

THE  
RAINBOW  
INITIATIVE



**The Rainbow Initiative  
Episcopal Migration Ministries**

**Webinar #1**

*An introduction to LGBTQ+ forced  
migrants  
& what The Episcopal Church can do  
with and for them*

**March 30, 2023**

**9:00 Pacific / 10:00 Mountain / 11:00 Central / 12:00  
Eastern**



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# Housekeeping

- **Mute:** All audience lines are muted.
- **Recording:** Today's webinar will be made available online ([www.vimeo.com/emmrefugees](http://www.vimeo.com/emmrefugees) and the Rainbow Initiative web pages: [www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative](http://www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative)) and in a follow-up email.
- **Presentation slides:** This presentation will be made available on the Rainbow Initiative web pages, in English and in Spanish.
- **Questions:** Please submit questions through the questions pane.
- **Closed Captioning:** To access closed captioning, please select the "CC" icon on your Zoom window.



## OPENING PRAYER

O Holy God, The Living God, Parent of us all, we ask your blessing on all who love and most especially forced migrants and those in the LGBTQ+ community. Guide and nourish them as parents, children, siblings, friends, and colleagues; support them in their daily work, both in the world and at home; nurture them as members of a faith community; encourage them to do your will as citizens of the universe.

We pray especially for their physical and emotional safety in a world where they too often face violence, hatred, and misunderstanding. Strengthen them in their resolve to live their lives in truth, honesty, courage, and love. Let the world see your face in them.

We pray that all will serve you, dear God, to your glory. Amen.

This is a slight modification of a prayer from Ms. Constance Cohrt in *Women's Uncommon Prayers*



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# THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE



## AGENDA

1. Introduction to the Rainbow Initiative & EMM
2. Introduction to “forced migration”
3. LGBTQ+ forced migrants
4. Rainbow Initiative strategies
5. Rainbow Initiative partnerships
6. Why Episcopalians and others should care
7. Questions and Answers



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## 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).



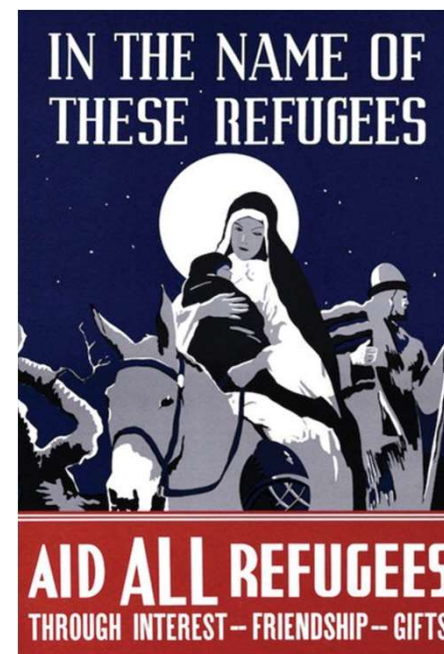
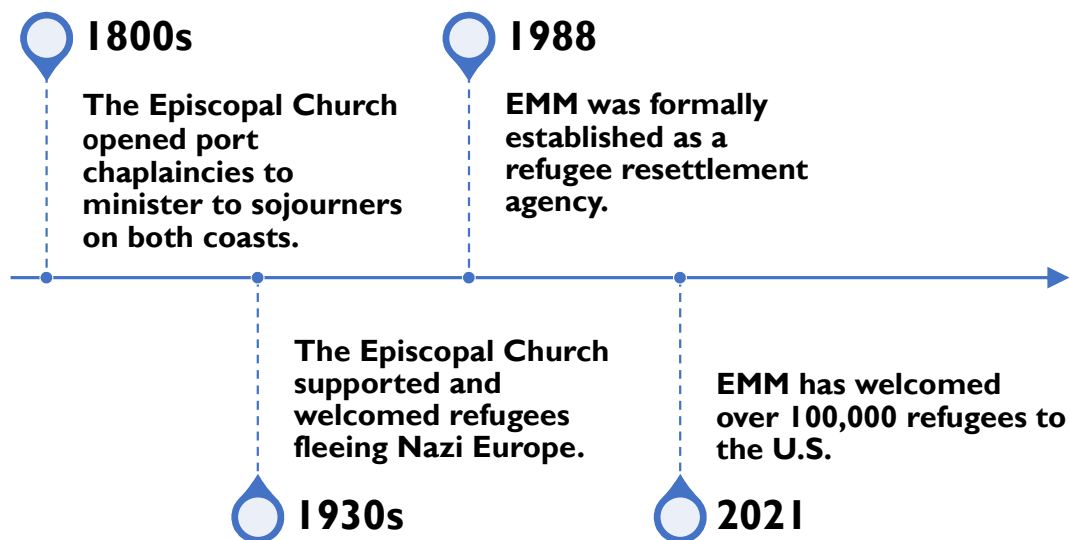
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# INTRODUCTION TO Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM)

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



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# INTRODUCTION TO 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.



