



STUDY GUIDE FOR VITAL *CONVERSATIONS ON IMMIGRATION*

FOR CONGREGATIONS WHO
ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGING
IN IMMIGRATION JUSTICE



RELIGION & RACE
The United Methodist Church

A Pastoral Word from the General Secretary

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the One who journeys with us—who crossed borders, broke barriers, and called us to love boldly. As people of faith, we are shaped by a story of migration—from Abraham and Sarah’s pilgrimage to Ruth’s courageous crossing, from the flight of the Holy Family to Jesus’ own ministry as a wandering teacher. Scripture is filled with movement, displacement, and divine accompaniment. And yet, too often, our communities respond to today’s immigrants not with compassion, but with fear; not with welcome, but with walls.

That’s why this *Vital Conversations on Immigration* series matters. It offers us an invitation—a sacred opportunity—to go deeper. Deeper into Scripture. Deeper into our discipleship. Deeper into relationship with those who have been pushed to the margins and at times with dehumanizing rhetoric. These conversations may stir

discomfort. They may uncover truths we’d rather not face. But they also hold the potential for healing, for growth, and for transformation—if we are willing to listen with humility and respond with courage.

I believe the Church is at its best when we live into God’s call to be a sanctuary people. A people who welcome, who advocate, who accompany. A people who say clearly and without hesitation: *“You are beloved. You belong. We acknowledge you.”*

Whether you’re in a congregation filled with newcomers, or in a place just beginning to wrestle with immigration, I thank you for opening your heart to this work. May the Spirit move through your conversations and convict us all to be a Church that reflects the heart of Christ—especially for those who sojourn.

Let us walk this journey together—with compassion, with courage, and with hope.

In Christ’s justice and joy,



Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo
General Secretary,
General Commission on Religion and Race

Immigration is not merely a political issue—it is a theological and spiritual matter deeply rooted in our Christian faith. From Genesis to Revelation, God calls us to welcome the stranger, care for the sojourner, and recognize the sacred worth of every person. Yet in our current context, immigrants are often criminalized, excluded, and dehumanized. In the face of such injustice, the Church must not remain silent.

The United Methodist Church has spoken clearly on this matter. Our Social Principles affirm:

“We oppose all laws and policies that attempt to criminalize, dehumanize, or punish displaced individuals and families based on their status as migrants, immigrants, or refugees... We challenge policies that call for the separation of families... and we oppose the existence of for-profit detention centers for such purposes.”

(SOCIAL PRINCIPLES ¶163.G)

These are not just statements—they are a reflection of who we are called to be: a Church that embodies justice, mercy, and hospitality. A Church that walks with immigrants not out of charity, but as a matter of covenantal faithfulness and Gospel discipleship.

The *Vital Conversations on Immigration* series was developed to help local churches explore this sacred calling. Each session invites you into deeper reflection on the realities of immigration today, guided by the voices of faith leaders, theologians, advocates, and immigrants themselves.

TOGETHER, WE WILL EXAMINE:

- The biblical and theological foundations of welcome, hospitality, and justice
- Why people migrate and how global and national systems shape those decisions
- The deep connection between migration, displacement, and land—particularly in Indigenous communities affected by colonization and forced relocation
- How race, culture, and power intersect with immigration in the U.S.
- How the Church can move from acts of compassion to systems change and prophetic witness
- What it means to build congregations of true welcome, accountability, and inclusion

This study is intended for group use—whether in Sunday School, small groups, or Bible studies—and is especially recommended for congregations seeking to understand how to accompany immigrant communities with humility and faithfulness.

We pray that this journey challenges you, transforms your understanding, and deepens your commitment to live out your faith in public. May these conversations help us become a Church that doesn't just talk about welcome—but lives it.

Immigration Justice: What is it?

SINCE 1968, GCORR HAS EXISTED “to hold the newly formed United Methodist Church accountable in its commitment to reject the sin of racism in every aspect of the life of the church” (www.gcorr.org). Racism, however, is resilient and has continually reshaped itself within the United States—both institutionally and structurally. While racism no longer appears as segregated lunch counters, Jim Crow laws, or fire hoses turned on nonviolent demonstrators, it has morphed into subtler but equally harmful forms: the dismantling of Affirmative Action policies, the rolling back of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, increased funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the targeting of Black and Brown immigrants and their families. These shifts perpetuate injustice and inequity.

