

Disciples Volunteering Spring 2020

Disciples Volunteering connects, supports, and equips Disciples serving in mission. This work is carried out through Sending Teams in Mission, Shaping Servant Leaders, and Supporting Local Missions. At the core of this work are faith values: learning, serving, and community. As DISCIPLES, we are students, learning through action and reflection, striving to deepen our faith by living it with others. In SERVING, we model ourselves after the one who came not to be served but to serve, giving and receiving in humility, and respecting the gifts of each one. Through COMMUNITY, we connect our faith and our lives with others, with deference for those with whom we serve, growing together in faith. Disciples Serving Community move from volunteer to servant to neighbor to friend as we get dirty for Jesus together.

People have called this time we are in “the Pause.” At first, that resonated with me. When the severity of the looming crisis became clear, I temporarily shut down Disciples Volunteering’s mission stations and placed upcoming programs on hold. I communicated my concern and intention with partners, seeking their counsel along the way. Together, we acted out of loving care for our servants and for those with whom we serve. As the crisis deepened, this holding pattern extended indefinitely. With seemingly daily revelations about the dangers of the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 and its spread, it became clear that we will not, at some point in the future, simply hit “play” and resume activity where we left off. This is not a surprise: a foundational tenet of disaster recovery is that one does not “return to normal” after a disaster. The world changes in small and large ways; to move through recovery and gain a sense of wholeness requires reaching a “new normal,” an adaptation to these changes.

What this means for Disciples Volunteering – indeed, for the whole church – remains an open question. Care for those who serve and those they serve with will guide Disciples Volunteering. Conversations point toward an eventual resumption of disaster response mission stations that look and operate differently, providing the most reasonable protections for all involved. More broadly, I anticipate a shift in emphasis to local mission engagement. Because of the heightened risks involved in travel, sharing meals and public spaces, and lodging away from home, congregations will be encouraged to identify ways to serve within or closer to their own community. Disciples Volunteering is collating updates via a single webpage: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/covid-19-updates/>. Included on this page are announcements, volunteer guidance, and, soon, updated mission trip protocols.

The summer mission intern program was already in a state of transition. Having previously reached out to other Disciples ministries with young adult service programs, Disciples Volunteering was planning a gathering to collaborate on a revision, possibly restructure, of the program. That is now delayed. The current crisis has removed the possibility for placing interns in all but one, maybe two, locations. While some mission sites have closed for the summer, others are still assessing the impact on their program.

Disciples Volunteering is supporting responses in Puerto Rico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Missouri. Referrals are available to partners in Texas and California. An evolving ecumenical project, in collaboration with the United Church of Christ and the Church of the Brethren, was taking shape in Dayton, Ohio. Engaging through Church World Service and National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), including my chairing of the National VOAD Long-term Recovery Group Committee, connects Disciples Volunteering and the Church with a broad spectrum of partners for mission. Among the benefits of these relationships, Disciples Volunteering and Week of Compassion, in partnership with the Pamlico County Disaster Recovery Coalition, wrote for and received a \$29,250 grant from Lowe’s Home Improvement. These funds, made available through membership in National VOAD, will enable the purchase of materials for home repairs in Pamlico County, North Carolina.

**Disciples Volunteering
Spring 2020**

I am grateful, as always, to the Board of Disciples Home Missions and the Week of Compassion Board of Stewards for your support in this ministry that we share,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josh Baird', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Josh Baird
Director, Disciples Volunteering

Disciples Home Missions
 Disciples Volunteering
 December 31, 2019

| | 2019 | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Budget | Actual |
| Income | | |
| Week of Compassion | 25,000.00 | 23,000.00 |
| Contributions | 0.00 | 2,835.62 |
| Disciples Home Missions | 14,750.00 | 0.00 |
| Totals Income | <u>39,750.00</u> | <u>25,835.62</u> |
| | | |
| Salary and Benefits | 15,000.00 | 15,000.00 |
| Interns | 13,500.00 | 6,250.00 |
| Intern Coordinator Salary | 5,000.00 | 5,000.00 |
| Intern Coordinator Travel | 1,500.00 | 1,684.72 |
| Interpretation/Recruitment | 750.00 | 358.00 |
| Leadership Development LTV Training | 1,500.00 | 944.28 |
| General Church Mission Events | 500.00 | 552.98 |
| Networks and Partners (NVOAD) | 2,000.00 | 1,924.19 |
| Totals | <u>39,750.00</u> | <u>31,714.17</u> |
| | | |
| Balance | 0.00 | -5,878.55 |
| | | |
| Beginning Balance | <u>35,000.00</u> | <u>43,618.54</u> |
| | | |
| Ending Balance | <u><u>35,000.00</u></u> | <u><u>37,739.99</u></u> |



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May 6, 2020

Week of Compassion Board of Directors

Re: Initial Report as New Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel

Dear Members of the Board,

In the infamous words of John Lennon, “life is what happens while you are busy making other plans.” During the Fall of last year and the transition of 2019 rolling into 2020, I was in a period of discernment regarding my next steps professionally. Whether premonition or intuition, I felt the need to pause. Shortly after the New Year, on January 31, our biggest snow day of the winter hit in the mountains of Western North Carolina. I remember being curled up on the couch by our woodstove with my husband and our animals when I saw Tana’s post. There was so much heart-felt concern in her words – certainly much more disquiet expressed by her than by any other outgoing professional leaving a position. I could sense her reticence in leaving that was, by then, inevitable. I had known Tana distantly since we were second year law students over a decade ago, and I much admired her. So I applied. Then, I really started exploring “who are Disciples?”

