



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



**Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service**

“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’” (Matthew 25:40).

The global need for refugee resettlement has never been greater, and the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is that lifeline — for children forcibly conscripted into armies, for LGBTQ+ people attacked for who they are, for religious minorities persecuted for their worship. In response to deepening crises around the world, the United States must reclaim its humanitarian and moral responsibility and reassume global leadership in refugee resettlement.

With so many lives in danger, we will continue to honor the Lutheran legacy of generous and compassionate welcome for those who seek refuge in our communities. How would we respond if the refugee on our doorstep were Jesus himself? As Jesus taught, “Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

For more than 80 years, Lutherans in the United States have joined together to respond to God’s call to love the neighbor who comes to us as a stranger. Since 1939, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has led the Lutheran movement to welcome vulnerable migrants and refugees in America. LIRS is the largest faith-based nonprofit in the United States dedicated to serving vulnerable immigrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees. Together with Lutherans across the country, we have equipped and supported over half a million newcomers as they settled into cities across the country, and we have advocated boldly for policies that protect those we serve. We work rigorously to ensure that our policies reflect the best of our nation, and when a child of God has no safe home to return to, we open ours.

This legacy of welcome is woven into our tradition and history as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Many of our Lutheran ancestors faced the pain of having to flee their homes and knew the joy of being welcomed into new communities across the United States. Because this church believes in sustaining a faithful presence in the world, it “holds power accountable, advocates justice, stands with those who are poor and vulnerable, provides sanctuary, and meets human need” (ELCA social statement, *For Peace in God’s World*, 1995). Offering refuge to displaced people and people fleeing persecution is a natural extension of that biblical witness. The ELCA’s AMMPARO strategy (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) — a holistic churchwide commitment to accompanying vulnerable migrant children and families, now and into the future — reflects this calling. Around 199 welcoming and sanctuary congregations, as well as 36 synod AMMPARO or immigration task forces with connections in 53 ELCA synods, have committed to offering accompaniment to migrants in their communities.

This year, World Refugee Day will include a social media campaign, prayer services, and [opportunities for advocacy and education](#). Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America invite you to learn, pray, and act on behalf of those seeking refuge on our shores. We encourage you to explore the ELCA's [social message "Immigration,"](#) its [AMMPARO strategy](#), and these [LIRS resources](#) to determine how LIRS and the ELCA can best support your congregation as it responds to God's call to serve the most vulnerable. With such pressing need, we urge our leaders and elected officials to push for quick resettlement of as many refugees as the United States admits this year, to strengthen and streamline the process so fewer families experience prolonged separation, and to help our nation forge a system of even warmer welcome, as resettlement partners work to rebuild.

This World Refugee Day let us recommit ourselves to empowering those driven from their homes by conflict, persecution, poverty, and climate change. We pray that all will experience grace in welcoming the stranger.

Together in hope,



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The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
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