of the Nations (576) Justice, peace and human rights
- Lead On Eternal Sovereign (573) Prayer, preparation and strength for the work of justice
- Spirit of Jesus, If I Love My Neighbor (590) Based on Rom. 13:8-11

Worship Resources for World Refugee Day (June 20)

- Recorded YouTube Service 2022: [World Refugee Day Ecumenical Worship Service](#)
- Worship Outline: [World Refugee Day Worship 2022 - FINAL 2.pdf](#)
- Prophetic Witness Toolkit: [WRD 2022 FAITH Toolkit - Google Docs](#)

4. Engage: Bringing your Congregation into the Wider Community

After your core group has discussed, sought out education, and introduced the Immigration Welcoming concept to your congregation, invite more into the circle of discernment. While some of this could include repeats of small group reflection and education, this step could expand toward 1.) outreach or 2.) immersion. Outreach and immersion both function to connect the intellectual discernment of your congregation to the realities on the ground. These two options for advancing your Immigration Welcoming project are outlined below.

4a. Outreach: Meet Local Migrants & Service Providers

Relationship building is part of our calling as Christians. It is a cornerstone of our journey with God. Through interpersonal encounters and shared experiences, we meet God more fully. As we grow in our relationships with the immigrants in our community, state, and country, we can build a movement for justice together with our immigrant brothers and sisters.

There are several ways to get to know your immigrant neighbors.

- **Refugee offices.** Connect with local refugee service providers and learn ways you can get involved. A list of local providers in your area are available here: [Find Resources and Contacts in Your State | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#) Local refugee offices have varying capacities and may ask for anything from volunteering to organize files, to hosting an ESL program at your church, to co-sponsoring a migrant family.
- **Interfaith and Ecumenical Connection.** A safe way to connect with migrant populations in

your community and learn more about them is through visiting the religious communities where they worship. The Pew Research Center recorded most recently that 63% of displaced populations worldwide are Muslim, immigrating mainly from the Middle East, Persia, South Asia, and the Horn of Africa, followed by Roman Catholic, immigrating from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central America, and Eastern Orthodox, immigrating from Ukraine and Syria. However, often religious persecution and division plays a role in a refugee's need to flee their country of origin, so we ask that you keep your mind and spirit open as you engage and learn with interfaith and ecumenical communities. Please call the worship center ahead of your visit to learn about appropriate times, dress code, and personal conduct to engage respectfully.

- **Cultural Centers.** Many large cities, and even smaller ones, have cultural centers that empower local immigrants to thrive in their host cultures. Examples of these include [Ukrainian Cultural Center | Warren, Michigan \(uccwarren.com\)](#), [Arab Cultural Center](#), [The Guatemalan-Maya Center \(guatemalanmaya.org\)](#). If a particular nationality interests you, a Google search of that nationality's cultural center may bring up local results where you can go meet immigrants and learn more about their backgrounds.
- **Mutual Aid Coalitions.** A rising form of social connection is the Mutual Aid Coalition (MAC). These groups engage in community solidarity work across the country. While their missions vary, many MAC organizations promote connection and empowerment for immigrants in their neighborhoods. Unfortunately, there is not a standardized method to find a MAC in your community; however, many operate and advertise through social media pages on Facebook, Instagram, Slack, or Google.
- **ICE Detention Centers.** This point of immersion for faith groups new to immigration ministries requires first building a safe container. First, check to see if there is an ICE detention center near you: [Detention Facilities | ICE](#). Please call ahead of your visit to confirm visitation times and regulations for entry. Because ICE Detention often follows inhumane practices that have been subject to heavy scrutiny, we advise you to be centered and aware as you prepare for this visit and the potential suffering you may witness. We encourage you to work with a church or MAC that is experienced at navigating the ICE Detention system before scheduling a visit.
- **Migrant Shelters.** Not every state has migrant shelters, but several large cities and border cities that process asylum seekers do have one. Although migrant shelters often conduct more humane practices than ICE Detention, they similarly have strict regulations around visitation and expectations for visitors that community groups should be aware of before scheduling a visit. If you do choose to visit an ICE Detention Center or Migrant Shelter, we recommend you balance these experiences with other experiences so that your observance of immigration isn't drawn only to crisis and suffering. Immigrants, as the backbone of American society and full human beings with a range of experiences including joy and dreams, have much to offer and aren't simply traumatized figurines for educational or entertainment purposes.

