

CHURCH BETWEEN BORDERS

Facilitator Guide



Christian
Reformed
Church

A guide to welcoming the stranger.

Office of Social Justice and Office of Race Relations

CHURCH BETWEEN BORDERS

Facilitator Guide Overview

Thank you for your interest and willingness to facilitate a conversation about immigration in your community. *Church Between Borders* is a three-session workshop that has been done in various settings throughout the country—adult-education classes in congregations, youth groups, schools, colleges, community organizations, and more. It was created by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) [Office of Social Justice](#) (OSJ) and by the Christian Reformed Church [Office of Race Relations](#) (ORR).

The session lengths can be flexible but we recommend one hour per workshop. While there are three workshops available, it's common for some groups to just want one or two sessions, often based on capacity. We recommend always including the simulation and doing it first. The workshops could be done in one session or over multiple weeks.

The advocacy activity in session three is a key component of the workshop and could be added on to either session one or two, depending on how many you decide to facilitate. Some churches or individuals may be reluctant to participate in this activity, so it's important to make clear that it is an optional activity, but the hope is that it would be offered. The idea is to empower people to be in touch with their members of Congress and to give people an action step they can take to apply what they've just learned. The advocacy postcards also have a place for participants to sign up to receive OSJ immigration newsletters and partner in the future.

To learn more about Synod's call to CRC churches to educate, show compassion, and advocate, [check out our website](#).

To learn more about why the OSJ encourages the church to engage in advocacy, check out our resource, [Biblical Advocacy 101](#).

If you plan on facilitating this workshop, please contact the Office of Social Justice at osjha@crcna.org. We love to know with whom we are partnering! Also, feel free to reach out with any questions related to the content or how to facilitate. We are here to support you!

Keep in mind that you'll want to . . .

- Order Advocacy cards a few weeks in advance to make sure they arrive on time ([order here](#)).
- Encourage participants to sign-up for updates and partnership opportunities with the Office of Social Justice.
- Be aware of what you'll need to print out before each session.
- Print out this guide to bring with you to each session
- Point people to the [Church Between Borders page](#) on the OSJ website for participants who have questions about sources or for those who want more backgrounder information
- (Optional) Order Church Between Borders participant guides ahead of time ([order here](#)).
- Be aware of time—one hour can go by fast!

PURPOSE AND GOALS FOR EACH SESSION

Session 1: Immigration Simulation—Stepping into the Shoes of an Immigrant

Opinions tend to run high about the issue of immigration, but often our shared set of facts runs low. If we're going to think faithfully about immigration, it's important that we share an understanding of how immigration works today—and maybe dispel some myths or misunderstandings that we didn't even know we had. In this session we will discover together how a person can legally immigrate today. We often hear the question, "Why don't undocumented immigrants just get in line?" Together we will learn what the lines are, who can get in them (and who can't), and how long it can take to get through those lines.

Session 2: Immigration Storyline—How Did We Get Here

One thing that is important for moving forward together is having a common memory about the past. In the United States, as a result of the diversity we enjoy, it can be a challenge to cultivate a common memory about immigration. The purpose of this session is to work toward a shared understanding of immigration history and the values that have shaped our evolving laws. We'll take into account memories that different groups may have, and together we'll form a more holistic combined understanding. We often hear the statement "My grandparents came legally, and other people should too." This session will help explain how immigration policy has changed and hasn't changed, and how it has prioritized some immigration seekers over others for hundreds of years.

Session 3: How Do We Think about Immigration as Christians? How Can We Advocate for Change?

As we listen to the rhetoric and read today's headlines about immigration, we can see how our culture defines a person's worth based on economics (are they a plus or a minus?) or safety (are they a threat or a benefit?)—but that is not how Scripture defines the worth of human beings. We have joined together, as people of faith, to have a certain kind of conversation about immigration—a Christian conversation. This does not mean we check our politics at the door, because immigration is a political issue decided by policy makers, whom we vote into office. But it does mean that we don't aim to sound more like Democrats or more like Republicans when we talk about immigration—we aim to sound more like Christians. In this session we'll consider how Scripture can inform our thinking and our conversation about the issue of immigration. We'll also consider how we are called to respond—using our time, talents, treasure, and the power that we have been given as citizens of a democracy. We'll consider ways to advocate for change to policies that are resulting in broken systems and damaged lives. We'll discuss how our voices and actions can bring about policies that are rooted in faithful thinking and aligned with Scripture's call on our lives and our leaders.

