

2024-2025 Update from Immigration and Refugee Task Force

The task force meets monthly, via Zoom or in person, on the third Wednesday of each month from noon to 1:00pm. The goals of the task force include:

- To further our understanding of what is happening in SE Michigan, Michigan at large, and the United States in issues relating to immigrants, refugees, and asylees.
- To be a presence in the community in partnership with those working to serve or advocate for immigrants, refugees, and asylees.
- To educate ourselves and then our congregations about what we can do to journey alongside refugees, immigrants, and asylees.
- To be a stronger presence within the SE Michigan Synod to further the work of the church's awareness of and valuation of work in immigration, refugee, and asylee advocacy, justice, and support.

Monthly meetings over the past 12 months included speakers from Samaritas Advocacy, Samaritas New American Families, Samaritas Refugee Foster Care, Welcome Corp Program including Zaman International and Office of Global Michigan, Immigration Attorney Patricia Hartig, Border Immersion Experience 2024 Participants, Border Servant Corp, and Michigan United.

Our ongoing relationship with Samaritas New American Families and Refugee Foster Care Programs resulted in Samaritas representatives from multiple programs attending each meeting. In addition, ABISA (African Bureau of Immigration and Social Affairs) staff regularly attend meetings, and ELCA staff members from Chicago, Texas, and Washington DC periodically attend meetings as well.

The Immigration and Refugee Task Force oversees two subcommittees:

- Asylum Seekers Support Subcommittee – Organizes material, financial, and physical support for a family of five from Venezuela; offers informal support and resource sharing to multiple other asylum-seeking families in Southeast Michigan; coordinates with Freedom House to meet needs of asylum seekers; organizes fundraisers for asylum seekers.
- Immigration Advocacy and Church Responsibility Subcommittee- Prepares presentations and trainings to support churches, houses of worship, and local organizations with information necessary to advocate for humane immigration policy, to understand the impact of executive orders on refugees and asylum seekers, and to understand our role in welcoming and protecting immigrants.

Task force members have developed relationships with and provide updates from a broad spectrum of faith-based and secular entities including: Guardian Angels and AMMPARO, Strangers No Longer, Freedom House, World Refugee Day and Advocacy Week Opportunities, Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services), Church World Service, Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, Michigan United, Immigration Law and Justice Michigan, Border Servant Corp, American Immigration Council, Samaritas, Zaman International, Office of Global Michigan, National Partnership for New Americans, Immigration Justice Campaign, Jubilee Detroit, ELCA Advocacy, ABISA, SEMI ELCA Synod Justice Committees and Task Forces, as well as state and national legislative updates from a variety of sources.

Projects and Special Events over the past 12 months include:

- Oversee support for and mentorship of an Asylum-Seeking Family of five from Venezuela
- Hosting a workshop entitled *Dialogues on Refugees and Asylum Seekers* at the SEMI ELCA Synod Assembly on May 11, 2024.
- Dialogue at Freedom House with Freedom House staff and the Immigration and Refugee Task Force – July 2024
- November 2024 Border Immersion Experience in El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico, hosted by Border Servant Corp as a joint venture between SEMI ELCA Synod and Samaritas.
- Presentations at SEMI ELCA and Presbyterian Churches on Immigration at the Southern Border and Immigration Overview – September 2024 and January 2025
- Presentation on the Impact of Executive Orders on Immigration at a SEMI ELCA Church – February 2025
- *Know Your Rights* Training – March 2025
- *Noisy Offering Fundraiser* for Asylum Seekers and Samaritas Refugee Programs – March 2025
- *Standing in the Gap: A Fundraiser for Asylum Seekers in Southeast Michigan* - May 4, 2025, Cathedral Church of St. Paul
- Hosting workshop at SEMI ELCA Synod Assembly on May 16, 2025, entitled *Immigration Advocacy and Church Responsibility*.
- Planning for October 4, 2025, Justice Summit immigration workshops and advocacy training

If interested in participating in or learning more about the Immigration and Refugee Task Force, please contact Chair, Jessica Beamer, at djbeamer@sbcglobal.net.

Report Submitted by Jessica Beamer on 4/24/25.