

Immigration Team Report to Synod Assembly 2021

The Immigration Team is committed to ensuring the voices of both adults and children are heard. Our nation was built by immigrants and that dream should still be alive for those seeking it. We continue to be that voice through advocacy and supporting programs and organizations that are working for the betterment of the lives of immigrants. Jesus calls us to this work by telling us to welcome the stranger [Matthew 25:35]. The Hebrew Scriptures instructs us that “you shall not deprive a resident alien or orphan of justice” [Deuteronomy 24:17].

This past year has created some challenges for the team as we have moved all our meetings to Zoom. Yet, we have maintained contact with our partners and have continued to meet nearly monthly.

Working with AMMPARO: We continue our connections with AMMPARO through the ELCA and the Guardian Angels program to be present for children in immigration court. Unfortunately, at this time the courts have closed the hearings to the public and we are waiting for that to be lifted.

Members Trained in Immigration Law: We continue to have many members on the team that are board certified in Immigration Law and are willing to help local organizations when needed.

Welcoming Congregations: Following the Churchwide Assembly of 2019, many congregations have entered into the conversation about what it means to be a Sanctuary or Welcoming Church. Please talk with someone on this task force if you would like more information.

Connecting with Partners: We continue to value our partnerships with *Michigan United*, *Michigan Immigrant’s Rights Center*, *Justice for our Neighbors*, and especially *Samaritas*.

Current Status at the Border: We continue to monitor the happenings at the U.S. border as many unaccompanied children are arriving. We continue to advocate for a safe effective system. At this time, LIRS has raised the need for foster families and to hold all in prayer until we get a better understanding of other ways we can be supportive.

The Immigration Team consists of Pastor Alan Casillas, Beverly Clarkson, David Corliss, Pastor Jack Eggleston, Carlos Gomez, Wendy Gomez, Pat Hartig, Pastor Jill Heather, Lynn Justusson, Pastor Bill Kirsch-Carr, Pastor Tim Larson, Brian McIntee, Barb Morris, Pastor Alex Steward and Pastor Krister Ulmanis. Team members are available to lead forums and educational events or to respond to questions you might have.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Alex Steward, Chair