

AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

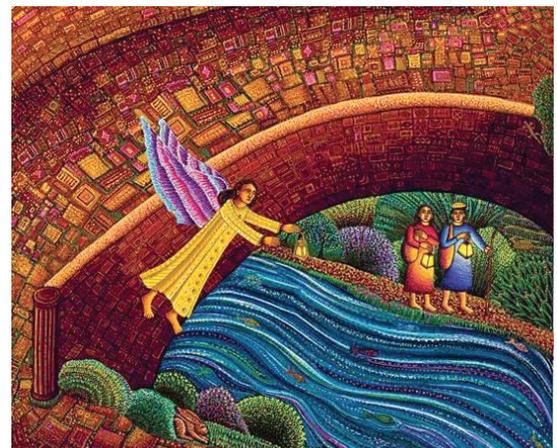
ELCA Guardian Angels Program

ELCA GUARDIAN ANGELS PROGRAM FOR UNACCOMPANIED AND MIGRANT CHILDREN

This program provides spiritual and physical accompaniment of unaccompanied migrant children and families through their immigration court process.

BACKGROUND ON THE GUARDIAN ANGELS PROGRAM:

One component of the AMMPARO initiative, Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy Representation and Opportunities, previously known as the Unaccompanied and Migrant Children Initiative, is the ELCA Guardian Angels program. The program is the visible expression of our church's ministry of presence in the lives of our women, men and children who are facing the unknown. As we participate in this ministry, we become transformed as well. The program also seeks to build community as church together and church for the sake of the world.



OBJECTIVES: The Guardian Angels program provides volunteers who accompany unaccompanied migrant children and single-parent families through their immigration court process, providing:

1. **SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT** – To provide spiritual support for them at court hearings
2. **PHYSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT** – To be a visible sign of the church in immigration court
3. **COURT WATCH** – To be present in court
4. **RESOURCE SHARING** – If requested, to provide information about local resources to assist migrants in their transition to life in the United States and to encourage families to obtain legal counsel

HISTORY: As a result of a Latino Pastoral Ministry conference in 2012 with three companion synods – Southwest California, Sierra Pacific and Greater Milwaukee – which accompany the Iglesia Luterana Salvadorena (ILS) in El Salvador, a joint declaration was adopted in which the three synods and the ILS committed to work on immigration issues together as a part of each of their companion synod relationships. The Southwest California Synod began the Welcoming Congregations program to provide a physical and spiritual accompaniment of migrants in their synod. To date, 21 congregations have agreed to participate in the program. When large numbers of unaccompanied and migrant children arrived in Southern California during the summer of 2014, the synod's Justice team created the Guardian Angels program, using as its base the Welcoming Congregations and others interested in physically and spiritually accompanying these children and their families through their court process. Starting in November 2014, twice a week, two volunteers, at least one of whom speaks Spanish, attend the immigration courts hearing these cases and accompany the migrants and their families. The Guardian Angels program at the churchwide organization began in September 2015 and does the same.

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