Lent.

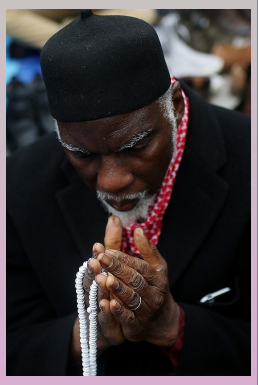
a season of spiritual preparation

Scriptural reflections, linked as devotions with the suffering steps of refugees & immigrants, and encouraging us to act on our faith in solidarity with them.

Scripture: ***"Blow the trumpet in Zion! Proclaim a fast, call an assembly. . ."*** **From Joel 2:12-18**

Call to Lenten Reflection: The familiar Lenten call to prayer and fasting has special urgency this Lent as we reel from the unprecedented U.S. context of "shock and awe" executive orders threatening, among others, immigrants, refugees, and Muslims. If in past Lents we have heard the call to repentance primarily on a personal level, we are reminded that the prophet Joel called together the people, with the nation plagued by an invasion of locusts. He called the assembly together to cry, "Spare, O Lord, your people, and make not your heritage a reproach, with the nations ruling over them!"

As we stand in solidarity with sisters and brothers under threat from our government, fasting involves more than fasting FROM food to cleanse ourselves spiritually, but fasting FOR our immigrant, refugee, and Muslim brothers and sisters. This fasting can take different forms according to each one's capability: advocate regularly with legislators; attend rallies and marches; raise awareness of others and encourage them to act; form circles of rapid response to raids; offer sanctuary; engage in civil disobedience.



Whatever form of fasting we choose, it must be rooted in and sustained by personal and communal prayer, so we do not yield to hopelessness. For the people in Joel's time, fasting and prayer resulted in a response from God: "Then the Lord was stirred to concern for his land and took pity on his people." May it be so for us.

For each Sunday in Lent, the Interfaith Immigration Coalition offers a resource that includes **scripture, reflection, a story, actions & resources, and prayer**. Together, as people of faith, let us rise to this year's Lenten challenge!

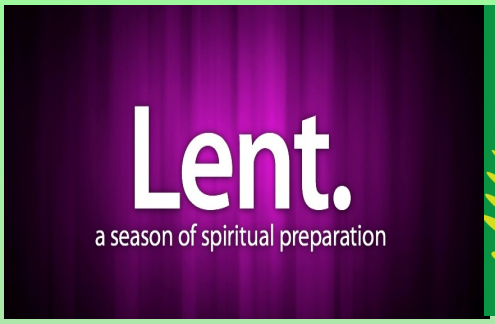
Action/Resources: Resolve to take action each week in Lent to be in solidarity with sisters and brothers threatened by Executive Orders against immigrants, refugees, or Muslims. Suggestions for actions will be provided on each week's resource.

Prayer: God, as we begin the season of Lent, we ask you to accept our repentance for our complicity in allowing neglect of civil and human rights. We pray that the minds and hearts of our elected leaders may turn from hostility toward immigrants, refugees, and Muslims, and toward compassion and justice. May we resist messages of fear and proclaim the reign of love. May our Lenten fasting and prayer strengthen our resolve to continue to work for justice and human rights despite the obstacles we encounter. AMEN.

INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

Devotion by Sister Marie Lucey, Franciscan Action Network

Formatting by Sharon Stanley-Rea. For questions about this resource, contact sstanley@dhm.disciples.org.

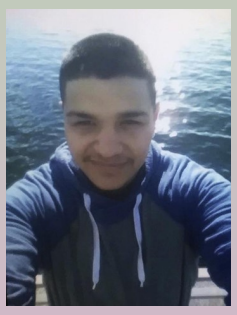


Scriptural reflections, linked as devotions with the suffering steps, of refugees & immigrants, and encouraging us to act on our faith in solidarity with them.

Scripture: ***"The Lord God...put Adam in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. But God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, but...she took...and ate...and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked."*** **From Genesis 2:15-17 & 3:1-7**

Reflection: Adam and Eve were surrounded by the best gifts in creation. Even more than that, they lived in the direct presence of and relationship with God! God was the center of their world—until, that is, they chose to replace God by putting their own wants in the center instead by eating the one forbidden fruit. In their self-centeredness, their world crumbled, their inadequacies were revealed, and fear overtook them.

