

**Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey**  
**Weekly Witness | March 14, 2017**

**SPOTLIGHT ON IMMIGRATION**

In the reading from John 4, Jesus builds community by crossing racial boundaries and breaking the distinction between “chosen people” and “rejected people.” He extends the mission of the Jewish Messiah to the Samaritan people, who were hated by the Jews for their history of racial mixture and religious syncretism.

Jesus leaves us with a crucial lesson to be learned: community can only be built when we are not afraid of overcoming old prejudices and are willing to break the social conventions that dehumanize us.

The United States prides itself on being a nation of immigrants, and the country has a long history of successfully absorbing people from across the globe. The integration of immigrants and their children contributes to our economic vitality and our vibrant and ever-changing culture.

**BY THE NUMBERS**

More than **40 million people** living in the United States were born in other countries, and almost an equal number have at least one foreign-born parent. Together, the first generation (foreign-born) and second generation (children of the foreign-born) comprise almost **one in four** Americans. A [2017 report](#) from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) finds that the long-term impact of immigration on the wages and employment of native-born workers is very small. First-generation immigrants are more costly to governments than are the native-born, but the second generation are among the **strongest** fiscal and economic contributors in the U.S. This report concludes that immigration has an overall positive impact on economic growth in the United States.

Additionally, increased prevalence of immigrants is associated with lower crime rates—the opposite of what many Americans fear. Cities and neighborhoods with greater concentrations of immigrants have much **lower** rates of crime and violence than comparable non immigrant neighborhoods, according to a [2016 report](#) from NAS.

**FROM CHURCHWIDE**

ELCA Social Message on Immigration:

“Immigration, refugee, and asylum policies express who we are as a nation, influence the nation’s future character, and affect the lives of millions of people. We encourage our members, in light of our history and our ministry with newcomers, to join with other citizens in our democratic society to support just laws that serve the common good.” [Read more here.](#)

Episcopal Church General Convention Resolution:

In 2015, the following [resolution](#) was passed: “That the 78th General Convention recommit to the spirit of the New Sanctuary Movement by supporting congregations so they can assist immigrant individuals, unaccompanied minors, families, and communities by being centers of information, services and accompaniment, and by supporting families facing separation in the absence of comprehensive, humane immigration reform.”

## COMMUNITY ACTION - BUILDING EMPATHY

Gather members of your congregation and community, share a meal or coffee, and share stories!

- *“What are the stories of immigration in your congregation?”*
- *What is different and what is similar in the stories of people whose families had come from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, or the Middle East?*
- *What is different and what is similar in the stories that come from a century ago and a decade ago or today?*
- *How do these stories help you to enter into the experiences of current newcomers?*
- *How can your congregation be a welcoming place for newcomers?*
- *How can you break down walls that separate, and address fear that divides?*