



ADVENT

Immigrants Waiting in Hope

Preparing for Christ, Remembering Immigrant Families Seeking Light

For too long, over 11 million immigrants have been waiting; waiting for hope and justice, for release from detention and suffering, for family reunification, for due process, and especially for action from the President and Congress.



***In the weeks before Christmas this year, we invite you and your family
to hear their stories of active and courageous waiting,
and to join in prayer and action for their families
as you light the weekly candles of the Advent wreath.***

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For additional resources, see: interfaithimmigration.org. For questions about this resource, contact ssstanley@dhm.disciples.org.



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The word **Advent** means “coming” or “arrival”. The season focuses our attention on the coming of God to break directly into history; bringing light into darkness, and offering hope for “the whole creation that has been groaning until now...while we wait for full deliverance” (Romans 8:22-23.) Such yearning is to escape from the oppression of the world—even as the Israelites long ago expressed their cries against the injustices they endured as slaves in Egypt. The **Advent Wreath**, then, reminds us also of the themes of threats and of promise to overcome them—and calls us to prayer for God’s renewing power. These devotions outline five “long waits” for deliverance from suffering felt daily by millions of immigrants. As you enter this season of Advent, may you learn about, pray for, and act to help eliminate these injustices our neighbors face as you light a candle each week on an Advent Wreath you light the fifth candle on Christmas Christ anew this season—as you



By so doing, may you experience the light of demonstrate Christ’s light to others!

1. Awaiting Impact of Executive Action



4. Awaiting Family Unity through Immigration Legislation



5. Awaiting Deportation Relief in Sanctuary



2. Awaiting Due Process for Children & Families



3. Awaiting Release from Detention

For additional resources, see: interfaithimmigration.org



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Nov. 30

Candle #1: AWAITING IMPACT OF EXECUTIVE ACTION

Scripture: Isaiah 64:5 “Would that you might meet us doing right.”

Mark 13:31, 33, 36-37 “Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away....Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. ...May he not come and find you sleeping. What I say to you I say to all: Watch.”

Lighting the Candle

Reflection: We light this candle and pray for those who are awaiting more inclusive actions that will provide relief from deportation. The President recently took administrative action, expanding the DACA program and starting a new deferred action program.

While we celebrate these actions to provide temporary relief from deportation to 5 millions of people, we commit to prayer and to work for justice for the 6 million undocumented immigrants who were left out of administrative relief. The President shared a passage out of Exodus reminding us “not to oppress a stranger, for we know the heart of a stranger, as we were once strangers too.” This reminds us of a story of the Israelites as foreigners in the Land of Egypt. We can be assured of the diversity that existed among the Israelites and how God’s gift of the promised land included the full community. Let us not forget the grace Christ extended to the woman at the well and the tax collector—and to all of us—and may we too have that same heart when we struggle for more ones left out of relief. In Isaiah’s words, “Would that you might meet us doing right.”

Story: Miscal’s life changed after a routine traffic stop that led to a deportation order. He recently entered sanctuary at Shadow Rock United Church of Christ where he is supported by the community and the church. Miscal, from Guatemala, came to the U.S. 9 years ago and has been working as a roofer for 6-years in the Phoenix area. He’s been supporting his elderly parents who are not able to work, has sent 3 siblings to school in Guatemala, and has been fully engaged in his community in Phoenix. As a single man with little family ties in the United States, he is at greater risk of deportation and is not included in the criteria set out in recent executive action. His story of waiting for inclusion in relief from deportation is not unlike others who do not have U.S. citizen or permanent resident children, many agriculture workers, parents of DACA recipients, a significant portion of our LGBTI neighbors, as well as those who have committed crimes in the past and have also taken responsibility for their actions and have turned their lives around. We commit to waiting with Miscal and 6 millions others while we continue in the struggle for justice for our immigrant community members through more inclusive actions. See: <http://www.shadowrockucc.org/sanctuary/>

Action/Resources: [Tell Congress](#) you support the President’s recent actions to expand deferred action. Call 1-866-940-2439 to be connected with your Representative. To use and share resources that provide credible legal guidance, alert for notario fraud, and outline the history of administrative relief since 1956, see: www.uscis.gov, [Justice for Our Neighbors immigration legal clinics](#), [AdminRelief.org](#), [National Immigration Law Center](#) (NILC), and the [American Immigration Lawyers Association](#).

Prayer: God of love, we pray for peace and comfort for neighbors who do not fit the criteria for recent administrative action. We pray for more inclusive legislative relief, which is not defined by the immigration status of family members, timing of entry into the U.S., or by past mistakes where responsibility is taken. God of nations, we pray for our leaders, that you would give them wisdom and compassion as they implement new deferred action and as policies are crafted. AMEN.



Photo: Shadow Rock UCC website.