The United States has been blessed with enormous and constant gifts as well, including vast land, resources, wealth, and diverse populations who have contributed their abilities to grow food, lead in technology, and build up communities. Yet misuse of our opportunities, lack of gratefulness for God's care, and devaluing of our neighbors cuts away at our culture as well. May we aspire instead to seek relationships that communicate God's hopes that we would live in partnerships that honor our world, respect one another, and trust God's power instead of our own.



Story: Daniel Ramirez Medina is a 23 year old in Seattle, WA. who is a recipient—among nearly 750,000 young adult immigrants—of the temporary legal status called "DACA" (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). Originally from Mexico, Ramirez was first brought to the U.S. as a 7 year old child. In 2014, he applied for DACA, received it, and has renewed the status once since.

According to the President's recent interior enforcement executive order, DACA status recipients are not to be targeted for detention and deportation. Yet on Feb. 10, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials entered Daniel's father's house with a warrant for his dad. With his father gone, ICE officers asked Ramirez whether he was in the state legally. Though Daniel verified his legal status, ICE detained and questioned him, and continue to hold him in detention—having falsely accused of him being in a gang.

Action/Resources:

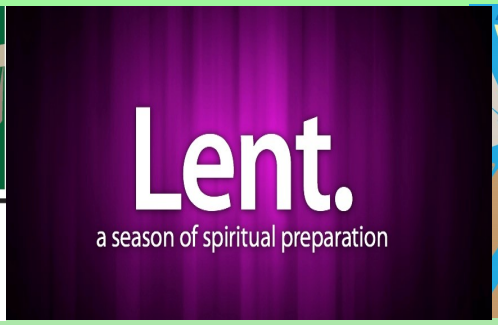
- Join United We Dream to #FreeDaniel and ask ICE to stop detaining him: https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/release-immigrant-father-from-detention-now-freedaniel/?source=fb14feb2017
- See more about DACA and how it may be impacted under the current administration at: https://www.nilc.org/issues/daca/daca-after-trump-q-and-a/
- Read this letter from dozens of U.S. colleges and universities in support of DACA students—and share the letter to gather more signatures!: https://www.pomona.edu/news/2016/11/21-college-university-presidents-call-us-uphold-and-continue-daca
- Learn about bi-partisan legislation such as the "BRIDGE Act" to temporarily protect young adults through DACA status, and hear commitment of all immigrants to continue working for permanent immigration solutions at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/immigration-protests-donald-trump_us_587a3883e4b09281d0eb377f

Prayer: God, help us to show our love and gratefulness for your blessings as we care for and protect one another. May our cravings for power never lead us to diminish the hopes in our neighbors' hearts. Remind us always that you are committed to lead and love us. And keep us from striving to displace you through selfish goals to serve only ourselves or to harm others around us. AMEN.

INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

Devotion by Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples of Christ

For questions about this resource, contact sstanley@dhm.disciples.org.



Scriptural reflections, linked as devotions with the suffering steps of refugees & immigrants, and encouraging us to act on our faith in solidarity with them.

Scripture: ***"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' So Abram went, as the Lord had told him."*** **From Genesis 12:1-4a**

Reflection: In this passage, Abram and Sarai follow a divine command to migrate to a new land. Later, they migrate due to famine and to find safety. Immigrants come to the U.S. today for similar reasons. As long as poverty, lack of opportunity and violent conflict push people to come to the U.S.—and, as long as opportunities, safety and family members pull people here—there will be migration. By building walls and turning away refugees we ignore Christ's call to care for those in need and to love the stranger among us as we love ourselves.

Story: On my last visit to the border I saw a couple of young men climb over a section of the border wall into Mexico. It took them less than ten seconds. Later, on the Mexico side of the border, I spoke with a father recently deported after more than 30 years in the U.S. It was easy to see that no wall would keep him from trying to reunite with his family.

Action/Resources:

- Pray for immigrants, for the church, for political leaders
- Learn about the people and wildlife who call the borderlands home, the walls already built, and the perilous journey migrants take to cross into the United States
- Advocate by contacting your local and national policymakers with messages of welcome for immigrants; write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Listen here to immigrant and human rights groups as they analyze the recent border related Executive Order and its implementation memo: https://www.dropbox.com/s/r4himwk6s13txz4/BORDERS%20022217.mp3?dl=0
- Read these Resource Books: *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* by M. Daniel Carroll R.; and *Continental Divide: Wildlife, People and the Border Wall* by Krista Schlyer
- Find further border information on the web at: sierraclub.org/borderlands