Because injustice toward immigrants is so pervasive, immigration justice can be understood in many ways. For the purposes of this resource, however, we define immigration justice through a biblical and theological lens.

The Hebrew Bible—particularly the first five books—is filled with God’s instructions to the people of Israel on how to treat foreigners among them. Leviticus 19:33–34 commands:

“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

While we do not expect the Christian faith to dictate U.S. domestic policy, as people of faith, we are called to treat the sojourner and foreigner as God does and to advocate for policies that are humane and just. From a biblical perspective, justice does not belong to any human system or government; it belongs to God alone. Immigration justice, therefore, is rooted in recognizing the Imago Dei—the image of God—in every sojourner. It is a justice that intentionally chooses to care for, accompany, and act on behalf of immigrants because they are God’s creation.

This vision is affirmed in The United Methodist Church’s Social Principles, paragraph 163:

“We affirm the dignity, worth, and rights of migrants, immigrants, and refugees, including displaced and stateless people.... We urge United Methodists to welcome migrants, refugees, and immigrants into their congregations and to commit themselves to providing concrete support, including help with navigating restrictive and often lengthy immigration policies, and assistance with securing food, housing, education, employment, and other kinds of support” (p. 144).

To understand immigration injustice today, we must recognize how white supremacy, xenophobia, and racial profiling have intersected to foster fear and hatred toward immigrants.

White supremacy, defined as “the system in which, either explicitly or implicitly, white people are societally favored to maintain inequities of wealth, power, and privilege,” has long established whiteness as the default or normative way of being. In the U.S., citizenship itself is often treated as part of this normative experience. Consequently, those who are not white and who are displaced, stateless, or “not from here” are frequently viewed with suspicion and fear.

This fear of the foreigner—xenophobia—creates barriers between “us” and “them,” framing outsiders as disturbances and threats to the community. In such a culture, racial profiling thrives. Racial profiling is “the practice of targeting individuals for suspicion of crime based on their race, ethnicity, or national origin, rather than any actual evidence or behavior.” When this practice is disproportionately sanctioned by the state against non-dominant groups, harm becomes inevitable.

Language shapes how we see people—and how we treat them. That’s why, in this study, we are intentional about the words we use when talking about migration and people on the move.

HERE ARE A FEW KEY TERMS WE USE AND WHY:

- **MIGRANT:** A broad term for anyone who moves from one place to another, often for work, safety, or family reasons. Migration can be voluntary or forced.
- **IMMIGRANT:** A person who moves to another country with the intention of living there permanently or long-term.
- **REFUGEE:** Someone who has fled their home country due to war, persecution, or violence and has received legal recognition and protection under international law.
- **ASYLEE:** A person who is already in another country and is seeking asylum based on fear of persecution in their home country. Asylees must meet the same criteria as refugees but apply from within the country or at its border.
- **UNDOCUMENTED OR UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANT:** A person residing in a country without official authorization. We avoid the term **“illegal”** because no human being is illegal. People can violate laws, but their existence and identity are never illegal.

As United Methodists, we believe in the **sacred worth of all people**. Our language should reflect that truth. Dehumanizing terms fuel fear and discrimination; justice-centered language affirms dignity and invites understanding.

As you go through this study, we encourage you to listen deeply, ask questions, and be open to how language—yours and others’—shapes our shared vision of God’s justice.

Why Is This a Vital Conversation?

This is a vital conversation because immigration is not just a matter of public policy—it is a matter of Christian discipleship. In a time when fear, misinformation, and division dominate the national discourse around migration, the Church is called to offer a different witness: one grounded in love, justice, and the sacred worth of every person.

As United Methodists, we are guided by the Gospel and our Social Principles, which compel us to care for immigrants, oppose dehumanizing systems, and stand in solidarity with those who are displaced. These conversations are vital because they help us confront our own assumptions, understand the lived realities of our immigrant neighbors, and discern how we—as individuals and as a Church—can more faithfully embody God’s radical welcome.

To remain silent in the face of injustice is to fall short of our calling. This series offers a space to reflect, to learn, and to grow. It equips the Church to live out its mission in a world deeply in need of compassion, courage, and Christ-like love.

