EMMAUS:

CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT GUIDE



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SESSION 1 – THE CALL TO WELCOME 1

SESSION 2 – UNDERSTANDING THE CALL 10

SESSION 3 – ANSWERING THE CALL 21

APPENDIX 28

WELCOME TO EMMAUS:
CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT NETWORK

Greetings siblings in Christ,

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside your faith community as you enter a season of discernment.

Our faith calls on us to welcome the stranger. Our history reflects American Lutherans' deep immigrant roots and passionate commitment to welcoming newcomers. In this moment, there is a critical need for congregations to prayerfully discern and take action to support the successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the United States.

EMMAUS: Congregational Discernment is an LIRS initiative that invites congregations to consider the role they are called to play in resettling refugee and migrant families and walking with them as they rebuild their lives.

As your community prayerfully walks through this Discernment Guide, please know the staff of LIRS are praying with and for you. Together, with congregations and people of good will from across the country, we can extend a long welcome to our new migrant and refugee neighbors.

Thank you for your faithful discernment and ministry of welcome.

In peace,

KRISTIN WITTE
Director for Outreach

CHELSEY JOHNSON
Network Organizer for Outreach

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Goals of the Program:

- Provide opportunity to learn about asylum and refugee resettlement processes
- Discern what roles a congregation is open to and called to fulfill
- Become a part of the national EMMAUS Network of congregations receiving support from LIRS and from one another

Who:

- The EMMAUS: Congregational Discernment Guide equips congregations and faith communities who are new to the work of walking alongside immigrants and refugees and also supports congregations who have decades of experience. All are welcome in the work of welcome!

How:

- This discernment guide is meant for use in faith communities and can be adapted for large or small group settings. The three sessions of EMMAUS may be conducted virtually or in person.
- Throughout this guide are many embedded links to additional resources, readings, and media clips. While reading this on a computer or tablet, you can access these by clicking on any of the blue, underlined, hyperlinked text. We also welcome your suggestions or additional resources to include in future iterations.
- Visit the **EMMAUS Resource Center** for additional tools for congregations working alongside refugees and migrants.

When:

- Faith communities are invited to begin the discernment process when it works best for them. There are no liturgical restrictions. The three sessions of EMMAUS are meant to be completed in sequential order, but can be spread over a period of time that works best for a congregation. Some congregations complete the program in 3 weeks, while others discern over a few months.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The enclosed resource is informed by the inter-organizational partnership and generosity of Episcopal Migration Ministries for use by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.

We also give thanks for our partners in ministry, the LIRS affiliate network, and congregations across country whose experiences shaped this discernment guide.

ABOUT LIRS

LIRS, the U.S. Lutheran expression of service to refugees and migrants in America, has been bringing new hope and new life to newcomers since 1939. In partnership with a national network of affiliates, partners, congregations, and volunteers, LIRS resettles refugees, protects unaccompanied refugee children, advocates for fair and just treatment of asylum seekers, and seeks alternatives to detention for those who are incarcerated during their immigration proceedings. With initiative and sound stewardship, LIRS seeks creative and lasting solutions to the needs of uprooted people regardless of their race, ethnicity, or religious beliefs.

SESSION 1
THE CALL TO WELCOME

In this session, we'll discuss the invitation for congregations to join in resettlement efforts, introduce the EMMAUS discernment structure, and offer foundational information. At the end of this session, congregations should be able to articulate what LIRS does and better understand terminology around migrant and refugee work.



OPENING PRAYER

Good and loving God, our source of love and light -
Thank you for bringing us together today
in a spirit of generosity.
May we honor one another
by keeping an open mind.
May we voice our truth
and listen with an open heart.
May we discern your will
to unite in fruitful outcome.
We ask for your wisdom and grace,
to use our talents for the betterment of others.
With gratitude, we offer this prayer in your name.
Amen.
(A prayer by Debra Mooney, PhD)

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

EMMAUS: Congregational Discernment is named for the journey the disciples took with Christ after his resurrection on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35. The disciples, confused, afraid and upset by what they had experienced in Jerusalem, were accompanied by Christ. When Christ joins them on their journey, he opens their eyes and their hearts.

As disciples of Christ, we are called to accompany others, listen to their stories, break bread, and share our love.

The vibrant network of relationships, resources, and support in your congregation create a unique opportunity to welcome asylum seekers and refugees in your community. Our faith communities can lead in the work of welcome. EMMAUS: Congregational Discernment is your congregation's invitation to pray, discuss, and discern how you might be called to accompany refugee and migrant families as they rebuild their lives.

We hope and pray that this Discernment Guide empowers you and your congregation to discern and live into the ministry of welcome to which you are uniquely called, and inspires you to continue building a relationship with LIRS in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

Luke 24:13-15

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them.

Accompaniment

Accompaniment is defined as walking together in a solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality. (ELCA)

A REFUGEE FAMILY'S JOURNEY

Sometimes they leave home in the dark of night, taking only what they can carry, knowing that because of their politics, religion, race, or ethnicity they aren't safe. Some have suffered persecution for years, living in fear in their own homes. Many are traumatized from torture or unbearable loss, and leave knowing they may never be able to return. Often their families remain behind, and they do not know if they will ever see them again.

When the Makano family fled their homeland in Uganda, they had no idea what awaited them. **In this video**, watch how the LIRS network of communities and congregations shared in the transformative power of welcome.



After watching the video, ponder these reflection questions:

- What emotions and reactions did you feel while watching the video?
- Did any quotes or moments stick out to you?
- What examples of welcome did you see in the video?

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees defines a refugee as someone who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. In 2020 over 26 million refugees worldwide awaited a place to call home.

CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT

We hope after hearing the story of the Makano family and Christ Lutheran Church, and stories of migrant neighbors in your own community, that you see the need congregations can meet and feel called to respond. But how? How is your congregation called to accompany our migrant and refugee neighbors?

Through EMMAUS, congregations are invited to engage in prayerful and intentional discernment centered on the question: "What is God calling this congregation to do in this place and at this time?"

