



LIRS



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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." (Matthew 2:13)

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20, Luke 9:58)

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The gospels recount the story of Jesus as a migrant, in need of welcome and reception. And Jesus identifies with every wanderer, every displaced person, every refugee, asylum seeker and migrant, when he tells the crowd, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35).

For 80 years, Lutherans in the United States have joined together to respond to God's call to love the neighbor who comes to us as stranger and sojourner. Since 1939, LIRS (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) has led the Lutheran movement to welcome vulnerable migrants and refugees in America. Together we have equipped and supported over half a million new Americans, while advocating boldly for policies that protect those we serve. Meanwhile, as part of the AMMPARO strategy, 128 welcoming and sanctuary congregations in 35 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have committed to offering accompaniment to migrants in their communities.

This year's Migrant and Refugee Sunday, which can be observed on any Sunday, comes at a critical moment in our nation's history for welcoming the stranger. We are shutting our doors to refugees during the worst global migration crisis in recorded history. And we are jailing and separating mothers and children who are fleeing horrible situations in their home countries, seeking refuge at our borders. Each of these people, we know, is a beloved child of God; each of them is the stranger in whom we see the face of Jesus. And in each of them we are reminded of our calling to be bearers of welcome and hope as we receive the stranger among us.

During this critical and unsettling time for migrants and refugees, we must live boldly into our Lutheran faith tradition and our legacy of courageous and compassionate welcome for those who seek refuge in our communities. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America invite you to visit www.lirs.org/migrant-refugee-sunday and www.elca.org/ammparo for resources to support your congregation's ministry of welcome. There you will find materials for preaching, prayers, bulletin inserts, study guides, and ideas for community gatherings and advocacy actions. These materials are seasonal, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, and are updated throughout the church year. We encourage you to explore these materials to determine how they can best support your congregation's response to Christ's call to welcome the stranger.

As you proclaim God's care for the most vulnerable, pray for those whose lives are uprooted, and interact with migrants and refugees in your communities, we pray that you experience grace and hope in welcoming the stranger, in welcoming Christ our Lord.

Together in Welcome,

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, President & CEO of LIRS
Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA

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