

Asylum webinar

SPEAKERS

Giovana Oaxaca, Kendall Martin, Allyson Pryor, Flor Saldivar, Mary Campbell, Allison Duvall, Andrew Byrd

Allison Duvall 00:10

Why do you support refugees?

00:12

I support refugees because my family were refugees.

00:15

I support refugees because we are all God's children and we all deserve a safe place to grow in God's love.

00:21

I support refugees because God made us all in God's image.

00:25

I support refugees because I'm a legal guardian of a minor asylee named Carol from Burundi.

00:32

I support refugees because my Lord was a refugee.

00:36

Because I welcome and I love my neighbor.

Allison Duvall 00:41

Hi, and welcome to Hometown, a podcast from Episcopal Migration Ministries, the refugee and immigration ministry of the Episcopal Church. I'm Allison Duvall.

Kendall Martin 00:50

And I'm Kendall Martin. Today's episode features the recording of Walking with Asylum Seekers: Ministry Opportunities for Congregations, the first of a three part virtual training series offered in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America AMMPARO Program and Lutheran Family Services of the Rocky Mountains.

Allison Duvall 01:07

The three 90 minute virtual events are for congregations interested in supporting and walking alongside asylum seekers. We provide advocacy updates resources for group discernment, ministry models, and important considerations when engaging in ministry with asylum seekers. Visit bit.ly/asylumtraining to

access registration for the two virtual meetings that are focused on sponsorship. You can find the information in the podcast notes. Thanks for joining us for today's recording.

Kendall Martin 01:39

Welcome, everyone. We're so glad you're here for today's webinar Walking with Asylum Seekers: Ministry Opportunities for Congregations. And now Mary will offer our opening prayer.

Mary Campbell 01:49

God of creation and of justice, we praise you for the boundless beauty of the earth and all of its creatures. Especially we praise you for creating human beings, each made in your image and placed upon this earth and blessed with a life that you intend to be lived in peace and with dignity. You are a God of justice that has called us to respect this inherent dignity of each person. We give you thanks for our lives, in our ability to hear the call which compels us to welcome the stranger, love our neighbor and work for dignity and justice for all. Today we pray for courage, courage to be moved toward action, to humbly do this work to which we have been called. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Allison Duvall 02:39

Thank you, Mary, and thank you all for being with us today. We'll do quick introductions of all today's presenters and panelists. My name is Allison Duvall. I am Episcopal Migration Ministries' Manager for Church Relations and Engagement coming to you from my home in Lexington, Kentucky. Glad that you're all here.

Allyson Pryor 02:56

I'm Allyson Pryor. I am the bishop--one of the bishop's associates and the DEM for the Southwestern Texas Synod of the ELCA.

Andrew Byrd 03:07

Good afternoon. My name is Andrew Byrd. I work with Lutheran Family Services of the Rocky Mountains. And I am here in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Flor Saldivar 03:18

Hello, everyone. My name is Flor Saldivar, and I serve as Coordinator for Immigrant and Refugee Ministries with the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas.

Giovana Oaxaca 03:28

Hi, everyone. My name is Giovana Oaxaca, and I am the new Migration Policy Program Director with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. And I'm coming to you from Washington DC.

Kendall Martin 03:38

Hello, I'm Kendall Martin. I'm the Communications Manager for Episcopal Migration Ministries, and I'm located in Richmond, Virginia.

Mary Campbell 03:46

Good afternoon. I'm Mary Campbell. I'm the program director of AMMPARO, the ELCA strategy. And I am located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Allison Duvall 03:55

Thank you all so much for being part of this. And we want to get to know all of you in the audience a little bit today. So we're going to open a poll to get to know you. So please take a moment. I'm watching the poll now. To let us know what areas of migration ministry have you been involved in in the past? We'll leave this open for a few seconds and we welcome you to answer. We're seeing quite a number of responses coming in. All right, I'm going to end the poll. And I'm going to share the results with all of you. So hopefully you can see those. And if you're not able to I will let you know what they what they show. And most of you have engaged in some kind of policy advocacy in areas of migration and that is excellent. You'll hear more about policy updates and advocacy needs later today. We also have a considerable number of you who are in discernment and who are new to this area of ministry so that we're glad that you're here to learn about all the opportunities that are available to you as an individual and as a member of a congregation, synod, or diocese. And then folks have also been involved in refugee resettlement, supporting asylum seekers, sanctuary, detention visitation ministry and other types of ministry as well. Alright, so we're going to move on with today's presentation and give you an overview of the agenda. We have quite a number of things we're going to be covering today. First, we'll start with some framing about why we're all gathered together. And second, Giovana will lead us through some critical asylum policy updates and some critical advocacy asks that we should all respond to and reach out to our members of Congress. We'll talk about discerning your response. Upon hearing what's happening in asylum, the asylum policy landscape, how do we take that information, integrate it and then plan ministry action moving forward. From there, you'll hear about opportunities to engage in ministry through the AMMPARO Network and also ministry opportunities through Episcopal Migration Ministries. We're excited to have Allison Pryor and FlorSaldivar here today to talk about a local case study, a window into how Lutheran and Episcopal partnerships are happening in this area of ministry in West Texas. And then we'll talk about a ministry model of asylum seeker sponsorship with congregations. Andrew will speak a little bit to that and give it a taste of what's to come. And the remainder of this series. We'll conclude with ample time for q&a. So please do get your questions ready and put them in the question and answer box. And then we'll conclude talking about upcoming events and ways that you can stay in touch with us. So to get started, and to center ourselves in why we're here today, I first want to say thank you to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America AMMPARO program, and to Lutheran Family Services of the Rocky Mountains for their partnership and their collaboration to make this series possible. This is representative of the proverb that if you want to go far, you should go together. So thank you all for your partnership. So why are we here today for Episcopal Migration Ministries for the Episcopal Church, we're here today because one, we are called to welcome, two, all welcoming work is local and community building work and, three, because the time is now. The first reason that we're here because we're called to welcome is almost so basic as to be unnecessary to mention. Our sacred stories, our holy scriptures, call us time and again, to welcome and to care for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. In the Episcopal Church, we make a promise at our baptism, to respect the dignity of every human being, to love God, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. And so I would presume we're all here today because we feel the call and the urgency to make those promises real and alive. We're here because we need those promises to mean something. We want to walk the talk. I'd also propose that we're here and called to welcome for some deeper and

