

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND MIGRANTS

There are few issues in contemporary America as how to treat migrants, the strangers among us. The Bible is clear. Jewish Scripture—our Bible’s “Old Testament”—constantly admonishes the Hebrews to “welcome those who sojourn among us.” Jesus was even more precise: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (*Matthew*, 25:35.)

Most of us probably are aware of Bishop Mariann Budde’s plea for mercy in her Washington Cathedral homily on inauguration day. Is Bishop Budde just an outlier? What is The Episcopal Church’s position on the fraught issue of migration?

Every three years, the General Convention of The Episcopal Church approves resolutions that establish official church policy on any number of issues, including some that are hotly contested in partisan debate. Every recent General Convention has approved resolutions on migration, from family separation (opposed) to DACA (supportive).

The 2024 General Convention approved four resolutions addressing both church and public policy towards migrants. One specifically called for expansion of Temporary Protection Status (TPS), which since has been terminated. Two families from Ukraine and Afghanistan that have been supported by St. Mary’s Nueva Esperanza Accompaniment Team (NEAT) now are in uncertain status.

On February 11, 2025, The Episcopal Church joined over two dozen Jewish and Christian organizations in suing the Trump Administration for removing “sensitive place” designation for churches, schools, and hospitals. Although there never has been actual legal protection of self-designated *sanctuary* spaces, since 2011 it has been the policy of the Department of Homeland Security to refrain from invading those specific spaces to arrest and detain people without warrant. That policy has now been terminated, and The Episcopal Church is joining others to reinstate it.

The Episcopal Office of Government Relations ([link here](#)) maintains a large and active presence in Washington, D.C., to actively lobby Congress and the Executive on these and other issues. Further, since 1988, Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) has been one of fourteen Refugee Resettlement Agencies certified and funded by the U.S. State Department to assist resettlement of internationally-designated Refugees, the number of which is set annually by the President. That funding was suspended in January, and EMM resettlement staff has been laid off.

However, EMM continues to lead The Episcopal Church’s direct work with migrants *and* shares and coordinates resources with diocese and parishes around the country.

You can join weekly half-hour online updates ([link here](#)). In November, our NEAT desperately sought assistance in locating legal documents in Guyana for a migrant we were accompanying. In an amazing display of responsive commitment to a single parish on the West Coast, EMM put us in touch with the Anglican Diocese of Georgetown, which assigned a person on its staff to help locate the documents.

In summary, by its actions it is clear that The Episcopal Church believes in our Biblical mandate to welcome the stranger by welcoming, serving, and advocating on behalf of those who have travelled thousands of miles, often at great personal peril, to seek safety and protection in the United States. In supporting migrants, St. Mary's Nueva Esperanza Accompaniment Team is living our faith as Christians within the full embrace of The Episcopal Church.