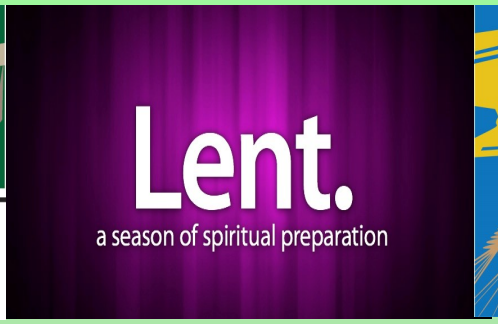
Guillermo Arias/AFP/Getty Images

Prayer: Holy God, You led Abraham and Sarah to a new land. You led your people out of Egypt into freedom. You sent your angel to warn Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to a foreign country, because their homeland was not safe. You are a God who calls us to love and care for foreigners among us. Empower people of faith across this nation to raise our voices not only in prayer, but also in protest against oppressive policies and heartless laws. Lead us to be a state and a nation that finds our security in offering generous hospitality to all of your people. AMEN. (*Excerpted from a prayer by Joanna Harader, Pastor, Peace Mennonite Church; Lawrence, Kansas)*

INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

Devotion by Tammy Alexander, Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

For questions about this resource, contact sstanley@dhm.disciples.org.



Scriptural reflections, linked as devotions with the suffering steps of refugees & immigrants, and encouraging us to act on our faith in solidarity with them.

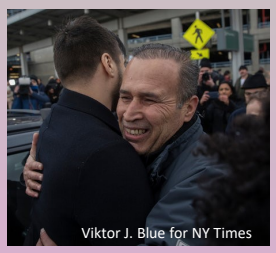
Scripture: ***"The Lord said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.'"*** **From Exodus 17:1-7**

Reflection: God's people had lost patience. Exhaustion set in deep, and in the midst of thirst and years of wilderness wandering, faith in God's leadership seemed to have been dropped along the barren trail a long time ago. Overcome by grumpiness, they demanded water. In the midst of their desperation came encouragement for their difficult journey. God re-committed to work through the power in Moses' hand to bring water out of a dry rock. God promised to be present just ahead of them; always leading, forever in sight, so they would not lose hope. And since the specific need they named was thirst, God reinforced the Lord's intention to meet that need, in order that their journey be safely completed. When water streamed from the rock after Moses hit it, it must have felt like "comfort they could taste" as it trickled down their throats to renew them.

Christopher Lee/NY Times

In the first 24 hours after the President's Executive Order on Refugees came out late Friday, January 27, 109 persons already in transit to the U.S. when the order was signed were denied entry. At least 173 were not allowed to board planes to America. Eighty one were initially stopped, but later allowed entry. Their journey, like that of the Israelites, must have been excruciating. Many refugee families had already given up their home and sold their property, after enduring war in their homelands and waiting years to be approved for refugee status after escape. We pray that the presence of thousands of supporters at airports felt like "water for their thirst" and reminded refugees of God's love, and how God's people are called in scripture to love the stranger and to recall how God led our faith ancestors through the desert to hope.

Story: Hameed Khalid Darweesh, shown in photo at right, is a previous translator for the U.S. Army. He risked his life while serving to protect U.S. forces in his homeland of Iraq, and was thus granted "Special Immigrant Visa" (SIV) status to come to the U.S.—as his affiliation with the U.S. government placed him in danger if he were to remain in Iraq. Ironically, his SIV status had been awarded on the very day President Trump was sworn into office. Yet, he was held up for 18 hours upon arrival in JFK Airport due to the rushed rollout of the Executive Order on refugees. Showing extreme grace despite such a lack of welcome, Mr. Darweesh said after his release, "America is the land of freedom, the land of the life." His words have become yet another expression of heroism and commitment to the United States that are characteristic those who enter the U.S. as refugees and as SIV partners.


Viktor J. Blue for NY Times

Action/Resources: Continue to urge your legislators to end the refugee Executive Orders:

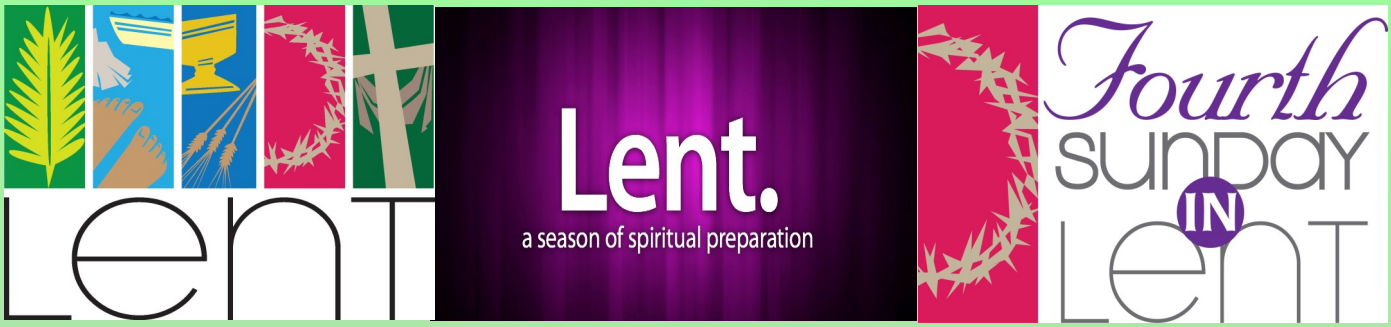
- Go here for summaries of recent legislation to rescind the EOs: http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/eobills/ and see our most recent refugee alert here: http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/supportrefugees/
- Many faith communities signed onto an "Amicus Brief" in support of Mr. Darweesh's case. See it at: https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Interfaith-Amicus-Brief-As-Filed-2-16-17.pdf
- See statements by many national faith offices in support of refugees and immigrants here: http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/faithfully-responding-to-president-trumps-executive-orders-on-immigrants-and-refugees/ and encourage all faith leaders you know to voice support for refugees through this letter: http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/4000religiousleaderletter/
- Strengthen inter-faith community partnerships and resist religious discrimination by engaging in studies like these: "My Neighbor Is Muslim" at http://lirs.org/myneighborismuslim/, "Christian-Muslim Dialogues" at https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/christian-muslim-dialogues/, or "The Jesus Fatwah" at: http://www.livingthequestions.com/xcart/home.php?cat=493

INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

Prayer: God whose leadership never leaves us, we thank you for your presence ahead and your power promised to be with your creation in all times. We pray for you, who gave water to your people in the desert, to continue to respond to the cries of immigrants and refugees in transit. Make those who have homes be eager to share them, and those who seek homes able to find them among welcoming neighbors. AMEN.

Devotion by Sharon Stanley-Rea, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

For questions about this resource, contact sstanley@dhm.disciples.org.



Scriptural reflections, linked as devotions with the suffering steps of refugees & immigrants, and encouraging us to act on our faith in solidarity with them.

Scripture: ***"The Lord looks on the heart and said, 'Rise and anoint David for this is the one.'"*** **From 1 Samuel 16:1-13**

Reflection: Wow! Samuel, the elders and leaders gathered and one by one Samuel's sons were brought forth to be anointed the next leader of Israel. But God had a different idea. God looked into the hearts of God's people and surprised them all with the selection of David. The community and David were both surprised by the choice! As we look into hearts of new refugees settling in our communities, are we surprised by gifts and blessings they bring?

Story: Claudette was born in Rwanda with her twin sister, four brothers, and an older sister. This is her story, in her words: We had a wonderful childhood – my mother ran a successful business and we lived in a safe neighborhood. But on April 12th, 1994, a grenade hit my home in Kigali, Rwanda and that was the end of life as I knew it. The genocide began when I was only 7 years old. That year my father was taken from our house and shot four times. As our family and others scattered and fled, I noticed the children were the most important things to the parents. No one was running back to take papers, jewelry, or televisions. No. They were running back to find their children and to try to keep them safe. My mother was no different. She returned during the fighting to find my brother. After finding my mother, I and my mother walked many days to the refugee camp in the Congo. Many people died on the way to the refugee camps. Once happy people living in Rwanda, now we lived in a camp in a strange country. The camp was stressful, food was often scarce and there was no privacy. We were there for 2 years!