As I perused websites, downloaded sermons, and read about the priorities and various missions of CC(DOC), it struck me: “this is what faith, in deeds and not just in words, looks like.” I began to realize that, unlike most legal positions, this was not just a job; it is a mission. As I have often been described as a “mission-driven” attorney, I was thrilled when invited to interview.

March 2 was my interview date. Oh, the days of early March when we did not yet know how life was about to change. By the end of my interview, I felt like I had developed new friendships and was full of hope and anticipation. When Sotello called with the offer, I was ecstatic! My path was taking an unanticipated and unplanned turn, but one that felt imminently right. Recently, in sharing my new position with a colleague, she remarked, “wow, that is the very trifecta [of job responsibilities] that you described as an ideal position over a year ago!” I cherish that this position allows a combination of 1) direct, full legal representation, 2) advice-only consultations, and 3) the opportunity to create and disseminate community education materials and initiatives. I am also thrilled to have the opportunity to work nationwide with such a diverse community of immigrants and people of faith. I am beyond grateful and humbled to have been given the opportunity to join you all.

With all of this said, nothing has happened as expected or planned – as I know is true for all of us in the Spring 2020. My on-boarding was originally envisioned to include time with Tana in person here in North Carolina as well as a trip to Indianapolis to meet everyone in person. Thankfully, due to a pre-existing trip planned in D.C. the week of March 8, I was able to meet Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea *in person(!)*. Our timing was perfect: she whisked me from the airport to a celebration at the National

* Attorney Licensed in North Carolina – Practice Limited to Immigration & Naturalization Law

Museum of Women in the Arts for International Women’s Day. As we strolled through D.C. on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, we shared our pasts and paths and planted a seed for what is growing into a powerful partnership.

My start date was March 15, and DHM staff went remote on March 17 as we all began to shelter in place in our new normal. Tana and I revised our plan and met on Zoom instead of in-person. We transferred files electronically and by snail mail as we overlapped by two weeks. Her files were impeccably organized, color coded, and annotated – an immigration attorney’s dream come true. Personally, I have never inherited a position that was so carefully curated for transition as what she prepared. I remain particularly grateful for Tana’s diligence and care. If there was any doubt, please know that she truly went above and beyond in fulfilling this role. Your support of her work was an incredible investment that I believe was so well worth it. Thank you! It is with tremendous gratitude for your support that I am humbled to step into this position now, especially at a time of such tremendous change – as individuals, families, congregations, communities, and the Nation prepare for what is to come.

Immigration Legal Updates & Cases:

From my first week with Disciples, the Nation’s immigration system has been in constant flux. First, USCIS (the agency that is responsible for adjudicating cases, including green cards and citizenship, within the U.S.) closed its doors to the public in mid-March, and has since extended the closure twice through June 4. This closure will compound the preexisting delays in case processing times as applicants are unable to complete interviews and/or present themselves for biometric appointments in new cases. For example, if a prior processing time was 8-10 months, at least 2.5 months will be added to the backlog of cases that have been postponed indefinitely. While affecting everything from work permits to family reunification to green card issuance, this delay will have a noticeable effect on naturalization cases, and thus new prospective voters. Typically, an election year causes green card holders to jump off the fence and apply for citizenship. In the Obama years, these applications were (anecdotally) prioritized so that new citizens would be eligible to vote in November. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know how many would-be citizens will remain ineligible to vote in the 2020 election due to the growing backlog exacerbated by COVID19.

The past two months have been unprecedented in the immigration system. Consulates and embassies have been completely closed around the world for two months, which has stopped the flow of visa issuance and all in-bound immigration. Even during the federal government shut-downs of recent years, USCIS has not closed as described above because it is a fee-based agency. This unprecedented time of uncertainty has required that I stay on top of procedural changes across multiple government agencies on a daily basis as most of my consultation cases have been in response to COVID19 changes. I am grateful to be a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association as we receive constant updates on these changes – from government office closures to extensions on filing deadlines to on-the-ground conditions related to COVID19 in immigration detention facilities. However, this also means that I have faced many questions from weary immigrants to which I had to sadly and candidly respond: “I do not know the answer ... because no one knows right now. But I am right here, I’ve got you, and I am not going anywhere. We will walk this wilderness together until we find the light.”