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## WHAT DOES “FORCED MIGRANT” MEAN ?

### *Definition:*

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

*Forced migrants may have many 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 citizenship or origin. Many trans community members are talking about this becoming a reality in the United States.



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Immigration status	Employment authorization	Pathway to legal permanent residency & citizenship	Eligible for Medicaid, SNAP (Food stamps), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Eligible for initial refugee program (Reception & Placement) – housing supports, case management, basic needs, referrals, employment assistance	Eligible for additional refugee programs funded by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), including employment services, intensive medical & mental health case management	Eligible to apply for family reunification
Refugee status/visa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Asylum seeker	Not immediately; waiting period of at least 180 days post-asylum application	x	x	x	x	x
Undocumented immigrant	x	x	x	x	x	x
Asylee	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓

Note: This list is not exhaustive. Certain humanitarian parolee populations have varying degrees of eligibility for the above.



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## 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).

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

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

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

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



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## STORIES OF LGBTQ+ ASYLUM SEEKERS



This video clip was produced by the LGBT Asylum Task Force, a ministry of Hadwen Park Community Church UCC in Worcester, MA, the only program in the U.S. to focus on providing housing, income support, and wrap-around services specifically for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers.

[www.lgbtasylum.org](http://www.lgbtasylum.org)

**Commentary by Craig Mortley**, an independent community advocate and graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work who was in the past a client of the LGBT Asylum Task Force, and whose research interests focus on "belonging" for Queer asylum seekers

## RAINBOW INITIATIVE STRATEGIES (JANUARY – JULY 2023)

### January-March

- Survey and outreach
- Select 10-20 core partners

### March

- Launch webpage on EMM site
- Develop new resources with partners
- Post resources on RI webpage

### March - July

- Webinars open to all
- Learning community
- Technical assistance

### June

- Highlight LGBTQ+ forced migrants in Pride Marches, Pride Services, and World Refugee Day, film screenings, etc.

### Ongoing

- Publish a series of articles/blog posts
- Research
- Review and revise EMM materials



## RAINBOW INITIATIVE CONGREGATIONS / COMMUNITIES (RICs)

### EMM will

- Provide monthly webinars, monthly online learning community sessions, and a dedicated webpage with resource materials
- Individually communicate with RICs
- Introduce RIC representatives to potential partners
- Name the RIC as a partner in the Rainbow Initiative
- Gather and share lessons learned

### RICs will

- Try to participate in the monthly webinars and learning community sessions
- Raise community awareness about LGBTQ+ forced migrants in June 2023
- Participate in periodic discussions with EMM
- Agree to be named as an RIC
- Provide EMM with a brief summary of activity and reflections on lessons learned



## RAINBOW INITIATIVE CONGREGATIONS / COMMUNITIES (RICs)

Our goal is to work with between 10 and 20 RICs  
So far, the following have confirmed participation, and several others are in discernment

All Saints Episcopal Church Hershey, PA	St. Anna's Episcopal Church New Orleans, LA
Bridge Refugee Services Knoxville, TN	St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church / San Miguel y Todos Los Angeles Iglesia Episcopal Portland, OR
Christ Lutheran Church Nashville, TN	St. Nicholas Episcopal Church Elk Grove Village, IL
Epiphany Episcopal Church Vacaville, CA	St. Paul's & St. George's Episcopal Churches Poughkeepsie and Newburgh, NY
Integrity Harlem at St. Philip's Episcopal Church New York, NY	





## OTHER PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

1

*Honoraria for the LGBT Asylum Task Force (ministry of a UCC congregation) to serve as mentors*

2

*Supplies for project partners*

3

*In-person follow-up gathering with core partners in order to solidify lessons learned and plan next steps in this work*

4

*Support for EMM and consultant efforts which will otherwise have to be carried out on a pro-bono basis or with general operating funds*





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

The Rainbow Initiative is beginning to work with partners at Episcopal seminaries and others to develop liturgical resources that will be useful for Pride services, and theological resources that will show how concern for LGBTQ+ forced migrants is an expression of our faith.

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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## **CONSIDER BECOMING A RAINBOW INITIATIVE CONGREGATION / COMMUNITY (RIC)!**

RICs will commit to continuing engagement with EMM about supporting LGBTQ+ forced migrants in some way during June.

EMM will work with them to discern what kinds of activities would be best for them, and provide them with the tools, information, and introductions they will need.

### **Contact**

**Max Niedzwiecki**

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



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- Online [bit.ly/supportemm](http://bit.ly/supportemm)
- 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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