more human reasons, reasons that our faith traditions give voice to. Even if we don't often center this as our reason for wanting to welcome, I want to propose that we reach out and welcome because as humans we know the pain of loss, we perhaps have experienced the disruption of catastrophe, the unsettling of crisis or the grip of fear. We know from our own life experiences that the holy comes to us, comforts us, and abides with us in our moments of despair. And we're spurred to empathy, because of this pain that we've suffered, however relatively small, we each may know or have experience of this truth so beautifully articulated by Martin Buber that the purpose of relation is relation itself. It's the touching, the engagement with the other, with the you. For as soon as we touch a you were touched by a breath of eternal life. Spirit is not in the eye, but it's in the space between the eye and the you. So we experience God, God lives and moves in the space between us in relationship. For those of us who identify with the Christian tradition, we know that our theology of God is that God is relationship, the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity together. So why are we here? We're here because God is relationship, we are made in the image of God, and we are made for and called to relationship. This is our way forward. So the second reason that we're here because all welcoming work is local and community building work. Welcome happens when individuals like you say, Here I am, send me. Welcome happens when neighbors come together and care for one another and for their newest neighbors. And I believe I probably speak for several of us that we're here because we know that in our communities and in larger society, these fissures of division are growing deeper and wider. And the only way to knit them back together is to foster relations, relationships based in mutual care. And that work doesn't begin on social media message boards or in the talking points of the political leaders. It begins in the work that each of us do every single day, to care for one another, to care for our newest neighbors, and to invite others to join us in this work. And the final reason we're here today, because the time is now. The time is now for the church at all levels, and ecumenically, and through interfaith partnerships, to organize for whatever may come. We do not know what the results of the November US presidential election will be. But we do know that the current administration has made sweeping policy changes to the nation's asylum system. Come January 20, we will either be facing continuing restrictions on the right to seek asylum in the United States or we'll be facing the rolling back of this current administration's policies. And either way, we need to be prepared. We need to be learning and discerning now, we need to be assessing our local congregations' and dioceses' and synods' capacities, skills and gifts and their readiness, now. We need to be getting to know what's already happening in our communities in our in our states now. Especially we need to listen to and follow the lead of immigrant-led organizing efforts that are already happening, have already been happening for years and decades. And we need to listen to how we can show up. We need to be planning and taking these small action steps, even small steps now. So I want to thank you for joining us for this series, for your interest, for your desire to join with others in this work. And for all of you who have already been engaged in the past or currently. Thank you. We're so grateful for your work and so glad that you're here. And I'll turn it over now to my colleague, Mary. Mary, over to you.

Mary Campbell 12:51

Thank you, Allison for that incredibly powerful call to action, outlining exactly why we're all here at this moment in time as people of faith. I also want to thank the Episcopal Church, Episcopal Migration Ministries, and Lutheran Family Services of the Rocky Mountains for this opportunity to work with ELCA AMMPARO. This is truly a critical moment in our lives in the US and globally as more people are on the move than ever. Through our full communion fellowship with the Episcopal Church and our close

relationships with Lutheran Social Services, of which Lutheran Family Services is apart, this series demonstrates our shared commitment to walk with the most vulnerable people in our communities, nation, and the world. For people of faith to impact justice, we must all work together and we must especially work with migrant-led organizations in our communities. Regardless of what happens on November third, we truly must be prepared. Our assessment of our individual congregational, synodical, diocese capacities and gifts is needed for us to be able to join with others in the work for justice for migrants and refugees. I know that most of you that are here today are deeply involved in the struggle for justice and accompaniment of migrants in your communities, and for some internationally for many years already. We hope that these webinars will expand your possibilities and provide you with new opportunities. So thank you all for being here. Giovana will now provide us with a policy and advocacy update.

Giovana Oaxaca 14:29

Hi, all. Thank you for those inspiring words, Allison and Mary. This is a fitting time for us to raise them in our commitment as a nation and as people of faith to the values of inclusivity and welcome towards people who are most vulnerable in our society. As we look to further the church's ministry of welcoming all people, we must actively strive to understand and empathize with their realities so that we can better discern the supporting role that we play. So without further ado, I will quickly summarize key decisions and policies under the current administration, that we have seen arbitrarily and intentionally bring our system of asylum to a standstill. And as Allison and Mary mentioned, could be rolled back in the next administration or continued. The last few years have put an incredible strain on the support system as a whole, but the effects have been most pronounced on asylum seekers themselves. The persons left stranded in migrant camps, incarcerated in our detention centers indefinitely, and those who indeed have lost their lives in the journey bear the brunt of the changes implemented under this administration. Back in 2017, President Trump put forth a blueprint for many of the anti-asylum and anti-immigrant policies that we now recognize, including the construction of a border wall, the increase in prolonged jailing of asylum seekers, and the increased use of expedited deportation procedures. By embracing a doctrine of intolerance, the Trump administration has chosen to abandon any pretense of compassion towards those fleeing disaster, war, and violence, demonizing instead asylum seekers as dangerous criminals bent on invasion. The enduring legacy of zero tolerance and family separation are that there are fewer options for protections for asylum seekers. The US government has an obligation to adhere to domestic and international laws and protect people fleeing persecution. And yet these changes have aimed to raise the threshold to petition for humanitarian protection, established cruel and inhumane deterrence policies, and more recently apply a regressive interpretation of national security and public health laws to expedite expulsions along the border during the pandemic. Starting in 2018, the administration began to criminally prosecute any adult who crossed between ports of entry, categorically denying asylum to anyone who did. This policy of zero tolerance led to the separation around 2500 children from their parents, many of whom are still unaccounted for to this day. The criticisms that erupted pressured the administration to walk back some of these policies, but others continued in full force. For example, the administration went forward with enforcing a second ban, broad ban to asylum called the third country asylum bar in July 2019. The bar the ban effectively banned all people including children who had traveled through another country to reach the United States before applying for asylum. Although that policy was recently struck down in a federal appeals court this summer, it was only one of several ongoing efforts to create conditions so inhospitable at the

border that they acted as deterrents. According to US asylum law, anyone who stepped foot in the US has the ability to request asylum, but due to a process known as metering, 10s of thousands of people have been forced to wait weeks and in some cases, months for an opportunity to request asylum. DHS has also forced more than 60,000 individuals who arrived at the southern border between ports of entry or without documentation to wait in Mexico for many months, while their proceedings continue through a turn back policy referred to as Remain in Mexico. According to the government: Migrant Protection Protocols. Coupled with asylum cooperative agreements that the US has with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, which allow US officials to return asylum seekers to these northern triangle countries, and oftentimes not necessarily their actual courts country of origin. These have raised even more obstacles for people turning north. It's worth mentioning, the journey is itself a very traumatic experience, as recounted by people who have had to endure violence, extortion, hunger, inclement weather, and more. Every obstacle raised by the administration as yet another layer of hardship and heartbreak. The policies of deterrence have had one pointed aim: cause sufficient harm to stop people from coming. Aside from being plainly ineffective, they inflict undue pain and trauma on on vulnerable people, particularly children. Prolonged detention is a different way that we've seen the enforcement of deterrence, and it's kind of gone so far as to apply for children. In August 2019, officials announced a new rule that aimed to allow for the indefinite detention of children and families, undercutting the Flores settlement, an important court settlement agreement establishing a 20 day limit for holding children in immigration detention. A federal judge blocked the implementation of the rule on September 2019. But the litigation for that case is actually ongoing. separately in June of this year, a federal judge again ruled favorably towards children in detention, in order their immediate relief in three US family detention centers due to the risks of COVID-19. Their parents as of yet have not received the same compassionate treatment and would be separated from their children. These are some of the harsh realities of a system that is devoid of more alternatives to detention. From policies of expulsion to raising the threshold to actually receive asylum, the administration has considered almost every which way to make the heat make humanitarian protection harder to get. Programs started in 2019, known as PACER and HARP, are examples of these programs. They're designed to expeditiously process asylum at the border, and deport individuals that fail to establish a credible fear of return. What's worrisome about these programs is that they're conducted by border patrol officers, not trained asylum officers. They're the ones conducting who need to be conducting these interviews. Border patrol officers routinely failed to advance asylum seekers with actual credible fears. Policies at the administrative level of asylum proceedings that have to do with who can claim asylum are also concerning. For example, asylum seekers cannot petition for relief that their claim to asylum is based on membership to a particular family to family. Furthermore, a rule that has not yet gone into effect, which was announced earlier this year, would create major obstacles for people seeking protection. That regulation seeks to change who can qualify for protection by narrowing the definition of persecution to be more stringent. The rule also significantly undercuts due process. Beyond a doubt these changes to policy and practice have been harmful. But one of the most sweeping changes that has occurred have been in response to COVID-19. On March 20, the CDC issued an order suspending introduction to certain persons from countries where communicable disease exists. The CDC order prohibits anyone without documentation from entering the US purportedly on public health grounds. The CDC order applies to asylum seekers, including unaccompanied children. We have since learned that between March 20 and September 9, CDC has expelled more than 159,000 individuals along the southern border, including 8,800 unaccompanied children. The CDC rule remains in effect until October

