

BRIDGING YOUTH TO YOUTH

AMMPARO Youth Group Curriculum



MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States



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

AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States

FACILITATOR INTRODUCTION

Facilitator notes

Thank you for your interest in the well-being of unaccompanied minors and their families! This three-session module seeks to introduce ELCA youth to:

- life for young refugees who live in the United States,
- the strengths and assets that young people bring to their challenges,
- programs that the ELCA offers to accompany these youth in North America,
- ways your youth group can accompany these young refugees, and
- young refugees from Central America living in the U.S., in a facilitated phone or Skype conversation.

Contact the AMMPARO team right away to set up your phone call

Session 3 includes a telephone call with youth from Central America who are living in the U.S. Arranging the call takes some doing. When you begin this program, please contact AMMPARO Program Director Mary Campbell at mary.campbell@elca.org or 773-380-2618 to begin the process of arranging the call. The youth will probably be bilingual, but it's possible that a translator will be needed.

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SESSION 1: USA—“YOU START AGAIN”

Learning objective

By the end of this session, participants will have:

- learned about the migrant journey of Central American teens fleeing violence in their home countries,
- considered how “unspoken” rules of culture are hard for newcomers to understand,
- experienced the lives of three refugee teens adjusting to the U.S.,
- considered the assets and strengths of these young people, and
- reflected on how they might reach out to refugee peers in their own school or community.

PREPARING FOR THIS THREE-SESSION WORKSHOP

Equipment and supplies

- Laptop, projector, Internet connection and wall to project web-based videos
- Candles, a cloth, a cross (perhaps from El Salvador) to set up a central table or altar for prayer

Links you will need

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GpzW5zRjY
- www.schoolsoutwashington.org/pages/starting-again-stories-of-refugee-youth

Before the session

- Review videos.
- Set up prayer area.
- Investigate migrant-led community organizations or faith-based organizations working together to advocate for or help connect migrants to service organizations. Introduce them in the wrap-up assignment.

Roadmap for this curriculum

Comments to the leader *will be written in italic*. Everything else is something that you will be saying in these or your own words during the portions where you talk.

SESSION 1: “USA—YOU START AGAIN”

Roadmap for session 1

- Welcome, opening prayer, and icebreaker (12 minutes)
- The journey from Central America (12 minutes)
- “USA” means “you start again” (30 minutes)
- Wrap-up and closing prayer (6 minutes)

Part 1. Welcome, opening prayer, and icebreaker (12 minutes)

Gather in a circle near or around the table with the cross and candles. Ask someone to light the candles. Welcome everyone. Take a few minutes to check in on everyone.

Imagine travelers in a desert. There are no restaurants. No hotels. No Arby’s or McDonald’s. Travelers bring their own food and water, and when they run out, they have to find more, usually with

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the help of other people. This is why the Bible made hospitality to the stranger so important. Traveling in a desert was dangerous. Without the support of other people, you could die.

Desert dwellers were obligated to provide food, water, and shelter for travelers who stopped at their tents. In exchange, the “stranger” was not to take advantage or rob the host. Sometimes the stranger was God in disguise. Let’s read Genesis 18:1-8. *[Ask a participant to read the passage aloud.]*

What do you hear? What is happening here?

Through these strangers, God tells Abraham that Sarah will have a child. When they leave, Abraham “went with them to set them on their way” (Genesis 18:16).

Many people who come to the U.S. cross the desert to get here—as well as mountains, valleys, jungles, cities, and all kinds of rigorous terrain that lies between the southern and northern borders of Mexico. And for new arrivals, living in the U.S. can still be like that unfriendly desert. They may have seen American television shows that portray some of our ways, but actually enrolling in and attending a school is much harder!

The next three sessions will look at young people who have come to the U.S. alone to join family members. How do they find water, shelter, and food? In school, how do they find friends? In courts, how do they find the allies they need to go through the complex process of petitioning to stay in the United States? How can we be like Abraham, welcoming strangers and walking with them on their way?

Today we will listen to young refugees from Central America share what led them to leave their countries and seek asylum in the U.S. We will also hear from teenage refugees from Burma, Russia, and Somalia who are attending high school in Washington state. In recent years, many young people have arrived alone from Honduras, Guatemala, or El Salvador. These young people came with their families as refugees, while the teens

from Central America are unaccompanied minors who came alone. Whether they came alone or with others, they face significant challenges adapting to and being accepted in the U.S.

In our second session we will look at how the ELCA walks with teens from Central America “in the desert” as they integrate into school and community, reunite with parents, and navigate a complex immigration system.

In our third session we will talk to young people from Central America who are living here in the U.S. and can share their story.

First, let’s pray.

God, you gave us to one another so that we might welcome and shelter strangers. Like Abraham and Sarah, help us extend hospitality to people seeking refuge in unfamiliar lands. Especially may we welcome and support young refugees who are creating new beginnings in our communities and schools. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Icebreaker

Think about your first day at your *[middle or high]* school. You were nervous. You had some friends, but many things were new. Eventually you came to understand the expectations around you—what you had to do to make friends or be “popular,” what you needed to do to succeed academically. Now, think for a moment about a rule or guideline you discovered that was unspoken. It might have been about how to dress in order to be accepted, or what kind of music to listen to, or which club to join. For me, for example ...

