



## Supporting New Worshiping Communities of Immigrants

Some new worshiping communities face uncertain futures as their immigrant constituents face deportation or jail. Some members have gone into hiding, afraid to go to a church service with other immigrants.

What are some of the implications for congregations and mid councils that attempt to be supportive of new worshiping communities? What can we do to help? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Make sure mid councils and congregations are well informed about rights and resources <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/>.
2. Get to know the immigration attorneys with the Office of the General Assembly. They are helpful, knowledgeable and great resources for the denomination: [Teresa.Waggener@pcusa.org](mailto:Teresa.Waggener@pcusa.org) and [Amanda.Craft@pcusa.org](mailto:Amanda.Craft@pcusa.org).
3. Get to know a trusted local attorney who can provide services to immigrants. Some attorneys take advantage of the vulnerability of immigrants and charge inflated prices.
4. Worship with new immigrant communities. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents are much less likely to make arrests when the gathering includes citizens.
5. Get connected with local coalitions that support immigrants. These may be ecumenical, interfaith or secular advocacy groups in your town.
6. Meet with local police to let them know you are concerned about and supportive of local immigrants.
7. Talk to the press. Let them know your concerns.
8. Accompany immigrants for court dates, ICE visits and meetings with congressional representatives.
9. Keep copies of important papers in a partner church or presbytery office. Sometimes papers indicating legal status are lost during raids and people cannot prove their status. Keep copies of birth certificates, Social Security cards, drivers' licenses, passports, visas and similar documents in a safe place apart from immigrants' homes.
10. Advocate with state and federal elected officials to promote humanitarian policies.
11. Take some of the burden from the most vulnerable by taking the lead in helping immigrants so that pastors or community leaders who are in the country with visas that can easily be revoked are not taking all the risk.

The PC(USA) Office of Immigration Issues, Office of Public Witness and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance have worked collaboratively to produce several resources for congregations, mid councils or anyone else interested in organizing to support immigrant communities. Here are three of these resources:

[We Choose Welcome Action](#)  
[Guide Family Care Plan](#)  
[Supporting Immigrants](#)

Participants in new worshipping communities are our Presbyterian brothers and sisters. Please have conversations in your church or presbytery about how to support them.