21, 2021, sorry October 21, 2020, at which point it is likely to be continued. There are vast and major improvements to be made to the US asylum system to correct course and improve the efficiency and fairness of the process. Inherent challenges will not be solved at the border or through policies aimed at deterring specific populations from migrating. I thought I would highlight a few pieces of pro-asylum legislation that could prevent ongoing or future rules from taking effect while simultaneously modernizing the current system. The first is the Refugee Protection Act, which is a comprehensive blueprint blueprint for restoring and modernizing our resettlement program and asylum system. The second is the Immigration Enforcement Moratorium Act, which would hold certain immigration enforcement activities during COVID and defund the CDC order that I earlier mentioned. Third, the Asylum Seeker Protection Act would prohibit the use of funds to implement or enforce the Migration Protection Protocol or Remain in Mexico policies. The viability of these bills, however, rests in the Senate, and it's divided Congress. So I would urge everyone to call their senator and ask them to support these bills. You can use the US Capitol switchboard by calling 202-224-3121 and you can call twice to reach both of your senators. Please help us in urging for more humane policies that respect the dignity and rights of migrants.

Allison Duvall 23:27

Thank you so much Giovana, and friends in the audience, if you take no other action as a result of joining us today, I do hope that you'll read the follow up email that we send you and that you'll take action on, on what Giovana suggests that you'll call your senators and speak about those bills. Thank you so much, Giovana. And with that we're going to transition now from an understanding of the policy landscape into thinking about how we take the information about what is occurring and implement it into a process of discernment within our congregations and judicatories and how we move forward from there. So with that in mind, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Kendall Martin.

Kendall Martin 24:07

Thank you, Allison. So as you explore different opportunities and ministry models to support asylum seekers, it's really important that you discern your reason for entering this work. And all models of engagement can be time and labor intensive. And it is because of your commitment to this work and the relationships that you will build that it is crucial you come together as a ministry team to discern your why. To define what your purpose or your mission for engaging in this ministry. And we encourage you to take time to center yourselves in prayer, scripture, and discernment as you build your ministry team. An important step in the discernment process is getting to know your local community. Identify local and regional immigrant-led organizations, mutual assistance associations, and ethnic community based organizations. If your team is primarily composed of US citizens or permanent residents, begin this worked by forming relationships with organizations that have taken leading roles in advocacy and support for immigrants by immigrants. It's important that you show up and you learn and listen and support and not take the lead. We have some suggestions for discussion and reflection questions that you can use as you continue to discern and develop your ministry team. You can ask where and how is God already at work among the immigrant community in your area? What can your ministry do to align with organizations, ideally immigrant-led, already working in your community? What other faith communities or partners could you engage with for this ministry? Who is this ministry for? Does this really serve others? Or does it serve our own sense of guilt or obligation, fear, or hopelessness? Who is not at the table? What voices are missing from the conversation? How are the people you serve

increasingly empowered to use their unique gifts and skills to pursue their dreams? And what are you learning from the people you serve? How are you being transformed personally, and as a group? I'll now turn it over to Mary to talk about some of those ministry models.

Mary Campbell 26:09

Thank you, Kendall, for these important considerations that will definitely help congregational and individual discernment. Now, I'd like to take some time to talk through this engagement, beginning first, for congregations and synods and dioceses, and individual engagement. There are opportunities for each of you no matter where you may find yourself either in a congregation, synod, or as an individual, but also geographically, I can tell you some amazing stories of engagement by ELCA members in eastern North Dakota, it all starts somewhere and kind of moves to deeper higher engagement like walking up a set of stairs. When anyone or any organized group develops an interest in something, they might begin by first learning or awareness building and then taking a small action step. Here are some of our resources for this awareness building. As more learning happens, more action steps are added, the group might take more significant actions, which can lead to more awareness building and even bigger action steps. This is exactly what we found when we began our work formally with AMMPARO in late 2016, after the strategy was adopted by the church wide assembly. We began to create a network of welcoming congregations and already had a few synods with immigration task forces. Synods for our Episcopal folks are like your dioceses. We invited congregations to join our network as welcoming congregations. These congregations make four commitments to welcome migrants in their communities: to spiritually accompany migrants, to physically accompany migrants, for example, finding needed services in the community or maybe going to an ICE check in or even court, to pray for justice, and to advocate for justice. There's no financial commitment required. Some of these congregations went through long periods of discernment, awareness building, and education to gather a committed group of people before they joined as a congregation. Others other congregations already had a small group of committed people who then asked for and received the blessing of their congregational leadership to accompany migrants both in their communities, some at the border and internationally, offering more and more people in the congregation come and see opportunities. Synods have done the same. Each of these congregations is encouraged to connect to local migrant-led organizations and to participate in the work of those organizations as they are able. To date there's a great variety of work happening in our congregations. During this time, some of our congregations joined local sanctuary networks and were trained as sanctuary congregations. Our churches here supports sanctuary work, but sanctuary networks were created locally. In the ELCA, we also invited our sanctuary congregations to join the network. So what's the difference between them? Sanctuary congregations, whether they are sanctuary hosting or supporting, make a financial commitment, and as I said welcoming do not. To date we have 187 welcoming and sanctuary congregations across the US and here here's here's the map. The orange stars represent welcoming and sanctuary congregations black stars represent our sanctuary synods, of which there are five about to be seven. They all have task forces connected to AMMPARO to direct their work. The green stars represent our synod AMMPARO immigration task forces, which gather congregational representatives and individuals across the synod to do immigration advocacy, awareness building, and accompaniment. The network as a whole is regularly invited to do advocacy by our Director for Migration Policy, Giovana Oaxaca. And at a state level by our state public policy offices. Here is a succinct statement of our overall advocacy goal. Everyone can participate in advocacy. All these synods and congregations start with

