

THE  
RAINBOW  
INITIATIVE



**AN INTRODUCTION TO LGBTQ+  
FORCED MIGRANTS  
&  
EPISCOPAL MIGRATION MINISTRIES'  
RAINBOW INITIATIVE**

**Training Tool  
Updated August 21, 2023**



## PURPOSE & INTENDED USE

This slideshow is intended to accompany presentations about The Episcopal Church's efforts to direct attention and aid towards people who have fled their homelands because of persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity. It has been produced by the Rainbow Initiative of Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM).

Website: [www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative](http://www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative)

Email: [rainbowinitiative@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:rainbowinitiative@episcopalchurch.org)



Photo: Beth Holst, First Lutheran Church (Duluth, MN)



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## OPENING PRAYER

O God, you call us to welcome all your children with equal care:  
empower us with your Spirit, that we may courageously and sacrificially open our hearts  
to those seeking a home with us;  
always give us passion to incarnate justice and blessing for people of every stripe,  
in particular our LGBTQ+ siblings who are in grave danger in their native lands.  
Help us to enfold them in the same loving embrace in which you enfold us  
and all your creation;  
through the great savior whose arms stretch to include all, Jesus the Christ.  
Amen

*Composed by The Benedictine Way, Omaha, Nebraska*



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# THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE



## AGENDA

1. Introduction to the Rainbow Initiative
2. Introduction to EMM
3. What is “Forced Migration”?
4. Who are LGBTQ+ Forced Migrants?
5. More about the Rainbow Initiative
6. Why should we care?
7. Q&A



## THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE

The Rainbow Initiative is a pilot program created by EMM to respond to General Convention 2022 Resolution D045:

“On Supporting LGBTIQ+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers”

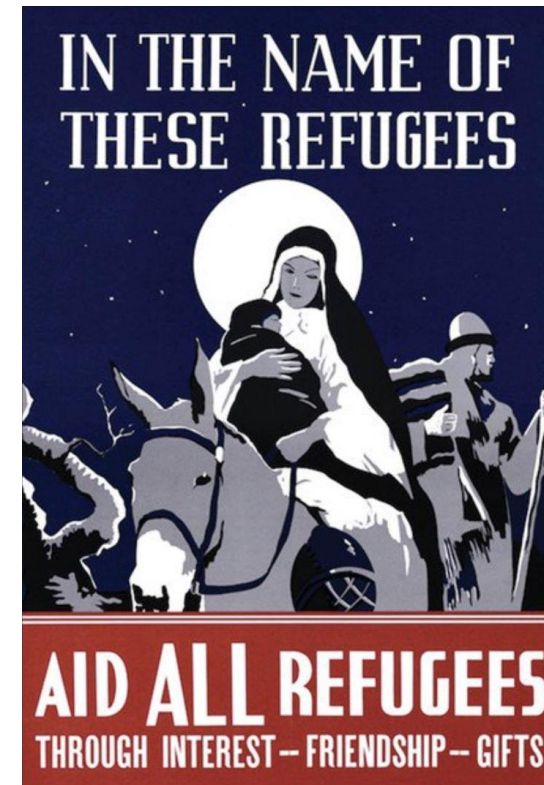
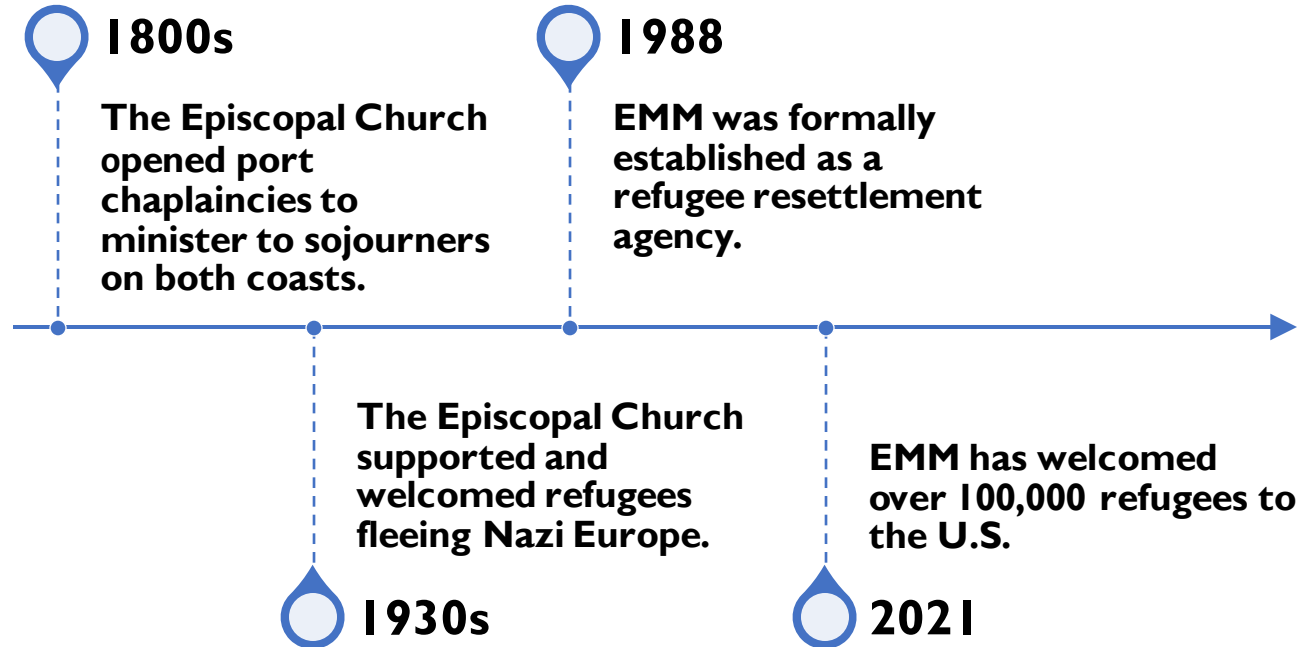
The Rainbow Initiative pursues two main strategies:

1. Ensure that all EMM procedures and materials are fully inclusive of LGBTQ+ people
2. Work with Episcopal congregations and others to promote visibility and aid for LGBTQ+ people who have fled their countries of origin because of persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Focus on activity during June (Pride and World Refugee Day).



# INTRODUCTION TO EPISCOPAL MIGRATION MINISTRIES (EMM)

*Episcopal Migration Ministries welcomes refugees, educates communities, and mobilizes congregations to advocate for the protection and rights of all migrants.*



# INTRODUCTION TO EPISCOPAL MIGRATION MINISTRIES (EMM)

- EMM is one of ten national refugee resettlement agencies that partner with the federal government to resettle refugees in the U.S.
- EMM currently has 12 Affiliates.
- The Episcopal Church's convening place for collaboration, education, and information-sharing on migration.





## WHAT DOES “FORCED MIGRANT” MEAN ?

A forced migrant is a person who is compelled to leave their country of origin because of persecution.

Forced migrants may have different immigration statuses, including:

- “Refugees” who have been recognized by the U.S. government as needing protection and then resettled in this country
- “Asylum seekers” who have entered the U.S. and then petitioned for permission to stay here permanently
- “Asylees” who have been granted that permission
- “Undocumented immigrants” who according to the U.S. Government do not have a legal right to stay in the country

“Internally displaced people” have fled persecution, but remained within their country of origin. Many trans people and allies are talking about this becoming a reality in the United States.







## WHY IMMIGRATION STATUS MATTERS

The rights that people have when they move to the United States differ, depending on their immigration status. For example:

- Refugees are able to work from their first days in the country, and have access to a variety of government-supported programs
- Asylum seekers must wait at least 180 days after filing their asylum applications before they can legally work, and they do not have access to most government-supported benefits
- Undocumented immigrants are not able to legally work, do not have access to most government-supported benefits, and are at risk of detention and deportation

*EMM can provide more information upon request.*



# WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A FORCED MIGRANT IN THE U.S. ?

*They face a lot of challenges*

- Many asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants are in unsafe, unstable living situations on the street, in detention centers, etc...
- Continued discrimination
- Refugees have access to government aid and can legally work, unlike undocumented immigrants and most asylum seekers
- Difficult adjusting to new cultures and languages

*They are strong, determined, and hopeful*

- Successfully fleeing from persecution requires enormous strength and determination
- They bring their talents and energies to their new country
- Throughout their journey towards safety they are driven by hope for a better future



# PARTICULAR CHALLENGES OF LGBTQ+ FORCED MIGRANTS

It is **illegal to be LGBTQ+** in about 70 countries, with persecution widespread in many more

**Religion** is used to justify much of the persecution they face

Still, many remain spiritual or religious, and much of the help they receive is motivated by religion

LGBTQ+ forced migrants in the U.S. are **more likely to be asylum seekers** (30,000/year) or undocumented than refugees (1,000/year)

Consequently, they are often **unable to work legally and access benefits**

**Proving LGBTQ+ status** can be difficult.

**Discrimination** often continues from people who share their backgrounds, as well as others

Many suffer from **social isolation** and cannot rely on community support



## **THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEARNING AND PLANNING TOGETHER**

The Rainbow Initiative is a pilot program that is drawing attention and aid to LGBTQ+ forced migrants during June 2023 (Pride Month and World Refugee Day).