How to Use This Resource

This *Vital Conversations on Immigration* resource is designed to help congregations engage in faithful, courageous dialogue about immigration through a United Methodist lens. It can be used in Sunday School classes, small groups, Bible studies, or other Christian education settings.

EACH SESSION INCLUDES:

- **OPENING PRAYER:**
Ground your group in a spirit of reflection and hospitality.
- **VIDEO INTRODUCTION:**
Read the short introduction to familiarize the group with the video contents.
- **VIDEO PRESENTATION:**
Watch a short video featuring a theological reflection or personal testimony. These videos center the lived experiences of immigrants and justice leaders.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**
Use the guided questions to explore the theological themes, challenge assumptions, and reflect on how your faith community is called to respond.
- **SELF-REFLECTION:**
Use this time to reflect – either written or in silence – on what has been presented.
- **CLOSING PRAYER:**
End with prayer to honor what has been shared and to commission continued learning and action.

Facilitating Faithful Conversations:

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATORS AND GROUPS:

This study is designed to spark honest, courageous conversations about immigration through the lens of our Christian faith. Because immigration can be a sensitive and deeply personal topic—especially in congregations where perspectives vary widely—it’s essential to create an environment rooted in grace, empathy, and discipleship. The following guidelines will help facilitators and groups engage one another with respect, openness, and a shared commitment to growing in Christlike love. These conversations are not about winning arguments—they are about listening deeply, learning faithfully, and responding to God’s call to love our neighbors.

- **Create Sacred Space** – Establish group norms that invite honest reflection, active listening, and mutual respect across lines of difference. This is not about debate—it is about discipleship.
- **Honor Lived Experience** – Be mindful that some participants may be immigrants or directly impacted by immigration policies. Their stories are sacred. Create space for these voices to be heard and ensure they are honored with care, consent, and confidentiality.
- **Engage with Openness** – Invite participants to approach each session with humility, curiosity, and a willingness to grow. Encourage thoughtful dialogue, especially when encountering perspectives or theological insights that are new, challenging, or unfamiliar.
- **Connect Faith and Action** – Each session invites movement from learning to faithful living. Encourage the group to reflect on how their discipleship calls them to respond—through ministries of welcome, advocacy, solidarity with immigrant communities, or deeper theological study.

SUGGESTED PACING:

- Each session is designed to last 45–60 minutes but can be adapted to fit your context.
- The study can be done over six weeks or condensed/expanded based on your group’s schedule.

Preparation:

Before each session, take time to prepare both the space and your own facilitation.

- **Select a Suitable Room:**
Choose a space that is comfortable, quiet, and large enough for group conversation. Each session requires internet access and a screen or projector to show the video.
- **Test Equipment:**
Do a technology run-through in advance. Ensure that the internet connection is stable, the video plays properly, and all computer and projection equipment is functioning.
- **Preview the Video:**
Watch the full video before the session to become familiar with the content and tone.
- **Review the Materials:**
Read through the session guide in advance. Take note of the discussion flow, key questions, and any biblical or theological connections you want to emphasize during the conversation.

Preparation creates the conditions for a thoughtful and Spirit-led gathering.

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WHAT DOES OUR FAITH REQUIRE?

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IMMIGRATION AND THE BIBLE: WHAT DOES OUR FAITH REQUIRE?



VIDEO LINK

<https://youtu.be/azcw1kwZN98>

PRESENTER



Karen González

is a writer, speaker, and immigrant advocate who came to the U.S. from Guatemala as a child. She is the author of *The God Who Sees and Beyond Welcome* and works with an organization supporting asylum seekers. Karen writes and speaks widely on immigration, faith, race, and culture, with bylines in *Sojourners*, *The Christian Century*, and *Christianity Today*. She lives in Baltimore, where she enjoys cooking Guatemalan food and traveling.

OPENING PRAYER

God of the Stranger and the Sojourner, You who guided Ruth to new beginnings, You who took on flesh and found no room at the inn— Be with us now as we reflect on your Word and the call to justice for immigrants and refugees. In this time together, may we listen not only to Scripture, but to the cries of your people seeking safety, dignity, and home. May your Spirit disrupt our comfort, rekindle our compassion, and reveal what your Word requires of us—to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you. Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO *WHAT DOES FAITH REQUIRE?* VIDEO

This video reframes the story of Ruth as one of migration, survival, and justice rather than a romantic tale. The speaker highlights Ruth's commitment to Naomi in the midst of famine, widowhood, and forced emigration, paralleling the speaker's own family's migration from Guatemala during civil war and economic collapse. The narrative contrasts Ruth's experience of welcome and provision in ancient Judah—where God's laws ensured immigrants had access to work and dignity—with the harsh realities faced by immigrants today. It underscores the "blessed alliance" between Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz, where citizens and immigrants co-labor for the flourishing of the whole community. The speaker asks whether modern societies extend the same compassion and justice to vulnerable newcomers – ultimately challenging viewers to consider how faith requires welcoming and supporting immigrants in tangible ways.



