



Sample Vigil Program

The purpose of a vigil is to engage participants in communal prayer and action around specific concerns. A vigil can be as simple as a circle of ten people gathered to hold candles and pray for 20 minutes, or may be a more formal program with speakers and music.

Below is one example of how a vigil might be ordered, but your program may look very different—consider the resources within your community or core planning group (an exceptional church choir or cantor, local poet, sign language translator, artist, etc.), and use them to plan your vigil program.

- I. **Welcome**—a few words about the focus and purpose of your vigil. Why now? What’s the concern? Who’s affected? What values shape your faith traditions’ response to these concerns?
 - a. This may take the form of brief comments from one of your speakers or the “emcee” of your vigil, or may consist of a few words of welcome, then an opening prayer that lifts up the central concerns of your vigil.
 - b. The three areas of focus for **Prayer, Renewal and Action on Immigration** are: **protection** for immigrants, **empowerment** of people of faith to speak out more boldly for immigrants, and **moral courage** for Members of Congress to show leadership in enacting humane immigration reform.
- II. **Song**—You might invite a church choir or an instrumentalist to provide appropriate music, or simply recruit a few strong singers to lead participants in singing.
- III. **Reading**—*for ideas see suggested readings below.*
- IV. **Speaker**
- V. **Prayer**—One person may lead the prayers, or you might invite several faith leaders to pray according to their traditions. Involve vigil participants in praying a refrain throughout your prayer time. Consider offering prayers in multiple languages.
- VI. **Song**
- VII. **Speaker**
- VIII. **Closing**—reiterate the focus and purpose of your vigil. At this time you might also invite vigil participants to join your group at a future event.

Suggested readings:

The Hebrew Bible tells us: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34)." In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger (cf. Matthew 25:35), for "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me (Matthew 25:40)." The Qur'an tells us that we should "serve God...and do good to...orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, [and those who have nothing] (4:36)." The Hindu scripture Taitiriya Upanishad tells us: "The guest is a representative of God (1.11.2)"

--*Interfaith Statement in Support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform*, Interfaith Immigration Coalition, updated October 24, 2008.

"Why should you not hate the stranger? asks the Torah. Because you once stood where he stands now. You know the heart of the stranger because you were once a stranger in the land of Egypt...I [G-d] made you into the world's archetypal strangers so that you would fight for the rights of strangers – for your own and those others, wherever they are, whatever the colour of their skin or the nature of their culture, because, though they are not in your image – says G-d – they are nonetheless in Mine. There is only one reply strong enough to answer the question: Why should I not hate the stranger? Because the stranger is me."

--Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the (British) Commonwealth

"The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him yourself, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

--Leviticus 19:34

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

--Hebrews 13:1-3

In the Qur'an, the central religious text of Islam, it is written that Muslims should "serve God ... and do good to ... orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, [and those who have nothing]." (Qur'an 4:36)

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

--Luke 10:25-37

"This law of shielding the alien from all wrong is of vital significance in the history of religion. With it alone true Religion begins. The alien was to be protected, not because he was a member of one's family, clan, religious community, or people; but because he was a human being. In the alien, therefore, man discovered the idea of humanity."

--German-Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen (Dr JH Hertz, *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* (The Soncino Press, 1960), Pg 313.)

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

--Matthew 25:31-46

We bid you welcome, who come with weary spirit seeking rest.
Who come with troubles that are too much with you, who come hurt and afraid.
We bid you welcome, who come with hope in your heart.
Who come with anticipation in your step; who come proud and joyous.
We bid you welcome, who are seekers of a new faith,
Who come to probe and explore, who come to learn
We bid you welcome, who enter this hall as a homecoming,
Who have found here room for your spirit, who find in these people a family.
Whoever you are, whatever you are, wherever you are in your journey,
We bid you welcome

--*We Bid You Welcome*, by Richard S. Gilbert, reading number #442 from *Singing the Living Tradition*.

And then all that had divided us will merge
And then compassion will be wedded to power, redefining power
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
And then both men and women will be gentle
And then both women and men will be strong
And then no person will be subject to another's will
And then all will be rich and free and varied,
 allowing us to realize the infinite ways we can be rich
And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
And then all will live in harmony with each other and the Earth
And then the talents of all will be valued and utilized, not exploited
And then desire for community will overcome fear of difference and embarrassment
And then the fragmented people will be one
And then the inner light of all people will quench the darkness of disparity
And then there will be comprehension and understanding everywhere
And then people will smile more
And then we will love each other more
And then there will be no more barriers
And then all will live fully and completely
And then everyone will be reconciled
And then we will say Alleluia, Amen!

--*And Then*, by Judy Chicago, re-abridged from original poem to address immigration, reading #464, from *Singing the Living Tradition*

Spirit of Community, in which we share and find strength and common purpose, we turn our minds and hearts toward one another seeking to bring into our circle of concern all who need our love and support: those who are ill, those who are in pain, either in body or in spirit, those who are lonely, those who have been wronged.

(Here people says the names of those to be remembered).

We are part of a web of life that makes us one with all humanity, one with all the universe.

We are grateful for the miracle of consciousness that we share, the consciousness that gives us the power to remember, to love, to care.

--Reading #501, from *Singing the Living Tradition*. Can be adapted to address immigrants, refugees, migrant workers and other individuals impacted by immigration policy.
