

Week #1.

## **The (Insert Name of Parish or Institution) Circle of Support begins educational series on immigration**

The (Name of Parish/Institution) Circle of Support was founded in (insert date). Following the imposition in 2017 of what came to be called the Muslim Ban, a group of concerned parishioners from Gesu Parish, Detroit; St. Mary Student Parish, Ann Arbor; and Ste. Anne Parish in Detroit came together to unite in addressing the multiple challenges facing immigrants in our community. This effort was in direct response to Pope Francis's exhortations to receive immigrants and refugees as our brothers and sisters.

Initially, Catholic parishioners, and lay and religious leaders from throughout the community formed parish-based Circles of Support, determined to find ways to make a difference in the lives of immigrants. These groups eventually formed an umbrella organization they called Strangers No Longer (SNL). To date, SNL Circles of Support have been established in 23 Catholic parishes and educational institutions throughout the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Diocese of Lansing.

The three pillars of SNL's mission are as follows: to *Educate* parishioners and others in the broader community about issues related to immigration; to *Accompany* individuals and families in crisis; and to *Advocate* for more humane immigration policies and practices with legislators and other public officials. Over the past year, SNL has established a Board of Directors with representation from all Circles of Support and will soon finalize steps to establish itself as a separate 501c3, allowing the organization to further expand its mission of education, accompaniment and advocacy throughout the immigrant community.

*Please insert a brief paragraph about the unique work your parish's Circle of Support is doing to provide services to immigrants in your local community and beyond.*

The growth of Strangers No Longer would not have been possible without the hard work, leadership and generous support of individual Circle members, parish communities, religious congregations, and foundations, including the Catholic Foundation of Michigan and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. SNL has also worked closely with the leadership of Alianza Americas, a network of 50 immigrant-led organizations representing more the 100,000 families across the United States. Alianza has offered education and leadership support to our grassroots organization.

Over the coming four weeks, the (Insert Parish Name) Circle of Support, we will offer a series of articles designed to raise awareness about immigration and to encourage others in our parish to consider joining us in this critical social justice and humanitarian effort.

We close with a *Call to Action* from Oscar Chacon of Alianza Americas:

*It is crucial that elected officials know what is happening in Central America and understand the true Humanitarian crisis happening in countries where people are fleeing. This understanding is vital to advocate for changes in the U.S. humanitarian protections and reshaping our foreign policy so that these countries become places from which fewer people are forced to flee.*

Oscar Chacon, Executive Director, Alianza Americas

Alianza Americas Annual Report, 2019-2020