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Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America

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# **Immigrant Welcoming Congregations' Guide**

**CRLN's Immigrant Welcoming Resource List (rev. 2021)**  
**Become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation (of CRLN)**  
A Project of the **Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America**

- **[The Journey to Becoming Immigrant Welcoming \(Page 3 below\)](#)**
- **[Living Out the Commitment \(Page 5 below\)](#)**

**Educational Resources**

- [Basic Definitions](#)
- [A History of Migration in the U.S.](#)
- Faith Community Documents & Resource Links
  - [Catholic](#)
  - [Jewish](#) (this is one of many)
  - [Lutheran](#)
  - [Presbyterian](#)
  - [Unitarian Universalist](#)
  - [United Church of Christ](#)
- Films, Books & Digital Media Resources
  - [Background Materials compiled by the DV-USA-Dominican Volunteers-USA](#)
  - [Lawful Assembly Podcast](#) | The Way of Wisdom: The Edgewater – Rogers Park communities are rich with diversity including many immigrant and refugee families. The following podcasts by Edgewater resident, Craig Mousin, entitled “Lawful Assembly, are produced via DePaul University. Learn more about your neighbors, their journeys, and their lives in our neighborhoods.
- Workshop Opportunities. Please contact CRLN staff to set up a workshop. Join our email list for updates. Email Juan Carlos Hernandez: [jchernandez@crln.org](mailto:jchernandez@crln.org)

**Local Non-profit Organizations Providing Services to Immigrant Communities**

**Arise Chicago:** *partners with workers and faith communities to fight workplace injustice through education, organizing and advocating for public policy*

**Bethany House of Hospitality:** *offers housing and support services to young immigrant women as they journey to independence.*

**Centro Romero:** *provides classes, family support, youth programming, legal support.*

**CRLN's Sanctuary Working Group:** **Provides temporary support for immigrants and asylum seekers.**

**ICIRR:** **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights:** *dedicated to promoting the rights of immigrants and refugees to full and equal participation in the civic, cultural, social, and political life of our diverse society.*

**Family Support Network and Hotline**

**Attorney Referral List**

**Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants** (ICDI): *supports immigrants caught in an inhumane immigration system, including through jail visitation, court watch, and post-detention accompaniment.*

**National Immigrant Justice Center** (NIJC): *Provides legal aid to ensure human rights protections and access to justice for all immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers*

**OCAD: Organized Communities Against Deportations**: an undocumented-led resistance movement against deportations and the criminalization of immigrants and people of color in Chicago and surrounding areas.

**Viator House of Hospitality**: A safe home for young immigrant men seeking asylum in the United States.

**RefugeeOne**: <http://www.refugeeone.org/>

**World Relief Chicagoland Refugee Resettlement**: <https://chicagoland.worldrelief.org/>

**Tool Kits for Providing Support** – organized by type

**Legal Support**

[Local Attorney List](#)

[List of Organizations](#) offering low cost legal assistance

[Illinois Immigration Services Directory](#)

[Responding to ICE](#)

NIJC's [Know Your Rights](#)

**Worker Rights**

[Arise Chicago](#)

[Centro de Trabajadores Unidos](#)

[Latino Union](#)

[Midwest Workers Association](#)

**Health Care Concerns**

ICIRR's [Healthcare Resources for Immigrants & Refugees](#)

[County Care](#) for All Cook County Residents

[Heartland Human Care Services](#)

**Language Support**

[Truman College](#)

[More Resources](#) for Adults

**For Detained Immigrants & Their Families**

[On-line Detainee Locator System](#)

[ICDI's Jail Visitation Program & More](#)





# Become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation

The Immigrant Welcoming Congregations of CRLN is an interfaith coalition of religious leaders, congregations and other faith-based groups, called by our faith to respond actively and publicly to the journey of immigrants. We witness the violation of rights under our current immigration policies particularly: the separation of families due to unjust deportations and the exploitation of immigrant workers. We are deeply grieved by violence done to families through immigration raids and unwarranted detentions. We cannot in good conscience ignore this perpetuation of suffering and injustice.

**As people of faith, stand together as one united voice for justice and to be communities that welcome immigrants. Therefore, we will explore what it means to be an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation through prayer, reflection, education, relationship building and action.**

## **The journey toward becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation involves four steps:**

### **1. Exploring our Faith and Values**

Start with your faith or values. Have an opening session with a core group from your congregation/faith community to learn about what your faith and values say about welcoming immigrants.

#### **Goals:**

1. Learn how your faith tradition, ethics or value system approaches immigration.
2. Anticipate and prepare for the hard questions/concerns you might encounter and research the answers.

#### **Examples of what it looks like:**

- Seek out the texts from your faith including through scripture, the interpretation of your scriptures, other holy writings and/or ethical codes about immigration (e.g. from

Catholic Social Teaching).

- Have a discussion with your congregation about what these texts call you to do.
- Host a presentation by an organizer or religious leader on the topic of immigration and faith - that might include a directly affected individual from your community
- Host conversations with other Immigrant Welcoming Congregations
- Host an interactive workshop on immigration and faith



## 2. Education and Relationships for Transformation:

Host an education event for a larger group in your congregation. Education events should include testimonies from individuals and families that are directly affected in order to begin building relationships and in order for people to see the human face of the issue.