IMMIGRATION SIMULATION

1

Tips for Facilitating Session 1

SUPPLIES

(Downloadable at justice.crcna.org/church-between-borders)

- One identity card per participant
- Copies of four visa forms (We recommend 10 copies of each form for every 20 participants.)
- Signs for the four visa stations
- Identity card answer sheet
- Pencils/pens for participants
- Debrief questions (one copy per table; see Debrief section below)

Before the session begins

1. Set out the four visa forms on a table at the front of the room or at stations around the room. Post each visa station sign with the matching form.
2. Place an identity card at each person's seat and invite participants to read it when they arrive.

SESSION STEPS

1. Welcome and Introduction (2 minutes)

- As you welcome participants, briefly mention why you or your church or community organization wants to offer *Church Between Borders*. From the beginning, we recommend that you frame the conversation as an expressly Christian one by noting that when we talk about immigration, we are discussing a topic that touches on people who are beloved by God and worthy of dignity and respect. We are also talking about a topic that is controversial and complex—and the church, like many of us, is not always good at talking about political issues in a way that's healthy and productive. We are going to do that together, respecting differing opinions and sharing our opinions in ways that value persons who disagree. Consider opening with Scripture and prayer.
- Give a brief overview of the purpose and goals for the three sessions of *Church Between Borders* so that participants will have an idea of what they'll be doing (details in the Introduction on page 3).
- Note that there won't be time to cover every detail about immigration, and if anyone wants to see source materials backing up the facilitator's claims, encourage participants to learn more in the *Church Between Borders* Participant's Guide.

IMMIGRATION SIMULATION

SESSION 1

2. “Four Lines” Immigration Simulation (8 minutes)

1. After you’ve given an overview of the session, point out that each person has received a unique identity card describing the story of someone hoping to immigrate to the United States. Each participant will step into the shoes of a person trying to navigate our immigration system to see if they can successfully obtain a visa to immigrate under our current immigration laws.
 - a. Explain that “to immigrate” means to legally move to the U.S. to live and work permanently. We are not talking about people who come under “nonimmigrant” or temporary visas, such as students or tourists.
 - b. All individuals are seeking an “immigrant visa.” This means they are seeking permanent legal residence (green card) and eventual citizenship, if desired.
2. Point out that there are four ways, or four different visa categories, in which individuals can attempt to apply to enter the U.S. We call these the “four lines.” Based on their immigrant’s story, each participant should select which “line” would work best for their immigrant. Explain the options below:
 - a. If the person in your story is hoping to work, you might try the EMPLOYMENT visa.
 - b. If the person in your story is hoping to join family members in the U.S., try the FAMILY visa.
 - c. If you’re fleeing persecution, try the REFUGEE/ASYLUM visa.
 - d. If you’re from a country that doesn’t already have a lot of immigrants in the U.S., try the DIVERSITY visa.
 - e. Clarify: The paperwork that you see at each station is not the real paperwork used by the government, but it will help you identify what kinds of individuals have access to these means of entry. All the described standards and wait times are real.
3. Ask participants to move around, pick up a visa form, and return to their seat to fill it out and see if they qualify for that visa. This process should not take more than 5-7 minutes.
 - a. You can mention that some people will qualify and others will not.
 - b. You can mention that all the information they need is indicated in their story.
 - c. Use your answer sheet to field questions participants may ask while filling out their forms.
 - d. If there are questions that pertain to the whole group, you can let participants know that you will be debriefing as a large group soon.
 - e. Participants may try more than one form if their first attempt doesn’t work.