Share your story of a time when you realized the existence of an unspoken rule and what you did about it.

What is one rule in your middle school / high school that students need to know? How does a new student learn that rule?

Invite participants to share. Encourage discussion.

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Part 2. The journey from Central America (12 minutes)

The desert is particularly dangerous for young people on the migrant journey from Honduras, El Salvador, or Guatemala. Fleeing gangs and other dangers in their countries, some young people come to the U.S. with their families. Many come by themselves, hoping to win asylum and be reunited with family members in the U.S. These strong, determined youth face violence and danger on their way to the U.S. When they arrive, they may be sent to a detention center, sent to join their families, or sent home. Along the way, people of faith are helping them, through the ELCA and companion churches in Central America. These survivors are on a new path, but the path is harder for those who are uncertain about their ability to stay.

Let's watch a video that summarizes the situation in Central America and introduces us to young people who are seeking asylum.

Show the eight-minute [video](#).

What did you hear? Whose story do you remember best? How are your school and family lives similar to or different from the lives of these teens?

Part 3. "USA" means "you start again" (30 minutes)

To get to the U.S., many refugee youth have come through war, violence, extreme poverty, religious and political persecution, loss of family members, and other traumas. Many refugees are used to thinking of the U.S. as the land of milk and honey, a place where everything will be better. However, all the new aspects of culture in the U.S. can create culture shock for refugee students. Their "landing" is harder than they thought it would be.

The students in the video we just watched are attending high school in the U.S. New arrivals to school have a lot of unspoken rules to decode. How to dress, what to eat, what to listen to, whom to hang out with, what classes to take, how to talk to

counselors about requirements, driving—the list goes on and on.

Let's meet three young people who came to the U.S. as high school students. They are not from Central America, but they share many challenges with these youth, talking about their journey to the U.S. and their efforts to enter American culture.

Show three out of four segments in [Starting Again: Stories of Refugee Youth](#). Use these notes of highlights to lead the conversation.

Joseph Lian, from Burma [Segment runs 1:06-6:49.]

"A few English" ... had never used a computer ... really didn't like the food at school ... works at a Vietnamese restaurant Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays ... watching his sister means he can't go out much ... his family doesn't have much family time now ... another family that came earlier helps them a lot ... the community helps ... he has friends in his culture and language, but does he have Anglo friends?

How would Joseph learn the unspoken rule that you mentioned?

Do you make friends through activities such as sports, clubs, etc? How can Joseph make friends if his family and work responsibilities keep him from participating?

How is your weekly life similar to or different from Joseph's?

Joseph's family endured lots of danger and suffering on their way to the U.S. What strengths does Joseph demonstrate? *[Bravery in flight, patience in uncertainty, endurance in hunger, persistence in learning English, industry in school and in supporting his family, responsibility in caring for his little sister, bilingual skills.]*

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Irina, from Russia

[Segment runs 6:50-12:00.]

Loved the U.S. from afar but sometimes hated it up close when she arrived ... didn't know anything about high school, didn't know which classes to take, failed them ... sleeps on the sofa in her family's apartment ... little brother developed diabetes ... translates for parents.

One teen in this video says that “USA” stands for “you start again.” How is Irina starting again?

How does Irina's church community support her?

Irina has many responsibilities for her family. What does she have to do that most U.S. teens wouldn't?

What strengths does Irina have and use in her daily life? [*Persistence even though she was discouraged ... strength from other people ... great support for her parents in translating, errands ... commitment to helping her family.*]

Amina, from Somalia

[Segment runs 12:00-17:06.]

Placed in the wrong grade, had never gone to school ... imitated TV to learn English ... afraid to ask for help ... defended her disabled sister from attack by a man in their refugee camp ... had a hard time doing her senior project due to other responsibilities ... great help from a lady in the community.

How do people sit in school? What are bells for? How do you choose your classes? You've known these things since you started elementary school. Amina had never attended school before. Can you imagine coming to your school never having been to one before? What would be strange?

Amina wears a hijab. How would that impact her if she went to your school? Are there students who wear hijabs in your high school?

What strengths can you see Amina developing in her daily life? [*Excellent English skills, determination*

to learn about how to go to school and learn, commitment to reading and learning English, commitment to her community, commitment to helping others adjust to life in the U.S., empathy for recently arrived teens, strength to survive the refugee camp, endurance to stand in water, courage to defend her sister, commitment to graduating and getting a college scholarship.]

Part 4. Wrap-up and closing prayer (6 minutes)

I'm impressed by the strength and maturity of these young people. They have endured so much more than I ever have.

Highlight what impresses you about their strength and commitment—like coming from settings of violence or war, their commitment to family, their openness to new experiences, their willingness to trust in spite of what they have been through, etc.

What refugees are coming to our community? Do you know students who are refugees? What are their stories? How are they received at school or in the community? Is there something you can do to make them feel more welcome? Can you help with those unspoken rules?