Theologian Benjamin Gensic[1] writes, "As Christians, we believe that God calls each one of us by name, and calls us to a life of discipleship, which is how we live in today's world as followers of Jesus Christ. Discernment is the way we try to seek and discover God's call, God's will, for our life as individuals and as communities. It involves reflecting on the deep questions of baptism, prayer, self-exploration, and awareness of the circumstances of our life, our gifts and abilities.

> *"Discernment is the way we try to seek and discover God's call, God's will, for our life as individuals and as communities."*
>
> —BENJAMIN GENSIC

One aspect of this process is learning how to listen to God's voice and the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through Scripture and through other voices. One helpful way is to compare it frequently to the ways we try to understand God's will in our individual lives."

Three sets of prayerful questions describe this process of discernment:

1. Lord, who are we? What are the strengths that you have gifted us with?

2. Lord, who are our neighbors? What are their needs and gifts?

3. Lord, after listening to your voice, how shall we respond?

We'll walk through these questions over the course of the three EMMAUS sessions.

Your congregation may be familiar with discernment, or this may be your first time asking such questions. Take heart knowing that no one is an expert at discerning. There are ways we can all sharpen our awareness and listening for God in unexpected places and through unexpected people.

1 *Gensic, Benjamin (2017) "Ignatius: A Guide for Congregational Discernment," Discernment: Theology and the Practice of Ministry: Vol. 3: Iss. 1, Article 2.*

The LIRS Mission

As a witness to God's love for all people, we stand with and advocate for migrants and refugees, transforming communities through ministries of service and justice.

ACCOMPANIMENT: THE WORK OF LIRS

As a congregation discerning through EMMAUS, you join a large and interconnected network of congregations, donors, local affiliates, advocates, and volunteers who partner with LIRS to walk alongside refugees and asylum seekers across the U.S.

Through the support of this national network, LIRS resettles refugees, protects unaccompanied refugee children, advocates for fair and just treatment of asylum seekers, and seeks alternatives to detention for those who are incarcerated during their immigration proceedings.

Simply put, LIRS seeks creative and lasting solutions to the needs of uprooted people regardless of their race, ethnicity, or religious beliefs.

Congregations and local affiliates are crucial partners in the success of LIRS' mission.

As we dive deeper into the ways your congregation may be called to be in relationship with migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, you will become familiar with new terminology and realities. Here are some terms and definitions that are key to understanding the migrant journey and the process of seeking asylum.[2]

Affiliate

A local LIRS service partner who carries out services for refugees and asylum seekers, such as helping refugees put down roots in new communities and assisting vulnerable migrants with legal and practical needs.



2 *TRANSFORMED COMMUNITY: FREED AND EMPOWERED FOR RADICAL WELCOME Written by Pamela Shellberg Adapted by Sue Ellen Spotts*

KEY TERMS

Migration: The process of moving within or across borders, either temporarily, seasonally, or permanently. Some migration involves an element of choice and is thus considered to be voluntary in nature. The migration discussed in this guide is *forced migration*, meaning those migrating have been forced to flee their homes on account of persecution, natural or man-made disasters, war, trafficking, and other push factors.

Migrant: A person who leaves their country of origin to seek residence in another country.

Immigrant: Any person who leaves their country of origin with plans to establish life in another country.

Refugee: A legal term and a legal status, designed by the UN, for someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has been determined to have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Refugees usually cannot return home for many years, as the source of their persecution, or their well-founded fear of persecution, is still present. War and violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

Asylee: An asylee is a person that has been granted asylum and is protected from being returned to his or her home country, is authorized to work in the United States, may apply for a Social Security card, may request permission to travel overseas, and can petition to bring family members to the United States. Asylees may also be eligible for certain benefits, such as Medicaid or Refugee Medical Assistance.

Asylum Seeker: An asylum seeker is someone whose request for asylum has yet to be processed. There are two ways in which a person may apply for asylum in the United States.

Environmental Migrants: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines environmental migrants as anyone who, for reasons of abrupt or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are pushed to leave their usual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their territory or across international borders.

Lawful permanent resident (LPR): Any person not a citizen of the United States who is residing in the United States under legally recognized and lawfully recorded permanent residence as an immigrant. Also known as "Permanent Resident Alien," "Resident Alien Permit Holder," and "Green Card Holder."

Displacement: Refers most commonly to instances where there is no choice but to move, either temporarily or permanently, within or across borders.

Credible Fear: A significant possibility that a person can establish in a full hearing that they have been persecuted or have a well-founded fear of persecution or harm because of race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion if returned to their country.

Host country: A country that is providing initial asylum to a refugee. For example, Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan are host countries to thousands of Syrian refugees. Refugees often stay for years or decades in host countries.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS): Temporary benefit given to eligible nationals of designated countries who are present in the United States and where conditions in their home country prevent safe return.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS): Department of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government charged with homeland security: preventing terrorism and managing risks to critical infrastructure; securing and managing the border; enforcing and administering immigration laws; safeguarding and securing cyberspace; and ensuring resilience to disasters.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP): An agency of DHS responsible for securing the United States and its territories by preventing the illegal entry of people and goods while facilitating legitimate travel and trade.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE): Office of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which houses enforcement agents and prosecutors in immigration court.

Deportation: Formal removal of someone from the United States for allegedly violating immigration laws.

Pull factors: The factors and drivers that lead people to go to a particular country. These include political stability, human rights, and economic opportunity.



Push factors: The factors and drivers that force people to migrate or flee their home countries. These factors include political persecution, conflict and instability, violence, and economic factors.

Sanctuary: Sanctuary has come to mean many different things in different contexts. Sanctuary can refer to sheltering or harboring an undocumented person. It can also refer to other ways that people can accompany and support those who are undocumented or facing deportation. Sanctuary is not a legally meaningful term.



Visit the EMMAUS Resource Center for additional tools for your discernment journey

Navigating this vocabulary can be difficult. Depending on where you are in your individual and congregational discernment, there may be a lot to learn. It's clear, from even this short list of terms, that migration is complex and intersects with political, geographic, and legal systems.