WATCH THE VIDEO

<https://youtu.be/azcw1kwZN98>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 “Wherever you go, I will go...” are often heard at weddings, but the context is one of deep loss and migration. How does understanding the true context of Ruth’s words shift their meaning for you?
- 2 The story of Ruth presents a “blessed alliance” between Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz—a partnership across lines of gender, citizenship, and power. What would a blessed alliance look like in your congregation or community today?
- 3 Deuteronomy commands landowners to leave food for the poor, the widow, and the immigrant. This biblical ethic of hospitality and provision challenges our current immigration policies and societal values. How should the Church respond when government laws contradict God’s justice?

SELF-REFLECTION

Reflect on your own family’s migration story, or the stories of migration in your congregation or neighborhood.

- How do these stories echo the pain, struggle, and hope in Ruth’s journey?
- What wisdom or lessons might these lived experiences hold for you personally?



Take a few moments to journal or pray about the connections you notice.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of Justice and Welcome, we thank you for your presence among us, for the challenge of your Word, and for the witness of those who journey in search of safety and hope. Forgive us for the ways we have turned away from the stranger. Forgive our silence in the face of unjust systems and hardened borders. Stir in us a holy restlessness, that we might not only hear your call—but answer it. Empower us to be your hands and feet in the world: to build communities of welcome, to advocate for justice, and to accompany those on the move with the same grace that accompanies us all. In the name of Jesus, who was once a refugee, we pray. Amen.

WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?



VIDEO LINK

<https://youtu.be/YVAr4X7UX5E>

PRESENTER



Monalisa Salakielu Tu'itahi

is an immigration attorney and lay servant leader in The United Methodist Church, where she has served at local, conference, and jurisdictional levels. She is the Immigration Coordinator for the California-Pacific Conference and advocates for justice and dignity for immigrant communities. Born in Tonga and raised in Hawai'i, she now lives in California with her husband, Rev. Dr. Saia Tu'itahi, and their family.

OPENING PRAYER

God of Exodus and Hope, you are the One who sees your people in their suffering and calls them out toward freedom. You know the reasons why people leave their homelands— the ache of hunger, the threat of violence, the dream of safety, the longing for opportunity. Today, as we reflect on why people migrate, may we see beyond politics and policies, and instead glimpse the sacred stories of families seeking life, dignity, and peace. Be present among us now, O God of every border and in-between place. May your Spirit guide our conversation with wisdom, mercy, and humility. Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO *WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?* VIDEO

In this video, the speaker highlights the current humanitarian crisis where millions of immigrants, including families and children, are fleeing violence, poverty, and political instability—often worsened by U.S. foreign policies and global inequities. Drawing on her own migration story from Tonga and encounters with asylum seekers like Juan and Julietta, the speaker underscores how migration is driven by a quest for life, dignity, and hope. Yet, instead of compassion, migrants are often met with militarized borders and dehumanization. The speaker tells followers of Christ that resistance to oppression is not optional but central to faith by: reminding the Church of its call to resist this evil, reclaiming its identity as God's people, and actively opposing injustice in whatever forms they present themselves.



WATCH THE VIDEO

<https://youtu.be/YVAr4X7UX5E>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How can we practice humility and interrelatedness in our advocacy and conversations about migration in your local church context?
- 2 How do the personal migration stories shared by the video presenter (e.g., from Tonga, El Salvador, Mexico) expand or challenge your understanding of why people migrate?
- 3 The speaker names immigration enforcement as a form of evil that dehumanizes people made in God's image. What theological grounding do you see in this claim and how does your faith call you to respond to such injustice?

SELF-REFLECTION

Where have you remained silent in the face of injustice within your congregation or community? What might it take for you to step into active accompaniment and advocacy with immigrant communities?



