Faith Calling for Action

The Advocacy Booklet of the Faith & Action Committee

--Educating, Equipping, and Empowering Our Community –

Welcoming the Stranger

FAITH & ACTION

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Scripture tells us, again and again, that God is found among those who cross borders. From Abraham and Sarah leaving their homeland, to Israel wandering in the wilderness, to Mary and Joseph fleeing violence with the child Jesus, the story of salvation is inseparable from migration. God's people are, at heart, a people on the move. To welcome the stranger is not a political gesture first and foremost; it is a theological one. It is how we recognize the God who "pitches a tent among us" and who continues to meet us in places of displacement and uncertainty.

Jesus is unambiguous: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." In welcoming the immigrant, the refugee, and the asylum seeker, the Church does not merely offer hospitality; we encounter Christ himself. When fear shapes our policies and indifference numbs our compassion, it is not only migrants who suffer. The Body of Christ is diminished.

The Episcopal Church has long affirmed this truth. Through Episcopal Migration Ministries, through diocesan and parish partnerships, and through public advocacy, our Church bears witness to a God whose love does not stop at borders. As Episcopalians, we hold together prayer, service, and public witness. We care for those directly affected, and we also speak when systems deny dignity, due process, or basic safety.

This month, the Faith & Action Committee invites you to reflect on immigration not as an abstract issue, but as a deeply human and deeply spiritual reality unfolding here in Richmond, in our neighborhoods, and in the lives of people we know. What does faithfulness look like in this moment? Where is Christ asking us to see, to speak, to accompany, and to act?

Faithfully yours,

Florian+

Deacon

Free Arman

By David Hoover, Faith & Action Committee

His story touched my heart. Arman Momand is a 19-year-old Tucker High School student who was arrested by ICE after he settled a traffic violation. Arman is in the United States legally on a visa, granted to his entire family because his father was an interpreter for U.S. service members fighting in Afghanistan.

In August 2025, Arman was arrested by ICE with no warrant or charges and sent to the Farmville Detention Center. I wasn't able to find out much about his conditions there. When it came time for the August prayer vigil on the steps of St. Paul's, I made a sign. "Free Arman Momand." That is all it said.

There was a Labor Day protest in Monroe Park the following Monday, and I brought the sign with me. While there, a man with a professional camera asked if he could take my picture holding it. Afterward, he introduced himself as Luca, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reporter who had broken the story about Arman's arrest and detention. We both teared up as he told me how much it meant to him that his reporting had led to Arman being remembered at the rally. Because the sign was there, Luca was able to report that "Free Arman Momand" was among the signs present.

I am pleased to report that Arman was released in October. He has a great deal of healing to do.

My takeaway from this experience is simple: I was moved to make a sign. God magnified it so that the sign reached page three of the *RTD*. Making a sign was mine to do. We all have something to do to help bring in the Dream of God. It may seem small, but God rewards even the smallest acts of faithfulness.

Mother Teresa said, "We don't do great things; we only do small things with great love." What is yours to do? What is ours to do? Stay vigilant. Soak your life in prayer. Look for God. Make *your* sign.

Immigration in Our Region: What Is Happening in Richmond

compiled by David Hoover, Faith & Action Committee

- A $1.2 billion contract was awarded to Acquisition Logistics, based in Henrico County, to build an ICE detention center at Fort Bliss, Texas. The facility has been operational since August. The company, which has not previously built facilities of this scale, reportedly receives a ten percent profit from the contract.
- In Richmond, there have been multiple ICE raids at the Southwood Apartment Complex. Residents report being stopped on their way to work, having apartments entered without warrants, and experiencing damage to vehicles. Arrests have often been carried out by masked agents, sometimes without warrants or charges.

- Human Rights First has identified the Richmond Jet Center, a private airport near RIC, as a major hub for ICE deportation flights. Hundreds of flights have reportedly transported handcuffed and shackled individuals, primarily to detention centers in Louisiana, with some flights landing in El Salvador. These flights operate under special security status, with limited public transparency. According to available data, only a small percentage of those detained by ICE face violent criminal charges. Varina District Supervisor Tyrone Nelson stated publicly that he is deeply disturbed by these reports and has pledged to investigate further.
- Several local organizations are actively monitoring and responding to these developments, including RVA Indivisible's immigration action subcommittee, RVA Defensa, and ReEstablish Richmond, which works to resettle immigrants and refugees in our region.

Faithful, Practical Ways to Respond

Pray and Learn

Include immigrants, refugees, and detained individuals in your daily prayers.

- Explore the Episcopal Church's teachings and action alerts through the **Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN)**, which equips Episcopalians to advocate for just and humane immigration policies.

Support Local Partners

- **ReEstablish Richmond** accompanies refugee and immigrant families as they rebuild their lives, offering housing support, employment assistance, and community integration. Volunteers and financial support are always needed.
- **RVA Defensa** monitors ICE activity and shares timely information to help protect immigrant communities.
- **Sacred Heart Center** (Manchester) provides medical care, case management, and support services to uninsured and immigrant neighbors.

Advocate Faithfully

- Sign up for **EPPN Action Alerts** to contact elected officials about legislation affecting immigrants and asylum seekers.
- Speak with compassion and clarity in your own circles, resisting fear-based narratives and affirming the dignity of every person.

Discern Your "Sign"

Not everyone is called to the same action. Some are called to show up publicly. Some to write, donate, accompany, or pray persistently.

The work of justice is made up of many small, faithful acts.

Ask: *What is mine to do?*

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A Prayer for Migrants

Loving and faithful God,

you led your people through deserts and across seas,

and in Jesus you became a migrant among us.

We lift before you all who journey in search of safety,

those fleeing violence, hunger, and fear,

those separated from loved ones, detained, or turned away.

Guard them on the roads they travel.

Grant courage to the weary and hope to the afraid.

Soften our hearts, sharpen our conscience, and make your Church a place of refuge, welcome, and truth.

May we recognize your face in every stranger,

and walk in your way of justice, mercy, and peace.

Through Christ, our companion on the way.

Amen.