small action steps and gradually find deeper engagement over time as they get to know the migrant community organizations and find other ecumenical partners. In fact, the AMMPARO network is open to ecumenical partners and congregations and we have interfaith organizations in our network as well. Some congregations and synods deepen their engagement by doing border immersion experiences which are available in El Paso, Las Cruces, Tijuana, Nogales, and many other places as well. Some visit companions in Central America and Mexico to see the amazing work done by AMMPARO international companions. Individuals sometimes organize these visits as well. Let's so let's talk about individual engagement. I have lots of people who reach out to me on a regular basis and asked to get involved with AMMPARO. I always encourage them to find like minded people in their congregation or in their synod and join either as a welcoming congregation or help their synod start an immigration task force. Why? Because there's more power in a group and it can lead to deeper engagement and support. But if you happen to be a lawyer, there are other opportunities. You are certainly needed right now to be trained and to take on pro bono cases. As a lawyer, I have found it incredibly satisfying to use my legal skills in a variety of ways. This slide outlines some of the work our pro bono lawyers have done in the past few years. Email me for more details. One opportunity for individuals is the guardian angel court watch program where you can be the physical presence of the church in the courtroom. We have 11 programs across the nation that are always looking to expand to more of the 65 immigration courts in the US. Here is our most well known guardian angel in the ELCA, Bishop Eaton. She's in front of the Chicago immigration court. Take a look at this long list of first step opportunities for individuals, but also for congregations, synods, and dioceses for engagements. Connect to ELCA AMMPARO as a welcoming congregation or Episcopal Migration Ministries and engage with migrant community organizations. Build awareness of issues facing migrants through educational events. Plan an immersion, either internationally to learn about root causes in Central America or a border immersion experience. Join or develop a guardian angel program and be the physical presence of the church in the courtroom. advocate for protections for migrants through ELCA advocacy AMMPARO or Episcopal Migration Ministries. Volunteer in migrant shelters, visit migrants in detention centers, pray for justice for migrant children and families, and give to support ELCA AMMPARO or Episcopal Migration Ministries. Now here you will see some additional steps that you can take if you are ready for deeper engagements. We already have congregations and synods accompanying asylum seekers. But this upcoming training will equip more to do so and will be a deeper level of engagement than what I have mentioned so far. Now Allison is going to tell you about Episcopal Migration Ministries' opportunities.

Allison Duvall 33:41

Thanks so much, Mary. As Kendall alluded to, and Mary mentioned and described there's a wide variety of things that any individual or congregation can do, to get started to deepen their engagement and to try new different new and different types of ministry opportunities in partnership with other organizations and congregations. So what I want to do is share with you a few of the opportunities available through EMM. So like the ELCA through AMMPARO, we offer a variety of different ministry and networking opportunities. And we've organized these opportunities under three different ministry areas. One is welcoming refugees through the refugee resettlement program. The other is ministering to those who are harmed by immigrant detention. And then third, supporting asylum seekers. And within each of those different ministry areas, for us we talk about the the kind of cycle of engagement being always starting with learning and deepening awareness, as Mary said, engaging in advocacy as you learn, and then move toward surface and towards relational engagement. So Episcopal Migration

Ministries is one of only nine national refugee resettlement agencies that work in public-private partnership with the federal government to resettle refugees. We have 13 local affiliate partners across the country. And prior to 2016, we had 31. And as many of you know, if you've been listening and learning over the past few years, you know that this administration has taken a very restrictive approach to all forms of immigration and humanitarian protections, including the resettlement program. So even in spite of these immense challenges, our affiliates, local volunteers, congregations have continued to resettle refugees. So we would love to connect you and your congregation to the nearest EMM affiliate to you. We also work with congregations to connect them to the affiliates of the other national agencies. For us, we want Episcopalians and our congregations to be involved in the work of welcome however, welcome shows up nearest to you. We also work in close partnership with the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations, or OGR. And we elevate different policy areas and issues of importance to Episcopalians as things move in Washington. All of the policy positions of the Episcopal Church are voted upon and approved by our governing bodies, the General Convention and the Executive Council. So if you are an Episcopalian or an interested friend, and you want more information about how to take action on issues that matter to us, please join the Episcopal Public Policy Network. And we'll have information about that in the follow up materials. Earlier in 2020 EMM launched the first ever Episcopal immigrant detention ministry network. The network is currently comprised of clergy and lay leaders from across the country who are engaged in ministry to those who are harmed by immigrant detention. The network is busy mapping out what's happening in dioceses across the country, especially for congregations that are in proximity to detention centers. They're creating educational resources and how to materials. They're networking to support those who have been released from detention to support family members on the outside. They're working together, and in partnership with other groups across the country to stop deportations of asylum seekers and so much more. You are more than welcome to join us. We'd love to have you join this network. Even if you're just at the beginning of your learning, you are valuable and we'd love to have you with us. Again, advocacy is also critical to end the abuses that occur in detention and to advocate for humane alternatives. As Giovanna mentioned in her presentation, the Episcopal Church likewise has policy on ending immigrant detention and in advocating for humane alternatives and to end family detention and family separations. So another reason to join the Episcopal Public Policy Network is that periodically, we do bring up and continue education and advocacy awareness around immigrant detention issues. So please do join. The third area is our area of building out ministries that support asylum seekers in a variety of ways. Similarly to how we have a detention ministry network, we have an asylum ministry network. And we have many ecumenical partners who are part of this network as well from interfaith organizations to Unitarian Universalist congregations. It's really quite a wonderful community that's forming in this network. So if you are engaged in any way or want to learn more, we encourage you to join the network. We also encourage you to check out Supporting Asylum Seekers: A Toolkit for Congregations. We composed this in partnership with a number of practitioners, congregational leaders, refugee resettlement professionals last year. It is an incredible offering that comes from our experience and practice in our refugee resettlement work, and adapts some of those forms, procedures, and policies to be used by congregations who might deepen their engagement in supporting asylum seekers in a more long term fashion or through sponsorship. So we do encourage you to check that out. And you will see that in the follow up email as well. Finally, we've released a lot of resources in recent years to help in the education and the conversation in the formation of members of our churches around these issues. We have a podcast called Hometown, which we'd really

encourage you to check out, you can subscribe on Apple podcasts, Google Play, Stitcher, SoundCloud, and I think we're on Spotify now as well. So please subscribe to the Hometown podcast. We have a book club where we provide discussion guides, prayers and other resources for different books on forced migration topics and narratives. We have Reflections on Stations of the Cross for use during the season of Lent and during Holy Week specifically. We offer Bible studies for use during Epiphanytide. So lots of resources, wherever your congregation might be, there is a way to take one small next step to continuing the conversation to learning more and then through prayer and discernment to find out where God is calling you to next. So I will stop there, you can rest assured that all of the things Mary and I have mentioned will be in the follow up email that will come to you in the next day or so. And I'm very happy to now turn our attention to an example of local partnership across an ELCA Synod and Episcopal Diocese. Flor Saldivar is the Immigration and Refugee Ministry Coordinator in the Diocese of West Texas. And Allyson Pryor is the Associate to the Bishop for Border Response in the Southwestern Texas Synod of the ELCA. And I'm very excited to have them share their story of collaboration with all of you today. So Allyson, I'll turn it over to you.