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Dec. 7

Candle #2: AWAITING WELCOME AND DUE PROCESS

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1, 3, 11 *“Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God....A voice cries out: ‘In the desert prepare the way of the Lord!’....Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs.”*

2 Peter 3:13 *“But according to his promise we await a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”*

Lighting the Candle

Reflection: We light this candle remembering the words of Isaiah were first spoken to a community in 539 B.C. that had been in exile from their homeland for almost 5 decades! They surely were anxious about whether or not God had enough power to heal their sorrow and lead them towards a new time, a fresh future, a path to wholeness. The Hebrew word for “comfort” carries a deep meaning of “help the people,” “pull them out of whatever their problem is,” and “bring them solutions.” It is that depth of fullness also offered in the “new heaven and new earth” in 2 Peter. In the lives of immigrants where insecurity, separation, and loss are too often constants, what kind of light and hope might we offer to help find solutions to difficult challenges? Are we willing to stand in solidarity with immigrants to help build justice and a pathway to hope?



Story: The U.S. has the largest immigrant detention infrastructure in the world, and in 2012 detained a record number of 478,000 immigrants. Although the practice of family detention had nearly halted in 2009, family detention centers have grown drastically after recent separated and unaccompanied children and moms fled to the U.S. this summer seeking escape from horrific gang and drug violence in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. A detention center opened mid-summer in Artesia, New Mexico, and will be closing soon. The closure follows many complaints of its extreme remoteness, and due process concerns including the inability for residents to pursue asylum relief and fair hearings, lack of privacy for legal meetings or proper orientation about why they were being detained or deported, deficient medical and mental health care, and failure to meet basic child education and care guidelines. Hundreds of children and moms there will be transferred next month into other large, rural detention centers in Dilley and Karnes City, Texas—where concerns remain about expensive and harmful human warehousing.

Action/Resources: Read the “Expose and Close” report which includes information above on the Artesia, New Mexico detention center at www.detentionwatchnetwork.org. Also see the “Children on the Run” report from the UNHCR at: www.unhcrwashington.org to understand concerns that children be provided identification, screening, and protection to properly protect them from the violence and extortion they are fleeing in Central America. Write letters to children through CWS at: https://www.disciplehomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/AngelstoAngelsProject_CallforLetters.pdf.

Prayer: God, comfort your people who on this day are detained and suffering from lack of due process in centers such as Artesia. For those now and soon to be housed in Karnes City and Dilley, Texas, guard those being transferred, offer them opportunities for legal and personal support necessary to communicate their protection needs, and heal them from memories of violence endured in their homelands, along the path here, and too often experienced again once in detention. AMEN.

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Dec. 14

Candle #3: AWAITING RELEASE FROM DETENTION

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1, 8, 11 *“The Spirit of the Lord God...has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to prisoners....For I the Lord love what is right, I hate robbery and injustice....As the earth brings forth its plants...so will the Lord God make justice and praise spring up before all the nations.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:19, 23-24 *“Do not quench the Spirit....hold fast to what is good....May the God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.”*



Photo from Breitbart, 6-19-14

Lighting the Candle

Reflection: We light this candle and stand with those awaiting release from the inhumane practices of immigration detention where families and children are held, adults are held arbitrarily, and where there are no bond or bail policies. As Isaiah proclaims our call to bind up the broken hearted and seek freedom for those held captive, we are also reminded that the Lord “loves what is right” and “hates injustice.” As we participate in God’s call to justice, may we remember those being held in immigration detention and seek justice and dignity for all persons.

Story: Maribel fled her home country and came to the U.S. after suffering from the abuse of her husband. She took her 2 year and 6 month old and fled for safety, only to wind up in family immigration detention in the U.S. in September. She experienced a traumatic life at home and journey here. The trauma continued in detention where she struggled to communicate through her native dialect while in confinement with her children. While waiting release on bond, Maribel’s children were abruptly taken away, even while breastfeeding. Maribel is among many immigrants in detention awaiting family unity and experiencing inhumane practices in immigration detention. There is no way to humanely detain families and children and there are alternatives to detention that are more humane and cost effective. We stand now with those families waiting to be released from detention and commit to work for sound immigration detention policies that do not arbitrarily detain families without bond or bail and that adequately meet their protection needs. See *“Locking Up Family Values, Again, at: <http://lirs.org/familyvalues/>.*

Action/Resources: To learn more, see [Locking Up Family Values, Again](#) from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and the Women’s Refugee Commission. Also, see Detention Watch Network’s [toolkits](#) for educating Congress and your community, or send a holiday card to a family through LIRS’ [Hope for Holidays](#) campaign. Consider participating in [a visitation ministry](#) through LIRS, or help build CWS’ [Religious Services Provider](#) teams for families in detention. Finally, use or share [resources](#) from the Women’s Refugee Commission in regards to immigration detention, family separation, and parental rights.

