



Presbyterian Mission
**Presbyterian
Peacemaking Program**

This Immigration and Migration excerpt is taken from the Companion Guide, which can be found here: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Companion-Guide-to-the-Commitment-to-Peacemaking.pdf>



COMPANION GUIDE

Introduction to the COMPANION GUIDE

by Carl Horton, *Coordinator for Mission, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program*



A LEGACY OF PEACEMAKING WITNESS

Since 1980, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), along with its predecessor denominations, has proclaimed peacemaking as a priority for the church. After a significant period of study, a statement, *Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling*, was adopted and has served to guide the church for decades, remaining as relevant today as it was then. It affirms that:

- the Church is faithful to Christ when it is engaged in peacemaking.
- the Church is obedient to Christ when it nurtures and equips God's people as peacemakers.
- the Church bears witness to Christ when it nourishes the moral life of the nation for the sake of peace in our world.

BACKGROUND OF THE COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING

Three years later, in 1983, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirmed its call to peacemaking and introduced the *Commitment to Peacemaking*. It was an opportunity for congregations, mid councils and theological institutions to pledge to use their resources to be peacemakers in the world. Since then approximately 5,000 congregations and other church bodies have affirmed the *Commitment* and used it to shape faithful and creative ministries of peace and justice.

The Commitment remains a simple but profound statement. It:

- declares that working for peace is an essential mission priority;
- establishes a framework for planning and implementing peacemaking ministries;
- invites Presbyterians to work for peace in their own lives, their households, their congregations, their communities and the international arena;
- challenges Presbyterians to grow as peacemakers and to pass on a legacy of peacemaking to future generations.

The *Commitment to Peacemaking* identifies a holistic vision of peace that includes eight areas of peacemaking engagement. These really haven't changed over the years. Read them slowly, and see if they seem as critical and as necessary today as they were in 1983:

Worship — provide worship that expresses the reality of God's peace giving.

Prayer and Bible Study — encourage prayer, Bible study and spiritual disciplines that nurture and deepen the spiritual life of the community and equip people to share the gospel message of peace to the world.

Peacemaking in Families and in Community Living — create opportunities for people of all ages to develop peacemaking skills such as conflict resolution, mediation or nonviolence training that will help them grow as peacemakers in their families, in the congregation and in the community.

Community Ministries — work with and support ecumenical and interfaith partners and other bodies in the pursuit of social, racial and economic justice to confront racism and all other forms of prejudice and to respond to people in communities, local, national and worldwide, who are caught in poverty, hurt by employment or burdened by other problems.

Study and Response to Global Issues — support human rights and economic justice efforts in at least one area of the world through presbytery partnerships and sister countries.

Global Security — study global security concerns, work for worldwide arms control and support alternatives to military solutions to international and civil conflicts.

Making Peace with the Earth — protect and restore the environment through study, advocacy and individual and corporate lifestyle commitments.

Receiving the Peace and Global Witness Offering — support financially the churchwide peacemaking effort by receiving the Peace and Global Witness Offering.

About the COMPANION GUIDE

This Companion Guide has been developed not to replace the Commitment to Peacemaking, but to accompany it as a resource and a tool, assisting congregations, mid councils and theological institutions as they make, reaffirm and deepen their commitment to peacemaking.

It is intended to help Presbyterians practice peacemaking in a focused and ongoing fashion. Instead of occurring only at certain times of the year associated with days of emphasis or seasons of the church or calendar year, the Companion Guide offers a model for year-round peacemaking engagement. Through a unique process of worship, spiritual grounding and reflection, community building and partnership, study and preparation, and direct action and advocacy, Presbyterians are invited to engage in an intentional “development” of their peacemaking work and witness:

	<p>WORSHIP — As the central act of the people of God, worship continually centers and directs our peacemaking work and witness over and over again. Resources include hymns, prayers, litanies and sermon suggestions.</p>
	<p>SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND REFLECTION — Informed by scripture, theological reflection and spirit-led wonder, we lay a spiritual foundation that will support our peacemaking practice. Resources include scripture references, confessional material, discernment guides, prayers and communal questions.</p>
	<p>COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS — We don't do this work alone or in isolation. We learn about and gather the resources we'll need within and beyond the congregation, identifying partners and those already doing the work. We find allies and connect to impacted communities. Resources include suggested local, state and national organizations, ecumenical and interfaith partners and other congregations and mid councils engaged in the work.</p>
	<p>STUDY AND PREPARATION — We recognize the importance of study in our preparation as peacemakers. We seek to deepen our knowledge, broaden our understanding and heighten our awareness of the challenges we face as peacemakers. We delve deeply into the issue areas and identify root causes. Intentional preparation sharpens our skills and readies us to take action. Resources include recommended books, study guides, articles, videos and websites.</p>
	<p>DIRECT ACTION AND ADVOCACY — We are peacemakers in word and in deed. We speak out and speak up, speaking truth to power, advocating for just changes, knowing that silence is complicity. We also take action, not simply to alleviate immediate suffering and injustice but to expose and address their structural and systemic root causes. Resources include suggested actions and best practices and recommended forms of advocacy to address the issue area.</p>

