



In Midst of Anti-Immigrant Discourse, People of Faith Must Offer a Prophetic Welcome

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In the midst of the 2024 presidential election, anti-immigrant rhetoric is on the rise. A large percentage of voters are now [naming immigration](#) as the most important issue in this election in light of the influx of migrants at the border, which is unjustly framed by some media outlets and candidates as an “invasion.” The politics of fear are once again being used as motivators to mobilize voters and to place blame on those often marginalized by our societal structures, which has and in turn forced politicians that have been supportive of immigrants to capitulate their positions.

When we look at the root causes of immigration—poverty, violence, political instability, persecution, and climate displacement—we understand that as people of faith, we have a moral responsibility to offer a prophetic welcome, and that we must do this in a time when an increasing number of people believe we should shut the door.

President Biden, who criticized former President Trump for his inhumane immigration policies in his 2020 campaign, recently put out a [press release](#) calling on Congress to give him authority to “shut down the border,” a statement that could have easily been attributed to his political rival, rather than President Biden himself.

It’s true that some cities have felt overwhelmed by [Texas Governor Abbott’s bussing](#) of thousands of migrants to places like New York City as a political stunt to punish Sanctuary cities. However, the reality is that over the last forty years, increased border militarization and enforcement has never actually stopped the flow of migrants. This is simply because the push factors are too great. When someone is fleeing for their lives, or when parents are trying to protect their children, they’re not concerned

with what type of border fence they might encounter or how many Border Patrol agents are on duty. Instead of stopping migrants, our policies just become more cruel and inhumane with increased family separation and migrant deaths in the desert.

The only workable solution to the migrant influx is to increase welcome infrastructure, create capacity to provide work permits, open legal channels for people to adjust status, and help people integrate so that they can become part of our communities and economy. Together we could build an inclusive societal structure where immigrants can be treated with dignity.

As the Senate negotiates a Biden-backed deal that would create anti-asylum provisions in exchange for foreign aid, and as we continue to see the rise of hateful rhetoric towards immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, people of faith must raise a prophetic voice for welcome. The United Church of Christ National Collaborative on Immigration has a network of Sanctuary and [Immigrant Welcoming Congregations](#), who along with partners such as the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) and [Church World Service](#) are calling on Congress to protect asylum.

In the wake of the 2016 election, nearly one thousand new congregations across faith traditions joined the [Sanctuary Movement](#). Now, as we prepare for another possible Trump administration, we must once again be a moral voice to ensure that we are calling on our communities and congregations to be an inclusive force where newcomers, regardless of immigration status, can be treated as citizens among us. Together we will work to make sure our congregations can recognize the face of Christ in the migrant and the greater public might witness our work to welcome immigrants to our communities and congregations.

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