

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service 2019 Annual Report

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.” Ephesians 2: 19

Rich Legacy Shapes Current Work

In 2019, LIRS marked its 80th year of welcome in the name of Christ. Luther speaks of the "left hand kingdom of God" as our involvement in God's care for the world. The Board of LIRS affirmed its commitment to be on the front lines of public engagement with the world, as it welcomed a new President and CEO, Krish O'Mara Vignarajah.

Through partnership with community based social services, LIRS resettled refugees; placed unaccompanied children and youth in foster care; arranged for asylum seekers in immigration detention to receive comfort from pen pals and visitors; assisted congregations and individuals to understand current immigration issues and discern ways to get involved.

Respite and Welcome Centers in Phoenix and Albuquerque received asylum seekers as they were released from detention visitation and provided one- or two-nights shelter, food, clothing, and coordination of travel to their final destination.

“Hope for the Holidays” card campaign resulted in congregations and individuals submitting 14,000 cards and \$30,000 for gifts for children spending the Christmas holidays in detention with their families.

On World Refugee Day, 10 Migrant and Refugee Leadership Academy alums joined 5 ELCA synod bishops in making 40 visits to members of congress to ask for higher refugee admissions and more funding to help refugees make a good start in the United States.

Blessing of Partnership Empowers Us to Continue

We are living through the largest refugee crisis the world has ever seen. Extreme weather, poverty and violence are pushing people in various parts of the world to leave their homes in search of food, safety, and welcome. In these challenging times, *LIRS relies on congregations to support our work; and offers assistance as people of faith discern their call to welcome the stranger*

Congregations prayed and preached and learned about migrants and refugees through the wealth of resources available on the LIRS Migrant and Refugee Sunday web page.

[\(https://www.lirs.org/migrant-refugee-sunday/\)](https://www.lirs.org/migrant-refugee-sunday/)

Lutherans called and wrote letters to Members of Congress urging higher refugee admissions and proper care for children at our southern border

Congregations proclaimed God's presence to families and children held in immigration detention by sending Christmas cards and money for gifts through LIRS' Hope for the Holidays campaign; and volunteered as pen pals or detention visitors.

Lutherans wrestled with God's call to welcome all as members of the household of God through “Entertaining Angels” training events, and discernment of their role in a sanctuary church body

Lutherans supported the work of LIRS with offerings and individual donations.

As members of the household of God, we encourage you and your congregation to explore how you will welcome the stranger in the coming year, and to contact LIRS for information and resources to assist you.