FIVE AREAS OF INTEREST IN THE COMPANION GUIDE

This guide outlines how Presbyterians can apply each step in the unique process outlined above to one of five areas of emphasis. These areas, identified by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, also align with the current priorities, initiatives and policies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These are not the only areas of peacemaking engagement, to be sure, but they are some of the most persistent, prevailing and pressing challenges for Presbyterian peacemakers today. They are:

- **Poverty**
- **Violence**
- **Racism**
- **Climate change**
- **Immigration/migration**

Several of the areas of emphasis share common cause with other PC(USA) initiatives. An [Earth Care Congregation](#) or a [Matthew 25 Church](#), for instance, will find those efforts consistent with the emphases suggested above.

IDENTIFYING THE EMPHASIS FOR PEACEMAKING

Decisions about the Commitment to Peacemaking have always been made at the local level as an expression of the commitments and concerns of a particular community of faith. PC(USA) congregations, mid councils and theological institutions have committed to peacemaking and directed their peacemaking efforts to the issues, concerns and needs that align most closely with their priorities and passions. Many congregations do the same thing year after year; others move on to new areas of emphasis for peacemaking from one year to the next. The Companion Guide helps worshiping communities expand and deepen their expressions of peacemaking. Congregations that want to deepen their existing peacemaking emphasis will find guidance to take their peacemaking efforts to the next level. Those that wish to try a new, yet-unventured expression of peacemaking will find what they need to get started on something new.

DISCERNMENT FOR PEACEMAKING

For those congregations that have yet to commit to peacemaking, a good place to start is the helpful study resource for church sessions, *Exploring the Commitment to Peacemaking*. For a congregation that committed to peacemaking in the distant past, *Renewing the Commitment to Peacemaking* will help as a resource to refresh, renew and reawaken that commitment. If a congregation is uncertain as to its status as a “peacemaking congregation,” please contact the [Presbyterian Peacemaking Program](#), and we can provide that information

QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the *Commitment to Peacemaking* or the Companion Guide, please email the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program at peacemaking@presbyterianmission.org. You can also call our office directly at 502-569-5805.

Peacemaking congregations that would like guidance in determining the area of emphasis for their future peacemaking work and witness should refer to the resources for “Living Out the Commitment to Peacemaking” on the Peacemaking Program’s website.

A CURATED COLLECTION OF RESOURCES

As previously mentioned, the Companion Guide is not a program, curriculum or lesson plan. It is a curated collection of suggestions, best practices and resources for each step in the process to assist congregations, mid councils, and other Presbyterian entities as they explore new areas for their peacemaking witness or as they deepen their existing commitments. One of the key features of the Companion Guide is that it is an “evergreen” resource that can be updated and revised over time. We enlisted expert and experienced “curators” for each of the sections and are grateful for their willingness to help us create this resource.

- **Poverty** — Alonzo Johnson, Coordinator, Self-Development of People
- **Violence** — Roger Powers, Pastor, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque, NM
- **Racism** — Denise Anderson, Coordinator, Racial & Intercultural Justice
- **Climate change** — Rebecca Barnes, Coordinator, Presbyterian Hunger Program; Jessica Maudlin, Associate for Sustainable Living and Earth Care
- **Immigration/migration** — Susan Krehbiel, Associate for Refugees and Asylum, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance; Amanda Craft, Manager for Advocacy, Office of Immigration Issues; Teresa Waggener, Immigration Attorney, Office of Immigration issues

Readers should note that the section on violence is unique because it consists of two parts: “Violence in Families and Communities” and “Collective Violence — The U.S. and Global Security.” The first part, “Violence in Families and Communities,” helps congregations discern how to address self-directed violence and interpersonal violence including suicide, bullying, domestic violence, sexual violence and gun violence. The second part, “Collective Violence — The U.S. and Global Security,” helps congregations discern how to address collective violence or violence on a much larger, systemic and cultural scale including armed conflict within or between nation-states, genocide, repression and terrorism.

