

THE  
*Episcopal*  
CHURCH



## **Breaking Bread and Building Bridges** **Potluck and Town Hall Meeting**

**Communities across the country have experienced the divisive effects of our country's broken immigration system and the hateful tone that has surrounded our nation's immigration debate. With immigration poised as one of the top priorities for leaders in Washington, now is the time to come together, not only as people of faith who welcome the stranger but as neighbors. This spring, join in fellowship with communities across the country by hosting an event that is part potluck and park town hall meeting—an opportunity to break bread with your neighbors and build bridges across community divisions by discussing how current immigration policies affect your lives.**

We hope that each **Breaking Bread and Building Bridges** event will bring together a broad range of the people in your community around the theme of faithful, compassionate immigration reform. We hope that you will invite people of your own faith, people of different faiths, service-providers, immigrant's rights advocates, refugees, recent immigrants, and longtime residents to break bread together, and by doing so break the barriers that often separate neighbors who do not yet know one another.

Breaking Bread and Building Bridges events will be taking place in communities around the country from February 1, 2013 to May 1, 2013.

### **Why host a Breaking Bread /Town Hall Event?**

- To build stronger relationships between neighbors and to help each other better understand how current immigration policies affect the entire community
- To connect local immigration organizations or coalitions to communities of faith. To elevate the tone of the immigration debate above its current, divisive level and to raise public awareness about the importance of this issue
- To strategize amongst a coalition of organizations and make a plan of action

### **But I have never hosted an event like this before**

Not to worry! If you know how to host a good potluck, you already have the all the necessary skill to host a successful and impactful Breaking Bread and Building Bridges event! Just like any good potluck, no one person can do it alone. Gather a group of leaders to plan with you, mine the toolkit for tips on organizing your event, tailor the event to your talents and the unique dynamics of your community, and take this next step with advocates across the country on the road to strengthening relationships and building support for compassionate immigration reform.

### **Tips for Ensuring a Successful Event**

- Invite other local groups who are touched by immigration to share in the planning of the event. Suggestions: neighboring congregations, other faith groups, agencies that serve immigrants, immigrant associations, civil rights groups and labor organizations

- Research and identify the key local issues on immigration
- Think about who the key decision makers are for your campaign. Will you work on local or state issues to stop Secure Communities or win Drivers' License for undocumented people or will your focus be the national push for Compassionate Immigration Reform?
- Invite decision makers to participate in the discussion. Whether it is your council person, your Mayor, your State Representative or your Senator, let them know about your event.
- Advertise the event to the wider community
- Work with your Diocesan Communications Director to reach out to the local press and invite them to your event
- Let your event be the beginning! After the event, gather your planning group to strategize next steps so that you can engage participants in your event in continued relationship building and organizing for immigrants' rights

## 1. Assembling a Coordinating Committee

To begin, we suggest that you set up a coordinating committee comprised of diverse representatives from interested churches and community organizations. Consider who you would like to have participate in your event, and invite people who are leaders within those groups to help you plan and build relationships.

If you are hosting an event for your faith community, it's still good to think in terms of diversity—invite members of the youth group, Diocesan staff, volunteers and clients of the outreach ministries, the women's and men's bible studies, and your Bishop. Also think about those who have different areas of experience in the life of your community, and invite them to help you plan—greeters, kitchen coordinators, vestry members, etc.

## 2. Location, location, location

Examples of venue options include churches, synagogues, meeting houses, school auditoriums, or community centers. You'll need a place that can accommodate eating, informal conversation, and a more formal program of speakers and discussion.

Consider the following when you choose your location:

- Does it fit the tone and purpose of your event?
- Is it easily accessible?
- Does it have the proper sound equipment and electrical outlet access?
- Be realistic about your attendance, and choose a location that is appropriate to the size of your event—you don't want to be in a room for 80 if your attendance is 10
- Make sure you have all the appropriate permissions to be in the area where your event is planned

## 3. Identifying speakers

Consider identifying 2-3 speakers to give personal testimonies about the way our broken immigration system has affected their lives. Panelists could include recent or established immigrants, long-term residents, members of a faith community that works closely with immigrants, Episcopal Migration Ministries staff or clients, ESL teachers, local officials, or business owners from the community. (See the Program Template for more information on choosing speakers.)

## 4. Establishing a time frame

Work with your coordinating committee to establish a time frame in which to accomplish the event and the assigned tasks leading up to the event. It is generally helpful to work backwards from the date of the event and create a **written plan** for when tasks will be completed.