4b. Create an Immersion Experience

A time-honored way of building support to become an immigrant welcoming congregation is through witnessing the experiences of migrants and what compels them to leave their countries of origin. Responsible tourism, which is a methodology of touring intentionally to gain organic insight on the complexity of the lives and experiences of a foreign place, can work to ignite the spirit of justice in your congregation. For more information on responsible tourism, please watch: [For more tolerance, we need more ... tourism? | Aziz Abu Sarah - YouTube](#)

Responsible immersion tours that partner with the UCC include:

- El Salvador: <http://www.share-elsalvador.org/>

- Israel/Palestine: [Dual Narrative Multi-Day Tour of Israel and Palestine – MEJDI Tours](#)
- Syria: [Project Amal ou Salam - Empowering the future of Syria](#)
- Micronesia: [Partners – Global Ministries](#)
- US Southern Border:
 - Abriendo Fronteras: <http://www.openingborders.com/> for trips to the El Paso/ Ciudad Juarez border
 - Borderlinks: <http://www.borderlinks.org/> for info about trips to the Arizona border
 - Green Valley Samaritans housed at the Good Shepherd UCC <https://www.gvs-samaritans.org/>

5. Create a Covenant

When your congregation has decided that they want to embrace becoming an immigrant welcoming congregation, developing a covenant is the next important step to take. A covenant in our faith tradition is an agreement that God makes with God's people. It indicates what God will do and what God's faithful followers are to do. This is not something to be taken lightly. It is a sacred arrangement. Create a covenant that fits what your church sees as God's call to them. Each covenant will look unique to that particular congregation. It is important that the covenant has "feet." In other words, when your congregation is ready to declare itself an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation, your covenant should include what your congregation will do to continue that covenantal journey.

Example of an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation Covenant:

Mayflower Community Congregational Church

Mayflower Community Congregational Church has been transformed by opportunities to walk beside and learn from immigrants who have come to our church, who live in our neighborhoods and who we have met at the border. We covenant with God and each other to continue to seek out, welcome and deepen relationships with our immigrant brothers and sisters and to work together with them to see that immigrant justice is done.

Covenants can include action steps the congregation seeks to commit to, such as:

- **Pray** for immigrants and that just laws are passed that will support immigrants
- **Learn:** Host continued educational opportunities about the root causes and legislative patterns of migration, including but not limited to: adult education series, youth programs, Theologian-in-Residence programs, worship lecture series
- **Speak out** against injustices that immigrants face such as exploitive labor policies
- **Protect:** Support sanctuary or offer sanctuary to immigrants in unjust deportation proceedings.
- **Empower:** Invite immigrants to share their stories ("Responsible Requests for Sharing" training here): [February 2022 Trauma-Informed Reflection Meeting - YouTube](#)
- **Sponsor** a refugee through a local refugee office or [Welcome Corps – Sponsoring Refugees. Strengthening Communities.](#)
- **Accompany** an asylum seeker.
- **Donate** to [Refugee Emergency - United Church of Christ \(ucc.org\)](#). 100% of the proceeds from this donation center go towards resourcing UCC churches to assist migrants in a wide range of

capacities.

- **Community Classes:** Host a migrant community program. For example, your church could open a distribution center for household goods and food; host ESL classes, financial literacy classes, naturalization classes; partner with health professionals to open culturally informed behavioral health and medical clinics. Grant opportunities for churches to host community programs are available here: [Migrant Community Program Seed Grant](#)

6. Sponsorship and Accompaniment: Host a Migrant

Since the UCC's merger in 1957, our churches have hosted thousands of refugees and asylum seekers from all over the world. The archives at United Church of Christ National Ministries demonstrate a proud history of sponsorship in almost every conference. In 2023, the opportunities for churches to sponsor have increased exponentially with the evolution of Welcome Corps. No church is too small or too remote to qualify as a sponsor, and there are ample resources to help you accomplish this goal. We strongly advise that you partner with other IWC churches, as well as ecumenical, interfaith, and community groups in your area to welcome a migrant family, as the work is more effectively done with bountiful resources and collaboration. A core group of 5-10 individuals is recommended or required for most sponsorship programs.