Prayer: God of justice, we pray for families, children, and individuals in immigration detention who are being held arbitrarily. Surround them with your peace and comfort, and may you set the captive free. God of love, we pray for families who are separated because of immigration detention; may they find the perseverance to continue to seek justice and family unity. AMEN.

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Dec. 21

Candle #4: AWAITING FAMILY UNITY THROUGH IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION

Scripture:

2 Samuel 7:9-11 *"I have been with you wherever you went....and I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more....and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house."*

Luke 1:30-33 *"Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold you shall conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name his Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'"*

Lighting the Candle



Reflection: We light this candle and remember that millions of immigrants in the U.S. have been waiting many years "to live (as citizens) in their own place, and be disturbed no more." Many have worked hard, raised families, and they love this country. Yet deportations have torn families apart while Congress has refused to reform what they admit is a broken system. How much longer will our sisters and brothers have to wait in hope that an earned path to citizenship will be opened to them, that their families can be reunited, and that they can fully claim that the U.S. is "their own place" where they are firmly planted? Imagine the feelings of Mary as she learned of her pregnancy, and consider the difference it made to know of God's welcome and purpose for the Christ child. Is there a way you can help a local immigrant family feel welcomed to fulfill their gifts in your neighborhood?

Story: Javier Flores lived in Ohio for 13 years, worked his way up to be a manager in a window factory, paid \$850 a month in taxes, and purchased a home for his wife and four children before suddenly being deported back to an impoverished village in Mexico, leaving his family to fend for themselves. His deportation occurred after being pulled over in 2011 for driving with an expired license. At that time, he was referred to ICE, and in desperation agreed to leave the country within a year—hoping that legislation or action by the President would enable him to stay. Now he barely survives as a lime picker in Mexico and worries constantly about his family struggling to survive in the U.S. (Story printed in *Washington Post*, October 26, 2014.)

Action/Resources: To help Javier and millions of separated families, continue to form alliances, organize and advocate for comprehensive immigration reform in 2015. Go to house.gov and enter your address to find your representative and their local office. Visit your leader to share stories of immigrants in their district, and to ask Congress to pass immigration reform in the coming year. See <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/issues/immigration-reform/> for sample language of faith values to share.

Prayer: God of all people and nations, we continue to pray that lawmakers will soon have the wisdom and courage to enact genuine immigration reform. We pray for immigrant families that they may hold onto hope for reunification. We pray for renewed energy for all of us to persist in advocating for comprehensive immigration reform. AMEN.

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Christmas Eve

Candle #5: AWAITING DEPORTATION RELIEF IN SANCTUARY

Scripture: *Isaiah 9:2, 4, 6-7* “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; ...For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian....For a child has been born for us....and he is named...Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for...his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.”

Luke 1:76, 78-79 “And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways....to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Lighting the Candle



Rosa and family. Photo: Sanctuary2014.org

Reflection: For thousands of years “the people who walked in darkness” waited for release from their oppressor, holding onto the hope proclaimed by prophets like Isaiah that light would shine on them. Finally, the promised was fulfilled, for a Child was born to establish God’s kingdom of peace upheld with justice. John the Baptist, “prophet of the Most High,” then prepared the way for Jesus, “Prince of Peace”—who in turn passed on to his followers his mission to bring light into the darkness of their times, and of our times. It is our mission now to birth Christ into our world, to offer hope to all burdened by the yoke of injustice. We must work to open doors for immigrants who wait in places of Sanctuary and walk with them into the light of freedom.

Story: Rosa Robles Loreto has lived in the U.S. since 1999, has been married for 13 years, and is the mother of two young sons who are Dreamers because Rosa returned to her family in Mexico to birth them. Rosa does contract housekeeping and catering although she is a licensed public accountant in Mexico. In Tucson, Rosa volunteered at her sons’ school and was an active member of Santa Monica Catholic Church. She has 16 U.S. citizens and Legal Permanent Family members in Tucson. She pays her taxes and has no criminal history. Rosa was picked up in a traffic stop where no ticket was given, but police reported her to Border Patrol. Due to a failure of her former attorney to request that ICE prosecutors close her removal proceedings, Rosa was ordered removed (deported) on August 8, 2014. Rosa now waits for a stay of removal in a welcoming church in Tucson.

Action/Resources: Go to www.sanctuary2014.org to learn the background of how over 70 churches across the U.S. are offering hospitality and protection to a growing number of persons like Rosa. Click on “Take Action” to sign a petition for Rosa or others in Sanctuary, and to sanctuary sites, and resources for how your faith community can consider joining the movement.

Prayer: You came to live among us as one of us, O God, to bring light and hope into our darkness. We pray for those immigrants who have found refuge in Sanctuary congregations as they wait for a stay of removal, and we pray that more congregations will make a declaration of Sanctuary, offering hope to immigrants living in fear of deportation. Finally, we pray for the day when Sanctuary is no longer needed because the light of justice will shine in our country. AMEN.

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