## 5. Identifying your target audience(s)

It is important to identify the congregations, community organizations, decision makers, and other groups that you hope to engage in your event and plan outreach and publicity accordingly. In order to create a powerful, rich event, we suggest that you pay special attention to reaching out to congregations and communities that are from differing theological, racial/ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. (Some examples of different types of groups include: faith communities and houses of worship in your area, local policy-makers, representatives of policy groups, direct service providers, local community and political leaders, college and university students, area youth groups, social and civic organizations, and at-large community members). Remember, the purpose of this event is to, so reach out to as many friends and allies in your community as you can!

## **6. End with an action/ Developing Follow-Up Plans**

(See our Suggestions for Follow-Up on guidance.)

## **7. It's all in the details!**

As you move through the seven steps above, your plans will begin to take shape—now it's time to take care of the DETAILS! We've listed several work areas below. You may want to appoint sub-committees for each area, or your coordinating committee might work as a whole to accomplish them.

### **Food**

- To ensure you have enough food at your event, enlist the cooks in your community to bring a designated list of staples, then expect the food from the participants to fill out the menu.
- Consult with your host to make plans regarding how food will be served: Are there enough tables to set food on? Will there be a designated drink table? Who will make the coffee? Are plates and silverware available at your location, or does someone need to bring them? Will you use disposable items?
- Consider food-related needs of the various communities who will be present at your event—don't overlook the importance of labeling food vegetarian, vegan, kosher or halal!
- Setting up your location to create a space where people will eat together in small groups, then perhaps move into a more formal presentation of panel speakers or a film might be tricky. Think about the best way to set up the room to accommodate each activity on your agenda.
- Recruit volunteers to help with food-related cleanup and set-up- find out if the building has recycling policies, available trash bins and trash bags and plan accordingly.

### **Program**

- Plan and organize all logistics related to your event's program—small group conversation, panel discussion, keynote speaker, film, Q&A, etc. (See Program Template on page X for guidance.)
- Make sure that the program of the event allows opportunities for constituents to communicate support for comprehensive immigration reform to their Members. Remember, as members of a faith community, we have a distinct voice to contribute to conversation about immigration—make sure your program speaks with that voice!
- Produce any program bulletins.
- Work with venue host on music, audio, and video logistics concerns.

### **Speaker Preparation**

- Send invitations to appropriate local speakers, clergy, etc.

- Send confirmation letters to invitees, and make sure they have all the details concerning their presentation at your event—the agenda and audience, how long they should plan to speak, if they should expect to answer questions, etc.
- Designate a main contact for speakers before, during, and after event
- If necessary, plan to give speakers an opportunity to practice telling their stories at the location and using any sound equipment that will be set up for your event.
- Consider designating a moderator for your event to introduce the host, speakers and special guests, move through the agenda of your event, facilitate Q&A, etc.

## **Press and Publicity**

- In conversation with your church leadership, work with diocesan communications staff to designate one or two press contacts
- Create a list of all the media outlets you want to invite to your event, including their contact information.
- Write and distribute all local program/event press releases
- Designate an individual or team who will manage the media presence at the town hall meeting—greet reporters, make sure they have your press release and any other relevant documents, arrange for them to speak with panel presenters or other speakers, etc.
- Develop and distribute flyers, bulletin inserts, and leaflets about the event
- Work with local congregations, local and regional faith-based organizations, colleges, seminaries, and other institutions to get the word out about the events in church bulletins, newsletters, list serves, community bulletin boards, etc.

## **And don't forget to register your event!**

- ***Our voices and message are magnified when we speak and act together!***  
***Register your event on the Interfaith Immigration Coalition at this [LINK](#), and let Katie Conway ([kconway@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:kconway@episcopalchurch.org)) know at least two weeks in advance if you'd like assistance in any way!***

## Breaking Bread Event Program Template

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition offers the following template as a guide to creating the program for your *Breaking Bread and Building Bridges* potluck. You should feel free to alter the program as you see fit, taking into consideration the level of participation you have decided upon. As local organizers, your committee will have ideas and suggestions for crafting the program in a way that addresses the specific dynamics and interests of your community. Feel free to take the vision below and run with it!