It is a partnership linking EMM with “Rainbow Initiative Congregations / Communities” (RICs) throughout the U.S. and Europe.

In the summer of 2023, EMM will work with partners to draw lessons learned from this experiment, and plan for the future.

The Episcopal Church and EMM are committed to working with and for LGBTQ+ forced migrants for the long-term. Together with partners, we are building a network, educating ourselves, and discerning what our strategies should be going into the future.



# RAINBOW INITIATIVE CONGREGATIONS / COMMUNITIES (RICs)

*21 partners called RICs have joined the Rainbow Initiative through June 2023*

All Saints Episcopal Church Hershey, PA	Bridge Refugee Services Knoxville, TN	Cathedral of the Holy Trinity Paris, France
Christ Lutheran Church Nashville, TN	Church of the Ascension Munich, Germany	Epiphany Episcopal Church Vacaville, CA
First Lutheran Church Duluth, MN	Gloria Dei Lutheran Church Duluth, MN	Grace Episcopal Church Sandusky, OH
Holy Spirit Episcopal Church Belmont, MI	Iglesia Episcopal San Mateo / St. Matthew's Episcopal Church Hyattsville, MD	Integrity Harlem at St. Philip's Episcopal Church New York, NY
LGBT Asylum Task Force, Hadwen Park Congregational Church UCC Worcester, MA	Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church Houston, TX	Rio Grande Borderland Ministry El Paso, TX
St. Anna's Episcopal Church New Orleans, LA	St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church / San Miguel y Todos Los Ángeles Iglesia Episcopal: Portland, OR	St. Nicholas Episcopal Church Elk Grove Village, IL
St. Paul's and St. George's Episcopal Churches Poughkeepsie and Newburgh, NY	Southeastern Synod, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Atlanta, GA	The Benedictine Way Omaha, NE

# RAINBOW INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES



## WITNESS

Pride Marches & Festivals  
World Refugee Day (6/20)



## WORSHIP

Pride worship services



## LEARN

Community forums  
Online events

## SERVE

**Some are providing direct help to LGBTQ+ forced migrants**  
**Others are raising funds to contribute to those programs**



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# RAINBOW INITIATIVE RESOURCES



## WITNESS

Banners, posters, and stickers are being sent to all RICs



## WORSHIP

Collects, Prayers of the People, etc.



## LEARN

Brochures, reports, presentation materials and assistance

Many resources are available online: [www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative](http://www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative)  
While some are for RICs only, most are available to the general public



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# WHY SHOULD EPISCOPALIANS AND OTHER PEOPLE OF FAITH CARE ABOUT LGBTQ+ FORCED MIGRANTS ?

The call to “welcome the stranger” through protection and hospitality is deeply rooted in many religions, including ours. Christian scripture and tradition emphasize seeing Jesus in all people, and particularly in those who are persecuted and in need of help.

Religion is interwoven with the persecution many LGBTQ+ people experience. It can also be interwoven with their welcome and healing.

***What are your answers to this question? Send them to [rainbowinitiative@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:rainbowinitiative@episcopalchurch.org).***



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# Q&A



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- Online [bit.ly/supportemmm](https://bit.ly/supportemmm)
- Mail - send a check or money order to:  
DFMS-Protestant Episcopal Church US  
P.O. Box 958983, St. Louis, MO 63195-8983  
(Write *Episcopal Migration Ministries* in the memo line)
- To make your gift over the phone, call (212) 716-6002.
- For information about making a gift of stock or securities, giving through a donor advised fund, or including Episcopal Migration Ministries in your estate plans, e-mail [development@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:development@episcopalchurch.org)



# Ways to Give



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# Contact Information



## Episcopal Migration Ministries

episcopalmigrationministries.org

**Social Media:** @EMMRefugees

**Video:**

[www.vimeo.com/EMMRefugees](http://www.vimeo.com/EMMRefugees)

*Thank you for joining us!*



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