A snapshot of these experiences was amplified on April 22, when a 38-word tweet struck fear into all immigrants and their attorneys, yours truly included. Ultimately, the April 24 “Immigration Ban” proclamation was not nearly as broad and sweeping as it could have been (thankfully). For example, as you know, the majority of my full representation cases are to assist pastors in their immigration matters. For about 36 hours, I contacted multiple clients to prepare them for delays and/or family separation in their immigrant visa or green card matters. As you may have seen, it left such an impression on me that I wrote about this experience in last week’s DHM newsletter. What you will not see there is that one of these clients was Shelley Jacobs, Archivist for the Disciples Historical Society. (I am sharing her experience with her permission.) When I established contact with Shelley to take over the case, I asked that she tutor me in Disciples history. When she began at 300 BC, I knew I had asked the right person. As we developed somewhat of a friendship, she was the first person that came to my mind when I read the policy-by-tweet announcement at 11 pm on April 22. Yet when I wrote her, Shelley – and each and every other client – responded with words of faith and reassurance *for me*. That experience was a first in my professional role as an attorney, as I am typically the counselor and consoler of anxiety and trauma for my clients. Though I breathed a sigh of relief when Shelley’s case was not affected by the ban, I jumped for joy when her green card was actually approved less than one week later! Neither Tana nor I had anticipated such a rapid approval. Both Shelley’s faith and the subsequent swift resolution simply took my breath away.

Unfortunately, I must also share that not all cases have had, or will have, such swift or glorious resolutions. In short, the ban extinguishes the flow of some family and employment based visas for individuals that have been waiting on their green cards for years, and in some cases, decades. The ban also temporarily extinguishes the Diversity Visa Lottery. This change intensifies racial inequity by disproportionately limiting immigration from countries that are underrepresented in our immigration system, which primarily includes African nations. The 60-day ban will inevitably affect many among us, especially if it is extended. Families may be separated for an indefinite and unknowable period of time as a result of this ban with the uncertainty of COVID19. As much as I wish that I could use my legal arsenal to fight that battle, I am learning to accept that it may only be cured by time and faith, as Shelley and so many others advised me. But with that said, I am also stream-lining, prioritizing, and trying to fast track all cases that were pending upon Tana’s departure. As there are rumors of additional forthcoming changes to “protect the American economy,” I am doing everything that I can to assure that these cases move forward as quickly as possible.

Community Education & Outreach:

Tana and I quickly realized that her Facebook ILC profile predated the advent of Facebook “Pages,” and that as an organization, we would need to convert the page. From when I took over as administrator near the end of March, I have rebuilt the entire presence of Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel accordingly. Literally, this page has gone from a blank slate of 0 likes to 692 likes and 744 followers that have reached a total of 987 people with 380 engagements in the month of April. I try to post daily – especially given the recent, shifting landscape – and share through the “personal profile” that supports the official “Page” for further organic reach. As I am not able to travel to pastors and congregations, and especially as the 2020 Experience was so lamentably cancelled, I am trying to reach out and engage with the Disciples community through Facebook. Though not a big “Tweeter,” I am learning to lean into Twitter too. I also have plans to create and build an Instagram profile and following – especially as it targets a different generation. (I will admit that I think that I am too old for TikTok, so please do not expect to find me there unless you have a teenager who wants an internship. ;)

I am showing up to support what I can in collaboration with Refugee & Immigration Ministries by virtually attending Monday DACA Prayers and the “Outer Study” of IWOBS. I am grateful to Sharon for introducing me to members of the immigrant advocacy faith-based community outside of Disciples (though I greatly look forward to when we can actually all meet in person). Sharon and I have shared and signed numerous letters calling for COVID19 relief for all Americans, regardless of immigration status, as well as calls to close immigration courts and detention centers, many of which astoundingly remain open. Finally, we both collaborated in preparing a google doc of information, articles, and talking points to be used by various faith-based advocates in drafting and submitting formal comments in the federal rulemaking process against a CDC-based rule to essentially exclude all land-based, incoming migrants, who are almost exclusively seeking humanitarian protection. Unfortunately, there was no real way to stop this rule from going into place, but it was still critical that we submit comments. From my administrative law days, I know that if and when there is litigation challenging a regulation, all comments from the public may be taken into account against the agency during the discovery phase of the lawsuit. So we have done what we could. A copy of my submitted comment is enclosed.

Miscellaneous Start-Up:

Honestly, I wish that I had more concrete data and metrics to share, but this is only week 8 in total, week 6 of being official and sole ILC (post-Tana), and what seems like week 72,347 of quarantine. Though not particularly exciting or remarkable, there have still been many mundane and necessary “start-up” activities to do – outside of practicing law and COVID19 upheaval. As an attorney working remotely, I have an ethical obligation to vet software and the technology that I use for safety and confidentiality, so I have had to devote much time to understanding various platforms and taking all reasonable measures to ensure client privacy. While I came in with plans for certain “bells and whistles” software with reduced nonprofit rates, I have erred on the side of changing course by utilizing either free or alternative programs to keep costs down as the economy tumbles. Meanwhile, a silver lining to COVID19 has included a plethora of free Continuing Legal Education webinar offerings. As I am required to complete a quota of hours annually, I have taken advantage of these virtual opportunities to avoid costly fees and travel to attend normal in-person conferences and convenings. Finally, I am working to brush up on cases particular to religious organizations that I have not handled these since the Obama administration, which was an entirely different world. As immigration law is the second most complicated area of U.S. law (behind tax), I must continually keep reading, studying, and learning to offer the best advice to my clients and our community.