- I. **Welcome and Introduction (5 Minutes)** – *The host, a local religious or community leader, welcomes everyone and sets the stage for the evening. The host should emphasize the importance of getting to know one’s neighbors in a community, especially for people of faith who are called to love their neighbors as we love ourselves. The host should also share the agenda for the evening, and may wish to begin with opening prayer.*
- II. **Get food! (10-20 minutes)**- *What’s a potluck if you don’t get to eat (and eat while it’s hot)? Remember that—especially if you have a large crowd—going through a food line can take a long time. If you are able, organize volunteers to label the food as people drop it off so that there are fewer questions over what is in the food, if it is vegetarian, vegan, omnivore, etc.*
- III. **Dinner and Dialogue (20-30 minutes)**- *Throughout history, sharing food has been—and is—one of the most common ways to engage others in conversation and dialogue. Use the time when people are eating to get new communities to interact with one another. Some ideas are:*
  - a. **Migration story circle**- *Have people eat in groups of 4-8. Encourage participants to sit with at least one person that they do not know. Then, as people eat, go around the circle and have each person share a story of when they migrated, whether it was from one city to another, from one part of the state or country to another, or from country to country. Ask them to share what that move felt like, why they did it, and whether it was hard or easy.*
  - b. **Local history discussion**- *Have people eat in small groups. Try and create intergenerational groups, as well as intermingle old and new residents in your town. Have some of the people who have lived in your area a long time talk about how the town used to be and how it has change. Who lived in the area in the past? Who lives there now? What factors led to those demographic changes? What influences have helped shape your town’s culture? Then ask some people who have moved there more recently to talk about their first perceptions of the town.*
  - c. **Personal history story circle**- *Have people eat in groups of 4-8. Encourage people to sit with others that they do not know or do not know well. As people eat, have them go around the circle talking about how their family arrived to the United States or to the part of the country where they now live. See if people know any of the individual stories of their families’ migration, or if they know the history of why they came.*

- IV. Overview of the Current State of Immigration Policy (10-15 minutes)**-A *religious or community leader* provides an overview of the current state of immigration policy, and facts about how it will affect your community.
- V. Personal Testimonies (15 minutes)** - *Have 2-3 individuals from the community* share how the current broken immigration system has affected their lives.
- a. Things to keep in mind when choosing persons to share testimonies:
    - i. Speakers should be diverse, not only representing the main constituencies who have much at stake in this debate. Reach out to parents of children who have married an immigrant and are not able to live in the United States, bi-national couples, naturalized citizens, US citizen children with undocumented parents, refugees, and asylum seekers.
    - ii. Remember that you may need to leave as much time for translation as for the testimony itself.
    - iii. Both your speakers and your translators should feel comfortable speaking to large crowds. It's not always easy sharing about personal experiences, so make sure that s/he is up to it.
    - iv. Speakers should be able to keep to the allotted time frame. It's important that you don't choose speakers who will truncate the remainder of the program.
- VI. Keynote Speech by Faith Leader/Panel Discussion/Film Screening/Immigration Quiz Game (20 minutes for a speech/film length)** - This portion of the program depends on how your community has decided to organize your potluck.
- a. **Film suggestions:**
    - i. Short documentary on Postville, produced by Jewish Community Action (MN)
    - ii. Made in L.A.
- VII. Question and Answer (15-20 minutes)** - Following the key presentation of your potluck, have the host (or other moderator) open it up for questions. If you are hosting a speaker or panel, the questions should be directed directly at them. In particular, if you are hosting a member of Congress, your committee may wish to have questions directed only at them. If you are hosting a film or immigration game, it may be more fruitful to break into small groups for discussion.
- VIII. Strategy Sessions (15 minutes in Small Groups)**- Strategy should always have the following categories Goals, Organizational Considerations, Allies/ Opponents, Targets- Decision Makers, Tactics-Actions
- a. In small groups begin to think about the impact of broken immigration policy in your town, what can you do to change the system so that it is more equitable?
  - b. What are current campaigns in your state-is there local activities already happening for state led DREAM Act- Equitable Tuition, Driver's License for undocumented, TRUST Act to limit Secure Communities?
  - c. Do you have to defend and stop an anti-immigrant bill from passing?

- d. Is there a Senator or Representative that will have significant influence in passing Comprehensive Immigration Reform?

**IX. Share an action and/or ideas to encourage people to follow-up on their action- (15 Min)**

- a. Call or email your US Representatives and US Senators to tell them about your event!  
Call **1-866-940-2439** to be connected to your Senator or Representative
- b. Track the issue in the paper and respond to articles on immigration by submitting op-eds
- c. Write a letter to the editor
- d. Set up meetings with your US Representatives and US Senators to tell them about your event and discuss the immigration issues important to your community

**X. Wrap up with a Closing Prayer (5 minutes)** - A local religious or community leader closes the event with a brief prayer for humane comprehensive immigration reform that would restore integrity to the US tradition of welcoming immigrants and provide real solutions to a broken immigration system.

**XI. Clean up!** Cleaning up after a potluck can be a lot of work. Make sure your committee solicits volunteers to help out or at least divides the work among its members.

*This document was last updated on January 24, 2013*