IMMIGRATION SIMULATION

SESSION 1

3. Debrief (45 minutes)

1. (Optional) Once everyone has reached a conclusion, ask them to come up with **one word** that describes what the experience was like personally, or what it felt like to go through the process. Ask people to take turns sharing their one-word answers with the group. (Examples: sad, frustrating, difficult.)
2. Ask participants to further share their experience in groups of 3 to 4 persons by discussing the following questions (5 minutes):
 - Could you immigrate legally?
 - If yes, how long would you have to wait to get a visa?
 - If you weren't able to enter, did you initially assume your person would be able to immigrate? Why?
 - What surprised you about the process?
3. Return to one large group. You will now facilitate a whole group discussion about each of the "lines" that comprise our legal immigration system. (5-7 minutes/visa form)
 - Start by discussing Family-based visas. Ask participants who tried to fill out that paperwork to share what surprised them when they tried to go through this "line" or what they learned about it. Refer to the points of emphasis on page 7 as you guide the group through its conversation, so that everyone in the group is able to learn the highlighted information.
 - Move on to employment, then refugee/asylum, and finally diversity lottery—first asking for learnings from those who tried to go through that "line," and then ensuring that the group's conversation for that section includes the points of emphasis found on pages 8-10.

4. Closing (5 minutes)

- You could close this session by posing the question "After going through this simulation, how would you respond to someone who asked, 'Can you help me understand why some people don't get in line and come the legal way?'" Most likely, participants will have answers and explanations that debrief the themes of this lesson. If not, here are a couple of suggestions:
 - For many individuals who want to immigrate to the United States, there is no "line" to get into. There are no legal channels for most people to enter the United States, and once they are in the U.S. without legal status, there is no opportunity to "get in line."
 - Wait times are often very long, even longer than some individuals' remaining lifetime.
- Ask participants to come back for the next session with some information about their family's immigration history (if applicable).
- Let everyone know that new folks are welcome to join in on the next session as well!

IMMIGRATION SIMULATION

SESSION 1

Points of Emphasis on the Visa Forms

Family

- The family member in the U.S. does the work of petitioning the U.S. government for their family member who wishes to immigrate. The family member in the U.S. must be a citizen or a legal permanent resident.
 - A person without legal status cannot petition for family members.
 - A person on a temporary visa cannot petition for family members.
- Highlight that the family member in the U.S. must meet certain financial requirements in order to petition for a family member.
- Emphasize that the family member in the U.S. must be 21 years old in order to petition for a family member to immigrate to the U.S.
- Your family member must be an immediate family member.
 - An immediate family member is a spouse, child, parent, or sibling.
 - Extended family relationships (aunts, uncles, cousins, grandchildren, grandparents) do not qualify.
- You may or may not be able to enter, based on the status of your U.S. family member.
 - If the family member is a U.S. citizen, they can petition for all immediate family members.
 - If you are a legal permanent resident (green-card holder) you can petition **only for your spouse and unmarried child (minor or adult)**.
 - A majority of legal permanent residents can apply for citizenship after five years of living legally in the United States.
- Highlight the wait times. The forms show averages, but wait times are based, country of origin, family relationship, and how many applicants are in the line ahead of you.
 - There is a maximum number of family-sponsored preference visas that can be issued to citizens of any one country in a single fiscal year. No country can receive more than seven percent of the visas available for the year. This results in significant backlogs for high-volume immigration countries, like China, Mexico, and the Philippines.
 - Unlike all the other visa categories, Congress does not place a limit on the number of visas it will give annually for spouses and minor children. Therefore, they tend to experience shorter wait times, but there is no guarantee that these visas will be granted.

