

Welcoming & Supporting Immigrants

Guidance from Scripture

Judaism

"The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him yourself, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

(Torah, Leviticus 19:34)

Islam

"Serve God ... and do good to ... orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, [and those who have nothing]."

(Qur'an 4:36)

Hinduism

"The guest is a representative of God."

(Taitiriya Upanishad, 1.11.2)

Christianity

"... I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me... just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

(Bible, Matthew 25:35-40)

Buddhism

"Everyone trembles at the stick, for all beings life is dear; comparing oneself with others, one should not hurt or cause harm."

(Dhammapada, Chapter 10)

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Ways to Get Involved

Relationship

If you are already connected with immigrant communities, ask what is needed and helpful. If you are not yet connected, remember that support is most easily received from a place of trust. Look into local organizations or congregations that support immigrants, and ask what you can do.

Advocacy

Stay informed on what's happening at the federal and state level through organizations, including Virginia Interfaith and those listed on the "Resources" page. Call and write your elected officials encouraging them to support the immigrant community. Remember that personal messages are stronger than form emails!

Direct Support

Look into local and national organizations that support immigrants. Some ideas are:

- **Accompaniment:** attending court hearings with folks who may not have documentation or helping bring kids to school.
- **Financial support:** both for organizations helping the immigrant community, and for individual families that may have lost work.
- **Education:** teaching English for Speakers of other Languages (ESL) or volunteering at a Know Your Rights training.

Prayer

Use this sample, or make one specific to your faith community:

"Creator of all, you have formed every human with love and intrinsic dignity. Be with your children throughout our nation. Grant our immigrant neighbors your, especially those who are overwhelmed with fear. Grant our policy-makers your compassion toward those who come to our country seeking safety and justice. Grant our congregations your courage to stand up for those on the margins of our society.

Lord, who is continually moving, migrating toward justice, help our community to see your face in our immigrant neighbors. Give us all the grace to be your presence in this world."

Welcoming & Supporting Immigrants

Resources

Congregational Resources

- **Congregational Know Your Rights** and guidance on maintaining member safety from Legal Aid Justice Center (available in English and Spanish):
<https://www.justice4all.org/rapid-response-toolkit/#CHURCH>
- Many faith traditions have **denomination-specific immigration resources**. Here are a few examples, but feel free to look up your own denomination:
 - **Catholic:** justiceforimmigrants.org
 - **Friends (Quaker):** www.fcni.org/issues/just-immigration
 - **Jewish:** rac.org/issues/immigration-justice
 - **Presbyterian:** pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/immigration-issues
 - **Lutheran:** www.elca.org/our-work/relief-and-development/lutheran-disaster-response/our-impact/migrants-and-refugees
- **Sanctuary information from the ACLU:**
www.aclu.org/documents/sanctuary-congregations-and-harboring-faq

Know Your Rights (For Individuals)

- **Guide from National Immigration Law Center**, with drop-downs for different scenarios (available in many languages):
<https://www.nilc.org/resources/everyone-has-certain-basic-rights/>
- **Flyers on rights from CLINIC**, with many scenarios (available in many languages):
<https://clinic.shorthandstories.com/know-your-rights/index.html>
- **Virginia-specific “Know Your Rights” card** (available in English and Spanish):
<https://www.justice4all.org/rapid-response-toolkit/>
- **Bilingual rapid response hotline (listed on above card):** 855-298-3271 (855-AYUDAR1)
- **National “Know Your Rights” wallet card from Immigrant Legal Resource Center** (available in many languages): <https://www.ilrc.org/red-cards-tarjetas-rojas>
- **Videos to know your rights from ACLU** (available in many languages):
<https://www.wehaverights.us/>

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Educational Resources (For Small Groups or Congregations)

- **Film Study: The Genesis of Exodus** <https://genesisofexodusfilm.com/>
- **JustFaith module on immigration justice**
<https://justfaith.org/courses/faith-and-immigration-justice/>
- **Books for study and discussion**
 - “Everyone Who is Gone is Here: The United States, Central America, and the Making of a Crisis” by Jonathan Blitzer, 2024
 - “Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate” by Matthew Soerens and Jenny Yang, 2009

Local Organizations throughout Virginia

- **Congregation Action Network**, based in the greater DC area
<https://www.congregationactionnetwork.org/>
- **Centreville Immigration Forum**, based in Centreville
<https://centrevilleimmigrationforum.org/>
- **Just Neighbors**, based in the greater DC area <https://www.justneighbors.org/>
- **Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC)**, Offices in Richmond, Charlottesville, Petersburg, and Falls Church <https://www.justice4all.org/>
- **Northern Virginia Friends of Refugees**, based in Arlington
<https://www.facebook.com/novafriendsofrefugees/>
- **ReEstablish Richmond**, based in Richmond <https://www.reestablishrichmond.org/>
- **Roanoke Asylum Seekers Support Network**, based in Roanoke <https://rassn.org/>
- **Sacred Heart Center**, based in Richmond <https://shcrichmond.org/>
- **Sin Barreras/ Without Barriers**, offices in Charlottesville and Waynesboro
<https://www.sinbarrerascville.org/>
- **Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations (VACOLAO)**, Based in Virginia Beach
<https://www.facebook.com/VACOLAO/>

VICPP Connections:

- Check out our website for more resources: virginiainterfaithcenter.org/immigration-justice/
- Contact us with questions: sheila@virigniainterfaithcenter.org