



ASSOCIATION FOR EPISCOPAL DEACONS

ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

Open Space Notes 2020

Open Space Topic: **Immigration**

3/7/20

Facilitator: Lori Mills-Curran

Scribe: Anita Miner

Introduction

- Lori spoke of her non-profit called “Mission Hub” in the Boston area
- Some of services of Mission Hub are ESL classes, Know your rights, etc
- 1500 people are on a class wait list. Often use Skype.
- Started with a grant of \$20M from the Diocese of MA, with \$7M given to churches to do outreach
- Diocese of MA includes 25% Latinos and 35% Brazilians
- Partners include ELCA church, Presbyterian Church of America and the Episcopal Church
- Some of challenges facing the Brazilian Presbyterians: Calvin pre-destination; also they feel betrayed by government.

Ways to learn about immigration and training to help immigrants:

- USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services). This is part of the USA Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
- They offer a 2-week training to be credentialed representatives to work like paralegals.
- Cost to be trained is \$500-\$600 for registration plus \$400 for books
- Great ministry for deacons
- AILA.org (American Immigration Lawyers Association)

Immigrants and laws

- We can pay to bail people out with an affidavit
- If we say the person is of “good moral character,” we stand a chance
- It’s a constitutional right
- Case law has 2 regulatory aspects
- There are rules as well as regulations
 - “Good moral character” is restrictive, however
 - Help build portfolio to assist those detained
- To bail out = to post bond; we purchase people’s liberty; person may wear ankle bracelet
- People are picked up by ICE
- Eg, Episcopal City Mission can hold funds which are used to pay for court fees. When giving money, it may be tax-deductible
 - Diocese of MA has bail fund of \$10,000
 - Diocese of Atlanta has \$2500

Various deacons told immigration stories.

Lois-Diocese of LA. Once people are released, they need services.

Juan-Diocese of Atl. People are sometimes released at night. They need transportation and lodging. They are given a bag of necessities. It's important to educate church folks on immigration. A Nonprofit called Faith & Public Life operates there. Cathy Meeks leads advocacy pilgrimages. We can visit people at "El Refugio." It is helpful to go to court with folks. They wear orange jumpsuits. Talk via TV screen. Only 3% get released in Atlanta compared to 14% in MA.

Charleen Diocese of LA. IRIS is an interfaith refugee and immigration service organization. A family that arrives goes to a retreat center in LA, gets lodging, food, and other services.

Lori-Diocese of MA. BIGAM in Boston. People retained need a friend to go to court with them. An authorized rep can go. Important to develop a network of reliable lawyers. The court is in Fitchburg MA so people need ride to the court. Often teens skip school to take their parents to court.

Bette-Diocese of Louisiana. Some guards are helpful; most not. In New Orleans there's "Voces Unidas" which has resources and money. They train. Immigrants leave their countries/places with nothing except clothes on their backs.

What can we as individuals/deacons do to help?

- Help change the system (Some think the system is okay.)
- Listen to the immigrants
- Working class folks have lots in common with Presbyterians
- Deflate bad attitudes
- Know ITIN#
- Do immigrants take our work seriously?
- Assume the best of people, even if ideas are opposed to yours; they often suffer:
 - Loss of heritage
 - Grief & jealousy
 - Judgment: Don't judge anyone

Q & A and Comments

- Does ICE need a warrant? Don't open the door; opening the door = consent to search
- Lori. Not everyone should be bailed out, eg, cases of domestic violence.
- Sanctuary parish/diocese. It is not a legal status, but a political or religious statement.
- What's definition of sanctuary? Unclear
- Juan: Lights for Liberty has 600 people
- Term "harbor." Definition and usage are difficult.
- Forward vs FWD.org
- Dennis: Iranians often go from Canada to USA.
- DACA students. Often pay out-of-state tuition to skirt the situation
- It's important to LISTEN to others