IMMIGRATION SIMULATION

SESSION 1

Employment

- The following individuals can obtain a visa to immigrate to the U.S. within 12 to 18 months: (Such individuals find this out at question one on the employment visa form and do not need to proceed to the other questions.)
 - People investing \$500,000 to \$1 million in a job-creating enterprise that employs and preserves at least 10 full-time U.S. workers.
 - “Persons of extraordinary ability” in the arts, science, education, business, or athletics; outstanding professors and researchers, multinational executives and managers.
- Otherwise, you must be a skilled worker to enter through this visa.
 - Individuals must have a permanent, full-time job offer from a U.S. employer, so this involves much more than being willing to work.
 - Before officially offering the job, the employer must in essence prove to the U.S. government that there is no other qualified U.S. citizen who wants the job—this is to prioritize hiring U.S. citizens.
 - The employer must petition for the prospective immigrant. As the visa form demonstrates, the employer may have to wait six to 10 years for the immigrant to receive their visa and pay up to \$10,000 in legal fees, so the employer has to really, really want this person.
 - A majority of immigrants coming through the employment “line” must have a college or advanced degree or two years of experience in the field in which they are seeking to work.
- Wait times for all employment visa categories are based on the annual limit on the number of visas given and the number of applicants for each visa
- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Farm Bureau estimate that 50 -70 percent of all farm workers in the U.S. do not have legal immigration status. This demonstrates a major injustice of our immigration system—we have jobs that need to be filled but our broken system doesn’t give enough visas to allow people to come do the work.
 - There are visa shortages for high-skilled workers. So, many tech companies are strong advocates for immigration reform.
- Congress sets the annual visa limits for each category. For example, there are only 5,000 permanent low-skilled worker visas allowed per year, and seasonal workers do not qualify. Only Congress can change these numbers.
- Congress also sets the requirements. For example, if someone is working on a farm today and does not currently have legal status, there is basically no way for that person to get legal status without returning to their country of origin and entering through one of the four “lines” we have discussed. Congress created this requirement, and only they can change it.
- There are no temporary visas that lead to legal permanent residency (green card). If someone on a temporary visa wants to apply for a green card, they must apply to enter through one of the four doors.

IMMIGRATION SIMULATION

SESSION 1

Refugee and Asylum

- A person may qualify for refugee and asylum status if they are fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a specific social group.
 - Meeting this legal definition is a requirement for someone to be considered a refugee or an asylum seeker.
- Difference between refugee and asylum status: Refugee status is processed overseas, and recipients arrive to the United States with legal status. Asylum status is requested when someone arrives in the U.S. and then applies for status while on U.S. soil. The criteria are the same for both categories.
- There is a common perception that a “refugee” is a generic term for a desperate individual who cannot safely stay in their home country. It is critical to understand that the criteria is much stricter than this, and there is a high burden of proof required.
 - Beginning in 2013, there’s been a rising number of people (especially children) from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala who had been forced to flee due to violence, coming across the southern border to the U.S. While the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees urged the U.S. to treat them as refugees who had a legitimate claim to asylum, the U.S. in most cases deemed them undocumented immigrants and returned them to their countries of origin.
 - You are five times more likely to receive asylum status if you have legal representation, but a majority of individuals, including children, do not have access to legal counsel.
- A person fleeing persecution will often leave their home country and find safety in a United Nations-sponsored (U.N.) refugee camp or an urban center in a neighboring country. The U.N. will do initial screenings and give refugee status to individuals. Only the most vulnerable individuals will be recommended to a third country for resettlement.
 - There are about 30 countries that participate in refugee resettlement - one of them being the United States.
 - Less than 1 percent of the over 21 million refugees will ever be resettled into a new country.
- Refugees are the most thoroughly vetted individuals to enter the United States (security checks can take up to two years).
 - There is very little evidence to connect refugees and the threat of violence. The Cato Institute reports that the chance of being murdered in a terrorist attack caused by a refugee is 1 in 3.64 billion per year.
- There are currently 65 million displaced persons worldwide, but because of the strict definition, not all are given refugee status (for example, economic migrants fleeing northern Africa to Europe).
 - 21 million of these displaced persons have refugee status.

Diversity

- This visa category was created in 1990 to dedicate a channel for immigrants from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.
- This visa acts as a lottery system. You must meet the criteria to be granted a visa, but selection for this visa is random.
- Each year only 50,000 diversity visas are available and in 2015 over 9 million individuals applied.
- This visa isn't for the poor: you have to meet certain education and job-experience levels, and you must have enough money to file. It costs \$330 to file, plus additional fees, and you will not receive a refund if you aren't selected.