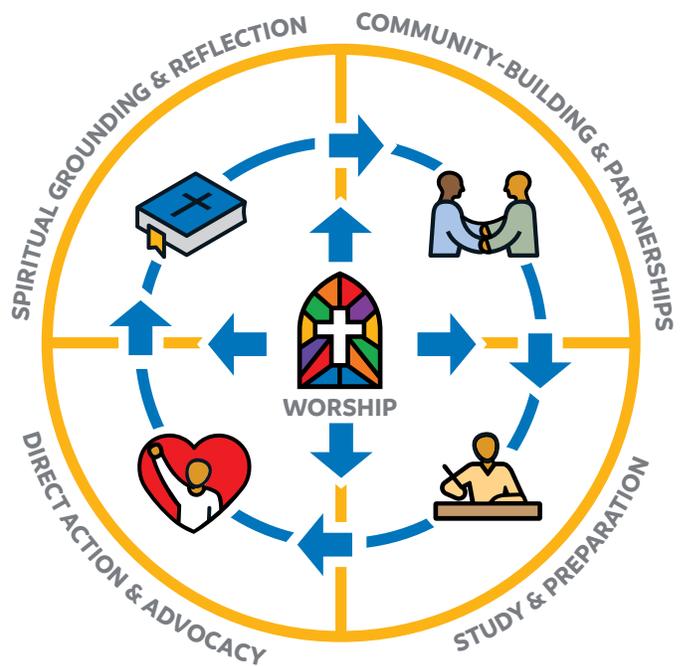
UTILIZING THE COMPANION GUIDE

The Companion Guide’s approach is for a congregation to spend a year utilizing resources outlined for the chosen issue area, culminating in action and advocacy. For congregations participating in the Season of Peace and receiving the Peace and Global Witness Offering on World Communion Sunday, it is suggested that the yearlong cycle begin and end during the Season of Peace. During the Season, congregations can conclude and celebrate the previous year’s accomplishments and begin their new year of peacemaking engagement. A possible yearlong schedule that follows the programmatic year of the congregation might look something like this:

Sep. – Oct.	Announce the area of peacemaking emphasis for the coming year. Participate in the Peace and Global Witness Offering.
Nov. – Dec.	Engage in spiritual grounding and reflection.
Jan. – Feb.	Explore community-building and partnerships.
Mar. – Apr.	Study and prepare.
May – June	Take part in direct action and advocacy.
July – Aug.	Evaluate, report and celebrate the accomplishments. Practice discernment, and identify the next area of peacemaking emphasis.

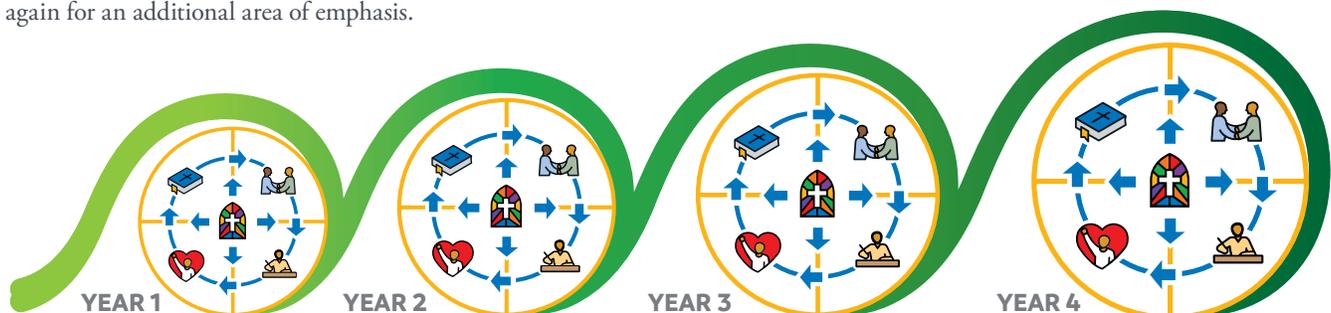
ONE-YEAR CYCLE:

A congregation chooses an area of emphasis and then engages in a one-year cycle of spiritual grounding and reflection, community building and partnership, study and preparation, and direct action and advocacy. Because worship continually centers and directs our peacemaking work as Christians, and is often incorporated into the other steps in the cycle, it lies at the center of this process.



MULTI-YEAR CYCLE:

As a congregation engages in the one-year cycle over a number of years on their chosen area of emphasis, they explore new resources, build new partnerships, and undergo further discernment about possible solutions. The congregation goes from viewing surface level issues related to the area of emphasis to recognizing and addressing root causes and the intersectionality across all the areas of emphasis. Over time, the focus, effectiveness, and reach of their efforts increases and their commitment deepens. Eventually, the congregation may decide to begin the cycle again for an additional area of emphasis.





IMMIGRATION & MIGRATION

Curated by Susan Krehbiel, *Presbyterian Disaster Assistance*,
Amanda Craft, *Manager for Advocacy, Office of Immigration Issues*, and
Teresa Waggener, *Immigration Attorney, Office of Immigration Issues*

INTRODUCTION

The movement of people is as old as the history of humanity, and the ability to relocate or migrate has been core to our survival. Today there are more than 70 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their home towns—within their own countries and across national borders. Even as international migration, both voluntary and involuntary, is at its highest ever, there is also increasing tension about the rights of individuals vs. the rights of governments to control migration. In this resource, we will focus on how the Commitment to Peacemaking can be applied to address the root causes that force people to flee in the first place as well as how to be peacemakers in the midst of an increasingly tense and conflictual debate over the treatment of people who come to the U.S. borders (land or air) in search of safety and freedom.