Language is a powerful tool as we shape our community's response to migrant neighbors. We are living at a time when refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants are often in the news and too often considered a political "issue." These people are not a political issue; they are human beings and children of God in desperate need. We can help meet those needs, while also lifting up the vulnerable so that they can stand on their own.

Welcoming our neighbors as we would welcome Christ is not political; it is central to our identity as followers of Jesus.

CONVERSATION: LORD, WHO ARE WE?

As a community of believers, take some time to think through and discuss these conversation guides. There are no right or wrong answers.

During the conversation, pay attention to the ways the Holy Spirit may be moving through yourself and your community.

Think of a time when you received radical hospitality and welcome. How did it make you feel?

_____

What characteristics or qualities come to mind when you think about your congregation?

_____

What key values guide your congregation?

_____

What are strengths and unique gifts God has provided?

_____

What motivates your ministry team, as Christians, to provide companionship and support to asylum seekers and refugees?

_____

CLOSING PRAYER

Creative and loving God, we give thanks that you accompany us in hope and love on the journey ahead. May everything we do begin with your inspiration and continue with your help so that all our prayers and works may be guided by you. Strengthen us and bring your work to completion within, around, and through us. Amen.


#refugeesare
ADVOCATES
#refugeesare
FATHERS
#refugeesare

Session 2
Understanding The Call

In this session, your faith community will learn more about how LIRS and our local affiliates serve refugees and asylum seekers and how congregations can offer support.

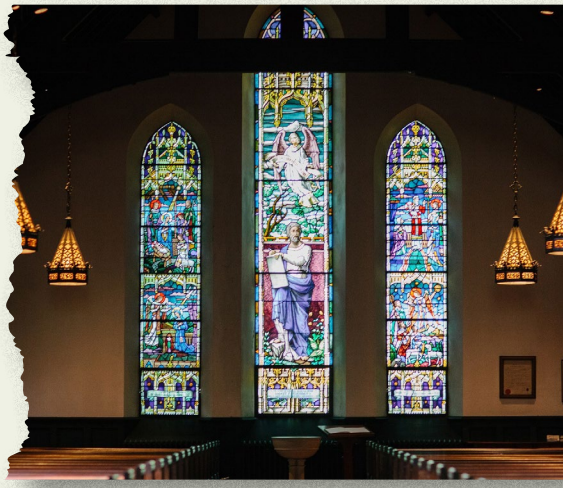
Opening Prayer

Lead us, O God, into the active ways of love for our sisters and brothers who have no place to call home or lay their heads this night. Our hands are Christ's hands, our feet are Christ's feet, and we lay before you ourselves, to be the hands and feet that serve and tend the needs of the refugee and all those who flee violence. Strengthen us in this work, dispel our frustrations, heal our broken hearts, that we may be balm in a wounded world; through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Wounded Healer.

Amen.

(A prayer from Episcopal Migration Ministries)

> ***"The Biblical story is a migration story. The Bible is the story of the uprooted People of God seeking safety, sanctuary and refuge and the living God giving directions for welcoming the stranger. From Adam and Eve, to Noah, Abraham, Moses to Jesus, Joseph, and Mary, all found themselves on the move, migrating, looking for a better life."***
>
> —JOAN MARUSKIN



BIBLICAL STORIES OF MIGRATION

Today, we will dive deeper into the complex systems and procedures our refugee and asylum-seeking neighbors face in their journey to the United States. It is important however, to remind ourselves that people have migrated since the beginning of time.

In our own Christian faith tradition, we lift up the stories of migrants. In scripture, we read of people leaving home because of famine or fear of persecution, and there are nearly 120 passages that refer to God's call to welcome the stranger.

Genesis 12:1,5, 10

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you... He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there... Now there was a famine in the land. So, Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land.

Deuteronomy 10:17–19

"For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the stranger, providing them food and clothing. You should also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Matthew 2:13–15

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night,and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

Matthew 25:34–40

"Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for 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.'

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

Reflection questions:

- Have you ever read scripture through the lens of migration? What parallels do you see between these passages and life around us today?
- What other biblical stories of migration come to mind for you? Feel free to take time to share or read them aloud.
- What reasons caused people in scripture to migrate?
- How would you describe God's attitude toward migrants?

MIGRATION TODAY

Today, the world is facing the largest forced displacement crisis in history[3]:

80 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes

26.3 million people are refugees

45.7 million people are internally displaced

4.2 million people are seeking asylum

Why would someone be forced to flee?

The reasons someone would be forced to flee their home are called "push factors." Some examples:

- Someone has been jailed and tortured because of how they worship.
- A family is threatened with violence because of political comments a family member made.
- People around them are mysteriously disappearing.
- People face threats of or real physical harm, persecution, or death if they speak their ethnic language or practice their religion.
- Adults are intentionally not given work opportunities.
- Children are bullied at school or not allowed to go to school because of their cultural background.

3 *UNHCR, Refugee Data finder (Geneva: UNHCR, 2021), https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/*

Other larger forces and factors play into forced displacement, including climate change and its effects[4] (e.g. resource depletion, which drives conflict) and domestic and gender-based violence[5].

> **"Now there was a famine in the land. So, Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land."**
>
> —GENESIS 12:10

For the next few minutes, write down what types of persecution would motivate you to leave your home in the U.S. and move to another country. Where would you consider going? Share what you wrote.

How do those who migrate decide where to go?

When people are fleeing for their lives, they often travel to the nearest safe country to seek protection. Other reasons, or *pull factors*, may play into the decision of where to go, including*:

- Political stability
- Political freedom and lack of persecution based upon ethnicity, religious beliefs, or social and cultural affiliations
- Improved employment and economic opportunities
- Better infrastructure that results in adequate facilities and services
- Better health care and medical facilities
- Opportunity in terms of employment, education, social class mobility
- Lower crime rates
- Known people, friends, or family
- A generally higher standard of living
- Personal and financial safety

* Note that refugees who are resettled do not have a choice in where to go; they are referred to a resettlement country for resettlement. (They may be referred to a country in which they already have family members who had previously emigrated or been resettled.)