Listen/discuss. Encourage anyone who wants to get to know a refugee or “foreign” student to act this week and report back at the next meeting.

In our community, migrants and people of faith follow in Abraham's footsteps to welcome and walk with strangers on their way through [*name(s) of local migrant or community organizations working with migrants*]. Could two of you learn a little bit more about this group this week and report back to us next time about what they do, whom they serve, and whether we might be able to accompany migrants with them? [*Assign to two participants.*]

Thank you!

Let's close with prayer.

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Dear Lord, we pray for all those who have to flee their countries, especially the young teens from Honduras and other Central American countries. Please keep them safe here in the United States with their families as they seek to resolve their

immigration status and learn all the ways of life here. As with Abraham, Sarah, and other desert dwellers, help us reach out to them with friendship and concern. In your name we pray. Amen.

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SESSION 2: NAVIGATING THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

Learning objective

By the end of this session, participants will have:

- heard the story of Maryori, a Honduran teen who came to the U.S. alone and is applying for asylum status;
- learned about the intricate process of seeking legal status through the Immigration Game; and
- encountered ways to walk with unaccompanied migrant teens through the ELCA.

PREPARING FOR THIS SESSION

Equipment and supplies

- Laptop, projector, Internet connection, and wall to project web-based videos.
- Candles, a cloth, a cross (perhaps from El Salvador) to set up a central table or altar for prayer.
- Instructions and scripts for the **Immigration Game on page 14**.
- The one-page graphic handout included in this packet. **Download the handout online**.
- List of ideas for participating in Welcoming Congregations, found in the Welcoming Congregation suggestions on page 18.

Links you will need

- www.chicagotribune.com/news/immigration/ct-met-unaccompanied-minor-contreras-20180226-story.html
- www.chicagotribune.com/news/immigration/ct-met-five-things-asylum-maryori-20180301-story.html

Before the session

- Review the videos.
- Prepare slips and question sheet for the Immigration Game.
- From the link under “Equipment and supplies,” print the one-page graphic “What Part of Legal Immigration Don’t You Understand?”
- Cut into slips of paper the ways that welcoming congregations can accompany migrant youth, found in the **Welcoming Congregation suggestions on page 18**.
- Confirm with AMMPARO Program Director Mary Campbell whether the session 3 call will be in English or Spanish.

Roadmap for this curriculum

Comments to the leader *will be written in italic*. Everything else is something that you will be saying in these or your own words during the portions where you talk.

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SESSION 2: NAVIGATING THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

Roadmap for session 2

- Warm-up and icebreaker (5 minutes)
- Experiencing the immigration system (15 minutes)
- “Abraham went with them to set them on their way” (15 minutes)
- Planning the call (12 minutes)
- Wrap-up and sending (5 minutes)

Part 1. Warm-up and icebreaker (5 minutes)

Gather in a circle, near or around the table with the cross and candles. Ask someone to light the candles. Welcome everyone. Take a few minutes to check in on everyone. Did anyone get to know a refugee at school, or have further insights into the “unspoken rules” of school and U.S. culture? If participants took time to investigate a local migrant-focused community organization, give them a few minutes to talk about it.

Today we will look at the very complicated system that determines whether a new arrival to the U.S. can get legal status to stay. We'll also be looking at ways in which congregations such as ours walk with people through the process and assist them in other ways.

First, let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we give thanks for the time you have given us to be together today. As we learn about the members of God's family who come here to escape oppression, poverty, persecution, violence, and war, we can be filled with fear, doubt, and suspicion, just as your disciples were at the feeding of the five thousand. By your grace, help us overcome our fears and lower our barriers, embrace your children as brothers and sisters, and welcome migrants and refugees with joy and generosity while learning to walk alongside them. Together, may we learn the ways of peace and justice and live into a human family that reflects your divine unity. We ask these things in your mercy. Amen.

Part 2. Experiencing the immigration system (15 minutes)

The teens we met last week from Burma, Russia, and Somalia can focus on rebuilding their lives because their families have already received refugee status and have legal status in the United States. They may be in an asylum process or have received green cards, so they don't have to worry about being deported or returned to their country of origin.

That may not be true for teens from Central America. Let's listen to the story of Maryori Urbina-Contreras.

Show this [video](#).

How is Maryori's story different from those of Joseph, Irina, and Amina? [Uncertainty about immigration, being involved in a court case at a young age, having to get to know her mother again after many years of separation, and meeting new half-siblings! This doesn't mention a detention center, but many teens who have come across the southern border have spent time in one.]

Maryori is seeking asylum. Asylum is available to people coming to the U.S. seeking protection because they have suffered persecution or fear that they will suffer persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinions. To apply for asylum, you must reach U.S. territory and turn yourself in to a border agent. Though we don't know the details, Maryori may have been arrested at the border. She may have spent time in a facility like those run by Lutheran Social Services, which offer housing to minors while staff vet the parents in the U.S. to confirm their suitability. These are locked facilities where minors must stay until the investigation process is done and they can be reunited with their parents.

