

Meeting summary for Welcoming the Stranger, A Methodist Call to Action (06/29/2025)

Quick recap

The meeting focused on preparing for an upcoming social justice and diversity program featuring various speakers and panel discussions, with detailed instructions provided by Lisa Rogers about recording, Q&A sessions, and available resources. The program centered on immigration awareness, featuring presentations about immigration terms, myths, and the experiences of immigrant children, with contributions from legal service organizations and advocates. The conversation ended with discussions about immigration detention centers and a call to action for attendees to support immigrant rights through advocacy, volunteering, and donations.

Next steps

- Church Members: Develop an ICE policy and response script for their facilities, particularly those offering services to immigrants
- Volunteers: Join rapid response teams to monitor and report ICE activities in local communities, particularly in Bensenville and Addison areas
- Community Members: Contact local police departments to clarify their stance and procedures regarding ICE activities
- Church Members: Support Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary's 45 international students through gift card donations and monetary donations for rent
- Lisa: Share Congresswoman Dalia Ramirez's contact information for immigration detention cases
- Volunteers: Support citizenship workshops and legal clinics through JFUN
- Volunteers: Support English language classes at Trinity United Methodist Church in Mount Prospect as teachers
- Community Members: Support immigrant families through furniture donations to Trinity United Methodist Church's furniture ministry
- Meeting Attendees: Sign up for the 5 Calls app to receive notifications and scripts for immigration-related advocacy calls to representatives
- Church Members: Make coordinated calls to local police departments to reinforce expectations about sanctuary city/state policies
- Lisa: Distribute electronic copies of all resources to meeting attendees

Summary

Social Justice Program Planning Meeting

The meeting focused on preparing for an upcoming program on social justice and diversity, which is a joint initiative between Kingswood Church and the Northern Illinois Conference. Lisa Rogers, the chair of the Conservative Social Justice diversity team, made announcements and provided instructions for the event, including details about recording, question-and-answer sessions, and available resources. She emphasized the importance of respecting speakers and encouraged attendees to use note cards or handouts for questions. The program is set to feature various speakers and a panel discussion, with a break scheduled in an hour.

Immigration Awareness and Education Program

The meeting focused on an immigration awareness program organized by Lisa and her team, with contributions from various speakers and organizations. Lisa highlighted the importance of sharing factual information and stories about immigrants, emphasizing the need to challenge stereotypes and promote understanding. The program included theological reflections on welcoming strangers, presented by a deaconess, and an overview of immigration terms and concepts by Tim. The event aimed to educate attendees and inspire action in support of immigrants, with plans to continue similar programs across the conference.

Immigration Myths and Facts Overview

Lisa provided a comprehensive overview of various immigration terms and myths, explaining the differences between immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and other related categories. She debunked common misconceptions about immigrants, such as the belief that they are more likely to be criminals, drain the economy, or take jobs from Americans. Lisa emphasized that immigrants contribute significantly to the economy and often face long, complex, and expensive legal processes to gain status in the U.S. She encouraged attendees to challenge misinformation and support immigrants by volunteering or advocating for their rights.

Immigrant Children's Rights Advocacy

AJ, a senior philanthropy officer and volunteer child advocate at the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights, described the organization's mission to protect the rights and best interests of immigrant children through direct services, policy advocacy, and litigation. She explained how unaccompanied and separated immigrant children are processed through the US immigration system and highlighted the Young Center's work in getting children released from detention, reunified with their families, and living in the community while awaiting immigration proceedings. AJ emphasized the importance of bilingual volunteers and staff in advocating for children's rights and noted the current challenges faced by immigrant children, including increased interior arrests and the cancellation of government funding for attorneys representing children.

Immigrant Legal Services Overview

Lisa introduced two organizations providing legal services to immigrants: the Young Center and Justice for Our Neighbors. Claudia Martin, Executive Director of Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors, shared her personal story as an immigrant from Mexico and outlined the challenges faced by the organization, including increased demand for services, fear among clients, and the impact of recent policy changes. She highlighted the need for flexible responses to rapidly changing circumstances and the importance of

providing accurate information to clients about their options. The session concluded with a brief break before moving on to a panel discussion.

Evolution of Immigration Detention Centers

Lisa discussed the history and current state of immigration detention centers in the United States, highlighting how the system has evolved since the creation of ICE in 2001. She explained that many detention centers are now privately run, profit-driven facilities, often housing immigrants who have committed civil offenses rather than criminal ones. Lisa also noted that Illinois has successfully banned private prisons, and she emphasized the bipartisanship in past legislative efforts to protect immigrants, while also acknowledging the changing nature of immigration laws under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

Immigrant Rights Advocacy Support

The meeting focused on supporting immigrant rights and providing resources for individuals and organizations to help immigrants in their communities. Lisa discussed various ways to get involved, including organizing events, volunteering for know your rights presentations, and donating to legal services organizations. Claudia shared information about her organization's work and the need for support. The panelists emphasized the importance of advocacy and taking action to support immigrants, with suggestions for prayer groups, fundraising, and rapid response teams. The conversation ended with a call to action for attendees to advocate for immigrant rights in their communities.