Allyson Pryor 40:54

Thank you, Allison. So I work in the Office of the Bishop and it's Sue Briner. And that's in southwestern Texas, which is contiguous with the Diocese of West Texas in the Episcopal adjudicatory. And one area I cover is border response. And the thing to know about Lutherans in Texas is that we are small. But we do like to consider ourselves a mighty force. And so when I started this, this work, the Bishop had already figured out that we weren't big enough to duplicate or, or come behind any anyone with huge infrastructure projects or large scale initiatives that would require a ton of volunteers or resources. And so she encouraged me to go and find partners, and others doing this work and to bring our little Lutheran superpower to the task, which is connecting and communicating. So in an effort to do that, I began with the ecumenical partners and the relationships she had already formed, and we formed some connections around border response, especially because last year, in the summer of 2019, there was a huge influx of folks coming to the border, who were seeking asylum. And it created a lot of stress on the nonprofit network and the in the ministry networks down here. There literally was no room at the inn. And so for us, that moment where you are welcoming is something that's is really is real is real to us, because the people who come they're coming to our border with Mexico, and they're, they're manifesting the reality of a miracle that they've survived this long, dangerous journey. And they're showing us every day how resilient they are, and how much ingenuity they bring to their survival. And so how can you help but become incredibly passionate and motivated in how you might come together to support welcoming the these heroic people in their first moments of being in the United States. And so we knew at that point, that caring for a large number of travelers coming to the border meant making the most of each and everything that you have to offer, whether it's prayer, or a church building. And so we got together with the local nonprofit by the name of the Interfaith Welcome Coalition. And they're based in San Antonio. And they have been welcoming refugees and asylum seekers since 2014. And it became clear that through them and their network that there were a lot of nonprofits and ministries, all struggling to do work, that was somewhat duplicative. And so we said, okay, what we can do is connect with our ecumenical partners and this wonderful San Antonio based non profit, and create a communication and connection network. And so we did. We got together, all of us and established the Texas Border Collaboration Network. We are focused on bringing service providers together who provide direct humanitarian relief, legal aid, hospitality connections, which is either a shelter or

sponsorship, or even short term shelter while waiting for transportation on a plane or a bus in San Antonio, and of course, advocacy. So the difference between what we talked about here, and what in what you've been hearing throughout this presentation so far is that we're at Ground Zero. And so one of the things that we do at TBC and is have a have a monthly webinar so we can give a window into what's going on down here so that others around the country can witness what we're doing and the current events along the border. And during our August webinar, we were having webinar on hospitality connections, I met a dynamic and passionate advocate for immigration by the name of Flor Saldivar. And it turns out that Flor is my Episcopal Church counterpart. And she works for Bishop David Reed here in the West Texas diocese. And really, we understood right away that our passions were very parallel. And I was just so pleased to meet her, but I'm going to let her tell you her story. Flor, take it away.

Flor Saldivar 45:43

Hi, Allyson. Thank you so so much. So it's great to be here with y'all. And again, thank you so much, Allyson. As she mentioned, local collaboration is just absolutely essential to providing the resources necessary to best serve migrant communities. While there are numerous nonprofit interfaith and migrant support organizations, many, as mentioned, consist of very small teams and quite limited financial resources. So when the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas Immigration Ministries came along, we were no different by any means. So quickly, we learned that partnering with other organizations and groups was the best way to kind of accomplish our goals since we all shared such a similar mission. And one of the especially memorable moments came when a local group that we connected to because of the Texas Border Collaboration network, they sent out an email to several of us requesting emergency short term housing assistance for families released from detention from two of our nearby San Antonio area detention centers. And originally, we were asked to find hosts who had a spare bedroom, or churches with a spare parish hall, these kinds of church properties that might be available, and if possible, some funds to get a hotel room or an AirBnB for the two week quarantine period upon release. And quickly, we all kind of knew that we had to do something. So this entire network jumped on the phone. And we were calling our our folks up throughout our entire networks to see what could be done. And that's when I had a meeting with our Bishop David Reed, who throughout this process has just been an outstanding supporter of this ministry, as he is also a valley native right along the border. And I explained that there was this growing need for emergency housing and that this federal, federal order had been passed. And we were expecting quite a number of children to be released from detention and we really needed to have this short term housing available. And so quickly, we established the Diocesan Emergency Immigration Housing Fund. And then Bishop Reed wrote a letter to all of our clergy, churches and members of our diocese explaining this critical need. And he and his wife became the first family housing sponsors and then they encourage the others in our diocese, to either host a family or donate to the emergency fund. And through that, we were able to provide quite a number of short term AirBnBs and hotel rooms for a number of different families and individuals, as several members of our diocese generously donated and volunteered to serve as hosts throughout this time. And again, because we are a rather small group, it was very difficult because while we could provide housing, it was quite difficult to get essential needs and food to all of these different AirBnBs and hotel rooms. So we had a lot of local support from our ecumenical partners who would sign up for shifts to go purchase and deliver food and it was just the true meaning of local collaboration. And again, as always, the Texas Border Collaboration network hospitality connections webinar, led me to meet

Allyson, we had previously engaged a little bit in discussion with emails back and forth and then slowly but surely, I noticed that Allyson was quite fearless and driven and she was just ready to get the job done. And so this is when we went ahead and decided to move forward with this new idea.

Allyson Pryor 49:57

So really clearly, we love working together, I think this, if you haven't picked up on one thing, that would be a great thing to pick up on. But what we really have in common is you. We looked at each other, in our passion for serving this amazing a community that comes and brings their hopes to our doorstep. We realized that, and I'm looking at the number of participants, there's over 100 of you on this webinar. I mean, again, we looked each other and said, we have something that we can do, that brings in all of our network of congregations from across the country. And that's something that some of the nonprofits--they don't have national bodies. And so we have you, and we are so thrilled that there has been an interest in learning more and becoming more involved in providing respite care for people who are awaiting asylum hearings, and, and hopefully, some will receive refugee status.

Flor Saldivar 51:07

And as mentioned, I mean, also the number of releases from detention at this time continued to just increase. And we were then given a call that we should expect an even larger increase in the coming days and weeks. And so we said, Oh, my goodness, okay, we need to prepare. And quickly, as we continue to see this increase need, our local collaborators said, Well, we've contacted all of the long term shelters throughout the US and most, if not all, of them have reached maximum capacity, or we've connected to several potential sponsors. But due to COVID, we're unable to actually connect families to sponsors. And the thing about the families that were being released is that most of them did not have any contacts in the US whatsoever. So this meant no family, no friends, no, and no type of long term support. And so at this point, Allyson and I kind of looked at each other. And we said, there's something we can do to address this gap in this system.

Allyson Pryor 52:16

And so in an act of complete faith, that individuals and congregations like you would show up, it was definitely one of those, if you build it, they will come moments, we launched in I think it was what 10 days, Flor, the Texas Border Sponsorship Forum. And what we thought we could do...now neither of us is experts, right? But what we thought we could do is open a space, a virtual space, and a in a reoccurring time for potential sponsors to find each other and share experiences and build community. So it is we have had just this week, we started in August, and we had our third one this week. And I am very, very grateful to be working with Flor to do this. And I'm gonna let her tell you a little bit more about what we do on those calls.

Flor Saldivar 53:15

Yes, so essentially, each month, we invite speakers such as case managers, sponsorship experts and other organizations that can assist attendees as they prepare for or discern sponsorship, either as individuals or congregations. And one of the best parts about this Forum is that there's been quite a vast amount of sharing of stories and doubts and questions about sponsorship. And the experts are right there to address these concerns right away. And in addition, the Forum has served as a place to really just connect with existing organizations and groups and individuals from across the country that

have very similar interests, or are seeking the same thing. And that's actually how we engaged with our partner and now friend Andrew Byrd from the Lutheran Family Services at Rocky Mountains.