After 12 years in two different refugee camps we were resettled by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in Rhode Island. We received lots of assistance from many wonderful people in R.I. but I also remember that we had to figure out a lot by ourselves. At first we only went to school part time because we found jobs in order to support ourselves. I always wanted a career in the medical field, thinking that one day I would go back to Africa to help people on the continent. But I soon found out that the Rwandan community in Providence, R.I. was also in need of help so my sister and I studied and worked to start an afterschool program for refugee children. The program my sister and I created provides supplemental tutoring in order to help new refugee children succeed in schools here in the United States. We mentor the children and try to encourage them to set goals for their new lives and new futures.
Claudette's story is part of a Refugee Sunday storybook, available with other worship resources at

Action/Resources: Resettlement offers refugees a second chance at life! Support it as you:

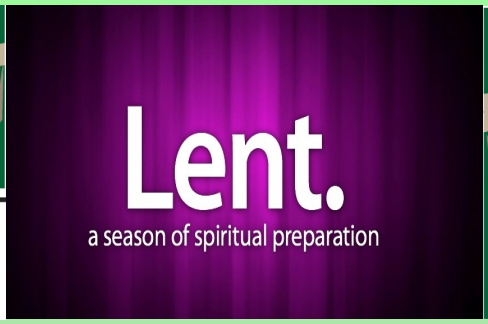
- Find and link with refugee resettlement offices nearest you at: http://www.wrapsnet.org/rp-agency-contacts/
- Learn more about refugee resettlement here: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/577d437bf5e231586a7055a9/t/5881079b20099ec2c4c010c9/1484851100541/Refugee+Resettlement+Backgrounder+-+January+2017.pdf, and share your information to help others learn about and support refugees!
- Find a "Menu of Refugee Welcoming Actions Here": http://www.refugeesarewelcome.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/RW-MENU-of-Welcoming-Actions-One-Pager127_Meredith.pdf, and a host of Refugee Welcoming Resources on the Refugees Welcome website here: http://www.refugeesarewelcome.org/welcoming-resources/
- Hold a Refugee Sunday in your faith community! Claudette's story is part of Refugee Sunday resources, available at: *www.refugeesunday.lirs.org*

Prayer: Gracious God, Through Samuel you reached out to David during those days of long ago and now you have stretched out your loving hands to Claudette. We pray that all refugees may feel the love that you have for all your people. Surround refugees with caring hands and loving hearts as they resettle into our country, find a new home with caring friends and welcoming hearts. In God's name we pray. AMEN.

INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

Devotion by Kevin Jacobson, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

For questions about this resource, contact sstanley@dhm.disciples.org.



Scriptural reflections, linked as devotions with the suffering steps of refugees & immigrants, and encouraging us to act on our faith in solidarity with them.

Scripture: ***I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord have spoken and I will act.*** **From Ezekiel 37:1-14**

Reflection: At times we feel very much like the dry, lifeless bones in Ezekiel's encounter with God. This may be one of those times. All around us we see fear and sense despair. We hear of mothers who go off to work in the morning and never return to their children. We know of fathers who are stopped, detained, and deported. These are our people. They are God's people. With the people of Israel we cry out, "Our bones are dried up, & our hope is lost; we are cut off completely" (37:11).

Who will prophesy over these dry bones? Who will breathe the breath of God's spirit back into our communities? Who will remind the people, as Ezekiel did, that there is still hope, even though the people find themselves far from their home. Even in exile, our God has not forgotten. "I, will put my spirit within you, and you shall live . . . then you shall know that I, the Lord have spoken and I will act" (37:14). Who will stand with the immigrant and refugee? Who will remind us that we are better than the policies which divide and actions that separate us one from another? Who will prophesy to these dry bones and remind us that we are all God's children—created in God's image and endowed with dignity that cannot be denigrated and will not be denied.

On this the fifth Sunday of our Lenten journey we ask for the grace to prophesy; to listen carefully to the Word of God and to speak words of justice and truth, words of healing and life. We pray for the strength to proclaim the truth of the God who walks among us in the guise of the immigrant and refugee.

Story: Petra left El Salvador because she was in a gang and wanted out. She came to the US for safety as she was told if she left the gang she or a family member would be killed. She also came for a better life and to continue her education. Her husband came to the US as an infant. One day while he was on his way to work, he was arrested. He was deported back to Mexico even though he did not even remember the country. He was able to return but now they live in constant fear. Now only one of them can work outside the home. One of them is always at home to ensure the children will have a parent in case the other is picked up and deported.

Action/Resources:

- Share Petra's story with your family and friends.
- Sign the pledge here: https://action.groundswell-mvmt.org/petitions/we-pledge-to-resist-deportation-and-discrimination-through-sanctuary to resist deportation and discrimination.
- Call on your members of Congress to fix the broken US immigration system that continues to separate families and threaten migrant and refugee members of our communities. See here how faith communities can raise our voices now to support immigrants: http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/faithfully-responding-to-president-trumps-executive-orders-on-immigrants-and-refugees/
- Call the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to stop separating families through detaining and deporting immigrants: http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/recent-legislation/stop-ice-raids/

Prayer: Gracious God, God of all compassion and consolation, your breath alone brings life to dry bones and weary souls. Pour out your Spirit upon us, that we may face despair with hope. Help us to dance with the spirit which calls us out of the valley of dry bones and into God's beloved community, both a present reality and the grounding of our future hope. AMEN.

