



## Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was;  
and when he saw him, he took pity on him.”  
(Luke 10:33)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

God calls us to love and serve our neighbors and bear witness to the plight of the vulnerable and marginalized. Our shared faith inspires us to welcome the stranger and extend compassion to all who sojourn to our land. No matter how often we read the parable of the Good Samaritan, it ignites a renewed commitment within us to live a life that embraces and supports others in times of need.

Historically, the United States has been a welcoming nation - opening our doors to refugees and migrants who face unimaginable atrocities forcing them to flee and seek refuge in our country. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has been part of that tradition by assisting more than half a million migrants and refugees since 1939. As a church, our synods, congregations and members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America also have responded to God’s call to love and serve our neighbors by offering healing, hospitality and hope to thousands of refugees and migrants from around the world.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees describes the current situation as the worst global migration in recorded history. It is more important now than ever that we welcome our neighbors whose lives are being threatened by circumstances that compel them to flee their homeland.

In the midst of this challenging context, many of our undocumented brothers and sisters (DREAMers who came to this country as children, asylum seekers, and those with Temporary Protected Status from countries still rebuilding from natural disasters, and wars) live in constant fear of deportation and of being separated from their families.

As a church with deep immigrant roots, Lutherans have been a witness to God’s love for all people as we stand with and advocate for migrants and refugees. Now is the time to embrace that Lutheran history of bold and courageous generosity of spirit and welcome migrants and refugees. This is our call and this is how we bear witness in a time of great unease and uncertainty.

The ELCA through the AMMPARO strategy adopted by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly commits our church to accompany migrant minors with protection, advocacy, representation and opportunities as a significant holistic whole church response to this global refugee crisis. Our church responds together with companions in multiple ways internationally as well.



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As we celebrate the extraordinary power of Jesus Christ's love to transform the life of every person that is seeking refuge, we invite you, your congregations, schools and communities to welcome the stranger. Matthew 25:35 says, "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." Set aside any Sunday this year to celebrate refugees and migrants on Refugee Sunday and continue this transformative journey of courage and renewal. Visit [www.lirs.org/Refugee-Sunday](http://www.lirs.org/Refugee-Sunday) and [www.elca.org/Resources/AMMPARO](http://www.elca.org/Resources/AMMPARO) for materials and ideas to take the first step.

A Refugee Sunday service will provide your congregation with a powerful experience of how the grace of God turns journeys of loss and pain into new beginnings filled with peace and hope. May Jesus, the Good Shepherd, help us to show compassion to others who seek God's goodness and mercy.

Yours in Faith,

Pat Nichols

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pat Nichols".

Interim President & CEO  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth A. Eaton".

Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America