Upon release, young people may be released to their parents and assigned to a particular immigration court. Many more young people such as Maryori were refused admission or returned to their countries of origin.

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This is a long and tough process. You need to demonstrate how you suffered persecution or were in danger. You need a lawyer to help you find evidence, build a paper trail, and shape a compelling case for asylum status. The average asylum application can take three to five years to be approved; currently there are 320,000 affirmative asylum applications pending with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Many of these are for teens such as Maryori. To stay in the U.S., they need to be granted a visa or green card. Without papers, they face uncertain futures and can be deported at any time.

With the right visa, you may be able to secure legal permanent residence in the U.S., a process that also takes many years. Once you are a legal permanent resident, you can apply to be a citizen after five years of holding a “green card.”

The process of getting to stay legally in the U.S. is long and complicated, so we are going to learn a little about it through a game. I’m going to hand out roles for some of you to play. Take your role and read it. If I don’t give you a role, then you will play yourself as you go through the game. Then we will line up at the back of the room. You will move forward or stay put depending on what you hear me say. Staying at the back of the room gets you closer to having legal status. Moving forward takes you further away. It all depends on your situation. Take a minute to read and line up, and then I will give you some examples.

They read and line up.

Now listen to what I say and follow my instructions. My first instruction is: If you or the person you are playing was born in the United States, stay where you are. If you or the person you are playing was NOT born in the U.S., take a step forward.

If you were born in the United States but your parents weren’t, and they have no legal status, take a step forward. What do you think you should do, based on the role you are playing? This is complicated. It’s OK to ask me questions.

As you call out lines one by one, people stay where they are or move forward. When all are in their final positions, call on three or four people to explain where they are. Ask the person who has moved forward the most to read his/her story and explain why he/she had to move forward. Repeat the process with someone in the middle and again with one or two who ended up near—but not in—the back row. What factors influenced their final position?

Look around the room. People in the back, you are probably safe and on your way to securing legal status in the United States. Everyone closer to the front is vulnerable. You could be ordered to leave the country at any moment or be swept up in a raid. In fact, the three people closest to the front of the room may already have been deported.

Securing legal status can be very complicated and difficult. You can’t do it on your own. You need the help of a lawyer who understands immigration law and can argue your case before a judge.

Also, laws change. Our great-great-grandparents were able to establish citizenship easily because they arrived before 1929. Until 1929, you could emigrate to the U.S. and become a citizen unless you were ill or had broken the law. In 1929, citizenship law changed. Quotas were established and the potential immigrant had to show why he or she should be admitted.

Hand out “What Part of Legal Immigration Don’t You Understand?”

Take this sheet home and look at it with your family. Has anyone in your family had to seek legal status through these processes?

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Part 3. “Abraham went with them to set them on their way” (15 minutes)

When the visitors who’ve announced that Abraham and Sarah will have a son go on their way, Abraham accompanies them for a bit. The Bible says that Abraham “went with them to set them on their way.”

Think back over the stories we heard from these teens. Who has been going with them on their way as they settle in the U.S.? *[Other refugees who help, such as the Somali lady who helped Amina’s mom. Churches such as Irina’s. Teachers and counselors and the tutors who help new arrivals with language and homework. Employers who give them jobs. Friends.]*

Today we’ll look into ways that we can walk with refugees on their way. The ELCA accompanies migrants through many programs, and there are many good ways we can get involved.

There are ways we can go with teen refugees as they find their way in the U.S. Historically, Lutherans have been leaders in caring for refugees and the strangers among us. We support compassionate survival assistance for refugees and vigorous international protection for them. In our own country, we support a generous policy of welcome for refugees and immigrants already on U.S. soil.

The AMMPARO network of welcoming and sanctuary congregations

The good news is that the ELCA is welcoming young migrants and helping them connect to the things they need to flourish in the U.S. Working with companion churches in the region, the ELCA is also helping young migrants who have been deported back to their home communities start a better, more secure life there, so that they no longer feel that fleeing their home country is the only answer. We can join this effort.

We can embrace migrants who are already here by joining more than a hundred other ELCA congregations in the AMMPARO network. This is a project of AMMPARO, Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities. In Spanish, “amparo” means

the protection of a living creature from suffering or damage.

There are many ways these congregations are accompanying migrants. Recently, congregations in Chicago worked together to help a migrant family with a 19-year-old daughter who was separated from them at the border and kept in detention for months, even though she had a lawyer. Through the combined efforts of these congregations, she was finally released and reunited with her family.

Let’s listen to some of the ways we can walk along with teen migrants.

Pass around a basket of slips of what congregations in the network are doing. Find them in the Welcoming Congregations suggestions on page 18. Read them aloud and discuss.

Who works with refugees and migrants in our area? *[If a local organization was mentioned during the warmup and gathering time, bring it up again here.]* How can we build bridges with this organization?

ELCA youth are getting more involved in the Welcoming Congregations program. Did you hear something that we might be able to do as a church or in conjunction with *[name of local organization]* to accompany young migrants?