Pause to reflect honestly. What is one step God may be inviting you to take?

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious and Loving God, as we end this time of reflection, we remember the many whose journeys are unfinished—those who have left everything behind not out of luxury, but out of necessity. We remember parents who carry children across borders, young people who walk alone, and elders who hope to see peace before they die. Send us out with compassion in our hearts, conviction in our voices, and courage in our actions. May we be builders of bridges, not walls—practicing welcome, justice, and solidarity in a world that longs for belonging. In the name of Jesus, the Migrant Messiah, we pray. Amen.

RACE, CULTURE, AND IMMIGRATION: WHO BELONGS?



VIDEO LINK

<https://youtu.be/ovulePN10rA>

PRESENTER



Precious Kufarimai

is a member of St. Paul UMC in Triana and served as a Global Mission Fellow with the General Board of Global Ministries in Miami from 2021–2023. She is passionate about the intersection of faith and justice and currently works as a flight attendant. Precious is the daughter of Revs. T.K. and Adlene Kufarimai.

OPENING PRAYER

God of all nations and all peoples, you knit each of us together in our mother's womb, and you delight in the languages, cultures, and colors that reflect your image in countless ways. We gather today holding deep questions—Who belongs? Who is seen, welcomed, and affirmed? Whose stories are told, and whose are silenced? Let your Spirit stir in us the holy discomfort that moves us to repentance, reconciliation, and courageous acts of love. In this sacred time, remind us that in your kingdom, belonging is not earned—it is gifted. And your table is long enough for us all. Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO *RACE, CULTURE AND IMMIGRATION: WHO BELONGS?* VIDEO

In this powerful reflection, Precious Kufarimai, a 26-year-old Zimbabwean-American and second-generation immigrant, shares her deeply personal journey of navigating race, culture, and belonging within the Church. She challenges the Church to move beyond cultural comfort to embrace the fullness of Christ's Kingdom, where every skin tone, accent, and story has a place. Precious calls for the Church to listen deeply to immigrant stories, expand leadership to include diverse voices, and repent of racial and cultural biases that fracture the Body of Christ. Ultimately, she offers a vision of the Church as a place of radical belonging, where layered identities are honored as gifts and communities reflect the beauty of Revelation 7:9's vision of "every nation, tribe, people, and language" worshiping together.



WATCH THE VIDEO

<https://youtu.be/ovulePN10rA>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How have race, culture, or language shaped your sense of inclusion or exclusion in the Church?
- 2 Precious speaks about being “too Black” for white spaces and “not Black American enough” for others as a second-generation Zimbabwean immigrant. How can our church be a place that affirms layered, “in-between,” and intersectional identities?
- 3 The script challenges the Church to prioritize Kingdom truth over cultural comfort. What would it look like for us to choose the discomfort of transformation in the gracious inclusion of immigrants among us?

SELF-REFLECTION

“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...” (Revelation 7:9) As you reflect on this vision of God’s kingdom, consider:

- How do you perceive (or not) this vision reflected in my worship, leadership, and fellowship?
- Where might God be inviting you to grow in embracing this diversity?
- What steps can you take—big or small—to help make this vision more present in your church and community today?



Take a few moments to write or pray about what comes to mind.

CLOSING PRAYER

Life-giving God, We give thanks that Your boundless love and grace know no limits of race, creed, color, land, or citizenship. In You, we all belong; in Your glorious Kin-dom, no one is forgotten. Forgive us for the times we have withheld Your love, building communities of exclusion and offering grace with conditions You never required. Remind us, O God, that the very nature of Your Kin-dom is radical welcome—embracing all, honoring all, and making space for those most vulnerable among us. By the power of Your Spirit, grant us courage to labor for a world shaped by justice, where people of every culture, race, and nation find dignity, belonging, and peace. In the name of the One who sojourned among us, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

FROM CHARITY TO JUSTICE: THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN IMMIGRATION



VIDEO LINK

<https://youtu.be/DTqod3VLLtQ>

PRESENTER



Deaconess Darlene DiDomineck

serves as Executive Director of The Center at Arch Street UMC in Philadelphia, a community ministry with and for unhoused neighbors. She has also led the Methodist Federation for Social Action and served as a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries. A graduate of Union Theological Seminary, she is Vice-Chair of the National Association of Deaconesses and Home Missioners. Darlene believes in the power of storytelling and a connectional church that puts love into action for justice and transformation.