Refugee Sponsorship

Ways to sponsor a refugee:

- Find a federal refugee resettlement office: [Find Resources and Contacts in Your State | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#)
- Sponsor privately through Welcome Corps: [Welcome Corps – Sponsoring Refugees. Strengthening Communities.](#)
- Church World Service Remote Placement Program - for churches 100 miles or more outside the radius of a local refugee resettlement office: [CWS Remote Reception and Placement Program - CWS \(cwsglobal.org\)](#)

Asylum Accompaniment

Accompanying asylum seekers often involves more intensity and organic connections than the formality offered by refugee resettlement. While refugees are fully processed migrants in the USRAP system, and were asylum seekers somewhere else before being granted refugee status in the United States, asylum seekers in the US context have not yet been granted formal refugee status and therefore do not qualify for the same services and benefits.

To accompany asylum seekers, we suggest you reach out to a broader network with resources and experience. These networks may also provide you individual cases for accompaniment once you are prepared to receive them. Here are some asylum networks affiliated with the UCC that you may contact:

- [Cruzando Fronteras - Diocese of Arizona \(azdiocese.org\)](#)
- [CRLN – Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America](#)
- [Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity – All People are Sacred Across Bars and Borders](#)
- Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMIJ)
- Church World Service or refugee office affiliates with asylum resource capacity.
- State and local governments with asylum resource capacity.
- Sanctuary working groups.

Private Sponsorship Email Requests

With the increasing changes to private sponsorship shaping 2023, it may be that you receive individual requests for sponsorship through email from migrants that you have never met. While many of these requests are legitimate, the current landscape of private sponsorship is heavily shifting and may be ripe for scams or exploitation. If you have questions or concerns regarding an email request for sponsorship that you've received, please contact Rev. Irene Willis Hassan, hassani@ucc.org. This section will be updated as the situation for diversified private sponsorship opportunities evolves.

7. Prayerful Action: Get Involved in a Local Campaign

“And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

It is in the doing of justice that we experience the God of justice walking with us. We are called to action! There are many ways that you can get involved in seeing that justice is done for our immigrant brothers and sisters. One of those is through prayerful action.

- **Hold or join a prayer vigil:** Many areas hold regular prayer vigils at detention centers, get involved with what's already happening or start your own vigils and prayer services.
- **Stay Informed:** Most state legislature sessions run January through June each year, and increasingly there are state bills being proposed, Keep abreast of what is happening in the Legislative session. For example, for several years the legislature has debated whether or not to grant driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants. We continue this campaign.
- **Call your legislators:** Sign up on the UCC National Immigration Collaborative listserv to get regular updates and all in actions at both the federal and state levels including immigration and refugee issues. Email: nandersen@cwsglobal.org to get added to the list.
- **Join Direct Actions:** Join local, state and national campaign actions for immigrants' and refugee rights. Campaign actions are happening regularly in support of sanctuary cities, Dream Act, tuition equity or to stop anti-immigrant bills at the state level. Create your own faith-rooted actions with ethical spectacle elements such as a public communion or foot washing with immigrants and refugees.
- **Join the Sanctuary Movement:** For congregations that are ready for an advanced level of commitment and action, consider the spectrum of solidarity actions from legal clinics to actually hosting someone facing a deportation order in your congregation. More resources and toolkits can be found at <https://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>

8. Connect and Register Nationally

As we have emphasized elsewhere, it is not recommended nor sustainable to do the work of Immigrant Welcoming alone. Several national resources are available to help you network with others who share your passion, both locally and nationally. Funding and training are also available to ensure your success. Here are some resources offered by the United Church of Christ National Ministries to help you thrive in your new Immigrant Welcoming Congregation designation:

Register for Immigrant Welcoming Congregation with the Conference and National Offices. Once your congregation has completed its covenant, we request that you send the document in an

email to Rev. Irene Willis Hassan, Minister for Refugee and Migration Services - Team Global HOPE at United Church of Christ National Ministries (hassani@ucc.org) as well as your Conference Minister or Conference Administrator. This will ensure that your church can be connected in a database to other IWC churches for the purpose of collaboration and networking. Your church's information will never be shared without your expressed written consent.

