

AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

Welcoming Congregations

WELCOMING CONGREGATIONS:

In obedience to Matthew 25:35, Welcoming Congregations agree to welcome migrant children and families, listen to their stories with respect to receive the divine blessings that they bring, pray for and share the gospel, provide emotional and spiritual support, accompany migrants to access local and institutional services as needed and advocate for justice for and with migrant families and children.

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear ELCA congregation leadership:

I am writing to invite you to participate in the ELCA Welcoming Congregations Network of AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities). The network was initiated by the Southwest California Synod in response to a declaration signed by the ELCA bishops of the companion synods with the church in El Salvador and has now expanded through the AMMPARO strategy to other ELCA synods and congregations.

Welcoming Congregations make four commitments:

- welcome and minister to migrants and identify a contact person in the congregation who has the language skills necessary for basic communication;
- physically accompany migrants as they make new lives in local communities;
- pray for justice for migrants; and
- advocate for public policy that will positively impact the current immigration crisis – including working in partnership with the ELCA Washington Office and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service on immigration reform.

Welcoming congregations will be invited to:

- attend occasional meetings of the Welcoming Congregations Network or AMMPARO group in your synod for mutual support, fellowship and training; and
- participate in national AMMPARO network conference calls to be updated on the current situation of the migration of children and families and receive policy updates.

Becoming a Welcoming Congregation may not require a commitment by the whole congregation but rather a commitment by the pastor, leadership and a small team of members. Welcoming Congregations are not offering shelter, employment or other financial support but simply are willing to be a church home for migrant children and families in the same way that congregations of several generations ago welcomed Lutheran migrants from Europe and helped them navigate life in their new home.

Joining the AMMPARO Network provides congregations with a concrete and feasible strategy for connecting local and global mission while increasing their witness and capacity for ministry to the immigrant community. It is also a powerful way to respond to God's call in Matthew 25 – to welcome our Lord Jesus as he comes to us in the stranger.

To build awareness, the ELCA AMMPARO website and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service also offer a wide variety of biblical and practical educational resources on immigration, including information on immigration policy and reform efforts. Information on the legal right of congregations to minister to and with undocumented individuals and families is available upon request.

I hope that you will prayerfully consider participating in this effort. For further information, contact Mary Campbell at mary.campbell@elca.org, program director, AMMPARO.

AMMPARO Executive Committee

WELCOMING CONGREGATION COMMITMENT

We agree to these four commitments:

- spiritually and pastorally accompany migrants in our community congregation;
- physically accompany migrants as needed to medical, legal and pastoral resources;
- pray for the children and families; and
- prayerfully consider participation in ELCA advocacy.

Name and address of congregation: _____

Name of contact person: _____

Contact information: _____

Description of congregation and its ministries: _____

Pastor's signature: _____