To learn more about the processes of how a refugee or asylum seeker comes to the U.S., see Appendix A1 and A2.

4 *Abel, et al, "Climate, Conflict and Forced Migration," Global Environmental Change 54, (2019): 239-249.*
5 *Azam Ahmed, "Women Are Fleeing Death at Home. The U.S. Wants to Keep Them Out." New York Times, August 18, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/18/world/americas/guatemala-violence-women-asylum.html*

FINDING "HOME"

After a long and difficult journey, asylum seekers and refugees arrive in a community like yours.

Across the U.S., LIRS carries out much of our work in partnership with local service providers. With funding and technical support from LIRS, our local partners help refugees put down roots in new communities and assist vulnerable migrants with legal and practical needs.

Our affiliate network looks to congregations and community groups to join them in the work of welcome. In the next section, we'll share ways your congregation can consider walking alongside new neighbors.

CONGREGATIONS CAN ADAPT: ACT, DONATE, ADVOCATE, PRAY, TEACH

LIRS invites our network of volunteers, congregations, and communities from across the country to welcome new neighbors and educate communities on issues related to migration and refugees through the ADAPT model.

ADAPT stands for Act, Donate, Advocate, Pray and Teach.

The opportunities for your congregation to accompany refugees and asylum seekers vary depending on your geographic area and desired level of commitment.

The ADAPT model takes into account that congregations with varying gifts can support our migrant and refugee siblings in unique ways. Below is a brief list of ideas your congregation can consider as you build your welcome ministry.

Act

Community Sponsorship

One way to accompany our migrant siblings is through community sponsorship. Community Sponsorship is a commitment from a community group to assist with the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers through an organized contribution of in-kind goods, services, and financial assistance. Sometimes this looks like:

- Meeting a new family at airport
- Providing safe, sanitary, furnished housing
- Helping adults learn English
- Cultural orientation
- Helping employable adults become job ready and find employment



Your local LIRS affiliate office will partner with you to determine which opportunities are available and provide specific trainings on community sponsorship and other services.

If community sponsorship is not a good fit for your congregation, there are a myriad of additional ways to walk alongside the communities LIRS serves.

Detention Visitation Ministry

In collaboration with a national network of partners, LIRS is committed to providing hope, strength, and a voice to those in immigration detention. LIRS empowers congregations, community groups, and individual volunteers to launch and grow detention visitation ministries through resource development, training opportunities, and the distribution of small grants.

Those hearing a call to accompany an asylum seeker in detention may consult **lirs.org/detention-visitation**.

If there is not an active visitation ministry to a detention center in your area, we recommend that you reach out to community organizations in your area to build partnerships and support, and then reach out to an existing detention visitation ministry to learn how they got started.

Volunteer

Volunteering as a congregation can take many shapes and forms. Time commitments and needed skills vary, so be sure to be in conversation with your local affiliate for opportunities in your region.

Previously, congregations have:

- Served as mentors and language partners
- Coordinated community outreach and volunteer involvement
- Found foster parents in their community for unaccompanied migrant children
- Hosted clothing drives
- Organized pen pal programs for immigrants in detention
- And more!

LIRS Annual National Programs

Another way to engage in the ministry of "standing with" those navigating the U.S. immigration system is to work to positively influence local public opinion. Invite your community to engage with and support our migrant neighbors on a national scale through LIRS' three annual programs for congregations and communities.

- **Stand Up, Speak Up** is a national interfaith prayer vigil focused on prayer, reflection, and advocacy explored through the stories of migrants and refugees. Video of the interfaith prayer service and resources for coming together and taking action will be available at LIRS.org/speakup
- **Gather**: A Refugee Cultural Experience for Families, Friends, and Community equips congregations and communities to learn more about a region or country that LIRS supports through cultural and educational resources, discussion guides, worship resources, and a personal story of a family from that region. Find these resources at LIRS.org/gather
- **Hope for the Holidays** is an effort to bring hope and light to thousands of migrants in the United States. With the support of our hundreds of partners across the country, we collect donations for children's gifts and hand-written holiday cards to share hope with our friends effected by immigration detention (especially children) and remind them that they are not forgotten during the holiday season. LIRS.org/hope-for-the-holidays

Donate

Financial contributions are another tangible way to extend the ministry of welcome. Some congregations make donations to support LIRS efforts where funds are needed most, like in states where we provide foster care services for unaccompanied migrant children.

Additional ideas for generous support:

- Host a fundraising event
- Collect a special offering during a worship service
- Ask your synod to consider a becoming a financial partner with LIRS.

Visit lirs.org/give to donate or send your contribution to:

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
PO Box 17467
Baltimore, MD 21297-1467

Advocate

Your desire to serve refugees is likely rooted in a love of justice and compassion for the oppressed, the poor, the homeless, the rejected and the disenfranchised. We encourage you to be motivated by that love of justice and compassion to go beyond direct ministry and work toward righting the injustices that cause suffering.

Here are some ways your congregation can support displaced persons through advocacy:

- Read and respond to LIRS Action Alerts, occasional notices about urgent advocacy needs
- Form an advocacy committee to keep the congregation informed of legislative issues
- Contact legislators' local offices to discuss policies affecting refugees
- Participate in local hearing and public gatherings; ensure that refugee issues are addressed at these meetings
- Learn more at **LIRS.org/advocate**



Pray

Incorporate spiritual practices as a congregation that lift up the needs and voices of migrants.

- Pray for refugees and asylum seekers
- Host a bible study to explore ideas of radical welcome
- Reflect on what it means to welcome migrants and refugees with our **Immigration Catechism**.
- Incorporate liturgy relating to refugees and migrants in your worship services

Additional resources can be found in Appendix A3.

Teach

As your congregation learns more about the U.S. immigration system and the stories of migrant neighbors, we encourage you to take what you are learning and share it with others!

