



Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service 2018 Annual Report

For almost 80 years, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has been a champion for migrants and refugees from around the world. As we look at our immigrant roots, we are reminded daily to renew our passionate commitment to welcoming newcomers, especially those who are most in need. Through partnership with community based legal and social services, LIRS has supported over 500,000 migrants and refugees as they rebuild their lives in America.

2018 brought its own challenges as migrant and refugee admission numbers were decreased, and the administration introduced the “zero-tolerance” policy at the Southwest border that resulted in the family separation crisis. LIRS responded to the family separation crisis by designing and implementing a new service model in Phoenix and Las Cruces that assisted the US government with family reunification. The model included:

- a safe place to sleep for the night
- food (a hot meal)
- clothing and other immediate needs (first aid, etc.)
- basic case management and needs assessment
- coordination of travel to a final destination.

LIRS provides opportunities for individuals, groups, and congregations to engage with refugees and migrants through several initiatives and programs:

- **Circle of Welcome:** Support newcomers with the integration process once they are resettled in the United States and stand with newcomers as advocates, friends and community members.
- **Refugee Sunday:** Every congregation in the ELCA is invited to lift up the gifts that migrants and refugees bring to our communities. A variety of resources for preaching, Bible study, prayers, devotions, advocacy and community gatherings is available <https://www.lirs.org/refugee-sunday/>
- **Hope for the Holidays:** Congregations, groups, and individuals are encouraged to write/make cards to those held in detention centers during the holiday season.
- **Detention Visitation:** Join a visitation ministry through LIRS or our partners on the ground around the country.

Congregational Engagement & Outreach:

In 2018, the Outreach Unit at LIRS engaged with eighteen ELCA Synod Assemblies, eleven LC-MS District Conventions, one LWML District Convention, and the tri-annual LCMS National Hispanic Convention. Through these engagements, the LIRS Outreach unit strengthened our relationship with Lutheran allies while developing new relationships with partners, advocates, and volunteers. The LIRS Outreach Team offered an interactive learning station on the experience of Rohingya refugees being resettled in the U.S. in collaboration with AMMPARO and Lutheran Disaster Relief at the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas.

Migrant and Refugee Leadership Academy

LIRS has been intentional in supporting migrant and refugee leaders through the Migrant and Refugee Leadership Academy (MRLA). In 2018, LIRS focused on 5 key states for 2018 MRLA instead of a nationwide MRLA. The state-level academies collectively trained 123 new migrant and refugee leaders with active participation from 30 Academy alumni leaders. The academies focused on enhancing migrant and refugee leadership skills, know your rights workshops, civic engagement strategies, and storytelling. MRLA participants advocated for increased refugee resettlement and an end to family separation by several in-district congressional visits. The current Migrant and Refugee Leadership Academy is comprised of 305 migrant and refugee leaders in 39 states across the US, representing 46 countries of origin.

To learn more about LIRS and how to get involved, visit: <https://www.lirs.org/>