



JUSTICE *and* ADVOCACY MINISTRIES

Dear friends,

Last year at this time, the United States Congress was poised to reform our nation's immigration system. While differences in opinion were deeply felt and plentiful, both in Congress and across America, there was a shared sense that the current system could not and should not stand, and that the time to act was at hand. Twelve months later, however, the need for reform remains urgent, but the national conversation has lost its way. Rather than discussing how we can improve our immigration system so that it serves families, business, and communities more effectively and more humanely, the discussion now focuses on repealing humanitarian laws and enacting barriers to prevent the arrival of vulnerable men, women and, most notably, children arriving at the southern border of the United States. These people have been forced from their homes by escalating violence and instability in Central America, and are literally fleeing for their lives.

Amidst the frenzied discussions of “stemming the flow,” “turning the tide,” and “stopping the surge,” however, Episcopalians have responded to the needs of these children and families quickly and without fanfare. Whether you have met families at bus stations with needed food and hygiene supplies, donated supplies, helped migrants released from detention reunite with family, contacted your elected officials, offered pastoral care to unaccompanied children and detained adults, or held these migrants and the communities serving them in prayer, Episcopalians have responded to this human need through loving service. As members of Congress return home for August to meet with their constituents and host discussions in your communities, your voices of compassion and justice will be needed more than ever. As Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori stated in her remarks in response to the humanitarian crisis at our southern border, “We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keeper, and as a Church, we are asking the United States government to support such a response, grounded in justice and the fundamental dignity of every human being.” These children and families, brothers and sisters in Christ, need not only our service and compassion but our voice.



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The resources and ideas in this toolkit, gathered from leaders across the Church, staff, and interfaith partners, are intended to help you raise that voice. We are especially grateful to the Rev. Gay Jennings, President of the House of Deputies, for providing a letter of introduction that we hope, in particular, will help leverage advocacy by the Episcopalians who will serve as deputies to the 78th General Convention next summer. President Jennings, like the Presiding Bishop and Bishop Stacy Sauls, The Episcopal Church's Chief Operating Officer, has been forthright throughout this debate in reminding Episcopalians that our commitment to the dignity of those arriving at our borders flows directly from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our office is honored to support the transformational work Episcopalians throughout this Church are undertaking to change the unjust structure of our immigration system and to welcome vulnerable people fleeing harm. Thank you for all that you do.

In faith,

*Alexander D. Baumgarten*  
Director of Justice and  
Advocacy Ministries

*Katie Conway*  
Immigration and Refugee  
Policy Analyst