- Share your experience and concern with your community and invite them to join you in taking action
- Invite your youth group to learn more about the needs of their migrant and refugee peers
- Learn about U.S. policy and response to the global refugee problem and to refugees and asylum seekers in the United States
- Ask families in your congregation about their immigration stories
- **Request an expert speaker** from LIRS for your panel, webinar, church service, or other event. Our speakers are immigration activists, foreign policy experts, thought leaders, and former refugees.

Explore more ways to ADAPT in the **LIRS Action Center**.

CONVERSATION: LORD, WHO ARE OUR NEIGHBORS?

In Session 1, we examined the discernment question of *Lord, who are we?*

Now, let us ask *Lord, who are our neighbors? What are their needs and gifts?*

As you begin to think more concretely about how your congregation may answer the call the welcome the stranger, consider these conversation prompts:

Why do you want to accompany refugees or asylum seekers?

_____

Where and how is God already at work among the immigrant community in your area?

_____

What can your congregation do to align with organizations (ideally immigrant-led) already working in your community?

_____

How do you expect your life to be changed by "your neighbor"? How are you being transformed, personally and as a group?

_____

Do any of the ADAPT possibilities stir your heart or align with your congregation's strengths? Continue to brainstorm and pray over this until your group meets again.

_____

CLOSING PRAYER



God of all, you have cared for migrants throughout the ages:

You walked with Abraham and Sarah;

When Jacob and his family were forced by famine to leave their home, you guided them to Egypt;

You led your people, Israel, safely through the wilderness when they fled slavery;

You protected the Holy Family when they fled violence and infanticide.

You commanded your people to show compassion and justice to the alien and

bade them remember that they had once been aliens.

Your son, Jesus said, "When I was a stranger, you welcomed me."

God of all, these are difficult and unsettled times.

Use us, we pray, to show compassion to migrants, especially the children.

Give to those who govern the will and the wisdom to work for peace in the countries from which migrants flee, so that they do not lose a generation of their people.

Keep us mindful that we are all strangers and pilgrims on earth.

God of all, hear our prayer.

Amen.

(A Prayer by ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton)



Session 3
Answering The Call

In this session, we'll touch on a few final considerations for your congregation's discernment and welcome you to the EMMAUS Network.

OPENING PRAYER

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son. Take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love. Accompany refugees and asylum seekers with your steadfast love and faithfulness. Stretch out your hand to deliver those whose lives are in danger. Teach us to welcome newcomers with the care and mercy we receive from your generous and loving hand. Keep us mindful that, with sojourners and strangers, we are all one body in Christ. Through this same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

THE EMMAUS JOURNEY

As we begin this third and final session of the EMMAUS journey, we invite you to take a few moments of silence to sit still and focus your breath. Feel the air filling and leaving your lungs. Feel your heart pumping in your chest.

The Holy Spirit, the breath of God, lives in you. On this discernment journey, the Holy Spirit has been at work, stirring up possibilities and opening hearts in your congregation.

So far, you've learned more about the realities facing refugees and asylum seekers and you've prayed over the ways your congregation might respond. Today, we'll take a look at some final things to keep in mind as you move from a place of discernment to action.

By the end of today's session, your congregation may not have a final decision about how you are called to accompany migrants and refugees. That's okay – discernment doesn't follow a linear path. The Holy Spirit is still at work and you are equipped to continue the conversation of discernment.

Also remember, you are not alone! The national LIRS network is here to pray with you, answer any questions, and help find the right path of accompaniment for your congregation.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Read through The Parable of the Good Samaritan. Reflect on how this parable stands out to you from the context of your congregational discernment.

Luke 10:25-37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

> ***"The question is not, 'Is she illegal?' The question is, 'Is she my neighbor?"***
>
> —PASTOR STEPHEN BOUMAN, CO-AUTHOR OF THEY ARE US: LUTHERANS AND IMMIGRATION

GO AND DO LIKEWISE

As you prepare to "go and do likewise" in your own community, your congregation will shift from discernment to decision making. The question of "How are we called to respond?" will give way to tangibly *responding*.

We've compiled a few final notes to keep in mind as your discernment draws to a close.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

As your discernment becomes clearer, your team should take time to get to know what is going on in your local community, map resources, and begin to build relationships with immigrant-led organizations. Especially if your team is primarily composed of U.S. citizens or permanent residents, begin by forming relationships with organizations that have taken leading roles in advocacy and support for immigrants *by immigrants*. Show up to learn, to listen, and to support, and *not* to take the lead.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Here are a few expectations to keep in mind as you continue learning about ways to support refugees and asylum seekers and discerning your congregation's call to welcome:

- Things won't always happen as planned. You must be flexible.
- Moving is one of life's major stresses and moving halfway across the world can multiply the stress level. Different people handle stress in different ways, so expect your new neighbors to feel and express a wide range of emotions during their integration period.
- You will probably answer the same questions many times. Learning a new culture is never easy. Language barriers combined with the stress of an entirely new environment can create confusion.
- You will be forever changed. Accompaniment is a transforming experience. Not only for the migrant family, but also for your team and congregation. You are about to embark on a journey filled with new cultural experiences, growing friendships, and encounters with the Holy Spirit.

> ***"When you're dealing with people, everything isn't going to go exactly as you plan it... you've got to be flexible."***
>
> —PAT FRIAR,
> ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH;
> FORT WORTH

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Cultural competency involves knowledge of other cultures, nonjudgmental acceptance of cultural differences, and adaptation of behaviors to enable successful communication, cooperation, treatment, and inclusion of diverse groups, while at the same time remaining grounded in a sense of shared humanity.

Working with asylum seekers and refugees requires finding the balance between treating your new neighbors like anyone else and recognizing that their culture and experiences may present challenges to their adaptation to the U.S. and to your mutual understanding. Country of origin, urban or rural background, and education — not to mention individual beliefs and attitudes — all contribute to how a newly arrived person will function in and adapt to U.S. culture.

