

Ten Ways

U.S. CHURCHES CAN WELCOME IMMIGRANTS



“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2).

In the Bible, strangers are often used by God to bring blessing. Immigrants today are a blessing to our congregations, communities, families, economy, and country. They are created in the image of God. And God expressly, and repeatedly, commands us to welcome the stranger.

What are practical ways your church can follow this command? Whether immigrants are already part of your neighborhood or living in communities farther away, here are ten ideas for showing hospitality and experiencing the blessing immigrants bring.

1 LEARN HOW IMMIGRATION REALLY WORKS

Opinions run strong, but facts can be slim when discussing immigration. Church Between Borders is an interactive set of workshops that dispel myths and clarify the facts. Participants take on the identity of an immigrant and must attempt to navigate the current lawful immigration system which works for some but not for all. To learn more about the workshop, visit justice.crcna.org/church-between-borders.

2 HOST AN INTERGENERATIONAL BOOK STUDY

Read *Welcoming the Stranger* together, a book which opens up dialogue about the facts, ethics, and biblical perspective on immigration. Talking with people of all ages, experiences, and perspectives beyond your own can help inform new thinking about a faithful response to the current immigration conversation.

3 RAISE YOUR VOICE

The struggle immigrants face can change if Congress chooses to pass new laws. Christians are called to steward the power of their citizenship. Participating in a local town hall, requesting a meeting with your member of Congress, or taking action through the CRC Office of Social Justice’s Action Alert mailing list are ways to become active in shaping a more just immigration policy. To sign up for Action Alerts, visit justice.crcna.org/connect.

4 HEAR FROM AN EXPERT

Find an organization in your area that works with immigrants, perhaps one that does refugee resettlement, to invite them to speak to your church. Often these organizations need specific support, and they can describe to a group what it’s like to be an immigrant where you live.

5 PRAY FOR IMMIGRANTS

Headlines about immigration often expose deep pain and suffering. Subscribe to OSJ Prayers at justice.crcna.org/connect, or use the litany found at justice.crcna.org/immigration-resources in your Sunday worship as a way to remember our many brothers and sisters whose immigration status puts them in need of prayers.

6 CONNECT WITH IMMIGRANTS IN YOUR AREA

Immigrating is often an isolating experience, and one crucial way to extend Christian hospitality is to make the first move of friendship. Volunteering for a local English as a Second Language program, teaching a citizenship class, attending a local immigrant church, or maybe just learning a greeting in another language can be ways to bridge the divide and extend a small gesture of welcome.

7 CHANGE THE CONVERSATION

Too often, immigrants are portrayed as burdens to the economy, to public safety, or to the American way of life. They're viewed as a problem to be managed. But Scripture tells a different story. The "stranger" is often used by God to bring a blessing. In truth, immigrants bring economic vitality, public safety, and they strengthen and grow churches. The "Immigrants Are a Blessing, Not a Burden" campaign empowers you to change the conversation. To learn more about the campaign, visit blessingnotburden.org.

8 CONSIDER THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND IMMIGRATION

The first federal immigration law in the U.S. was called the Chinese Exclusion Act. Since the beginning, race has been used to define and limit who is welcome and who is not. The Office of Race Relations can help your group develop an anti-racist lens through which to engage immigration. Visit their website at crcna.org/race.

9 ORGANIZE AN INTERGENERATIONAL MISSION TRIP TO THE BORDER

A trip where your mission is to learn and build relationships is a powerful way to deepen understanding and humanize an issue. Contact the CRC Office of Social Justice to connect with a border ministry that can guide Christians of all ages through a transformative learning experience on the U.S./Mexico border.

10 HOST A MOVIE NIGHT

Stories can provoke deep dialogue and expose new truths. Films like *Documented* and *The Stranger* have study guides available that help set groups on a path toward engagement with immigration advocacy. Whether a group of friends, a community-wide screening, or during the Sunday school hour, the CRC Office of Social Justice can help you find a film that will work well in your context.

This resource has been developed by the Office of Social Justice in partnership with Faith Formation Ministries.

Immigrants bring profound blessings, and the church's welcome is crucial today. The CRC [Office of Social Justice](http://justice.crcna.org) would love to walk with you as you engage with immigration through learning, worship, connection, and advocacy. Visit justice.crcna.org/immigration to connect with us.

Faith Formation Ministries encourages and equips local CRC ministry leaders in their calling to shape intentional, lifelong faith formation in their context. The [Faith Formation Ministries](http://faithformationministries.org) team and our [regional catalyzers](http://faithformationministries.org) are available to consult with your congregation on any faith formation matter.

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