The Guardian Angel program

Another option for accompanying migrant youth in the U.S. is the ELCA Guardian Angel program. Central Americans who turn themselves in at the Mexico-U.S. border are not greeted by agents with outstretched arms saying, “Welcome to the U.S.!” After they are taken into custody, they may be sent to a detention center. Families may be split up, with dad and son over 18 going to one detention center and mom and underage children going to another, especially if they were separated during the migrant journey and arrived at the border at different times. It will be difficult for them to stay in touch. Detention centers can be cold. Some people call them “the dog cage” or “the freezer.” Detainees can be in custody for a long time.

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If a teen or family seeking asylum is released into the U.S., they will have a notice to appear in immigration court. That court can be hundreds of miles away from where they are staying. And when they go to court, they will need to begin the long process of seeking asylum. They need a lawyer to help them build a case for asylum, which means remembering everything dangerous that happened to them in their country of origin and documenting it. Some documents will need to come from their home country. They will need interpreters to help them communicate. Their cases might take two to four years to complete. While they are waiting, they might be living in a community that doesn't want them there. Adjusting will be hard, as we have learned.

Let's hear from some Lutherans who are helping people through this complicated process. There may be a role for us to play here, too.

Show this 3:26 [video](#) on the Guardian Angel program.

In our next session, we'll consider some very specific actions we can take to accompany young migrants. But for now, after watching this video, what other ways do you think we might be of use?

Discussion.

How can we be like Abraham, welcoming strangers and walking with them on their way?

Part 4. Planning the call (12 minutes)

Through videos and stories, we have begun to understand what life is like for young refugees in the U.S., especially those from Central America who have made the migrant journey. In our next session, we will have a conversation with an unaccompanied minor who lives in the U.S. now. We'll learn about that person's life and share something of our own with them.

The call will be *[if in English, about 45 minutes long; if in Spanish, about 20 minutes plus 20 minutes of translating; check with AMMPARO Program*

Director Mary Campbell to confirm]. To use our time efficiently, we need to choose two people to represent all of us during the call. These people will do the talking, ask the questions we have, and respond to questions the youth may have. Let's take a minute to decide who these two people will be. [Look for youth who won't be shy or tongue-tied and who can confidently connect by phone.]

To plan our questions, let's review the videos we have watched of Joseph, Irina, Amina, and Maryori. What would we like to know about the teen we will talk to? We can't ask questions that make him/her uncomfortable or require him/her to disclose confidential information. We could ask about the positive things in the teen's life or what challenges he/she faces. Any ideas? What could we ask to learn about them?

Discussion. Choose the three or four questions that interest the group most. Make sure there is space to share positive things and that the teen taking the call isn't asked to disclose anything confidential.

What should we share about our own lives? This might be a place where we can talk about the "unwritten rules" we discussed last time. We could share a story about someone who didn't know that rule and ask the teen to share about the rules he/she has encountered. What would you say about our community? About the positives and challenges facing youth who live here?

Give an example of a challenge and an asset or good thing in your community. Ask for input, discuss, and have youth shape their contribution. Together, make a quick outline of final questions and topics to share. You may want to meet with the two conversation leaders to confirm that they understand how to prepare for the call.

Part 5. Wrap-up and sending (5 minutes)

Before we leave today, let's find out whether Maryori was able to stay in the United States.

Play this [46-second clip](#).

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What will Maryori be able to do now that her immigration status is clear? *[Study, feel free, focus on her future, get a job, etc.—all good things.]* Let's give thanks for Maryori's good fortune and pray for the other young people we've met today.

Dear God, we are grateful that you accompany us each and every day on our journey through life. Thank you for your presence among us and among the youth we met this evening in stories. We're grateful that Maryori gets to stay with her family, and we pray that you find people to accompany those who are navigating the complex immigration system. We pray particularly for the young people

we will meet by telephone soon. We don't know them yet, but you do. Be with them as they go about their lives. Surround them with your love and strengthen them for their challenges. May we take all the youth we have met tonight with us and keep them in our prayers this week. In your name we pray. Amen.

Before the next session

Review the call outline in session 3 so you can prepare the two call leaders and all participants as they pull together questions and plan the call.

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THE IMMIGRATION GAME

Script

If you were born in the United States, take a step back.

If you were born in the United States but your parents weren't, and they have no legal status, take a step forward.

If you have a parent who is a legal resident of the U.S., take a step back.

If you can read and understand English, take a step back.

If you can read and understand only Spanish, take a step forward.

If you speak an indigenous language and can't read or understand English or Spanish, take two steps forward.

If you understand the court papers you receive, take a step back.

If you don't understand the court papers you receive, take a step forward.

If you are petitioning for asylum from a detention center, take a step forward.

If you are in one detention center but your spouse or children 18 and over are in a different detention center, take a step forward.

If you have a secure, permanent address where you can receive mailings from the court, take a step back.

If you don't have a secure, permanent address where you can receive mailings from the court, take a step forward.

If you live in the same city as the court where you must appear, take a step back.

If you don't live in the same city as the court where you must appear, take a step forward.

If you have to buy a plane or bus ticket to get to court, take a step forward.

If you live more than 400 miles from the court where you must appear, take another step forward.

If you have transportation to the court, take a step back.