OPENING PRAYER

God of Exodus and Welcome, we gather today with hearts open to Your call. You are the One who led Abraham to new lands, who guided Israel through the wilderness, and who, in Christ, became flesh and dwelt among us as a migrant and a guest. Make Your Church a sanctuary of justice, a place where mercy takes root and grows into transformation. Be present with us in this session, that our prayers may become action, and our action may proclaim Your reign of love and justice. In Jesus' name, the Refugee and Redeemer, we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO *FROM CHARITY TO JUSTICE: THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN IMMIGRATION* VIDEO

In this video, Deaconess Darlene DiDomineck describes the Church's calling as one that moves beyond acts of charity to pursue justice rooted in faith. Sharing her work at The Center in Philadelphia, Darlene illustrates how radical hospitality and public witness create a sanctuary for unhoused neighbors and immigrants alike, embodying the Church's call to welcome all. She reflects on how charity addresses immediate needs, but justice dismantles the systems that perpetuate suffering. Drawing on biblical narratives and Wesleyan theology, Darlene calls the Church to embrace holistic, intersectional justice led by the voices of those most impacted. Ultimately, she urges us to share our migration stories, recognizing that movement is part of the human and divine story, and to be a Church that transforms mercy into lasting change.



WATCH THE VIDEO

<https://youtu.be/DTqod3VLLtQ>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 The presenter draws a distinction between charity (immediate relief) and justice (systemic change). How has our congregation responded to immediate needs of immigrants in our community?
- 2 How might your congregation stretch into ministries that also seek systemic change, like policy advocacy, coalition-building, or public witness?
- 3 The presenter stresses that justice must be intersectional, rooted in real lives and lived experiences. How can our church better acknowledge and respond to the overlapping injustices faced by people in our community—especially those shaped by race, gender, immigration status, and class?

SELF-REFLECTION

Deaconess DiDomineck reminds us that movement is a universal part of the human and biblical story.

- What is *your* migration story—geographical, spiritual, cultural, or emotional?
- How might reflecting on and sharing this story deepen your empathy and connection with others?
- In what ways could this help your congregation grow in solidarity with immigrant communities?



Take a few moments to write, pray, or ponder where God has moved you—and where God may be calling you next.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of Justice and Mercy, we thank You for the stories shared, the wisdom spoken, and the challenges set before us. You remind us that charity meets the need of the moment, but justice changes the conditions that create suffering. We entrust ourselves to the movement of Your Spirit, believing that another world—Your Kingdom—is not only possible, but breaking in even now. Through Christ, our Companion on the Way, we pray. Amen.

CONNECTING FAITH, RACE, AND IMMIGRATION JUSTICE



VIDEO LINK

<https://youtu.be/TNApc5hMWMQ>

PRESENTER



James Kang

is Associate Specialist of Communications at the General Commission on Religion and Race, where he supports storytelling, media, and resource development that advance the church's work toward equity and justice.

OPENING PRAYER

God of Many Tongues and Nations, we gather in Your presence today, mindful that You created us in all our differences—cultures, languages, histories, and stories. You are the One who scattered humanity at Babel and reunited us at Pentecost, showing us, that difference is not a curse but a gift. Today, open our hearts to listen deeply. Open our eyes to see You in the face of every neighbor. And open our communities to be places where belonging is not conditional but abundant. May our worship and our witness move us from charity into transformation justice, from token inclusion into beloved community. We pray this in the name of Jesus, who crossed every boundary of culture, race, and nation to dwell among us. Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO *CONNECTING FAITH, RACE, AND IMMIGRATION JUSTICE* VIDEO

The speaker reflects on their journey of faith, belonging, and the Church's role in welcoming immigrants. They share a formative seminary experience where gratitude for their immigrant father's theological achievements collided with a congregant's dismissive comment about language barriers, leaving them questioning how churches truly bridge cultural divides. A later visit to South Korea revealed for the first time what it felt like to belong—free from the burden of explaining oneself—underscoring how shared cultural reference points create ease and connection. Grounding their reflection in Leviticus and United Methodist Social Principles, they challenge the Church to move beyond charity and into transformative relationships with immigrants. Practical suggestions include joining immigrant communities in their worship practices, cultivating spaces for honest conversations about difference, and creating church cultures that don't just welcome diversity but desire it deeply.