Future Plans:

Here is the good stuff! In no particular order, here are some of my plans on the horizon for Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel:

- Presentation of “Immigration 101” for the College of Regional Ministers weekly meeting on May 20 (with a standing offer to do so virtually throughout the regions in the wake of sheltering in place).
- Redesign of the ILC logo to rebrand from the black and white “open door” to something fresh and new. (I have solicited – and continue to accept – feedback from the Disciples community for ideas of images and symbols that speak to this work and role. Stay tuned!)
- Complete overhaul of the ILC website to convert to it a mobile device-friendly platform that can be more easily and quickly updated.

- Resume the Legal Updates email newsletters via MailChimp.
- Continue to increase social media presence through Facebook and Twitter, with addition of Instagram and Facebook Live events.
- Creation of video clips and “how to” *pro se* legal tutorials.
- Offer monthly webinars and/or “office/coffee hours” in English and Spanish to present legal updates and to increase visibility and accessibility as a resource to the Disciples community.
- Continued biweekly column in DHM Newsletter with hopeful submissions to other newsletters.
- Further outreach and meaningful connection with various Disciples groups – DJAN, Obra Hispana, NAPAD, HELM, Office of Search & Call, etc.
- Continued formal comment drafting and submission on new immigration regulations in the Federal Register.
- Continued collaboration and partnership with RIM in programming, outreach, and advocacy.
- ??? (Please reach out to me with any and all ideas as I am here to support you!).

In conclusion, I cannot thank you enough for your support and vision to have created and to maintain this position. Not all faith-based organizations are willing to invite a pesky lawyer on staff to actually represent and advise clients – much less to also provide community education and advocacy! Usually, immigration attorney positions consist of either one or the other. Like you, I believe that all of this work must go hand in hand. I applaud your foresight and efforts, which have resulted in you and Tana setting the bar quite high (especially for a part time attorney ;). I am beyond grateful to be here and look forward to doing all that I can to reach higher with you all. Finally, I wish each and every one of you and your families health, wellness, safety, and peace in this unprecedented time.

Peace and blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natalie B. Teague', with a stylized, cursive script.

Natalie B. Teague

P.S. – Just in case you would like to know more about me and my background, my bio is available at <https://www.disciplesimmigration.org/about/> and my LinkedIn profile is available at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/natalieteague>.



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April 21, 2020

Submitted via www.regulations.gov

Re: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Interim Final Rule with Request for Comments, CDC-2020-0033

On behalf of Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel, I respectfully submit this comment opposing the proposed interim final rule at CDC Docket No. CDC-2020-0033. Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel, a ministry of Disciples Home Missions, is a nonprofit immigration legal services provider serving the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. We serve Disciples pastors, seminarians, and church members without charging attorneys' fees because we believe wealthy individuals should not have exclusive access to the U.S. immigration system.

The proposed rule causes a regression of our public health immigration policies by 128 years. Though roughly based upon Section 362 of the 1944 Health Service Act, which allows the surgeon general to suspend "introduction of person or goods" into the United States based upon public health grounds, this provision was actually based on quarantine laws dating back to 1893 for cholera and yellow fever. Besides a technical change of authority from the Surgeon General to the Department of Health and Human Services in 1966, Section 362 has not been utilized in over 75 years.

The [original quarantine laws](#) date back to legislative debate in 1892, when the original bill proposed to suspend immigration entirely for quarantine of smallpox, cholera, yellow fever, etc. However, the final 1893 statute specifically replaced "suspend immigration" with the more general and less discriminatory language to "suspend introduction of persons or goods" so as not to differentiate between the treatment of citizens versus immigrants, [as detailed in congressional debate](#). Ultimately, a review of this statutory history demonstrates that the 1944 Section 362 was not designed, or contemplated, to prevent any one particular group of people from entering the U.S. - other than those who pose a public health risk to the United States. In other words, the 1944 Section 362 does not discriminate or differentiate against any particular immigrant group(s) or any particular manner of entry into the United States.

The currently proposed CDC rule is problematic at best, cruel and immoral at worst. It does, in fact, differentiate between and discriminate against a particular subset of immigrants and a particular method of entry into the United States. The proposed CDC rule would apply only to land travel, only to a subset of "covered persons" entering from Mexico and Canada, and only to those arriving without valid travel documents. In short, this rule would utilize a bad reading of statutory interpretation of an old and mysterious public health statute in order to categorically exclude a vulnerable group of migrants who are attempting to cross the border by land without authorization.

If there was a blanket provision against all immigrants entering from all ports of entry by land, sea, and air, the rule might stand muster. If there was an exception for immigrants seeking humanitarian protection of international and national U.S. law, the rule also might be permissible. If there was any acknowledgment of our international and national U.S. legal obligations to vulnerable migrants who are entitled to special procedural protections that can only be afforded when approaching by land without a valid visa, perhaps it could stand. However, the proposed rule does none of the above.