What is forced migration?

In the study of international migration, there is often a discussion of “push factors” and “pull factors” to explain why people move from one country to another. In most circumstances, an individual or group’s decision to migrate encompasses both of these factors. The term “forced migration” has been adopted by many universities and research institutes to encompass a wide range of push factors that compel people to leave, effectively causing their displacement—fleeing from war and other forms of violence, famine, persecution, oppression, government corruption, abject poverty and natural disasters. When people feel forced to leave, displaced by circumstances beyond their control, their decision to migrate has little to do with pull factors. Forced migration, therefore, requires a humanitarian and compassionate response.

The Global Context

Where are these 70 million displaced persons coming from, and where are they living now?

Over 40 million are internally displaced, living within their home country. The rest are refugees — either in the process of seeking asylum or already recognized as refugees, unable to return to their home country due to a fear of persecution. The three countries with the largest number internally displaced people are: Colombia with over 9 million people, Syria with 6.5 million and the Democratic Republic of Congo with over 5 million.

About 80% of refugees live in countries neighboring their countries of origin.



*UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Figures at a Glance, 19 June 2019 [accessed 18 September 2019].

EXAMPLES OF REFUGEE HOST COUNTRIES IN 2019:

Turkey — hosts on the largest refugee populations, over 3.6 million, most from Syria. Refugees represent 5% of their population.

Lebanon — hosting almost 1 million Syrians as well as other nationalities, representing 1/6 of their population.

Pakistan — hosting about 1.4 million refugees, mostly from Afghanistan.

Uganda — hosting about 1.4 million refugees from South Sudan and other African countries.

Germany — 1 million already recognized as refugees and ½ million still seeking asylum, almost 2% of the total population. This is the country’s second large spike in refugee arrivals, with similar numbers are the fall of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

What about the U.S.?

The United States has resettled about three million refugees over a 30-year period, an average of 95,000 refugees per year. In addition, it has recognized several hundred thousand asylum seekers, today resettling less than 30,000. Numbers of asylum seekers are on the rise — it is difficult to get current statistics, but it is estimated that over 800,000 are waiting a decision¹. The total U.S. population is 327 million, making the asylum-seeking population less than three-tenths of one percent (0.003).

PC(USA) Policy

The history of Presbyterians advocating on behalf of immigrants dates back to 1893 when the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. opposed the Chinese Exclusion Act. Today Presbyterians continue this legacy by working locally as well as nationally to join the struggle to ensure that immigration policy is more just and consistent with Christian principles.

The current PC(USA) policy compilation will soon be replaced by a more comprehensive online tool.

Commitment to Peacemaking

When considering how your congregation might carry out its commitment to peacemaking in the context of refugees and migration, it may be helpful to consider the whole migration cycle. How can peacemaking help address the root causes that force people to migrate? Violence is the number-one contributor to displacement. Likewise, most of the world's refugees dream of the day when they can return home, when it is safe and dignified to do so. Peacemaking has an important role in addressing the injustices of the past, mediating present conflicts and working toward just and peaceful resolutions where reconciliation is possible.

Peacemaking is also important in the midst of the migration experience. Peacemakers can play a vital role in providing humanitarian support along the journey and being places of welcome at the destination. In today's current anti-immigrant nationalist movements, peacemakers stand for the rights of refugees and migrants. They advocate against unjust treatment and help monitor access to refugee rights. They accompany refugees and asylum seekers as they make their way through the U.S. immigration system, as they look for work, settle into their new home, enroll their children in school and become a part of the community, including a worshipping community.



WORSHIP

Worship is our expression of gratitude and praise to God. It is the place we come together to confess our faults, shortcomings, brokenness. It is the place we are pardoned. It is a time to remember, to pray for, and to celebrate others in our community. It is the place that grounds us in who God calls us to be and sends us out to the world to extend God's love, compassion, grace and peace.

Remembering and celebrating immigrants, migrants and refugees is an important practice in worship. Here are pieces of liturgy and worship elements to utilize:

Hymns:

Glory to God Hymnal

- 69 I, the Lord of Sea and Sky/Here I am, Lord
- 695 Change My Heart, O God
- 756 O God of Every Nation
- 762 When the Poor Ones/Cuando el pobre
- 765 Song of Hope/Canto de Esperanza
- 769 For Everyone Born

El Himnario Presbiteriano (Spanish)

- 3 Al despuntar en la loma el día
- 306 Yo, el Dios de cielo y mar

Sing the Faith

- 2172 We Are Called
- 2191 Bless Now, O God, the Journey
- 2183 Unsettled World

Hymns by Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, Presbyterian Pastor

Lord, When Were You a Stranger
One Day, Naomi and Ruth Crossed a Border
Young Joseph the Dreamer

“God of the Traveler” (William McConnell © 2018 5.5.5.4.D)

Suggested Tune: Come to the Table (*Glory to God*, #508)

Alternate Tune: Bunesan

God of the traveler,
God of the journey,
Shelter and refuge,
Savior and friend.
Traveling with us,
Our close companion,
Grant us protection,
‘Til journey’s end.