IMMIGRATION STORYLINE

2

Tips for Facilitating Session 2

SUPPLIES

- Church Between Borders immigration timeline (downloadable at justice.crcna.org/church-between-borders); print out one copy (30 sheets)
- whiteboard/chalkboard or large piece of paper
- dry-erase marker, chalk, or regular marker
- painters tape
- large sticky notes (optional activity)

Before the session begins

- Break up timeline cards for the 7 groups
- Review cards you will present
- Draw t-chart on whiteboard/large piece of paper (hang it up so it's visible for everyone) with Hopes on one side and Fears on the other

SESSION STEPS

1. Welcome and Introduction (3 minutes)

- Open with prayer
- With the person next to them, ask participants to finish the sentence "I used to think ____ about immigration, but now I think/know ____."
 - a. Example: *I used to think the immigration process was fast, but now I know the wait times are very long, particularly for some family members and refugees.*
- Give an overview of session 2 (refer to the Introduction on page 1).

2. Intro Exercise (5 minutes)

The purpose of this exercise is to consider, as a group, hopes, fears, and other values at the root of U.S. immigration politics and policy throughout U.S. history.

1. On a whiteboard or chalkboard or a large piece of paper taped to the wall, draw a T-chart with two columns: one for "Hopes" and one for "Fears."
2. Ask participants to brainstorm hopes that resulted in new immigration policies throughout American history. Share some examples to help the group begin: need for railroad workers, wealth, humanitarian purposes, family reunification, etc.
3. Ask participants to brainstorm fears that resulted in new immigration policies. Share examples to help the group begin: racism and xenophobia, high unemployment rates, etc.

This activity will help get the group thinking about why a country might implement certain immigration policies.

IMMIGRATION STORYLINE

3. Immigration Storyline (45 minutes)

Use the steps below to engage participants in a brief but thought-provoking history of U.S. immigration policy. (Optional: Give two large sticky notes to each participant for them to make notes throughout the presentations and later stick their notes on timeline cards that evoked a personal connection or question.)

1. Split the timeline cards into seven sections, and distribute a section to each of seven evenly distributed groups, as follows:

Group 1: cards 3-4

Group 2: cards 5-9

Group 3: cards 10-12

Group 4: cards 14-18

Group 5: cards 19-21

Group 6: cards 22-24

Group 7: cards 25-27

Facilitator presents cards 1-2, 13, 28-30.

2. In their groups, ask participants will read their cards together and then discuss this question: "What were the hopes or fears of the American people that characterized this period in U.S. history? How did those hopes and fears inform political opinions on the topic of immigration? A group reporter should prepare a **brief summary** of what happened during the time period, as well as hopes and fears that the group identified. You may explicitly tell them not to read all of the cards. (10 minutes max.)
3. Invite group reporters to respond, and write their responses in the appropriate places on the T-chart. Make sure the groups provide something you can write in either the Hopes or Fears column. (1-2 min/group)
 - a. Example: "In the 1930s, during the Great Depression, almost a million people were deported to Mexico. Americans feared a slowing economy and were afraid of losing their jobs" (i.e., Fears: job shortages, slowing economy).
4. As facilitator, do the first time period as an example (using cards 1-2):
 - a. You could say this: "From the late 1500s until the 1700s, Europeans colonized the land we now know as the United States. A majority of Native peoples were killed or displaced. From the early 1600s until the mid-1800s, Africans were trafficked into the United States, and their labor contributed to half of U.S. export earnings."
 - b. Hopes: land expansion, free labor, economic growth.
5. As the groups present, refer to the "Important Moments to Point Out" section on page 14 and mention important historical moments if presenters don't.
6. Be mindful of time spent and participants' attention. The exercise may tend to drag and go overtime with low-energy groups or wordy participants.
7. If your meeting space allows, after each group presents, they can hang their cards on the wall or lay them down somewhere so that they are visible in chronological order.

IMMIGRATION STORYLINE

SESSION 2

4. Reflection (5 minutes)

1. Ask the groups, What are the beliefs and attitudes underlying these hope and fears?
 - a. Draw a line below the groups' past responses and write these new responses underneath the Hopes and Fears columns on the T-chart. (Examples include racism, xenophobia, discrimination against certain religions, etc.)
2. (Optional) If time allows, have participants walk around the room to see the timeline in chronological order and put their sticky notes on cards that evoked a personal connection or question. This may help participants gain a broader understanding of how their story fits into our immigration history.
 - a. Purpose: make a personal connection to facts and data, and encourage people to walk through the entire timeline.