If you don't have transportation to the court, take a step forward.

If you have a lawyer who can investigate and gather facts about your case, take a step back.

If you don't have a lawyer who can investigate and gather facts about your case, and you must represent yourself, take a step forward.

If you have an interpreter who can help you understand court proceedings, take a step back.

If you don't have an interpreter who can help you understand court proceedings, take a step forward.

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If you are applying for asylum and can document threats on your life to meet the “credible fear” standard, take a step back.

If you are applying for asylum but cannot document or need help documenting threats on your life to meet the “credible fear” standard, take a step forward.

If you are a youth in need of protective services who may be eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile status, take a step back.

If you were the victim of a crime perpetrated by a U.S. citizen and qualify for a U.S. visa, which means you agree to help law enforcement investigate or prosecute the crime against you, take a step back.

If you were trafficked to the U.S. and qualify for a “T visa,” which means you agree to help law enforcement investigate or prosecute the crime against you, take a step back.

If immigration removal proceedings are filed against you, take two steps forward.

If you received a green card, take a step back.

Roles for players (unless they opt to play themselves)

You are a 15-year-old girl whose mother is a legal U.S. resident. Mom had no legal way of getting you here, so you took the migrant journey across Mexico to the U.S. border, where you were held in a detention center while U.S. Customs and Border Patrol contacted your mother. You are fluent in Spanish and have studied English in school. You have been reunited with your mother, who is petitioning for you to get legal status in the United States.

I am Diego. When I was 11, I was playing soccer around the corner from my home. My four-year-old sister Rosa was home with my mom. A gang broke in and shot my mother 15 times while Rosa watched. Rosa and I and our other sister, Lisbeth, moved in with our aunts. When we received death threats from the gang that controlled the neighborhood where our aunts lived, we decided to go to the United States. We got to the border but were apprehended and separated. Rosa, Lisbeth, and I were sent to a detention center in Chicago. We don't know whether we will get to stay and ask for asylum or not. We don't have a lawyer, and we don't speak English.

I'm Esmerelda, and I am 15. My parents got tourist visas for our family after mom, who is a nurse with a good income, was threatened several times by gangs and had to pay extortion money. We moved to four cities in four years, but the gangs always found us. Once they broke into our house and held a gun to my mom's head until she paid them. It was awful. She went to a high police authority in my country, and they assigned her an agent, but the agent told the gangs where we were. When they started threatening to kidnap my sister and me, my parents made plans to leave. We came to the U.S. to apply for asylum and are living together in San Diego near relatives. A lawyer is helping us with the application for our family.

MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States

I'm Ana. My dad was murdered by a gang when I was very young. I watched my mother killed by men who broke into our house. My sister Lidia and I didn't know how to take care of our three little siblings. We tried moving to another part of Guatemala, but we couldn't make enough to take care of our little brother and sisters. We never felt safe, no matter where we went. Together the four of us left for the U.S. so we could feel safe, get an education, and have a better life. The four of us contacted an aunt when we came to the U.S. After spending a few days in a detention center, we were able to move in with our aunt. She found a bilingual pro bono attorney to help us file asylum papers.

Sonia is 14. She came to the U.S. with her sister, Julia, to join their mother. Sonia has a mental disability and her sister witnessed her being molested by a family member. The girls are currently in transitional foster care, working on reunification with their mother. They are also in the process of getting legal assessment regarding a potential Special Immigrant Juvenile visa or asylum. The mother's legal status is unknown.

Carlos, Javier, and Luis, along with their little sister, Mariana, journeyed to the U.S. from Honduras after being neglected and abused by their caregivers and receiving death threats from gangs. After the children's father died in a car accident in 2005, their mother left for the U.S. to provide for the children. The caregivers they were left with barely fed them and abused them both physically and emotionally, often taping their mouths shut during calls with their mother. Eventually, the children's mother decided to bring them to the U.S. The four children traveled to the U.S. and, after being apprehended at the border, were successfully reunited with their mother after seven years of separation. The children are in school, have started psychotherapy to recover from past trauma, have pro bono legal representation, and have been identified as having legal relief, probably through the Special Immigrant Juvenile status program. They are trying to learn English, are playing soccer on a community team, and are slowly recovering from their experiences in Honduras.

I am Fernando. When I was 14, I was in a car with friends when we were shot at numerous times by gang members. I wasn't hurt, but I had to lie in the blood of my friends, pretending to be dead, in order to escape. My family helped me come to the U.S. I received a Special Immigrant Juvenile visa due to the trauma and violence I experienced in Honduras. I eventually went into the Central American Minor Program of the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement and recently received my green card to live in the U.S. This program was closed by the Trump administration, but the administration agreed to reopen it in April 2019. Because of this, 2,700 kids have a chance to be reunited with their families.

MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States

My husband was killed by a gang in El Salvador who mistook him for someone else. My three children and I went to the United States. We asked for protection at the border and were detained for a short time before being released to a family friend in Los Angeles. The friend did not let us stay for very long because I wasn't able to find a job; it was very hard for me to find work without a work permit. My children and I were homeless and slept in a friend's car and even in a public park before we were able to find a place to live. I am doing what I can to make money, but I barely make enough to feed my children. I can't afford a lawyer, and I can't get a work permit until after I submit my asylum application. The court says I can't fill out the form in Spanish, and I can't afford to pay anyone to help me. Even though it has been hard since we arrived, I am grateful that my children are safe, but I fear what will happen if we are deported. I am scared that we won't win our case because I will have to represent myself and my children in court and don't understand the process very well.

You are a mother of three from Honduras. You and your family crossed the Mexico-U.S. border in Arizona and found housing in a shelter. A legal worker identified you as eligible for asylum, but you are representing yourself and your children without a lawyer and you don't speak English.

You are 20 and came to the U.S. from Honduras two years ago. While you have attended all your court hearings, you did not have a lawyer, and you have not been able to secure any kind of legal status. Immigration removal proceedings have been filed against you.

MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States

SESSION 2, PART 3: HOW WELCOMING CONGREGATIONS ACCOMPANY MIGRANT YOUTH

Cut these into slips for participants to pull from a basket, read aloud, and discuss as the group considers various next steps.

Befriend a new arrival at school. Can you and some friends include him or her in an after-school activity?

Join another youth group to volunteer at a shelter on the border.

Pray for justice for migrants.

Advocate for public policy that will positively impact the current immigration crisis, such as ending family separation or seeking alternatives to the detention of children in prisonlike facilities.

Educate your community about immigration issues and migrant rights.

Offer a church home for migrant children and families.

Attend immigration hearings with a young migrant.

Band together with other congregations to accompany a young migrant through asylum proceedings.

Write a reference letter for a young migrant.

Provide emotional and spiritual support for a young migrant.

Offer English as a Second Language classes for migrants and refugees.

Offer classes on citizenship for green-card holders who want to become citizens.

Invite migrants for meals and fellowship.

Offer hospitality to people who come to town for a court hearing and accompany them to court.

MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States

Offer to sponsor a migrant teen, helping him/her to secure housing, companionship, and legal assistance. Your congregation might be a “foster family” for a teen on his/her own.

Help secure free legal counsel for migrants and asylum-seekers.

Visit young migrants in detention facilities.

Partner with a local organization helping migrants and refugees with specific tasks.

Fund international phone cards or cell phone plans for migrant youth.

One church offered a “Three Kings” party at a local detention facility. They brought in everything needed to celebrate the arrival of the magi, a traditional holiday in Central America.

One church opens its doors twice a month to receive migrants, feeding them, providing them with overnight shelter, and calling their families so they can buy a bus or plane ticket to get to their court date on time.

One church gave its contact information to its companion synod in El Salvador, so that if young people came to Milwaukee, they could come to their church.

MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States

SESSION 3: GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Learning objective

By the end of this session, participants will have:

- gotten to know teen refugees from Central America living in the U.S.,
- shared their own stories,
- reflected on the conversation and what they felt and learned, and
- listed next steps the group can take in order to accompany Central American youth in the North American context.

PREPARING FOR THIS SESSION

Equipment and supplies

- Laptop, projector, Internet connection for Skype conversation, and a wall to project call if video is possible
- A marker and a pad of colorful 4x6" or 6x8" Post-its for each person to take notes on the conversation
- Candles, a cloth, a cross (perhaps from El Salvador) to set up a central table or altar for prayer

Before the session

- Follow up with AMMPARO Program Director Mary Campbell to confirm arrangements for the call.
- Check that your Internet/phone connection is working.
- Confirm that youth leading the call are prepared with questions and stories to share from your own context.
- Write "bienvenidos" and "Que Dios los bendiga" on a large Post-it for the wall or on a PowerPoint slide.

SESSION 3: GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Roadmap for session 3

- Welcome, opening prayer, and warm-up (4-5 minutes)
- The call (50 minutes, including connecting)
- Debriefing and what's next (15 minutes)
- Wrap-up and sending (4 minutes)

Part 1. Welcome, opening prayer, and warm-up (4-5 minutes)

Gather in a circle, near or around the table with the cross and candles. Ask someone to light the candles. Welcome everyone. Take a few minutes to check in on everyone.

"¡Bienvenidos!" Who can tell me what that means?

Yes—it means "welcome." Today we will be greeting and welcoming young people who have crossed the desert to the U.S. and are living *[details: With family? Where?]*. At school, they are learning English, but let's welcome them by saying "bienvenidos." *[Practice saying the word.]*

Before we place our call, let's pray.

MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States

Oh Lord, all of us are travelers in the desert who need the friendship and support of those around us. On our journeys, when we hit the most difficult spots, you faithfully link us to people who love us and help us thrive. As we get to know *[names]*, let us listen to their stories and discern ways in which we can offer hospitality to the travelers among us. Make us like Abraham, who graciously welcomed strangers and went with them to set them on their way. In your name we pray. Amen.