For Cultural Competence learning resources for members of your ministry team, we encourage you to explore Community Tool Box's **"Cultural Competence in a Multicultural World."**

SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is natural to share what is important to you, including your faith, with a migrant family. The purpose of accompaniment, however, is to offer caring support to a family in need that is not based on what they believe or a desire to convert them to a different faith. *Proselytizing*. i.e., inducing someone to convert to one's own religious faith, is strictly prohibited. LIRS and its partners have made a commitment with the federal government, our communities, and the refugees whom we serve to not proselytize during any of our activities, programs, or events.

Many refugees have spent years fleeing persecution because of their faith. For this reason, it is especially important that they feel safe practicing their faith in the United States. For others, religious beliefs and traditions may be one of the few elements of their heritage that they have not lost in their flight. These practices are one of the threads that connect them to their home, and it is important to respect refugees' desire to hold onto that familiar thread as you help them to adjust to so much change in their new home.

EXTENDING THE INVITATION

Depending on the number of people involved in your EMMAUS conversations so far, you may be interested in engaging more members of your congregation. As you move toward taking action after discernment, think about how you will invite others to join your work.

Your community of believers has many gifts, both known and unknown. Don't be afraid to ask individuals throughout the congregation to join whatever path towards accompaniment you take —you will be surprised who wants to participate!

Remember, not everyone needs to be on the team to be involved. Organize one-time volunteer opportunities such as a food drive, a fund-raiser, or a welcome reception event at which your new neighbors can meet the congregation.

We asked congregations across the country how they grew support for their refugee and migrant ministries. Here are a few ideas:

- Share information about the refugee program and community sponsorship with the larger congregation. Ask an affiliate staff member to give a brief presentation to the congregation.
- Be prepared to provide one-time volunteer and fundraising opportunities for the congregation.
- Host a welcome reception event at which your new neighbors can meet the congregation.

CONVERSATION: LORD, AFTER LISTENING TO YOUR VOICE, HOW SHALL WE RESPOND?

Your congregation has faithfully journeyed through prayer, scripture, reflection, and conversation. As a community engaged in discernment, you have learned to ask the right questions, not "What should we do?" but instead, "What might God have us do?"



Take a moment to assess how you feel.

_____

What have you learned?

_____

Have you gained a deeper appreciation for parts of your faith community?

_____

Write down fears or concerns you have around this work.

_____

Write down any hopes you have around this work.

_____

There may be lingering questions about your congregation's discernment. What are they? Identifying them will allow you to work towards clarity.

_____

As a group, what next steps are you committing to?

_____

In this moment, how would you articulate your congregation's discerned call to welcome?

_____

CONGRATULATIONS!

You did it! Your congregation is officially a member of the **EMMAUS: Network**. Regardless of what type of accompaniment your discernment has revealed, you are welcome here. Your congregation is now a part of our national network of congregations receiving support from LIRS and from one another.

Visit the **EMMAUS Resource Center** to download your official **EMMAUS: Congregational Discernment** certificate. LIRS Outreach staff will be following up with you in the coming weeks to provide further support and next steps.

As we develop additional resources for congregations, the EMMAUS Network will be the first to know. Stay tuned for EMMAUS webinars and regional round tables in the months ahead.

Closing Prayer

A Franciscan Blessing

May God bless you with a restless discomfort
about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships,
so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy anger at injustice, oppression,
and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for
justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer
from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may
reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that
you really CAN make a difference in this world, so that you are able,
with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

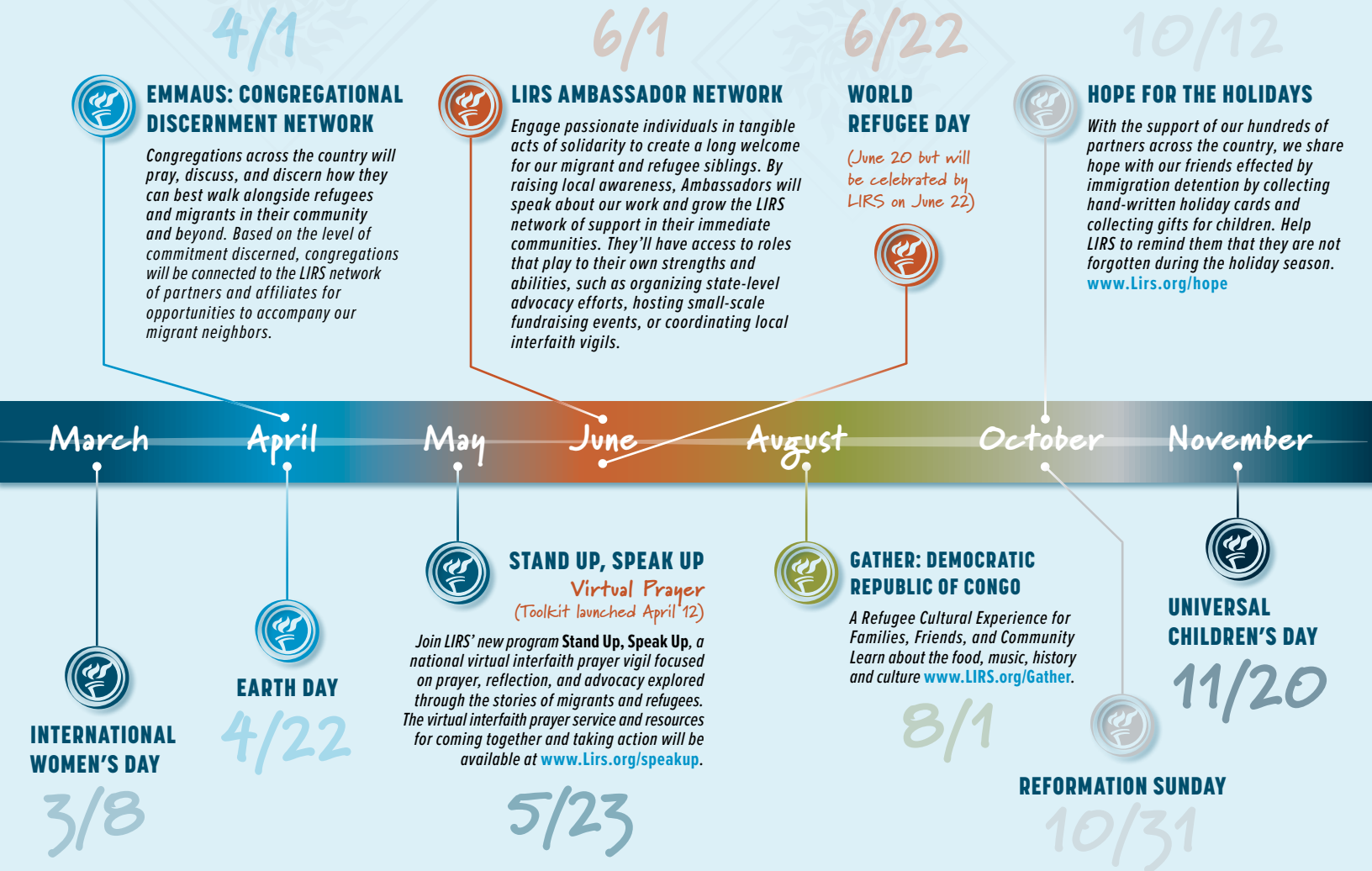
And the blessing of God the Supreme Majesty and our Creator,
Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word who is our brother and Savior,
and the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Guide, be with you
and remain with you, this day and forevermore. Amen.