5. Closing (2 minutes)

Invite participants to pay special attention to news headlines regarding immigration. What are the hopes and fears that are motivating those headlines? What historical lessons could be applied?

IMMIGRATION STORYLINE

Important Moments to Point Out

- **Native Americans, colonization:** People often say we are all immigrants, or we are a country of immigrants. While it's true that a majority of people in the U.S. have an immigrant history—and perhaps most within the past century—it's important to recognize that there were Native Americans here before European colonization. Africans were also forced to immigrate—what we would today call human trafficking. So while saying we are all immigrants is often intended to unite us, this statement can be dismissive of the experience of Native American and African American stories.
- **Asian exclusion:** Point out that Chinese immigrants made up only 0.002% of the U.S. population at the time of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882). People of Chinese descent were excluded from immigrating to the U.S. from 1877-1952, and many other Asians were also excluded within this time period.
- **World Wars I and II era:** Growing isolationism and nativism led to two immigration restriction acts that set ethnic quotas on non-western European countries. The quotas established in the Immigration Act of 1924 led the U.S. to reject German/Jewish refugees aboard the steamship *St. Louis* in 1939. A quarter of those 900 refugees later died in the Holocaust. During this time, 87 percent of visas went to immigrants from western Europe.
- **Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965:** This legislation changed the immigration system from being nationality-based and allowed for increased immigration from non-western European countries. Prior to 1965, our immigration system strongly favored western European immigrants, providing them an open, fast track to legal entry. (Ask participants if they've heard the statement "My family immigrated here legally, and other people should too!" How could this moment in history inform that opinion?)
- **1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act:** Under President Reagan's administration, there was a two-pronged approach to immigration efforts: (1) over 3 million undocumented immigrants were given amnesty (granted legal, permanent status in the U.S.), and (2) proposals for enforcement of labor and border policies that did not come to fruition. No changes were made to the legal immigration system.
- **Formation of Department of Homeland Security (DHS):** It's telling to track how the government shifted immigration enforcement to various departments over time. First, immigration was housed in the Department of Treasury (economic issue!). Then it moved to the Bureau of Labor (jobs issue!), then to the Department of Justice (public safety issue!), and then to the Department of Homeland Security (national security issue!).
- **Comprehensive Immigration Reform:** In 2013 a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill passed in the Senate but was never voted on in the House of Representatives. This was the last time Congress tried to comprehensively reform our immigration system.

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

Tips for Facilitating Session 3

3

SUPPLIES

- Bibles
- Three pieces of paper (or large sticky notes) per group
- Pens
- Tape
- Advocacy postcards - 1 per person. ([order here](#))

Before the session begins:

Some people will know the names of their senators and representative. Others won't, so please look up these names before the session begins:

- This website identifies representatives based on address (you could just put the address of the church):
www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative
- And this identifies senators: www.senate.gov/senators/index.htm

SESSION STEPS

1. Welcome and Introduction (2 minutes)

- As you welcome everyone to this final session, invite people to reflect on what they have learned about immigration with the person next to them and to consider what they can do to advocate for immigration reform.
- Give an overview of session 3 (refer to the Introduction on page 1).

2. Bible Study Activity (25 minutes)

1. Divide into groups of about four persons each. Try not to have more than six people in a group.
2. Tell the groups, "Our church's education director wants you to design a three-week Bible study for small groups on the topic of immigration. You don't need to write the entire study right now, but you do need to come up with a basic outline. What will be your title and theme for each of the three sessions? What do you want to make sure the study covers? The study sessions can be created around certain topics, Scripture verses, Bible stories, or whatever combination your group decides.
3. Tell this to the group: "Use markers to write the title of each session on a separate sheet of paper. Your result will be four separate pages, with a session title on each page. Choose a presenter from your group to share the results with the large group. After the results are shared the presenter can post all four pages on the wall."
4. Give them about 15 minutes to brainstorm with their groups, then gather everyone together and ask each group to present their Bible study plan.