* Attorney Licensed in North Carolina – Practice Limited to Immigration & Naturalization Law

The fatal flaw with this proposed CDC rule is that it ignores the United States' signatory status to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1980 Refugee Act, which codified our international obligations into United States law. In short, we cannot ignore our own national law in order to summarily exclude only one specific group of immigrants entering the country in only one specific manner, which thereby has the effort of penalizing the most vulnerable and most worthy of humanitarian protection.

Under the Refugee Act of 1980, “[a]ny [alien](#) who is *physically present* in the [United States](#) or who arrives in the [United States](#) (whether or not at a designated port of arrival ...), [and] irrespective of ... status, may apply for asylum.” [8 U.S.C. § 1158](#) (emphasis added). Furthermore, the Refugee Act also codified the mandatory prohibition in [Article 33](#) of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which provides that “[n]o Contracting State shall expel or return (‘refouler’)” a person “in any manner whatsoever” to a place “where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” Finally, in 1994, the United States became a party to the Torture Convention and Congress passed implementing legislation, binding the government “not to expel, extradite, or otherwise effect the involuntary return of any person to a country in which there are substantial grounds for believing the person would be in danger of being subjected to torture, regardless of whether the person is physically present in the United States.” [Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-277, 112 Stat. 2681, 2681-821](#); see also [8 C.F.R. § 208.16\(c\)](#) (implementing CAT).

Ultimately, the proposed CDC rule appears to have been meticulously sculpted to only dissect a particular group of immigrants who most resemble those fleeing violence from Central America, who may include unaccompanied minors, and who may include victims of human trafficking. All of these groups are entitled to specific legal protections and procedures upon arriving at the U.S. border without valid entry documents and with a colorable claim for asylum and humanitarian protection. The proposed term of art “covered aliens” paints too broad a brush and includes the very groups that must be afforded certain legal rights and mechanisms under our international and national legal obligations.

To add insult to injury, it is far less statistically likely that these groups would bring or introduce COVID19 to the United States in comparison with other immigrant groups arriving by plane -- even with documentation -- from “hot zones” of the current pandemic. Furthermore, the United States does not engage in a fair calculus of risk when it excludes the most vulnerable while simultaneously deporting migrants with confirmed positive cases. In short, the U.S. is potentially exporting new “hot zones” in the very countries facing unique challenges of violence and governmental instability that may have caused migrants to seek humanitarian protection in the first place. For further examination, see this [April 18 New York Times article](#) that demonstrates how the U.S. has continued deportation flights of thousands, with many deportees testing positive, and will export the virus and worsen the current pandemic worldwide.

At a time of pandemic crisis, we must assure public health and safety within the law. If the CDC is to enact a rule to protect the public health, it must comport with all preexisting law. Also, given that the proposed rule originates within the CDC -- the very governmental agency tasked both with protecting the public at large and with slowing and/or eliminating the spread of a pandemic virus -- it is imperative that this rule actually comport with public health best practices. However, this proposed rule does neither. The proposed CDC rule seems to restrict admission for public health purposes, yet it is a thinly veiled effort to exclude a specific group of immigrants in blatant disregard of our international legal obligations and national law. Therefore, I strongly urge you to withdraw this misguided, immoral, and arguably illegal rule.

Sincerely,



Natalie Teague, Esq.
Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel

Disciples Home Missions
Immigration Legal Counsel

31-Dec-19

| | Budget 2019 | Actual |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Income | | |
| General Ministries | 5,000.00 | 19,500.00 |
| Disciples Home Missions | 42,663.00 | 30,836.00 |
| Support from Regions | 11,500.00 | 16,000.00 |
| Week of Compassion | 10,000.00 | 10,000.00 |
| Total Income | <u>69,163.00</u> | <u>76,336.00</u> |
| Expenses | | |
| Salary | 63,663.00 | 66,336.00 |
| Travel | 3,000.00 | 3,384.91 |
| Supplies and Insurance | 2,500.00 | 2,094.47 |
| Total Expenses | <u>69,163.00</u> | <u>71,815.38</u> |



Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries

“Following the Prophet’s Voice to ‘Do What is Just & Right’”

(RIM Report to DHM Board, October 2019 thru April 2020)

By Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, RIM Director

While policies reducing refugee admissions, blocking asylum access, growing immigrant detention, closing borders, and limiting due process for family and child migrants continue to constrict, Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries (RIM), a ministry of Disciples Home Missions in partnership with Week of Compassion, works to mobilize churches, leaders, and communities to answer the repeated call of the prophets for justice.

