

## What about immigration?

This is a difficult time to support immigrants. As a longtime member of the Lancaster COB, I have witnessed our congregation's work with refugees for almost 70 years. Families from war-torn Europe, Indian refugees from Uganda, Lost Boys from Sudan, ethnic Turks who were unwanted in Russia, Afghans who sided with Americans during the war are some of the people that we have helped in their adjustment to life in America. They have become successful and continue to contribute much to our society.

Recently our congregation even purchased a nice house in downtown Lancaster that our current refugee family rents from us. In the future we plan to use this house to support other refugees when the Sadats are ready to move on.

But now suddenly by Executive Order, the Refugee Admissions Program has come to a screeching halt with new refugees no longer allowed to enter our country. We at Lancaster COB were preparing to assist two new families who were within weeks of coming to Lancaster. After years of waiting, they were going through the vetting process and just awaiting final approval to come to Pennsylvania where we have been getting things ready for their arrival. Now they are stuck in limbo and we are heartbroken.

At the same time there are members of our own congregations that are scared because of the uncertainty of their own immigration status with fear of arrest and possible deportation. What can we do to help them?

I believe that each one of us can make a difference to bring about positive change so that we can once again welcome the stranger. First of all, we can educate ourselves about the issues of immigration and share info with others to advocate on behalf of the immigrant community.

In response to concerns raised by congregations in their districts related to potential detention and deportation among members of the Church of the Brethren, ANE, in conjunction with three other districts, is working cooperatively to provide resourcing and support to affected congregations and to the whole church. This new ministry is offering resources and relational/pastoral support. Support of those congregations has begun, and the ministry hopes to share more resources for members and congregations looking to grow in discipleship and support around immigration broadly in the months ahead. An initial commitment from these districts of \$100,000 is launching this ministry initiative. Additional financial support is welcome to help sustain the program. Reach out to District Executive Pete Kontra for more information.

Church World Service and Mennonite Central Committee have a wealth of info online. You could start by checking out these websites.

<https://cwsglobal.org/learn/migration-asylum-and-refuge/>

<https://mcc.org/resources/immigrant-resources>

Contact the Parish Resource Center for info about the Pennsylvania Immigration Advocacy Clinic (PIAC).

<https://connectprc.org/community-initiatives/immigration/>

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