



Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO)

The 2016 Churchwide Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the AMMPARO strategy. AMMPARO—which stands for Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities—is a movement across the church that is responding to the large number of families and unaccompanied children fleeing violence and poverty in Central America. The ELCA has developed a powerful international AMMPARO network composed of:

- 4 companion churches and organizations in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.
- 3 companions in Mexico.
- 134 welcoming and sanctuary congregations.
- 28 synod task forces or committees that relate to AMMPARO
- 40 synods involved in some way representing all nine regions.

This network offers accompaniment and direct service with migrants throughout the perilous journey, as well as advocacy for child protection.

Child protection support includes nine Guardian Angel programs through which the church becomes a physical presence in immigration court, accompanying children and their sponsors through the court process. Programs exist in Los Angeles, Chicago, Omaha, Denver, Boston, Atlanta, Detroit, San Francisco and Minneapolis–Saint. Paul. New programs in 2019 include Hartford, Connecticut and possibly Phoenix, Arizona.

AMMPARO has established a small network of pro bono lawyers; recently, several volunteered their time to help women prepare their asylum cases at the family detention center in Dilley, Texas.

Through Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) and AMMPARO support, Lutheran Social Services of New York currently provides legal representation to 42 unaccompanied children and youth as they seek legal status in the U.S. As part of the ELCA's strong relationship with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), the ELCA provided support for LIRS-funded work uniting separated families in Albuquerque as well as shelter assistance to families released from Immigration and Custom Enforcement' detention in Phoenix. Coordination between AMMPARO and LIRS has helped unaccompanied children in need of foster care to find suitable families through ELCA congregations.

AMMPARO has achieved national advocacy leadership in the Interfaith Immigration Coalition and regularly consults with Congress on conditions in Central America. In 2017, AMMPARO worked with companions to develop a comprehensive advocacy strategy that covers all countries of origin, transit countries and the United States. Each of the four priorities developed common themes but requires unique advocacy in each country.

Among the many issues addressed in the last three years was an advocacy card-writing campaign at the ELCA Youth Gathering, in which 5,000 advocacy cards for child protection measures were delivered to Congress. The cards included 1,875 advocacy messages for Dreamers, 1,028 messages on the budget bill, and 1,000 Lutheran pledges to stand with asylum-seekers. Recent advocacy efforts by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton have included statements on DACA and an ecumenical statement on family separation and asylum.

Currently 88% to 95% of deported migrants have no plans to migrate as a result of companion church and companion organizations' work in migrants' countries of origin. Companions in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala have served thousands of people from 2016 to 2018. They have done so by helping individuals find safe places to live, creating income-generating projects and providing psychosocial trauma counseling. Companions include the Mennonite Social Action Commission (CASM), the Lutheran World Federation, the Salvadoran Lutheran Church and Pop No'j. Presiding Bishop Eaton and members of the AMMPARO Executive Committee recently had the opportunity to visit and hear from migrants in their countries of origin. Join the AMMPARO network as a welcoming congregation or synod. Information and written and video resources can be found at elca.org/ammparo