As RIM shared on May 6 in the [Washington Post](#), Jeremiah’s voice in 22:3 feels especially relevant to our ministries, during COVID-19, as he reminds us to “do what is just and right,” requiring we:

- *Rescue ones being unfairly compensated.*
- *Do not harm the foreigner, orphan, or widow.*
- *Put no innocent lives at risk.*



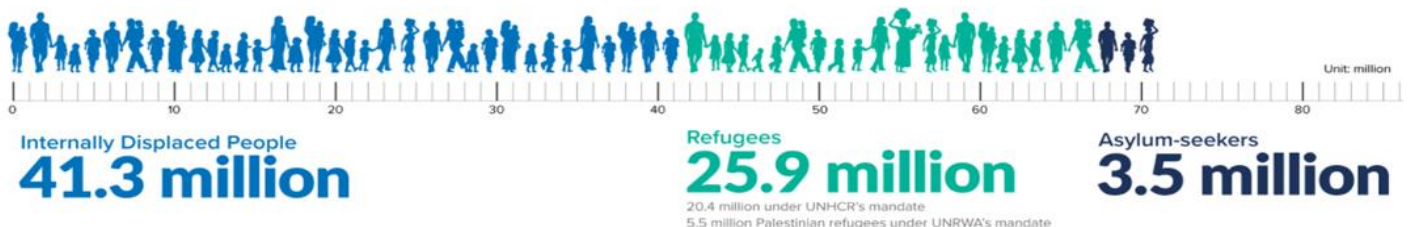
Highlights of RIM’s efforts to fulfill this call during this reporting period include:

Doing “What Is Just & Right” to Help Refugees & U.S. Refugee Resettlement

With drastic U.S. reductions in refugee resettlement numbers despite over two million more forcibly displaced persons, half a million more refugees, and 400 thousand more asylum seekers globally than one year ago, RIM built hope by encouraging Disciples to protect the U.S. heritage of welcoming refugees.

U.S. refugee resettlement goal numbers have plummeted from an annual average of 95,000 since 1980. In 2018, the number was reduced to 50,000. In 2019, the number diminished to 30,000. For 2020, the number was set on September 26, 2019 at only 18,000. In 2019, 90% less Muslim refugees and many less persecuted Christian refugees have arrived into the U.S. In the midst of this, RIM continues to encourage Disciples to support resettlement in these ways:

70.8 million forcibly displaced people worldwide





- Participates regularly in bi-weekly calls with CWS Immigration & Refugee Program staff and CWS partner denominations, to strategize collectively on sharing information and maximizing ecumenical support for refugees throughout the CWS network.

- Is preparing resources in celebration of this year's "40th Anniversary of the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980" and the lead up to and on World Refugee Day, June 20, 2020. Resources will celebrate and thank Disciples congregations for ways they have welcomed refugees into our communities and congregations, and will be shared on Twitter @StanleyRea, on the RIM

Facebook site: www.bit.ly/RIMFacebook and on the RIM website: www.bit.ly/DisciplesRIM.

These appreciations, together with other ways congregations can (virtually or in person) honor "Refugee & Immigrant Welcome Sunday" will be placed as ready on [this page](#) of refugee resources. Celebrations for World Refugee Day 2020 will be held virtually more than ever before, and as faith partners we will join with RCUSA, Refugee Congress, and We Are All America partnerships to lift up refugee voices!



- Led multiple initiatives in response to the US administration's drastic refugee cuts and issuance of the "Executive Order on Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement," such as:

--Sponsored a Disciples Refugees Welcome Webinar with Rev. Terri Hord Owens to share multiple

Ways Disciples can support refugees through: [Disciples Welcome Refugees Webinar on Oct. 9 and Resources](#) 10/04/2019

--Provided organization, leadership, and speaking among faith partners on a Refugee Support Press Conference/Action outside the US Capitol on October 15th in support of refugee resettlement. In the action, 18 participants wore "Refugees Welcome Life Jackets" to symbolize 1 per each 1000 (for the total 18,000) of refugee lives saved as refugees are resettled. Recruited multiple Disciples leaders and clergy to participate, and highlighted



the voice and refugee work of Beargrass Christian Church through Michael Puckett's participation to speak in the event.

--Joined interfaith partners to support and speak at a Refugees Welcome public action held at National Airport in Washington, D.C. on October 16. Disciples intern and TCU student Bailey Mooney (working with CWS in DC on internship) also assisted with the event.

--On October 18-20, RIM's Director taught and built relationships on campus with Disciples students at TCU in Fort Worth and Brite Divinity

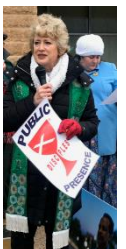
School to encourage their actions of support for refugees, visited University Christian Church leaders, and led a weekend keynoting and preaching with First Christian Church at its "Immigration and Fear" conference.

--In late December, RIM's Director was requested by interfaith partners to coordinate and lead an "Interfaith Prayer Vigil" outside the courthouse in Greenbelt, MD. where the legal case brought by Church World Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service was considered on January 8, 2020. Dozens of faith partners participated in expressing our moral and religious convictions to support ongoing refugee resettlement, and then attended the hearings.



--Published an Alert and RIM WRAP to interpret the Md. court's decision regarding the Refugee Executive Order: [Judge Blocks Executive Order Giving Veto Power to State and Local Officials in Refugee Resettlement](#) 1/15/2020

- Supported a [national call-in day](#) on Wednesday, January 15th to support refugees and urge bi-partisan legislators to cosponsor the GRACE Act, which would restore the resettlement program to historic norms and increase congressional oversight over the administration to ensure the program is being operated in good faith. Supporting the GRACE Act closely aligns with our national Disciples Refugee Emergency Resolution, [GA-1739](#). The "[GRACE Act](#)" /Guaranteed Refugee Admissions Ceiling Enhancement Act" (S. 1088 & H.R. 2146) would set a minimum Presidential Determination of 95,000 each fiscal year, and additional legislation called the "NO BAN/National Origin-Based Anti-discrimination for Nonimmigrants Act" (S. 1123





& H.R. 2214) aims to repeal the executive orders that ceased refugee admissions, banned many Muslim-majority country persons from entering, and stopped asylum seekers from making claims between ports of entry.