Refugee fleeing
Prison and torture;
Seeking asylum, Living in fear.
Children and parents
Torn from each other,
Great God of mercy
Hear heartfelt prayer.

Parents of Jesus,
Refugee guardians,
Flee Herod’s rage,
you Shelter the child.
Fathers and mothers,
Children beloved,
To you entrusted,
God’s undefiled.

Wanderers, travelers,
Weary and worried,
God grant us strength and
Courage to dare.
Risking our safety,
Freedom, and status,
Your children need us,
Dare us to care.

Visual Images to use during worship, education or other programming:

Arte de Lágrimas (art of tears) — a traveling exhibit of drawings in which art is used as the vehicle for Central American children and mothers seeking refuge in the United States to tell their migration story and/or detention story. It is curated by Reverend Dr. Gregory L. Cuellar, director of the Refugee Artwork Project in Austin. He can be reached at GCuellar@austinseminary.edu.

El Sueño Americano — Tom Keifer worked as a janitor at a CBP station in Ajo, AZ. During that time, he witnessed the mass of personal property discarded by CBP

officials as non-essential. He started to photograph objects to make sense of how humanity is washed away in our immigration system. This particular collection is called “El Sueño Americano.”

Prayers

Prayer for World Refugee Day
Prayer for a World Uprooted
Beatitudes Prayer (for families separated), Immigration Prayer for a Rally, and Presente Prayer (written for General Assembly 2018)

Sermon Ideas

“We are all migrants/Todos somos migrantes,” by Rev. Tony Aja
Reflection on “midwives” for the Kentucky Council of Churches, by Rev. Tony Aja
“No Human Is Illegal,” by Rev. Mark Koenig
“Your Prayer is Our Prayer,” by Rev. Mamie Broadhurst

Readings from the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Book of Order — W-5.0304: Justice and Peace, Directory of Worship
The Book of Confessions — The Confession of Belhar

Liturgical Resources from the Book of Common Worship (2018):

Prayers after a Violent Event (p. 593-594)
Service after a Violent Event (p. 595-598)
Service for Justice and Peace (p. 599-632) with special prayer for Refugees and Migrants (p. 630-631)
Las Posadas (Season of Advent) worship service (p. 180-183)
Praying for Neighbors (p. 640)



SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND REFLECTION

A journey made in hope

The choice to be on the move is born of a belief that there is something better planned for your life and that there is a place where one can fully realize that better plan. It is born of faith and hope.

Prayers

Here are some of the faith-filled words of those who are and have been on the move:

MY JOURNEY WITH PAIN *(Written by a Syrian woman from the Presbyterian Church in Latakia, Syria)*

My journey with pain started the day my husband, our three children and I were driven out of our house and land. We suffered days feeling crushed, sad, horrified that I can't put in words. Sleep, rest and peace deserted me for a long time. God alone knows what the five of us suffered, especially when we started feeling hungry, short of food. But, thank God, He didn't desert us; He didn't forget us. My prayer to

you, My God, is to give me, as a mother and wife, the peace of your Spirit, so that how wild life's storms get and shake the boat of my life, I wouldn't feel afraid, because you are with me. My Lord, grant that I would find my joy in you and with you no matter how heavy my sorrow, exhaustion and worry get. Teach me longsuffering and patience, so I wouldn't grudge anyone; and uphold me with power and victory over all difficulties that come in my way. Fill my heart, O Lord, with the comforts of your Holy Spirit, so that I'd be able to comfort others around me, and those in similar situation. Help me to lean on you, and trust you, and draw close to you; and to listen to your voice and wonderful words that say: “Take courage; fear not. For, lo I am with you all the days, and to the end of days.” Forgive me if I go stray away from you sometimes. Forgive me if I say sharp words about those people who took our house and belongings and caused us all woe. Let your peace, O Lord, fill my heart and life, and the hearts and lives of all agonized mothers. To you and your Spirit be all praise and gratitude forever.

