

Immigration Task Force 2025-2026 Update

Goals of the Immigration Task Force:

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

The Immigration Task Force oversees three subcommittees:

- Asylum Seekers Support – 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- 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 and legal actions on refugees and asylum seekers, and to understand our role in welcoming and protecting immigrants.
- Court Accompaniment – Partners with Immigration Law and Justice-Michigan, Central United Methodist Church Detroit, and the Greater Detroit District UMC to provide court observation in Detroit's Federal Immigration Court with the goals of assisting immigration attorneys in preparing their clients for court, providing eyes and ears on the legal immigration process, and offering moral support for those appearing in court.

Monthly meetings over the past 12 months included speakers from AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities), Global Refuge, Tecumseh Presbyterian Church's Migrant Ministries, Freedom House, Migration Policy Advisor for the ELCA, ABISA (African Bureau for Immigration and Social Affairs), Minneapolis/St. Paul ELCA Clergy during Operation Metro Surge, Strangers No Longer, Central United Methodist Church of Detroit, and Immigration Law and Justice – Michigan.

Task force members have developed relationships with and provide updates from a broad array of allied faith-based and secular organizations including: AMMPARO, Strangers No Longer, Freedom House, Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration 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 providing state and national legislative updates from a variety of sources.

Our ongoing relationship with Samaritas New American Families and Refugee Youth Services 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 representing AMMPARO and Migrant Policy from offices in Chicago, Texas, and Washington DC periodically attend meetings as well.

Projects and Special Events over the past 12 months include:

- Provided support for and mentorship of an Asylum-Seeking Family of five from Venezuela. Currently assisting the family with planning and tickets as they prepare for the next leg of their life journey.
- Hosted Raed AbuJries, Program Manager for Education and Communications for AMMPARO US Network, for experiences in Detroit's Immigration Court, the work of Grace Centers of Hope, and dialoguing with an allied organization, ABISA.
- Led two workshops and a large group advocacy training at the third annual Justice Summit on October 4, 2025.
- Provided training to congregations on Immigration Advocacy and the Church's Responsibility in Immigration
- Hosting a workshop at SEMI ELCA Synod Assembly on May 29, 2026, entitled, *In a time when immigrants are villainized, is there still reason for hope?*
- Working with our SEMI ELCA Synod as well as a Multi-faith Michigan Clergy Rapid Response Team to create networks of clergy and congregants willing and able to respond to ICE activity, the proliferation of detention centers, and/or voter suppression in Southeast Michigan

The task force meets monthly, primarily via Zoom, on the third Wednesday of each month from noon to 1:00pm. In addition, subcommittees meet as scheduled.

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