- Provided special Epiphany resources related to refugee education and actions: [Walking with Refugees, Remembering Jesus after Epiphany](#) 1/06/2020

- Promoted Valentine holiday themed resources for individuals and congregations to show their support for refugees: [Hearts4Refugees](#)

[Love4Immigrants](#) 02/14/2020 and [#Hearts4Refugees](#) 02/13/2020

- Was prepared to support this year's "Refugee Advocacy Days" with the Refugee Council USA (RCUSA), scheduled for May 8-10. Due to COVID-19, the Advocacy Days have been re-scheduled until March 2-3, 2021, and RIM will assist in planning and in engaging Disciples to participate.
- Will continue to work, in the months ahead, to encourage Disciples to call, visit, and write local and state legislators to ensure their support for refugees, and to speak publicly in their faith communities in support of refugees.
- Shared state specific alerts with Regional Ministers and faith partners from states of key leaders engaged in making the U.S. refugee resettlement decisions.
- Consistently encouraged Disciples congregations to resettle refugees in areas near them, and consistently worked to share information between local resettlement offices and congregations, and updated "3 Key Ways Congregations Can Support Refugees in Their Areas" [here](#).

Doing "What Is Just & Right" for Farmworkers, DACA/TPS/DED Recipients, and Immigrants and Refugees at Risk

Previously removed protections for 300,000+ persons with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), 4,000 Liberians with Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), and 700,000+ DACA recipients have been held up in court cases since the time of our last report. Farmworkers and other refugees and immigrants have been in danger through detention and/or deportation, and others with strong partnerships with Disciples remain at risk and are seeking protections. Amid these, RIM:



- Engaged in two Human Rights Consultations with Disciples Montagnards in Charlotte and Greensboro, NC regarding persecutions of community members still ongoing in rural Vietnam.

1) The weekend of November 24th, RIM Director traveled to Charlotte for meetings and to speak in worship with dozens of Montagnards from multiple N.C. congregations and communities who joined with leaders from Christian Churches in Charlotte and

Greensboro. 2) Following this meeting, RIM's Director invited and organized a Human Rights Delegation of visits in Washington, D.C. with five selected Disciples Montagnard leaders from N.C. The team traveled to Washington from February 26-28, and held meetings together with RIM's Director in the offices of Senator Burr and Senator Tillis, along with Representatives Budd, Walker, and Adams, as well as with staff from the Freedom House organization. Additionally, RIM assisted Montagnard leaders in connecting with leaders in the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, and with the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. Ongoing follow ups are needed, as our Disciples Montagnards continue to report ongoing discrimination against community members in their homeland.



- Continues to partner with our Disciples congregation, Whosoever Will Christian Church in Beltsville, Md., which is comprised of primarily Liberian worshippers, to support the extension of Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) protections for Liberians. One alert is here: [Pray for Liberian DED Court Case on Wed., Oct. 9!](#) 10/09/2019, and RIM supported prayers during consideration of oral arguments for the lawsuit African Communities Together v. Trump (in opposition to the administration's ending of DED last year), as it was heard at the Worcester, MA. courthouse on October 9, 2019. On March 30, RIM celebrated and shared resources regarding a temporary expansion of DED announced, through January 10, 2021: <https://www.informedimmigrant.com/guides/residence-for-liberians/#>

- Continues work with TPS groups & churches and offer [resources like these](#) for national solutions for TPS recipient country/numbers here: Sudan/1,040; Nicaragua/2,550; Nepal/8,950; Haiti/46,000; El Salvador/195,000; Honduras/57,000.



- Continues, through WOC support, in a three way partnership of RIM, with the Central Pastoral Office of Hispanic Ministries and the Capital Area Region, to supervise Disciples Immigrant Response Specialist, Valeria Bejar, a DACA recipient whose parents have experienced deportations (see some of [Valeria's story here](#)). Valeria is supervised by RIM's Director. Valeria is leading Disciples in engaging further around support for immigrants at risk, dreamers, and is helping further develop our Disciples to develop close and authentic partnerships with immigrants.



- Partners together with DACA recipient-led organizations to support legislative protections for dreamers, and to prepare our congregations to offer support to DACA recipients in the lead up to and following the Supreme Court's announcement of a decision which will personally impact the lives of 700,000+ DACA recipients, their families, and our congregations and communities. RIM's Director spoke often at dreamer organized events, educated and recruited Disciples to join marches and rallies, urged congregations to include DACA leader testimonies in their worship services, and gathered churches to provide hospitality and support to hundreds of DACA leaders who led all-day/daily actions outside the Supreme Court (especially ahead of the



November 11 oral arguments in the DACA case. RIM produced multiple "RIM WRAP" alerts as the Supreme Court decision looms: [DACA Discussions Go to the Supreme Court!!](#) 11/11/2019, and [Join IIC Webinar #Faith4DACA 10/30 at 3 PM ET – DACA Going to Supreme Court Soon!](#) 10/29/2019.