A MOTHER'S DAY PRAYER FROM SYRIA *(Written by a Syrian mother from Damascus who had to emigrate)*

With a heart full of genuine love to you, my God ... from far, far away ... from the freeze of estrangement I lift mine eyes to a sky unlike the sky of my homeland ... to a sun that doesn't warm me like the sun of my country, and plead your support and mercy. Today I feel like the numerous mothers whom the circumstances have driven far away from their loved ones. Yearnings kindle every morning, mixed with the tears of sorrow for a homeland crying for its parting with its children, for a soil longing for rain—not rivers of blood; children quaffing the cup of pain, want, and hardships every day ... a mother who lost her children, another who has no provider, and families who ended up homeless, and a homeless child seeking warmth and a loving breast but finds none. I miss my children who have struggled days, months and years ... Years separate us after being dispersed in God's spacious world. I miss playing with my grandson, and hugging the other, and enjoying their faces. They are growing, and here I am begging for a child's voice. I yearn for a country whose roses were soaked with blood, and changed it jasmines into thorns. I yearn for the noise of streets, and the sound of church bells, and hymn singing that embraces the skies. Bodies separated afar, but hearts are still there, because they refuse to beat except in Syria, and pray for it with every breath in and out. My God; you know me. You have stood with me through the most dangerous moments of my sickness and pain, and have granted me your peace when you reached out your hand and healed me. You cleaned me of every malicious cell that threatened my life. Then, I was suffering; but today the Malicious Cells spread with pain all over my country ... and no cure; Cain came with a new name to slaughter Abel, carrying with him the law of the wild, killing, slaughtering, and burning. But I fully trust

in your power to do miracles in healing people in sorrow, you the Great Physician. As you have calmed the storm, and silenced the wind, I pray you would clear out this black cloud and cure the wounds, and wipe out the tears, and bring the far away back to their mothers' bosoms. You shall bring back the smiles to the faces of children and restore life to the deserted homes; because you have said, 'fear not; lo, I am with you all the days and to the end of days; be of good courage.' Yes, Lord; we trust, and pray, here and in all the places we have been scattered, bring back safety to our country; hold it under your wings, and change the evil hearts. Break the chains, and liberate the minds. Send your Holy Spirit to the mothers and enable them to bear all hardships. Teach us to forgive as you have forgiven. Hear, O Lord, our supplications for Syria, who calls for you day and night. We look to you, Rock of Ages, with trust that the day of relief is nigh, for you are the Captain of the ship; it shall not drown as long as you hold the rein. Hear my prayer, for you are my shelter, rock, and salvation.

First-Hand Accounts

Stories from young members of Urban Life Ministries, San Diego, California

These first-hand accounts provide a glimpse of people who migrated to the U.S. as children and their hopes that the DREAM Act and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) would provide them with access to education and prohibit their deportation.

Videos for Reflection

These videos provide faith-filled words of inspiration of what it means to have an open heart to both accompany and receive persons on the move:

Advent Reflection, Rev. Dr. Gregory Cuéllar

As part of the 2018 PC(USA) Wall of Welcome delegation to McAllen, Texas, Rev. Dr. Gregory Cuéllar accompanied a student delegation from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. During the Season of Advent in 2018, Dr. Cuéllar shared this reflection on migration and the Bible.

Ash Wednesday Reflection, Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

In this video from the U.S.–Mexico border, the Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), speaks from a cemetery in Brooks County, Texas. For Ash Wednesday in 2019, he reflects on the cruel state of the immigration system in the United States.

Written Reflections

The following collection of writings provides a variety of reflections on immigration. Many of these were written for immigration emphasis days like World Refugee Day and Immigration Sunday.

Really Putting Christ Back in Christmas (A Curious Faith), by Rev. Angela Maddalone
"The decision to migrate is also not the end of the story," a Reflection and Prayer for World Refugee Day 2016, by Teresa Waggener and Rev. Mark Koenig

Presbyterians can provide a voice for people who are waiting to be resettled, April 2019 Reflection for World Refugee Day, by Susan Krehbiel
2018 Immigration Sunday Reflection: Do Not Fear, Office of Immigration Issues
2019 Immigration Sunday Reflection: Believing in Abundance, Office of Immigration Issues

Articles

How Does the End of DACA Hit Home for Presbyterians? by the Reverend Wendy Neff of Bethel Presbyterian Church, 2017

This article, written by a pastor at a church in Tennessee, reflects on the impact of the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) on an immigrant family in her congregation and on her faith community's response.



COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

It has been said that problems are never solved by only looking at what is missing or lacking. Problems or challenges are overcome by what we have to offer. When it comes to ministries with refugees and immigrants, they are our most important resource. As you consider what your congregation might bring to a relationship with refugees and immigrants in your community, use the following questions to help guide you to your strengths and gifts for this work.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS A SESSION, MISSION COMMITTEE OR CONGREGATION

- What is motivating your congregation to become involved in this area? How can you build that concern into action?
- Do you have members of your congregation with their own refugee or immigrant experience?
- Have any members lived in another country and faced the challenges of integration with another culture?
- What languages are spoken?
- Do you have an existing relationship with a church or organization that serves people from other countries?
- Where is your church located in relationship to immigrant neighborhoods and refugee-serving organizations? Do you have any space you can offer for groups to gather or for office space?
- What connections do you have with local government and other policy makers, other faith communities, civic organizations?
- What experiences can you draw on as a congregation to set a good foundation for you to enter into a new relationship or deepen an existing one?