(An Anonymous Prayer)

LIRS Hope Rising

2021 Calendar of Events

Join LIRS throughout the year in raising awareness and showing support for our migrant and refugee neighbors.



Appendix

A1.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Pathway to Resettlement in the United States

On the following page, we have reproduced an abbreviated chart that illustrates how people are admitted to the United States as refugees.



STEP 1 Leave Your Home Country for Fear of Persecution
You live in a country where you are persecuted because of your race, religion, ethnicity, social group, or political beliefs. Out of fear for your life, you flee your home and cross an international border, where you seek safety in a "country of first asylum."



STEP 2 Register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
for refugee status determination UNHCR collects biomedical data, biographic information, identifying documents, and conducts interviews to determine whether or not you qualify for refugee status. If UNHCR verifies your need for protection, you receive an ID card that allows you to stay in a refugee camp or urban environment.



STEP 3 Resettlement Processing Interviews and Security Screenings
If you are not able to return home or settle in the country to which you fled, you may apply for resettlement in a third country, such as the US. If you are referred to resettlement in the US, you undergo extensive screenings, multiple reviews of your application, and an interview with a United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer, who then is responsible for approving or denying your application for resettlement.



STEP 4 Conditional Approval and More Security Screenings
If all necessary criteria is met, you will be conditionally approved for refugee status. You must pass another round of security screenings, which are detailed in the Security Screening Chart. This includes passing a medical screening.



STEP 5 Journey to the United States
A very small number of refugees are approved for resettlement in the US. If you are one of the few, you are assigned to a national Resettlement Agency, such as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), the resettlement agency will book your travel, meet you at the U.S. airport and assist you with the integration process.



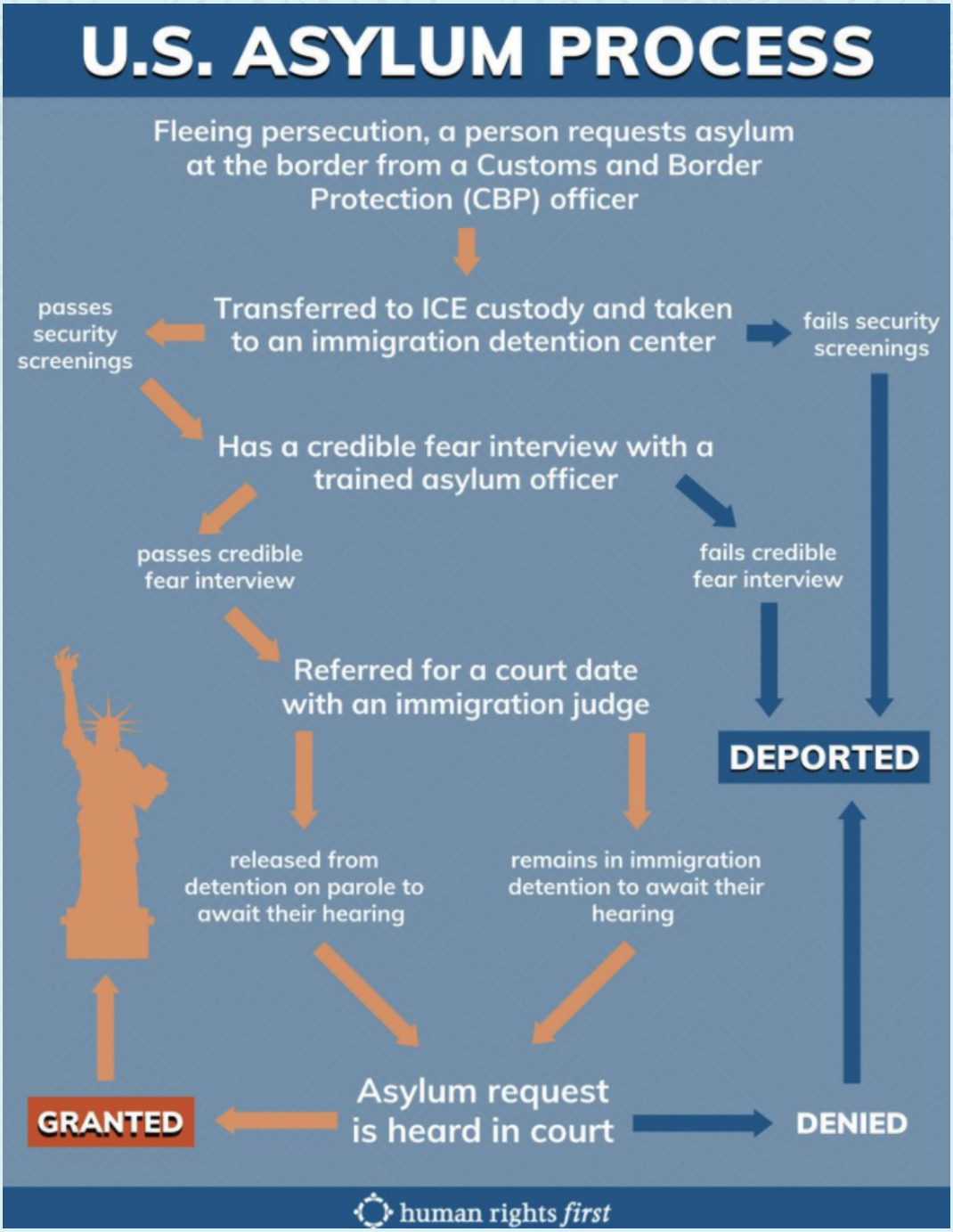
STEP 6 Welcome to the United States
Upon arrival, you will undergo security checks one last time by a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer, to verify that you have the proper documentation and that you are the same person. Once through security, you are met by members of the local resettlement agency and other volunteers who will walk with you as you begin to settle into life in the US.