Andrew Byrd 54:19

Thanks, Flor, for that introduction. Yeah, an amazing story of organizations coming together in this work. Thank you for sharing. And I am I'm still astounded as well. I had no idea there was a refugee stories podcast out there. I will be looking up Hometown right after this. So again, my name is Andrew Byrd, and I'm broadcasting here from Las Cruces, New Mexico. And I have the privilege of introducing our two upcoming webinars. So for those congregations who are interested in considering sponsorship, that is: long term housing, financial support, and service provision, while hosting asylum seekers, I would encourage you to attend the upcoming webinars. Those, again are going to be on October 20. And October 27, October 20, and October 27, from four to 5:30pm Eastern time, we're going to have some amazing speakers on those, those two webinars, including for those of you who may have had the privilege to come to Las Cruces and done an immersion program, representatives from the Border Servant Core, and then also from our partners at Save the Children. And really what those webinars are, is to get to a granular level of what it would mean to host an asylum seeker family, in your local community. So if you feel that you're ready to take that step in providing direct support, and you believe that families shouldn't be detained in a facility while they go through the asylum court process, these webinars are designed for you. We're going to be providing the details on the how to of connecting families to resources, down to submitting asylum applications, helping families get a job, the benefits they qualify for how to set boundaries as a congregation, and really providing a solid foundation for this work. Now, a lot of things have been mentioned during this webinar of ways that you can become involved in sponsorship really is that next next step up in the staircase. And it's a huge decision. And it's not a commitment that should be made lightly. So we really hope that these next two webinars provide the clarity for congregations who are looking into maybe the timeframe of helping families, and then the amount and the scope of work that would go into sponsorship. We want this as much to be an opportunity for congregations to gauge if sponsorship is within your capacity, as it is to be a training gateway. As Flor and Allyson mentioned, connecting partners together who are already doing this work in providing services. And with that, I'm going to pass it off to Kendall for for our next segment.

Kendall Martin 57:17

Thanks, Andrew. And if you haven't yet submitted your question, we'd encourage you to go ahead and submit it in the Q&A box. And we'll field it. We're going to go ahead and start with the questions and get the first question to Giovanna. And how does the asylum system differ from the migration one, particularly for the host institution?

Giovana Oaxaca 57:44

Sorry, just taking myself off mute there. Um, how did the asylum system different from the migration one, particularly for the host situation. So there are different systems in place here, the asylum system deals with people who are petitioning for humanitarian relief on account for that they're experiencing persecution, and you have to meet certain conditions to apply for asylum. So the asylum system has been under constant barrage under this administration. And as I mentioned, most significantly, by attempting to narrow the definition of persecution, so fewer people can can meet it. And in addition, with these new rules that the administration has proposed, they would significantly cut the due process

rights of people who are who are attempting to apply for asylum. So even if they did have a credible fear, even if they wanted to establish that they would be persecuted upon their return to their home country, it has become really, really hard to sort of appeal those decisions. And that's, that's part of the asylum system. But the broader immigration system that the United States has also come under all sorts of attacks in under this administration, affecting who can apply for visas who can apply to enter the country on refuge as a refugee. So these are all different places in the in the overall immigration system that have been under barrage but we are looking at two different a different systems that place here

Kendall Martin 59:34

Thanks, Giovanna, and someone's asked a question that I believe a few of you might want to answer which is does the location of your church impact whether or not you can sponsor? Our church is in the Chicago area.

Allyson Pryor 59:51

I don't mind taking that one because, um, we just had our forum on Tuesday and had a lovely discussion with with someone interested in sponsoring who's in Wisconsin, and really your location is a place you might consider a resource. So if you're in a location where you might be able to access, health care, or legal services, those things are really important to consider. And I know through this training, coming up in the next couple of sessions, you all are going to go into a lot more detail about that. But what we did discover in our call the other day, was the advantage to some rural locations. Now, there are inconveniences as stated with being in a rural location. But what we learned was that rural communities tend to come together a lot faster, and they're used to collaborating with each other as a community. And so we have examples of people who had a wonderful network in a rural community, and also that there are many examples of, of, of city governments or county governments or state laws, creating a much more appealing and easier environment for sponsorship. But anyone anywhere can do it. It just becomes a matter of the level of preparation and collaboration you need to seek out.

Kendall Martin 1:01:30

Thanks, Allyson. Someone has asked Am I correct that there's an increase in asylum seekers released from detention these last few months and an increased need for hospitality?

Mary Campbell 1:01:41

I would say that that's what we have seen. And we have currently are even seeing people being released at this point in time, certainly not to the level that we would like to see. Because with the incidence of COVID, in the institutions, we have had the highest number of deaths in detention. This year, it actually doubled from last year that's ever been seen. But yes, there still are people being released and actually being replaced. We actually heard in one session, about 10 families were coming in and 10 families were just about to go out. And it seems like very strange and all that that's happening. But yes, that's definitely true.

Kendall Martin 1:02:22

And Allison, I'm going to throw this one to you. Our rector wants to get our parish involved and he thinks education is the best way to start. What would be the best way to start this? I think the Epiphany readings would be great. And also the book clubs, is there something you might feel is more basic?

Allison Duvall 1:02:37

Oh, that's a good question. So we have already created a Refugee Sunday toolkit, which is mostly focused on educating congregations about the refugee resettlement program. However, we're preparing to release a Migration Sunday toolkit, which will be more broad and have sections that focus on different aspects of migration, including asylum and immigrant detention. So stay tuned for that. And since you've attended our webinar, we have your email address, lucky us. So we'll be able to share that with you when it's released. But doing something that can focus, a Sunday's worship and adult forum, around issues of migration and base them in biblical teaching, also in our baptismal covenant, and what we're called to as followers of Jesus can be really helpful. And also, by basing it in that biblical teaching in a sermon, perhaps the hymns that--you can look at the liturgical or excuse me, the lectionary cycle, and choose a day where the readings appointed make a lot of sense, thematically to talk about issues of migration as they appear in Scripture. It helps center the conversation in who we are as Christians, and who we are as people of faith. And I think that can be helpful, especially if a congregation is newer to talking about this topic in a faith context, to remove it from the partisan politicking that it's been forced into and to reclaim it as an issue for us as people of faith. So stay tuned for that the Refugee Sunday tool kit, as I said, already exists. The Migration Sunday toolkit is coming, but I'd encourage any parish leader, lay or clergy, a Lutheran or Episcopal or any other any other denomination to consider what cycle of readings are coming up in your churches or your faith communities yearly cycle of readings? When does it make sense thematically, to talk about migration from a scriptural basis, as opposed to it's what's in the headlines today. Right and I'd love to hear I saw Flor nodding I'd love to hear wisdom from the rest of my my fellow panelists about what they've seen that works well for a congregation that's just getting started.