Devotion by Sister Ann Scholz, Leadership Conference of Women Religious

INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

For questions about this resource, contact sstanley@dhm.disciples.org.

Lent.

a season of spiritual preparation

PALM SUNDAY

Hosanna to the King

Scriptural reflections, linked as devotions with the suffering steps of refugees & immigrants, and encouraging us to act on our faith in solidarity with them.

Scripture: ***"Your king is coming...humble...and mounted on a donkey....A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road." Mt. 21:1-11***

Reflection: Jesus plans to enter the city like a pauper--not like the Prince of Peace. He wants to enter the city as a humble stranger on the back of a donkey. But, he also wants to encourage the residents of the city to give him an extravagant welcome. He doesn't yearn for the welcome for himself. He wanted to teach a lesson in hospitality, which he really did quite well. They spread cloaks and branches across the road, in order to make the way smooth for him. This is a lesson that way too many Christians have yet to learn. Jesus compels us, like him, to welcome people with open arms and give them sanctuary.

Intertwining exodus stories weave together the fabric of the United States. Like the Israelites, our Founding Families fled their homeland and needed sanctuary. They found it at Plymouth Rock and Ellis Island. However, as they found sanctuary, enslaved people were torn from their homes and became strangers in a strange land. Undocumented immigrants are modern-day Israelites. Powers and principalities pushed them from their homes. Now, they must trek to new land to call home. Unlike the story told in scripture, many people aren't laying out the equivalent of branches and cloaks. Some are not welcoming; resorting to using rhetoric as "daggers and pitchforks". Instead of looking at undocumented immigrants as enemies, we should treat them like visitors worthy to be celebrated. They are children of God. Like the inn keeper, who offered his barn, we should be ready to offer shelter. In these times, we must remember radical hospitality is a spiritual act. When we arms and doors to someone, we are worshipping God.

NY Times photo: Ryan David Brown

Story: Jeanette Vizguerra, 45, is a mother of four, including her oldest daughter who is 27 and a DACA recipient, and three U.S. citizen children ages 6 to 12. She has lived and paid taxes in the U.S. for 20 years since first arriving in the U.S. from Mexico. She came to the U.S. three months following her husband, after he'd been kidnapped three times when working as a bus driver in Mexico. She was charged many years ago for driving without a license and using false documents in order to work to support her family. She has both a pending U-Visa and a private bill, H.R. 752, which could grant her lawful status.

On Feb. 15th, Jeanette entered sanctuary with her three youngest children in the First Unitarian Society church of Denver, CO.; fearful she would be deported if she attended her scheduled check-in appointment with Immigration and Customs Enforcment. Her fears were raised due to the arrest and deportation of another mother, Guadalupe, in Arizona, and because of the detention of a young DACA recipient Daniel in Washington state. Jeanette understands well what protections sanctuary can offer to an immigrant at risk of deportation. Indeed, she has worked with the American Friends Service Committee for years to help develop Denver's Sanctuary Coalition. And her instincts were correct, as her lawyer confirmed word from ICE that she would have been deported due to the new administration's prioritization of all undocumented individuals—not just ones who are deemed dangerous.

Action/Resources:

- Read more of Jeannette's story at: https://www.democracynow.org/2017/2/17/undocumented_mother_in_sanctuary_in_denver.
- Sign on to tell ICE to support Jeanette's case at: https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/tell-ice-jeanette-belongs-here
- Access toolkits about how your faith community can stand in solidarity with immigrants as allies, sign a pledge to resist deportation, and find other resources to help your faith community consider offering sanctuary protections through the Sanctuary Not Deportation network at: sanctuarynotdeportation.org and through the Matthew 25 Immigration Movement network at: https://sojo.net/sites/default/files/matthew25.toolkit.immigration.pdf

Prayer: Jesus let the little children come unto him. We should be ready to gather undocumented individuals and families among us and give them shelter. Let us extend radical hospitality to them, even as others claim that it's wrong. It's never wrong to open door or your heart. AMEN.

INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

Devotion by Jason Carson-Wilson, United Church of Christ

For questions about this resource, contact sstanley@dhm.disciples.org.