

A challenge we hear from Episcopalians in our diocese is the desire to welcome refugees and immigrants, but a lack of knowledge on how to do that. There are many ways that you can get involved as a parish, within your community, and in our greater national conversation. Cultivating community practices of welcome is a part of [our call to serve and love like Jesus!](#)

How We Welcome as a Church

Welcoming “the stranger” is a clear mandate from the Gospel^[1] that our parishes are equipped to meet! Refugees and immigrants often leave their homes, their possessions, and their normal lives behind. There are several ways that our congregations can work as a support network for people rebuilding their lives.



One of the simplest efforts is to host a donation drive. One Sunday a month, parishioners can select specific, high-need items to gather and donate to new families or local organizations. Items like hygiene products, household supplies, feminine care products, diapers, and other non-food items are almost always in need.

Another great church effort is to assist people with setting up their apartments. Furniture, linens, cookware, and clothing are items that are left behind. Not only can your church gather these items for donation – you can also assist with set-up. For example, it’s a generous gift to donate a bed and sheets. But it’s a very generous gift to then put together the bed, wash the sheets, and make the bed for the family’s first night in their new home.

How We Welcome as a Community

There are many other volunteer needs throughout this process. Local organizations in your community may be able to match you to opportunities where your skills are most needed. Supporting new arrivals might include helping people with transportation, providing mentorship on financial matters and professional fields, and educational support in learning English and their new culture.

Another excellent practice of welcome is to intentionally support refugee and immigrant owned businesses. [Immigrants start businesses at twice the rate of US-born people](#), creating a huge economic impact for our local communities. By supporting these businesses, we not only welcome these folks into the community, but also into our own lives. You get to know the refugee who makes your coffee every morning. You learn new ways to cook from the immigrant who owns the corner grocery store. Supporting immigrant-owned businesses strengthens our local communities.

How We Welcome as a Country

It may seem easy to warmly welcome refugees and immigrants in our churches and communities. But the fact is, without welcoming practices at the national level, “the stranger” will be cut off from that warm welcome. But what can we do to welcome people as a country?

First, educate yourself on the issues that cause people to flee their home countries. Violence, often based on gender or sexuality, conflict/warfare which compromise safety, and religious or political persecution are some of the biggest contributing factors. Also, learn which countries are currently experiencing high rates of persecution. Some organizations and efforts to follow for more information include:

- [Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies \(Georgia\)](#)
- [El Refugio Ministry \(Georgia\)](#)
- [Episcopal Migration Ministries \(National\)](#)
- [International Rescue Committee \(Atlanta\)](#)
- [Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network \(Georgia\)](#)
- [New American Pathways \(Georgia\)](#)
- [U. S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement \(National\)](#)

By proactively seeking information about these challenges, we can then serve as advocates for welcome. Advocacy can include lots of things. Spread the word to your friends, family, and networks via social media. Take action on action alerts from advocacy groups. Writing letters and call your state and national representatives. Raise your voice in civic meetings or peaceful protests. These efforts together create the joyful noise needed to ensure welcome is always a part of our community practice.

[1] Matthew 25:31-40



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