It is important to contact and interact with those already doing work with refugees and immigrants. The U.S. is blessed with a wide range of nonprofit organizations and both faith-based and secular groups who are committed to protecting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Individual Presbyterian congregations have been providing social, financial, emotional and spiritual care for decades. Today there is an ever-growing number of refugee- and immigrant-led organizations and coalitions offering a space for refugees and immigrants to speak out on their own behalf. Getting to know who is active in your own community is an important step before deciding how your congregation can or should engage. If you are a primarily non-immigrant congregation reaching out to an immigrant-led organization, do not be surprised if their first reaction is one of suspicion. It is important to lead with a desire for relationship-building. Action should grow out of a place of trust and understanding.

Connect with Local Offices

Below is a list of local offices that might help you to locate others already engaged in this work. If you don't see something listed near you, here are a few good places to start:

Public Schools — Schools are an excellent place to learn about the diversity of your community. Teachers and school social workers serve students of all backgrounds, including refugees and immigrants. They are often in the position of connecting their students with community resources way beyond their educational needs.

Legal Services Providers — Local nonprofit legal services may be one of the only formal organizations in some communities. They are often stretched beyond their capacity and looking for partners to provide other types of services and social support. They may also be aware of other immigrant coalitions and other grassroots organizations.

Places of Worship — Churches, temples, mosques and other houses of worship often include people at risk for immigration enforcement and collaborate with larger community ministries and organizations. They are an ideal place to start relationship building in a safe space.

City Office for New Americans — Many cities have established an office to provide services for residents who are born outside the U.S. or speak a language other than English. The names of these offices vary. Some include specific reference to immigrants, while many have chosen to use the terminology “new Americans.” Check with your city to find the right office.

State Office for Refugees and Asylees — Most states have an office or department responsible for overseeing public services and grants to nonprofit organizations that serve refugees and asylum seekers in the state. These offices are typically located within the State Department of Human Services or its equivalent. Note: Some states have closed the office and the responsibilities have been given to a nonprofit organization.

Refugee Resettlement Agencies — Many of these agencies work with specific populations identified as refugees but have contacts with organizations that serve others beyond.

Sanctuary Movement Coalitions — Although they grow out of providing sanctuary, many coalitions have broader objectives, actions and activities.

Connect with Denominational Programs, Offices, Staff and Networks

PC(USA) Offices

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is a ministry of relief and response to national and international disasters, aid to refugees and displaced persons, refugee resettlement and efforts toward development. PDA partners with mid councils and local congregations in the US and with church partners and faith-based relief organizations internationally. Find us on [Facebook](#).

The Office of Immigration Issues was established in 2004 to provide legal advice and counsel to mid councils and congregations regarding immigration issues. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has expanded the work of the Office to coordinate advocacy and education efforts and create worship materials on immigration. Find us on Facebook: [Presbyterians for Just Immigration](#), and sign up for our newsletter: [Presbyterians for Just Immigration](#).

The Office of Public Witness is the public policy information and advocacy office. Its task is to advocate, and help the church to advocate, the social witness perspectives and policies of the Presbyterian General Assembly. Read their blog for the most recent news. Find us on [Facebook](#), and sign up to receive [Action Alerts](#).

PC(USA) Networks

Presbyterians For Just Immigration (PFJI) is a network of Presbyterians interested in addressing the crisis caused by a broken immigration system. PFJI is committed to fostering discussion, sharing resources, promoting advocacy and writing liturgy on various immigration topics. PFJI hopes to empower Presbyterians to share vision, best practices, resources and a passionate concern for those coming to the United States to live and work so that we can become the church God is calling us to be, together. Sign up to be a part of the Just Immigration group.

National Organizations

Freedom for Immigrants (formerly known as CIVIC), based in California, provides resources for detention visitation, including a national map of detention centers and established visitation programs and advocacy resources.

Interfaith Immigration Coalition is made up of faith-based organizations focused on public policy concerning immigration. The PC(USA) is a steering committee member.

Immigo is an App from iTunes that provides an up-to-date directory of immigration legal service providers as well as regular news updates. It is a service of Immigration Advocacy Network,

Refugee Resettlement: There are nine national organizations that work with the U.S. Department of State to coordinate the initial reception of newly resettled refugees with a combined network of approximately 200 local offices. For the most up-to-date information, you can contact PDA, or visit one of the websites found on this contact list.



STUDY AND PREPARATION

The right to migrate is recognized in Article Thirteen of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reads,

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.*
2. *Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”*

For Christians, migration is more than a right — it is the story of our people. God sent Abraham to a new land to be a blessing. The Hebrews fled genocide in Egypt. Jesus migrated to the human condition and lived among us.

This key element of human nature is under attack. The motivations and character of those on the move and those newly arrived is questioned and vilified in popular culture. Through our relationship building in the previous section, we can free ourselves of some of the effects that popular culture has had on our own unconscious biases, but gaining that freedom is a journey that is never fully complete.

This section of the resource is intended to provide you with a collection of resources to deepen your understanding and awareness of migration.