Join the UCC National Collaborative on Immigration

Please write Rev. Noel Andersen at nandersen@cwsglobal.org if you would like to be added to the immigration and refugee listserv with regular updates and action alerts. This group meets monthly over Zoom to share resources and updates across the country and support each other in their Immigrant Welcoming action items and strategies.

Connect to a network of churches hosting migrants.

There are hundreds of Immigrant Welcoming Churches across the UCC. To find an IWC church in your area, please visit: [UCC Migrant Host Map - Google My Maps](#) Names of churches have not been included on this map for privacy; the map simply provides information if there are active UCC churches in your area and what nationalities of migrants they are currently hosting. To access the names of IWC churches in your area, please contact Rev. Irene Willis Hassan, hassani@ucc.org.

Apply for grant opportunities from Global HOPE.

We offer grants to UCC churches, their partners, and hosted migrants to promote sustainability and empowerment. New grants are currently posted below, and detailed, live descriptions of these grants are available here: [Refugee and Migration Grants Workshop 2023 – YouTube](#)

UCC Global H.O.P.E. Refugee & Migration Ministries Grants 2023:

- [Migrant Empowerment Match Grant](#): Career development funding, up to \$5,000, for individual migrants across a range of visa statuses. Church or migrant must match funds with [Global H.O.P.E.](#)
- [Migrant Community Program Seed Grant](#): Awards up to \$7,000 for churches creating community enrichment programs for migrants.
- [Refugee Resettlement Booster Grant](#): Funding for churches to resettle single or multiple families through a local refugee resettlement office, the U.S. Sponsor Circle Program, or the Church World Service Remote Resettlement Program. Awards up to \$2,000 for a single sponsored family, and \$3,000 to \$7,000 for two or more families.
- [Refugee and Migration Solidarity Grant](#): Awards up to \$3,000 intended for UCC churches and conferences to meet emergency mass care needs, such as sudden busses of migrants coming from the border or migrants suddenly landing on military bases.
- [Asylum Accompaniment Booster Grant](#): Funding for churches hosting or resourcing asylum seekers. Awards up to \$2,000 for a single sponsored family, and \$3,000 to \$7,000 for two or more families.
- [Ukrainian Sponsorship Seed Grant](#): Awards for churches to sponsor Ukrainian nationals, up to \$2,000 per individual. Applicants must be registered as a sponsor with [Church World Service](#) or [Welcome.US](#) to be eligible.

View recorded workshops to increase your capacity to welcome.

Several informational webinars have been provided by Team Global HOPE at UCC National Ministries to assist congregations in becoming Immigrant Welcoming. These webinars cover topics including approaches to trauma-informed care, comprehensive understanding of types of forced migration and international immigration systems, and cultural competency resources. For a full database of available recorded webinars, please visit this site:

[Refugee and Migration Ministries Multimedia Resources - United Church of Christ \(ucc.org\)](https://www.ucc.org/refugee-and-migration-ministries-multimedia-resources)

Special Thanks and Acknowledgement

We express gratitude to Jenny Dale, who wrote one of the first toolkits on Immigrant Welcoming Congregations with Wellington UCC and the Chicago Religious Leadership Network; Rev. Randy Mayer, Pastor of The Good Shepherd UCC in Sahuarita, AZ, bienshphrd@aol.com; Diane Haines who from the Mayflower UCC and Minnesota Immigration Task Force; Rev. Noel Andersen, Grass Roots Coordinator for Church World Service; Rev. Irene Willis Hassan, Minister for Refugee and Migration Services – Team Global HOPE at United Church of Christ National Ministries; and all the hundreds of immigrant welcoming congregations across the United Church of Christ whose witness and ministry contributed to this version of the Immigrant Welcoming Toolkit. (2023)