Facts

- Refugees can spend as many as 17 years or longer in a refugee camp awaiting a permanent solution.
- The security screening process to come to the United States can take between 18 months and 3 years.
- Many of the screenings are time sensitive, so if one expires while waiting on another, they must start over.
- There are more than 65 million people displaced around the world. Less than 1 percent of refugees are resettled worldwide.
- Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) is a special kind of protection for Afghans and Iraqis who are not safe in their home countries because they are persecuted because they worked with U.S. armed forces. Unlike the normal refugee resettlement process, these visas may be obtained while still in their home country.

Appendix

A2.



(Source: [1] "U.S. Asylum Process," Human Rights First, accessed August 31, 2019, https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/Asylum%20Flow%20Chart%20From%20Port%20of%20Entry.jpg.

Appendix

A3. WORSHIP RESOURCES

A Litany for Ministry with Uprooted People

Leader: Almighty God, thanks be to you for your love and goodness showered on us each day. We praise you for the gift of your Son, our Savior, in whom we have forgiveness and abundant life. We give you thanks for your Holy Spirit who keeps us in faith.

Congregation: We thank you for the gifts of life, family, friends and home. We are grateful especially for the care of others in our times of need. Lead us to show our thankfulness to you by caring for others in their times of need.

Leader: O God, teach us how to show your justice and kindness to uprooted people who are often unknown, forgotten or cast aside in our world today. Give us courage to step out in faith with you, to speak out and befriend the men and women, boys and girls who need freedom and healing to make life whole.

Congregation: Stir us by your love. Move us to be messengers of your good tidings to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort all who mourn, to give them a garland instead of ashes so that you may be glorified.

Leader: Almighty God, we pray for peace in our world. We pray for the leaders and people of other nations as well as our own, that all may see the glory of your ways and seek to work for peace.

Congregation: Show us our part in creating this peace at home and abroad. Teach us how to proclaim your care and wisdom in deeds and words that transcend cultures and backgrounds. Help us to recognize that people of different cultures and backgrounds can also be your messengers of love to us. Show us how to work with them in ways that are pleasing to you.

Leader: Our God our Savior, we thank you for renewing and restoring our lives every day. Turn us around when we have lost our way. Open our hearts to open doors for uprooted people.

Congregation: We thank you for the resurrection surprises you continue to bestow. Inspire and lead us that we may lift up your love for humanity in ministry with uprooted people. This we ask in Jesus' name.

BIBLE PASSAGES

- **Exodus 23:9**

  "You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."

- **Leviticus 19:33, 34**

  "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

- **Deuteronomy 10:17–19**

  "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the stranger, providing them food and clothing. You should also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

- **Deuteronomy 24:17–22**

  "You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this."

- **Proverbs 31:8–9**

  Speak out for those who cannot speak,

  For the rights of all the destitute.

  Speak out, judge righteously,

  Defend the rights of the poor and needy.

• Matthew 2:13–15

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

• Matthew 25:34–40

"Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for 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.' Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

• Luke 4:16–30

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

- **Philippians 2:3–5**

  Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus….

- **Hebrews 13:2**

  Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

- **1 John 4:19–21**

  We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

PRAYERS

Lead us, O God, into the active ways of love for our sisters and brothers who have no place to call home or lay their heads this night. Our hands are Christ's hands, our feet are Christ's feet, and we lay before you ourselves, to be the hands and feet that serve and tend the needs of the refugee and all those who flee violence. Strengthen us in this work, dispel our frustrations, heal our broken hearts, that we may be balm in a wounded world; through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Wounded Healer. *Amen.*

Oh God of all, with wonderful diversity of languages and cultures you created all people in your image. Free us from prejudice and fear, that we may see your face in the faces of people around the world; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. *Amen.*

(ELW, p.79)

Almighty and Loving God, whose love knows no boundaries and whose mercy extends beyond human walls, give us the strength to love in times of hate and to show mercy to those who suffer, especially our brothers and sisters who seek refuge, who are fleeing violence, and all who seek a place to call home.

May we never seek to deceive another.

May we never return anger with hatred.

May our own frustrations and resentments never cause suffering in another.

Guide our actions and our speech to honor the God we serve.

Be our Light on the Way of Love to serve our sisters and brothers who wander the earth longing for a home. *Amen.*

Hold your children this night, dear Lord, who have no place to rest or call home. Comfort those who are lonely and afraid in a strange land. Protect and sustain the children who have been taken from their parents and give them peace. May your Holy Spirit dwell with those who weep this night from fear and give us all a reason to hope for a better future. May Christ be the arms which hold close all who are afraid and may the presence of Jesus be known in the hearts of those who seek refuge and safety. In the name of the one who himself was once a refugee, Jesus. *Amen.*



Additional worship and congregational resources are created throughout the liturgical calendar. Visit LIRS.org or contact outreach@LIRS.org for more information.



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