

Statement on Immigrants and Refugees from the Global Mission Committee

“But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt”
Leviticus 19:34

We will have three Sunday forums on the topic of sanctuary: April 23rd - The theological imperative to care for the stranger; April 30th - The Episcopal Church and the Sanctuary Movement; and May 7th - Know Your Rights. We hope you will join us as we explore the ways we can respond to the needs of the immigrants and refugees among us.

Within our parish we have immigrants and refugees here by choice, by circumstance, because of tragedy. We hear repeatedly about diversity being our strength and inclusion our responsibility. St. Alban's has been and is living these tenets.

We have a growing and thriving Spanish language service. These multicultural members of St. Alban's come from over a dozen countries of the world where Spanish, Portuguese, French, Romanian and English are their first language and they have developed a community of faith and fellowship where all are welcome and respected.

Our Global Mission and Outreach Committees are leading efforts to support the immigrants and refugees in our congregation and communities. We recognize that outreach should not be limited to South Sudan and Jordan, but also to Syrian refugees in the area, to unaccompanied minor children from Central America and to those seeking reconciliation in Rwanda and here in the U.S. St. Alban's has hosted dinners and cultural events, educational sessions on legal issues impacting refugees, and tutoring, mentoring and support to students and families at neighborhood schools.

Immigration laws are becoming increasingly threatening and challenging to those seeking safety within our borders, refuge from violence, abuse, political persecution, searching for opportunity, food and shelter, community, peace. Meetings are underway within our diocese and beyond to understand these laws and legal options available, to share statements of support, commitments to teach and learn, provide legal and support services, and, for some churches, to literally shelter those seeking sanctuary.

Several of our parishioners are steeped in these issues, meetings and opportunities. We have opportunities to assist immigrants and refugees through the following:

- Sharing information with interested parties through education opportunities;
- Supporting a family with food, supplies, transportation and fellowship;

- Providing space for meetings;
- Providing legal and other services to support families in danger of deportation.

We have all experienced the alienation, the isolation caused by literally being different or confronting indifference toward us, someone we know, or someone in our community. We have been brought to tears by the tragedies of families torn apart while seeking asylum or legal status, refugees from famine, violence, persecution, children living in fear for their safety, needing food, shelter, peace. Believing they have found sanctuary among us, Jews and Muslims suffer attacks and prejudice, violence is inflicted upon people based on racial, ethnic and gender identity.

Bishop Mariann Budde has said, "Concern for the immigrant is not merely a biblical mandate for members of the Diocese of Washington. It is a matter of pastoral care. Many who fear arrest and deportation are parents, children, leaders in our congregations, and hardworking members of our communities."

We have no viable choice but to deepen and broaden the sanctuary we all have sought as foreigners at some time, by embracing those who strive to be embraced by us. While we know that ships and boats are no longer the only vehicles for reaching our shores, but planes, trucks, and by foot are equal means, the sentiment of the words of the late Martin Luther King, Jr. remains relevant to our times.

"We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."