Flor Saldivar 1:04:44

Thank you so much, Allison, so well that I definitely agree. I absolutely love that. And I'm trying to think of what's more basic than education because really, I know the other day I presented to a congregation. And the thing is, we assume that everyone knows a lot of things. For example, I assume that people know what an asylum seeker is, as opposed to an illegal immigrant. And when I attended this conversation presentation with this parish, I realized very quickly that a lot of the folks sitting in the audience thought that the asylum seekers waiting along the border, were all illegal immigrants that just kind of refused to leave. So quickly. I mean, I explained the difference between illegal immigrants and MPP and you know, those kinds of things to them. And they said, Oh, my gosh, we had no idea. And once I started talking about scripture and our baptismal covenant, as Allison mentioned, they were just like, Oh, my gosh, we had no idea. So really, I think just getting that basic education out there is perfect, along with Allison's suggestion.

Mary Campbell 1:05:59

I would just add that for a long time, in partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, we have Migrant and Refugee Sunday, which has those materials. But one of the things that we have that's been really important for some of our people in the congregations particularly to use during

Advent and Lent is 40 of the 92 verses in the Bible on a bookmark scripture bookmark that talk about welcoming the stranger. And so that's another way to read a verse every day, and to come in to pray about what God is calling you to do. It's also something that has been very useful, particularly in the advocacy arena, where our members of churches have gone to see their Congresspeople and people of faith and they are people faith and have said, You know, I would I challenge you to read this, the 40, do the 40 Day Challenge. And I will do it with you to see, you know, how, what, what God is telling us here on migration issues,

Kendall Martin 1:07:03

Thanks, Mary. And the next question asked how long is the typical time the congregation is expected to accompany the asylum seeker?

Mary Campbell 1:07:11

I would say that at this moment, we are saying considering that the legal system is so in such a protracted state, that it's it's probably a minimum of a year to 18 months. I don't know if Allyson, Allison, or Flor, four would like to add to that based on the other experiences, but it is much more long term and is becoming more long term all the time.

Allyson Pryor 1:07:39

So I would add to that, that is I listen to the questions, I just want to make a blanket statement about being prepared for the unexpected. That's kind of an oxymoron. But that's what we have to do. And so what what has been true in the past--it used to be six months. Now, the the extension of approval for a work permit, which is a recent change, again, changes happen from a government perspective in the application of policy. So being prepared for a longer term stay of a guest is a better way to think about it. And on the flip side, there are people who come and take a few months to kind of get their bearings, make connections, perhaps with the cousin or someone else that they may have connections with from their home country. And then they become self-sufficient. So I bring that up, because there's no guarantee--Flor and I would never have met if it hadn't been for the unpredictability of ICE and Border Patrol. So there's lots of blessings that come with that unpredictability. But it is something that if you are considering becoming involved, taking a fluid approach to your expectations is critical. I know y'all are gonna dig into this stuff. But I just want to in your following webinars. But there, there are no rule books that are bound and concrete that can determine exactly how long a commitment will be. So being flexible. And I think one thing I know you're going to cover is this idea of creating a support network. That is another reason it's a lot easier to flex when you have people that are working together so no one person gets burnt out trying to be a support.

Kendall Martin 1:09:37

Thank you. And someone asked how do you adjust the significant power differential between those offering services and those individuals needing services? This has been a real issue in some of our groups.

Andrew Byrd 1:09:48

I think that's an amazing question and and absolutely in the right headspace to be making those considerations when going into this work. I'll preface this by saying it's something that we're going to go

into in detail during this next webinar. But maybe to briefly touch on it. I think it's really important when you, you start out this work to establish what you might call ground rules, establish ground rules and expectations amongst members of your group that are doing the work. And then also those expectations with the asylum seeker families that you're supporting. If you create those rules and guidelines in advance, and determine what it is the limitations of the of what you're providing is, and what the expectations you have of a family as well. It helps to avoid scenarios like that, where maybe you're in a position where you feel more like you're adopting the family than working towards their self-sufficiency.

Mary Campbell 1:10:59

And I just want to emphasize when Andrew said this...when you establish ground rules, that has to be a process with mutuality, it can't be one sided making those kinds of decisions. And there needs to be mutuality throughout the whole process. And so I one of the things that's also important is when you're in your period of discernment to think about how much has your congregation done racial justice training, how much has your congregation been engaged in cross-cultural training, or had cross-cultural experiences or is prepared for that kind of training?

Kendall Martin 1:11:43

Thank you. And is anyone doing any work with deportees and their families when they return to their home of origin?

Mary Campbell 1:11:50

I just have to take that one. Just to say that one of the one of the exciting pieces of the work that's happened internationally in the ELCA, particularly in Central America, is that these the work that we have supported with our companion churches and organizations in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador has been precisely that, with the numbers of people being deported from the United States and Mexico, and with government services in Central America not being available at all, our companions have been able to do work over these last five years, amazing work to accompany people who have been deported. First to try to make sure they have a safe place to live, which that changes daily, one day, it may be a safe place, but with the conditional conditions changing it may not be, but also to do work with with income generation or school or whatever, whatever the per the individual would like to do, or has dreams of doing sometimes even starting small enterprises, micro business and you know, micro enterprises, but also psychosocial trauma counseling, because this whole process is traumatizing. And one of the things that everyone receives, with our companions, when they arrive, and are part of the program is the opportunity to have psychosocial trauma counseling. In some cases, it can it's possible to do it with a group with some cases are so trauma, and they have been people been so traumatized, and they need individual counseling. And so that's what's been provided. And when they originally felt that they would, when they looked at what their statistics might look like, they thought maybe they would get a 50% success rate, and help in in helping people and and giving them enough so that they would feel they didn't have to take the migrant journey, again. And those numbers keep rising over time as they do more and more of this work. And the last statistics we saw were 88 to 95%. At least at that moment, don't want to make the migrant journey again. So that's that's a very important piece of work that needs to happen. And those connections are very important for all of us. So what

that means is that when we know of people in the United States that are being deported there, we can say that there are services available to them and connect them with those services.

Allison Duvall 1:14:16

I'll just briefly say, Episcopal Migration Ministries does not have the programming similar to what Mary discussed, but the Episcopal Church of course is not simply a United States church. We have den.. or denominations we have dioceses in I believe it's 14 or 15 different countries that are part of the Episcopal Church, including dioceses in Central and South America, also the Anglican province in Central and South America. The acronym is called IARCA. So IARCA bishops and priests and congregations are frequently in conversation about this. Many of you on the webinar today might be familiar with Cristosal, a human rights organization based in El Salvador and the work that they've done both for to support in country processing of refugee claims but also returnees. So those are important things to note. And the other thing I might note for, just for the information of the Episcopalians on the webinar is that EMM hosts what's called the Anglican Working Group on Migration. And so we gather with Anglican Communion autonomous provinces around the world around issues of migration, including the kind of dynamics that have just been mentioned.

Kendall Martin 1:15:32

Thanks, Allison. I'm gonna give this next one to you. How does the congregation sign up for one or more of the EMM initiatives discussed and doesn't matter where the congregation is located as far as which are the most effective initiatives?

