

“Our Migration Stories”

WPLC’s Advent 2020 Prayer and Action Guide

(For an Electronic Version: <http://bit.ly/WPLCAdvent2020>)

Why is welcoming immigrants and migrants important?

- To be faithful to the Bible that calls us to love and welcome foreigners as ourselves (Lev 19:34, Matt 25: 35).
- To live out the ELCA’s social message on immigration that calls us to “advocate for fair and generous laws”¹
- To embody WPLC’s immigrant-welcoming principles and WPLC’s Vision of offering spiritual and social resources to people in our community



"Refugees La Sagrada Familia" by Kelly Latimore

Guide Outline

1. REFLECT on our migration stories
2. PRAY for immigrants and migrants in your community
3. ADVOCATE: Send an electronic letter supporting human rights for immigrants
4. ACCOMPANY: Write a letter to an immigrant in detention in Chicago
5. SHARE: Join in fellowship with the WPLC Community

1. REFLECT on OUR migration stories²

- a. IN OUR FAMILIES: “Our grandparents, great-grandparents, and our new immigrant neighbors have walked the same path that many in the Bible walked. The Bible is full of companions on the road, *amigos en pie*. We must link the feet of our biblical ancestors with the feet of our immigrant grandparents and with the feet of our new neighbors.” **Trace the footsteps of your ancestors. What migration stories are a part of your family identity?**
- b. IN OUR FAITH: Read one or more stories of migrants in scripture, our Biblical ancestors. **Compare migrants in scripture with migrants today. What is the same? What is different?**
- **Abraham and Sarah** left the land of their family because God had promised them a new and prosperous land. In a severe famine, they “went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien” (Genesis 12:10).
 - **Joseph and his brothers.** Joseph’s brothers were economic immigrants who fled to Egypt due to famine (Genesis 42:1-2 and 43: 1-2). Joseph was a foreigner in Egypt where he blesses his host nation and saves many Egyptians from hunger (41: 37-49).
 - **Hagar** was a migrant worker employed as a household laborer whom God sees and to whom God responds. (Genesis 21: 8-20).
 - **Ruth and Naomi.** First, Naomi and her husband immigrated to Moab when food runs out in Bethlehem. Then, Ruth, a Moabite immigrates with Naomi back to Israel and finds hospitality and respect (Ruth 1-4).
 - **Mary and Joseph,** the parents of Jesus, were political asylum-seekers as they took their baby and fled from political oppression (Matthew 2).
- c. IN OUR COMMUNITIES TODAY: Who are the Abrahams, Sarahs, Josephs, Hagars, Ruths, the Marys and Josephs in your life? In your community?

¹ “The ELCA’s Social Message on Immigration,” <https://www.elca.org/faith/faith-and-society/social-messages/immigration>

² Adapted from Chapter 1 and discussion questions from Stephen Bouman and Ralston Deffenbaugh’s *They Are Us*, Kindle Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020).

2. PRAY: Pray for immigrants and migrants in your community³

A Prayer for Children

Dear heavenly Father, tenderly bless all vulnerable children who are journeying alone in this world. Comfort orphaned children whose parents have been taken from them by violence. Provide for refugee children who are far from home and don't know where their families may be. Guide migrant children who take dangerous journeys to find family or opportunity. Rescue trafficked children whose freedom and innocence have been betrayed. Protect all children who need your care, bringing them justice, safety and home. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Prayer for Families

Dear heavenly Father, you created us to live in families, to protect, provide for, teach and help each other. We thank you for our own families, our family of faith, and our extended families of friends and loved ones. We ask your blessing on immigrant families who are at risk and are separated. Give them wisdom and guidance, safety and shelter, protection and provision. And bless us with the courage to accompany them in their struggles and speak out for them as they seek justice. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Prayer for Refugees

Dear Lord Jesus, your family on earth knew the life of refugees when they fled to Egypt. Bless all who seek refuge on this earth. Meet their needs for safety and for home. Move the hearts of your people to show them welcome. Cause wars to cease and bring justice to the nations that no one will need to flee again. In your great mercy, Lord hear our prayer.

3. ADVOCATE: Send an electronic letter supporting human rights for immigrants⁴

End the detention of children and families.

Even with unanimous consensus in the medical community that detention is never in a child's best interest, as of today, there are over 100 children being detained in ICE centers across the nation. [Sign a petition that urges the President and Congressional leadership to end ICE's detention of children.](#)

Protect the health of detained

immigrants⁵: People in immigration detention are extremely vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19 disease due to the track record of fatally flawed medical care detention centers. Read about the [#FreeThemAll](#) campaign and [Urge the Chicago ICE Field Director to prevent the spread of COVID in Chicago Detention Centers.](#)

Expand the welcome for Refugees:

On the evening of Sept. 30, the Trump Administration announced a ceiling of 15,000 refugees, which is the lowest target in the history of the U.S. Join with 243 bishops and other rostered ministers to call for resettlement of 95,000 refugees, the historic norm. [Urge Congress to welcome more refugees in 2020.](#)

4. ACCOMPANY: Write a letter to an immigrant in detention

[Read these instructions](#) to send a holiday message to an immigrant in detention in the Chicagoland area in partnership with the Interfaith Community of Detained Immigrants (ICDI).

5. SHARE: Join in fellowship with the WPLC community

- Join Virtual Fellowship on December 6, 2020 to share about your experience writing letters to detained immigrants and to learn about the impact of your letters.
- Invite friends and family to join one of the advocacy campaigns above, using the automatic prompts that appear after submitting the letters above.
- Make an entry in the Online WPLC Community Journal, share about your experience praying, advocating and accompanying immigrants at <http://bit.ly/WPLCOnlineJournal>

³ "Lord Hear Our Prayer," Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, <https://www.lirs.org/lord-hear-our-prayer-for-refugees/>

⁴ The ELCA Advocacy 2020 Federal Policy Priorities include the "human rights of migrants." <https://blogs.elca.org/advocacy/2020-elca-advocacy-federal-policy-priorities/>

⁵ Detention Watch Network is mentioned as a resource by ELCA AMMPARO Director Mary Campbell in her presentation: <https://www.facebook.com/47288660037/videos/743410496506120>