



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35).

Dear church,

Jesus taught us that when we welcome the stranger as a person made in God's image, we also welcome God. Our lives, ministries and congregations have been blessed by many immigrants and refugees over the years — from many of our ancestors to those we welcome among us today. Our faithful witness as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is enriched by people who are recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Earlier this month, a U.S. district judge [ruled](#) to end the DACA program on July 19. Finding it unlawful, the judge's order suspends the acceptance of any new applications while keeping intact the protections for current DACA recipients. The long-awaited decision strikes a blow against the 2012 program, which has provided relief from deportation and the opportunity to pursue an education and start careers for thousands of young people whose remarkable contributions benefit our children, our families, our communities and our church. While these important protections may continue for current recipients, this is little solace to those who may not be able to receive DACA status in the future. We lament the anxiety and turmoil this ruling is causing in our communities. We pray for all who may suffer due to the end of this program. We grieve this potential loss to our church and to the communities in which we serve.

As a church we will continue to welcome all people, regardless of their documented status, seeking to ensure hospitality and safety for all. Bishops and synods are encouraged to find ways to support congregations working with newcomers and existing vulnerable individuals and communities. We also continue our advocacy through the ELCA's [AMMPARO](#) strategy (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) and by urging our elected officials to [enact legislation](#) such as H.R. 6: the American Dream and Promise Act (or "Dream Act"), which provides a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients and other undocumented immigrants with deep ties to this country. We will also pray for the wisdom and courage to welcome the stranger, and in so doing to receive our Lord.

Lord Jesus, as you were taken as a child to Egypt by your parents seeking refuge, you know what it means to be the stranger. By your love, you draw people to yourself and welcome them into the household of faith. May we show your joy by welcoming the stranger as we bear your creative and redeeming love to all the world. Amen.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America