Allison Duvall 1:15:46

That's a really good question. So if you visit episcopalmigrationministries.org, you'll see all the different resources that we mentioned, with the sole difference of we're building out pages for our detention ministry network and asylum ministry network. So if you go searching for those, those pages are currently under development. We will, however, give you direct links to join those networks in the follow up email from this webinar. So stay tuned for those. Now in terms of what's the best thing to do to kind of get started, it really does depend on where you are, and what is happening and what are the most pressing needs regarding migration kind of writ large in your area. So Flor is participating in both of the networks that I mentioned. And one of the efforts that's underway is mapping what's happening in congregations across the Episcopal Church with regard to a wide array of immigration ministry, including where are congregations that are most proximate to detention centers? And are those congregations in any way involved in letter writing, in supporting families who are on the outside, things of this nature. So we're kind of in this deep, deep canvassing right now to learn what's happening across the Episcopal Church. But it really depends on where you are, what is happening, where you are, where can you show up to support efforts that are already underway. And then also just being aware of the capacity, the gifts, the skills, and the resources that your congregation or that partnerships with other congregations can bring to the table. And so it's a process of mapping your community and a process of being aware of what what you can offer and what you can bring. But I'd love to hear what others others have to say about that as well. I saw some nods, as I was talking.

Flor Saldivar 1:17:33

Definitely, I think something that's a common misconception is that you have to live near the border to kind of get engaged in this work. And that is definitely not the case, there are detention centers across the United States. And on top of that, there are a number of organizations across the United States as well. So for example, let's say you are in Montana, and you say oh my goodness, there's nothing going on in Montana, I know of no congregation near me that's doing anything related to migration ministries. Believe it or not, there will likely be a number of nonprofits around you that are doing something. And even if there are not, if you go online and just kind of look a little deeper, you'll find a ton of virtual volunteer opportunities, as well as things that you can get involved in such as these webinars where you can just learn and then you'll find additional opportunities outside of that. So definitely, you can always get involved regardless of where you are.

Allyson Pryor 1:18:41

And I would just add a tiny note to what Flor said. We down here, and in our partners focus on getting travelers out of Texas, because of the important fact that Texas courts do not tend to be as easy or let's just say they're a little more difficult when it comes to granting asylum. And so one of the things that we're working on, is getting a map together of the and there actually is one online, which hopefully we can include that in our email, right, Allison. We can do that. There's a link where you can click and there are statistics about the disposition of court cases. And there are definitely places around the country who have a better reputation for humanitarian positions around these cases. And so our hope is to be able to collect enough information that when someone is coming in, they are here that and they don't have somewhere to go, that we'll be able to have an intelligent answer about where the case and the resources are most of the case disposition and the resources are most favorable. So in addition to all the other preparation, you could just start listening in your community and use this map that that will include in the email and start thinking about what is going on around you in terms of potential support. And, and again, I think Flor also mentioned detention centers, they're all over the country. And so where there's a detention center, there's very much 99% sure, there's an activist group that's trying to influence what happens inside and the releases. So.

Mary Campbell 1:20:31

In fact, last weekend in Berks, Pennsylvania, there was a huge rally to try to shut down that private detention facility. And, and we had Lutherans and Episcopalians involved in that. Last weekend, that will continue. And in Texas, there's two other family detention facilities as well. And even though they're really remotely located, it's a little bit harder to accompany them, maybe. But there's, there's work being done to try to really get the families released.

Allyson Pryor 1:21:08

Well, and again, I know we're running out of time, but I want all of you to know, when it comes to detention centers. Taking on considering this work, and being a sponsor, is an act of resistance. What we understand on the ground somewhat informally, is that the attorneys can communicate into the detention centers that there is a destination for someone who's there. And that does at time, again, nothing's predictable. But it there are attorneys who have successfully identified sponsors, and, and, and created the opportunity for release. So no pressure. But that is the truth that if we can mobilize to create more destinations, for people who don't have one, it's possible we can influence their release.

So it's really happening. But I want you to feel empowered in a time that feels powerless. That's why I say it not to put undue pressure.

Allison Duvall 1:22:12

Thank you, Allyson. It's always it's just wonderful to be with all you panelists and presenters, but also just hear the questions of folks who are with us today. And thank you all so much for giving your time to learn and to ask these wonderful questions. One brief note on terminology. And we do tend to use language like undocumented and unauthorized. So I wanted to acknowledge those really important comments that were shared in the questions pane. Thank you so much. And I think when Flor was speaking it was more quoting the experience she was having on the ground.

Flor Saldivar 1:22:49

Yes, I will say that, um, I definitely unauthorized or undocumented is the way to go. It was just kind of sharing how how much information is not sometimes. Not that not that it's not available, but how much information people aren't aware of sometimes. So thank you for clearing that up. And thank you so much for making those comments, because we agreed.

Allison Duvall 1:23:16

Thanks, Flor. Wonderful. We're going to look now at those web webinars that Andrew mentioned. So the present webinar that we are all in right now has been recorded, it will be released, you will be able to view it. These last two are not being recorded. These are actually going to be Zoom meetings. And they're going to be interactive, there'll be breakout rooms and we don't want anyone to feel put on the spot by being recorded. So you want to come to these, folks, so please make sure that you sign up for them. We'll have links to sign up in the follow up materials. And I'm going to turn it over now to Kendall to close us in prayer. Kendall, over to you.

Kendall Martin 1:23:56

Thanks, Allison. Let us pray. Wise and compassionate God, help us to bear the burdens refugees and asylum seekers carry and not simply seek to shift the burden onto others. Call our leaders to justice, generosity and compassion. Help them create and implement strategies that are fair and just and treat refugees and asylum seekers with dignity and care. Oh God, our comforter we ask you to comfort the brokenhearted and protect the vulnerable. We pray for those who live in fear of detention and removal. For those who are in detention at this time. And for those who face removal to an uncertain future. We ask you to assure them of your great love. Surround them with your presence and fill them with your peace. God bless our eyes so that we will recognize and injustices. God bless our ears so that we will hear the cry of the stranger. God bless our mouths so that we will speak words of welcome to newcomers. God bless our shoulders so we will be able to bear the weight of struggling for justice. God bless our hands so that we can work together with all people to establish peace. Amen. And we're going to leave you with some contact information for both EMM and ELCA AMMPARO. You can visit episcopalmigrationministries.org and you'll be able to find all the things that we spoke about you can find us on social media @EMMRefugees. And ELCA AMMPARO, go to elca.org/AMMPARO. And on social media they are ELCAAMMPARO.

Allison Duvall 1:25:30

Thank you all so much for being part of today. Thank you, panelists and presenters, and we'll see you all hopefully at those next two events. Take care everyone.

Kendall Martin 1:25:45

Thank you so much for joining us today listeners, be sure to visit bit.ly/asylumtraining if you wish to register for one or both of the virtual sponsorship trainings.

Allison Duvall 1:25:55

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram where we are EMMRefugees.

Kendall Martin 1:25:59

joining the Ministry of welcome by making a gift to Episcopal Migration Ministries. No gift is too small and all gifts are used to support and grow our work resettling refugees, supporting asylum seekers and creating welcoming communities for all of our immigrant siblings. Visit episcopalmigrationministries.org/give or text "hometown" to 91999.

Allison Duvall 1:26:21

Our theme song composer is Abraham Mwindi Ikando, find his music at abrahammwindi.bandcamp.com.

Kendall Martin 1:26:28

Until next time, peace be with you and all those who consider home.