Films and Study Guides

The PC(USA) has produced a number of educational films and study guides:

Families Held Captive (23 minutes.) covers the opening of family detention centers in Texas in 2014. This film is still relevant as the use of family detention continues and is expected to expand.

Locked in a Box: Immigration Detention (24 minutes.) is an award-winning short documentary that follows the stories of individuals held in the U.S. Immigration detention system and those who visit them.

To Breathe Free (16 minutes.), a 2017 award-winning documentary, captures the intersection of individual narratives from a family fleeing Vietnam to the Syrian Conflict to the families who help create a new home in our nation's capital.

Facing the Human Tragedy in Syria (12 minutes)

contains interviews with our sister churches in Syria and Lebanon about the war and their humanitarian response along with interviews with PC(USA) members and staff on the need for advocacy to find a peaceful solution. **The Genesis of Exodus: The Roots of Central American Migration** (49 mins.) contains interviews with people living in Guatemala and El Salvador about the root causes of migration to the U.S. along with several PC(USA) leaders. Resources include an interactive website “story map” and reflection guide.

Books for Children About Refugees

This is an [annotated list](#) of books which are commercially available about refugees, including picture books for the very young. Books can facilitate dialogue and help children think about how they can become welcoming to children in their schools and community groups.

Visit readbrightly.com/books-to-help-kids-understand-what-its-like-to-be-a-refugee

Toolkits

PC(USA) Welcome Action Guide invites Presbyterians to extend biblical hospitality and stand in solidarity with our refugee neighbors. It includes background, guidance and resources to help you and your congregation get started in welcoming refugees to our community.

Interfaith Immigration Toolkits provide a whole range of guides for congregations from becoming a sanctuary church to specific advocacy campaigns. The toolkits also include guidance for faith communities on how to respond to immigration raids and how to plan a refugee welcome event.

Sample refugee “sponsorship” or welcome guide from Nassau Presbyterian Church. The congregation of Nassau Presbyterian Church has a long tradition of sponsoring refugees, welcoming nine refugee families over the past 50 years. Tom Charles, elder at Nassau Presbyterian Church, worked to put together this guide for churches, individuals and organizations looking to get involved in refugee resettlement.

The Toolkit for Congregations to Faithfully Accompany People Seeking Asylum is designed as a resource for congregations in the United States to accompany individuals and families seeking asylum in their journey to find safety and wholeness. It was developed as part of an ecumenical task force with Church World Service.

A Note on White Supremacy and White Privilege

The history of U.S. immigration law and policy is a history of white preference and dominance. Western Europeans were preferred over Eastern Europeans. Both were preferred over Southern Europeans. Asians, though brought to this nation when their labor was convenient for white U.S. interests, were deeply discriminated against with the Chinese Exclusion Act and Japanese Internment. Most Asians, though members of this nation for generations, were not allowed to naturalize under the law until 1952. African-Americans were taken and brought to the U.S. by force from their homelands and their families and enslaved. Though free persons after the civil war and purportedly allowed to vote under the 15th amendment of the U.S. Constitution in 1870, many African Americans did not enjoy the right to vote until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. **Please use the resources in the Peacemaking Guide's section on race to supplement your study of immigration.** The patterns we have created as a nation to seek justice, to gain access to resources, and to connect as people are all subconsciously and consciously controlled by a deep pattern of white preference and dominance. It is only through mindful study and growing awareness that we can live in right relationship with one another.



DIRECT ACTION AND ADVOCACY

There are many ways to become involved.

What will you do?

Immigration law and policy, though carried out in our local communities, are made at the federal level. Congressional advocacy is key in making your impact on the laws and policies that affect the lives of those on the move, those visiting and those who have made the U.S. their home. The Office of Immigration Issues updates congressional advocacy needs each year and, alongside the Washington Office of Public Witness, have created [tools](#) to use to organize groups to visit their representatives.

1. Write your elected leaders in Congress urging them to support legislation that supports immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Copy your letters to elected local and state leaders.
2. Host a film screening and follow-up discussion that is open to the community or organize a community educational series with local partners.
3. Pray regularly for all impacted by current immigration practices.
4. Volunteer with local organizations who work with refugees and immigrants.
5. Open your church property to outside groups to host meetings or immigration legal services.
6. Join an immigrant advocacy coalition.
7. Volunteer with organizations along the U.S. border and then share your learnings when you return home.
8. Become a sponsor to accompany an asylum seeker.
9. Organize a welcome team to accompany a resettled refugee or provide basic needs.
10. Give financial support to an immigrant-led or immigrant-serving organization.

Not sure where to begin?

1. Request a tour of a local immigration detention center.
2. Visit a local program/nonprofit.
3. Invite a refugee or immigrant leader to speak to your congregation.
4. Reach out to an immigrant-led faith community to start a dialogue, share a meal, visit each other's worship or prayer service.