### Goals:

1. Learn the terminology and the reality *of the different immigrant communities*. Begin to understand differences between the many different pathways migrants use for arriving to and remaining in the United States.
2. Create a personal connection between your congregation/community and an immigrant youth or family.
3. Expand the reach of your immigration ministry and work.

### Examples of what it looks like:

- Movie night followed by testimony
- A shared meal and discussion with families affected by the current immigration system (e.g., a Dreamer/DACA recipient)
- A panel discussion with immigration leaders, including youth or families

## 3. Prayerful Action

Through prayer and religious practice, find ways to be present with immigrant neighbors.

### Goals:

1. Create a powerful experience for your core leaders, to help connect their spiritual lives with their work on immigration.
2. Connect immigration to prayer and action.
3. Find ways to pray for and with affected community members - including through multi-lingual prayer, song and ritual

### **Examples of what it looks like:**

- Include prayers for immigrants in your community's regular weekly prayer
- Partner with other organizations that support immigrants and begin to discern what material support, mentoring, or other resources your congregation might provide
- Host a letter writing or post card signing session after your weekly service. Write your state or federal representative in support of progressive immigration laws and policies
- Participate in one of the Interfaith Coalition for Detained Immigrants's (CDI) programs:
  - Court Watch to witness and document courtroom proceedings
  - Friday vigil (virtual or in person, when possible) at Broadview Detention Center, the last stop before immigrants are deported
  - Pastoral Visitation of detained youth or sharing electronic resources for youth (book readings, short films)
  - Letter writing to adult detained immigrants
  - See [ICDI](#) Chicago for more ideas
- Host an interfaith prayer gathering



## **4. Affirming Our Commitment:**

As a way to bless or affirm your group's commitment to doing this work as an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation, we recommend a blessing or ritual that engages the entire congregation/community.

### **Goals:**

1. Have the leadership of the congregation/community speak to the entire group to show that immigration is woven into the shared faith life of the congregation/community.
2. Create a moment when the congregation/community makes a sacred commitment to continue to welcome, include and embrace immigrants.
3. Bless the congregation's/community's ongoing commitment or ministry on this issue.

### **Examples of what it looks like:**

- This will differ according to each faith tradition or community. Many will include a prayer, anointing, and/or covenant.
- Invite one or two people from your group to join the CRLN/IWC *Organizing Committee* and to attend regular meetings to unite with other people of faith working on

immigration issues.

- When a congregation/community makes an official commitment to be an IWC, they are invited to make a public declaration during an interfaith gathering and to sign a Welcoming Covenant.

## **Living out our Commitment to be an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation**



You are invited to live out this commitment by:

### **1. Response - Direct Service**

Deportation leads to broken families, children without parents, and families without breadwinners.

As people of faith, we have a duty to respond.

#### **Goals:**

1. Learn more about the rights of immigrants and what faith-based groups can do to support them.
2. Find concrete ways to serve the needs of immigrant families.

#### **Examples of what it looks like:**

- Support any of the many organizations or projects that support immigrants. For example, the IWC's [Sanctuary Working Group](#) . which strives to support immigrants and asylum seekers in need of temporary support.
- Explore how you can connect immigrant families to the programs and services in your community or neighborhood that might benefit them.
- Host a workshop to educate others about the basic rights of immigrants (legal rights, worker rights, parental rights), about what services are currently available, and brainstorm services (legal, food, transportation, emotional) that you could provide.
- If there is a raid or crisis within the immigrant community, your congregation may be called upon to participate in an emergency prayer vigil or press conference.

### **2. Public Action**

As people of faith, we cannot remain silent to the injustice around us, and we must use our collective voice to actively take a public, moral stand for immigrant justice and human rights.

**Goals:** The congregation/group participates in a public action that demonstrates its solidarity with immigrant communities who take great risks to participate in the public sphere.

**Examples of what it looks like:**

- Prayer vigil lifting up immigrant stories
- Prayer vigil at a local immigration detention facility, or at an elected official's office
- Meeting with a congressperson or public official about upcoming legislation
- Participation in a public rally, demonstration, town hall meeting, or candidates' forum
- Running a voter education campaign or call-in campaign

### **3. Continued Education and Relationships for Transformation**

We know that learning is a continuous process and that living out our faith and values is never complete.

**Goals:**

1. Continue to explore how your faith tradition or community approaches immigration
2. Continue to learn about the current immigration issues and realities that immigrants face
3. Continue to build relationships of love and hospitality with our immigrant neighbors
4. Identify and give witness to the connections between racial inequities and immigration policies

**Examples of what it looks like:**

- Host a movie night, panel discussion, educational forum, book group, scripture study
- Share a meal with families affected by current immigration system
- Participate in a "service-learning day" offsite, perhaps doing a small work project that supports an immigrant organization or community group. These opportunities are numerous.
- Participate in a longer immersion educational experience either along the US/Mexico Border or here in the Chicago area. [Participate in an event of IL SOA Watch](#)