WATCH THE VIDEO

<https://youtu.be/TNApc5hMWMQ>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How have you seen or experienced the burden of having to “translate your existence,” and in what ways do people in your congregation feel pressure to explain themselves, their culture, or their identity?
- 2 The speaker challenges common assumptions about language and immigration. How can we move from judgment to empathy when people don’t meet our expectations (e.g., not speaking English fluently)?
- 3 Scripture commands us to love the foreigner as ourselves, and the Social Principles affirm all people as part of God’s family. How is your congregation actively living out this biblical and denominational call to “love the foreigner” among you, and where might there be gaps between belief and practice?

SELF-REFLECTION

The speaker asks a hard question: *“Do we actually want to live among people who are truly different from us?”*

- Be honest with yourself: What emotions, hopes, or fears surface when you imagine being in deep community with people from different cultures, languages, or immigration statuses?
- Where might God be inviting you to lean into love, courage, and curiosity in those spaces?



Pause and reflect. Write down what stirs in your heart as you consider this question.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of Justice and Welcome, we thank You for the stories shared, the truths spoken, and the challenges placed before us today. We have been reminded that Your call is not only to welcome the stranger, but to perceive no one as a stranger at all. Give us courage to live as a Church that does not merely tolerate diversity but deeply desires it, knowing that each culture, each story, each voice reflects more of Your image. Strengthen us to dismantle judgment, to choose empathy, and to walk faithfully with immigrant neighbors as friends, companions, and co-laborers in Your Kingdom. Through Christ, who makes us one family, we pray. Amen.

CLOSING WORDS

We are grateful for your presence with us and thank God that you are educating yourselves and ministry contexts in this way in such a significant and urgent time. As we end this Vital Conversations on Immigration Series, let us remember - justice is not a concept we admire, but a way of life we practice. The call to connect faith, race, and immigration justice is not abstract—it is found in the faces of our neighbors, in the struggles of our communities, and in the witness of our Church. May you go forth today with ears ready to listen, hearts ready to be stretched, and hands ready to build communities where no one is asked to translate their existence to belong. Go in peace, go in courage, and go in the assurance that God goes before you, with you, and through you. Amen.

We Are All Migrants

BY REV. DR. CLAUDIO
CARVALHAES

We are all migrants.
From the dust of the earth to
the breath of God.
From womb to world.
From cradle to grave.

We move.
We journey.
We hope.

We are all migrants.
Leaving what we know,
yearning for what we seek,
carrying what we love,
hoping for what we need.

Some by choice.
Some by force.
Some with joy.
Some with grief.

But all in the image of God.
All bearing sacred stories.
All worthy of welcome.

We are all migrants.
Rooted in God's movement.
Led by the Spirit's wind.
Guided by Christ's footsteps.

Until every border is crossed,
every wall is torn down,
and every stranger is a friend.

We are all migrants.
And God is with us on the
journey.

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The Immigrant's Creed

BY REV. JOSÉ LUIS CASAL

Book of Common Worship: 2018.
Presbyterian Church

I believe in Almighty God,
who guided the people in exile and in
exodus,
the God of Joseph in Egypt and Daniel
in Babylon,
the God of foreigners and immigrants.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
a displaced Galilean,
who was born away from his people
and his home,
who fled his country with his parents
when his life was in danger,
and returning to his own country
suffered
the oppression of the tyrant Pontius
Pilate,
the servant of a foreign power.

Jesus was persecuted, beaten, and
finally tortured,
accused and condemned to death
unjustly.

But on the third day, this scorned
Jesus rose from the dead,
not as a foreigner but to offer us
citizenship in God's kingdom.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the eternal immigrant from God's
kingdom among us,
who speaks all languages,
lives in all countries,
and reunites all races.

I believe that the Church is the secure
home for all people,
who speak different tongues,
live in different places,
and belong to different cultures.

I believe that the Communion of the
Saints begins
when we embrace all God's people in
all their diversity.

I believe in forgiveness,
which makes us all equal before God,
and in reconciliation,
which heals our brokenness.

I believe that in the Resurrection
God will unite us as one people
in which all are distinct
and all are alike at the same time.

I believe in life eternal,
in which no one will be foreigner
but all will be citizens of the kingdom
where God reigns

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