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

SESSION 3

After the groups report, debrief by inviting people to share additional questions or comments (as time allows). Here are some additional themes you could mention:

- All people are created in the **image of God** with an inherent dignity, and God desires their flourishing just like ours.
- There are many **immigration stories in the Bible**—name several! Be sure to mention that Jesus was a refugee to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15). Participants will notice that many people in the Bible left their homes for the same reasons immigrants do today: to be safe, or to feed their families.
- **"Welcome the stranger**, for you were once strangers in the land of Egypt" is one of the most-repeated commands in the Old Testament. God is serious about this, because the people of Israel kept failing to show care and compassion for people of other nations. This was how they were to model that they knew who God was, and who they were (Genesis 12:2-3).
- The word for **"hospitality"** in the original Greek of the New Testament is *philoxenia*, which literally means "love of the stranger" (*philo* = love; *xenia* = "stranger"). Biblical hospitality goes beyond inviting one's friends over for dinner; it is loving those who are different from us, those who perhaps frighten us, those who are outside of our circles of comfort. Through *philoxenia*, God is calling us to participate in something vulnerable and meaningful. Consider how Romans 12:13 changes with this new understanding: "Practice hospitality," "Practice loving the stranger."
- There's a huge theme in Scripture: **the stranger brings a blessing**. This is the Christian way of thinking about a stranger—not as a burden. (Hebrews 13:2.)
- **Power**: Romans 13 ("respect the governing authorities") provides another important theme. We are to respect power. And we are to steward the power that we have been given. This means that if we have been given a voice (a vote, citizenship, etc.), then we are obligated to use it in a way that honors God. Laws should be followed—and if laws are bad and causing suffering, then they should be changed *so that they can be followed justly*.
- **Defend the cause of the vulnerable**: Throughout Scripture, the people of God are consistently called to advocate for the poor and the vulnerable—widows, orphans, and immigrants. All three of these groups are vulnerable to being taken advantage of and don't have much power in society. God calls the powerful to stand alongside them.

3. Advocacy and Signing up (10 minutes)

As mentioned in the introduction, the advocacy activity is optional for participants, but the hope is that it would be included in one of the sessions. In 2010, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church mandated its Office of Social Justice to educate CRC congregations and to help them advocate for more just immigration laws. This is one way we are responding to this call. To learn more about this mandate, see the link in the workshop introduction.

3. Continued from page 16

We want to ensure that everyone who goes through the CBB workshops have an opportunity to sign up to receive immigration updates from the OSJ and indicate if they are interested in partnering to further immigration efforts in their church. The postcards are perforated so the top section is where they will write their letter to Congress and the bottom section is where they will sign up to be connected with the OSJ. Ask participants to tear along the perforated lines and give the bottom piece to you. Please send their contact information to either be scanned to osjha@crcna.org or mailed to:

Office of Social Justice
1700 28th St SE
Grand Rapids, MI, 49508

Facilitating Advocacy Activity

- Distribute an advocacy postcard to each person.
- Share the purpose of this advocacy activity with the group. You could say something like this: "We now have an opportunity to share what we learned with our member of Congress. Only Congress can change our immigration laws, so it's important that we are in touch with them about this issue. You are free to share a story, something you learned during this workshop, information about a specific piece of legislation, or check out the ideas on the back of the advocacy card."
- People can write to whichever Member of Congress they'd like, but it's best if the group writes to the same person to make the delivery process easier.
- Tell participants to write their home address on the top left lines on the front of the postcard. This helps their Member of Congress know that they are a constituent.
- When you explain the activity or while people are writing, ask the group if someone in the group would be interested in taking the letters and dropping them off at the legislators district office. he works well so you do not have to worry about postage and to avoid the risk of people taking them home and never sending them. If no one is interested, consider bringing them yourself!

4. Closing (3 minutes)

- Collect all the sign up cards.
- Determine a plan for who will drop off the advocacy postcards to the member of Congress' office. (Perhaps simply tell person at the front desk, "My church has been learning about the broken immigration system, and wants to share our views with Rep. ____.")
- Thank everyone for participating and encourage them to continue this conversation moving forward.
- End with a prayer of thanks for what the group learned and for immigrants in our country.