

God Is Still Speaking...Through Us - Immigration

On June 23, with bowls of strawberry shortcake in hand, a gathering of Grace members and friends learned more about asylum seekers and ways to help them. Below are the shared learning and reflections of the Spiritual Growth Committee:

- There are huge differences among the designated groups who arrive at our borders:
 - o Asylum seeker – an individual fleeing from danger in their country who is asking for safe-haven. This person, and others from that country seeking safety, have not yet been identified by the UN as a refugee covered by international law. The asylum seeker must ask for asylum on US soil and is not allowed to work until 6 months after the asylum paperwork has been accepted. The person usually arrives with very little and is forced to depend upon the charity of others to survive until s/he can begin to work and find affordable housing. The asylum paperwork has to be approved on the credibility of the person's case.
 - o Refugee – an individual from a group of people determined by the UN to be deserving of the safety of international refugee law. Often these people are held in camps for months to years before being allowed to be vetted and admitted into another country. The US has drastically lowered the number of refugees we can welcome in the last two years. Those who are allowed into the US arrive with federal loans which they must pay off within a certain period of time. They are expected to work, and their sponsors help find them affordable housing and employment.
 - o Migrant worker – an individual who, for the majority, has entered the US without documentation to work on farms, or other seasonal work. They do the jobs that are not taken by American citizens and often live in unconscionable conditions where they have no recourse for fear of deportation. Some may have entered with documentation that has since expired or with seasonal work visas which still don't offer much protection.
- CASP – the Community Asylum Seekers Program is a non-profit (501c3) based in Rockingham which has already welcomed 5 documented families into their community and offered support until they are granted asylum (hopefully) in Court. The support includes a lawyer for the hearing, a placement with a family for housing, all basic needs met until the person's income can fulfill their needs, medical needs, English lessons if needed, and a caring support team of volunteers. If you want to contribute, we have some raffle tickets or you can send a check to CASP, 2128 Brockways Mills Road, Chester, VT 05413.
- Steve Crofter and Lauren Green from CASP shared all of this information as well as poignant stories of what they've seen and experienced. One story that stood out as a Vermont take on things was when a very patriotic farmer stated that he loves this country so much that he couldn't imagine having to leave home for the safety of his family. He said that if someone is driven to leave the country they love, we should be there for them until it is safe for them to go back to their home.

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August 18th, 5:30 PM

Join us for a great evening in solidarity with our brothers and sisters at the southern Border.

- Potluck dinner starting at 5:30

- Crafts and card/letter making for the whole family – we are sending what we make as a support for those being detained at the border. We are partnering with one of the locations that Marjorie McNeill visited that we learned about when she shared her journey with us.
- Free will offering to send to help house, feed, clothe and care for those being detained at the border – it would be great to raise a significant gift!
- 7-8 PM go as a group to the City Band Concert – bring a chair or blanket