In a few minutes, we'll place our call and meet *[names]*. Our call leaders have created a plan around our questions. Here are a few other things to know:

- The call is 45 minutes *[but if in Spanish, translating back and forth means it will really be just 20 minutes]*. That's not much time to cover lots of ground! When it's your turn to talk, be very concise.
- *[Designate a youth]* will keep time for us and give us a heads-up when 30 minutes have passed and again when we have five minutes to go.
- We won't be asking questions that are inappropriate or asking for too much personal detail.
- If our new friends ask the conversation leaders a question they can't answer, it's OK to turn to someone else in the group to answer it.
- Give our friends your complete attention throughout the call, even when you don't understand what is being said.
- Use your Post-it Note pads to jot down anything you want to remember—things that stand out, that particularly affect you.
- When we end, let's all say "Que Dios los bendiga"—may God bless you. Let's practice a few times.

Part 2. The call

(50 minutes, including connecting)

- Start with greetings and introducing all the participants. Give a group hello and welcome ("¡Bienvenidos!").
- Listen as the young people introduce themselves.
- If there is a translator, give him/her an opportunity to say hello and introduce him/herself too!
- Be sure to say how much you appreciate their willingness to take the time to talk and share about their lives.
- Start by naming your church and community—where you live and worship. Share a bit about your community—your school, your church, your activities, some highlights and challenges.
- Segue into questions and conversation.
- The person keeping time should signal when the call reaches 30 minutes and again at 40 minutes so you can start moving toward ending the call.
- Be sure to thank everyone again for participating, especially the translator (it's hard work).
- Group goodbye—"¡Que Dios los bendiga!"

Part 3. Debriefing and what's next

(15 minutes)

Help participants debrief the call with these discussion questions:

- What are your overall impressions of what you heard?
- Is there anything you want to share from your notes?
- What positive things did you hear?
- What challenges did you hear?
- How do they meet those challenges?

MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States

- How does God walk with them?
- How do other people walk with them?
- Can you see yourself in their stories?
- What have you learned?
- How might we accompany migrant youth?

Now that we have had this great opportunity to talk with *[names]* and hear their stories, let's identify what is next for us as we seek to walk with migrant youth and families in our communities. The best first step would be to join the AMMPARO network as a Welcoming Congregation. We can also learn more, we can share what we have learned with others, and we can move ahead in being part of the movement to welcome and accompany youth.

Depending on your sense of next steps, discuss one of these options and affirm any other ideas that youth may propose.

Commit to supporting the AMMPARO network:

- As a youth group or as a congregation, **join the AMMPARO network as a Welcoming Congregation**. A Welcoming Congregation makes four commitments: 1) to spiritually and pastorally accompany migrants in its community, 2) to physically accompany migrants in its community at ICE check-ins and to get them needed services, 3) to pray for justice for migrants, and 4) to advocate for the human rights and protection of migrants. To see how youth might participate:
 - list concrete ways to accompany migrant youth and families in your community, inspired by what you learned about the Welcoming Congregations program in session 2, and
 - talk to migrant organizations in your community.
- **Create an advocacy campaign in your congregation** centered on one of the many issues found on the ELCA AMMPARO Facebook page, [Facebook.com/ELCAammparo](https://www.facebook.com/ELCAammparo).

Learn more:

- **Map your community** to discover where refugees and migrants are coming from, which organizations are walking with them, and how. What might these organizations need our help on?
- **Investigate current laws affecting migrants**. Can refugees and migrants with no legal status get a driver's license in your state? Is there a sanctuary community nearby? Find out how these laws affect or will affect refugees and what you can do.
- **Invite a migrant community organization to come** and talk about its work and how you can participate.
- **Listen to a podcast** from Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Seattle, which offered sanctuary to a man threatened with deportation.
- **Take the Migrant Journey** as a youth group and then offer to lead a similar trip for members of your congregation.
- **Learn more about the context of immigration** by doing module 1 of "Bridging Youth to Youth" in your youth group.
- **Learn more about issues facing migrants** through the AMMPARO Facebook page, [Facebook.com/ELCAammparo](https://www.facebook.com/ELCAammparo).
- **Commit to doing the third module**, which focuses on refugee youth in Cairo, Egypt.
- **Visit a local agency or organization** that serves refugees in your community.
- **Visit Central American youth** in El Salvador, Honduras, or Guatemala.
- **Undertake an immersion experience at the U.S.-Mexico border** (AMMPARO offers some trips).

MODULE 2: Young Migrants in the United States

Share what you have learned with others:

- **Have an “open house”** where the youth group invites church members to view these videos about teens, hear about the call, and play the Immigration Game.
- **Share some stories of youth**, including the ones you talked to, at worship services or in your congregation’s newsletter.
- **Create a slide show of images and learnings** from these sessions to show during worship.

Encourage the group to commit to an action step and create follow-up plans in another meeting.

Part 4. Wrap-up and sending (4 minutes)

End the session with a “popcorn” prayer around the candles, inviting youth to add petitions for today’s caller and other people the group has learned about or met via phone or video the last few weeks. Conclude the prayer by thanking God for the opportunity to learn more about refugee youth from all countries and asking God to help the group discern how best to accompany them in their journey.

Dismiss the session with everyone saying, “Que Dios te bendiga.” God bless you!