



SanctUary Summit Primer 2018: Simple Steps to Get Started and Build Relationships for Immigrant Justice

We will be working hard in the coming months to incorporate the energy and shared ideas from the Summit into specific plans and proposals for action by our congregations, both individually and collectively. In the meantime, we offer a few suggestions for ways your congregations might continue your own discussion and discernment about how you can support immigrant justice and offer welcome to New Mainers.

It all begins with building relationships in which trust can develop: that rarely happens when we decide someone needs us to come to their rescue or we propose a “fix” for what we conclude to be the problem. Instead, consider:

- Learning who and where the New Mainers are in your community, what groups they are part of, and what area services (such as ESL classes or community meals or clothing give-aways) they may be using. Attend meetings of the groups they attend and challenge yourself simply to listen. Volunteering alongside New Mainers or—even better, in programs *they* direct, can be a great way to connect one-on-one;
- Encouraging members of your congregation to step out of their comfort zones by teaching them how to offer a basic formal greeting in languages spoken by the New Mainers in your area. For example, when you encounter women in hijab (or anyone you know to be Arabic speakers, such as persons from Somalia or Iraq), the greeting is “**As-salam alaykom**” (translated literally as “peace be upon you”), and it is generally pronounced “**Ahl sah-LAHM ah-LAY-koom**”. (The appropriate response if you are greeted this way is “Peace be upon you as well”, “**Wa Alykom As-salam**”, pronounced “**Wah ah-LAY-koom ahl sah-LAHM**”). Smiling is, of course, the universal language!;
- Checking out the Maine Immigrant Justice Resource List, available on MUUSAN’s website www.muusan.org (under Quicklinks). By exploring the website or Facebook pages of listed organizations and projects that are state-wide or within reasonable driving distance of your church, you may find something perfectly suited to your existing social justice or religious exploration groups;
- Building awareness and interest in members of your congregations by inviting immigrant speakers to come to your congregation and preach or otherwise share their own stories of being newcomers in our communities. (Some, like Color of Community, may be found through organizations on the Resource List. Be sure to provide a stipend.) For a book club or discussion group, consider one of the many outstanding titles offered in the UUA bookstore.

Many thanks to Jane Makela of First Universalist Church of Yarmouth for distilling these points from suggestions that emerged at the Summit!