- RIM joined the national "Home Is Here" network with United We Dream, multiple other dreamer led partnerships across the country, and multiple faith partners in January, and provided leadership in developing the multi-part Lenten devotional/action series to help congregations understand, prepare spiritually, and act to protect dreamers. The resource is here: [This LENT: Walk with Jesus & Stand with DACA Leaders](#).
- Created an education and prayer space with and about DACA recipients; called "Monday Morning DACA Prayers," held every Monday from 9:30-10 a.m. Eastern until the Supreme Court releases their DACA decision. RIM's Director, together with Disciples Immigration Response Specialist Valeria Bejar, continue to lead this space week by week, which has grown to become ecumenical among Christians, and last week included Jewish leadership. Each week, updates about the DACA case and ways congregations can support are offered, one or more DACA recipients share their story, and participants are invited into a prayer space led by Valeria and Rev. Sharon. RSVP to join us at: <https://bit.ly/DACAPrayersRSVP>. [Join DACA Monday Prayers, Tuesday Webinar, & Actions!](#) 03/28/2020
- [DACA Faith "Virtual* Prayer Vigil WED., Mar. 18, Noon ET!](#) 03/17/2020
- Continued to educate Disciples about how to protect legal immigration policies under threat, in partnership with the [Protecting Immigrant Families](#) network, and deepened our Disciples partnerships with the [Value Our Families campaign](#) which supports immigrants who entered legally to be able to stay united with their families. (The work of the Value Our Families campaign has been especially applicable to our NAPAD members.).



- Leads Disciples in connecting with farmworkers, through our partnerships with National Farm Worker Ministries--where RIM's Director serves on NFWM's board. In January, the RIM Director traveled to NFWM meetings with farm workers and advocates with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW); learning updates in the ongoing work to support tomato farm workers, and in CIW's boycott against Wendy's, which is the only of the top five fast food vendors in the US who have not signed on to the "Fair Food Program," which ensures fairer wages and worker protections for farm workers.

- During COVID, has participated in lifting up stories to document how farm workers are risking their safety to provide food for us all. From [Washington state](#)'s fruit and asparagus workers to [Florida](#)'s tomato workers, crews are saying "we're scared" but "we're expected to keep going." Safety practices are inconsistent, and many must bring their own soap just to wash their hands. Together with long term partners in National Farm Worker Ministry and farm worker groups, RIM helps faith voices [speak loudly](#) and produce [results](#).
- Supports the rights of all workers, including many immigrant and refugee workers in meat packing plants, who are facing impossible choices every day. Gregoria, a poultry worker in NC, said her employer "would not provide face masks or gloves and conditions for social distancing are very bad." RIM joined a recent [press conference](#) and supported a [faith leader letter](#) to remind: "Offering anything less than access to adequate healthcare, PPE, living wages, sick leave, and safe production lines risks the lives of our nation's most vulnerable." Check [here](#) soon for Pentecost resources to learn more about how you support workers at risk!
- Provides ongoing COVID-19 sharing of recommendations and health information for immigrants and refugees: [Holy Week & Protecting Immigrants During COVID-19](#) 04/08/2020
[COVID-19 and Care for Immigrants](#) 03/16/2020
- Is planning ahead for participation to lift up needs of refugees and immigrants during the Poor Peoples Virtual Campaign on June 20, 2020, in the 2021 Ecumenical Advocacy Days now scheduled for April 16-19, 2021, and at the "It's Real!" re-scheduled Disciples Conference.

Doing "What Is Just & Right" for Asylum Seekers, in the U.S. & at the Border

Longstanding international and U.S. laws have guaranteed the right to asylum for decades to persons seeking protections in the U.S. from persecution deemed well founded in their home country and based upon grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or particular social group. During this report period, U.S. asylum restrictions and bans continued to multiply, greatly limiting due process opportunities for migrants to seek protections.

Migrant Protection Protocols," generally called "Remain in Mexico" practices (first implemented in Tijuana in January 2019) expanded to all seven key border patrol sectors by January of 2020. This report period saw much suffering as the policy announced in late September to return families with credible fears who arrive at the Southern Border back to Mexico as their immigration cases are processed continued to be implemented. Recent months also saw the implementation of so-called "Safe Third Country" agreements with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras—which resulted in the return of migrants from those countries back to dangerous conditions, before they arrived at the US border. Amid these challenging conditions, RIM



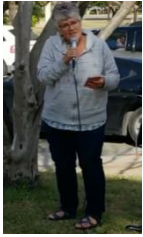
- Supported congregations by providing information and guidance for local engagement on "[Understanding Asylum and How We Can Help Asylum Seekers](#)."
- Counseled congregations to provide accompaniment to ICE Check Ins, to offer support for qualified legal assistance, and to provide family and spiritual support to asylum seeking families.

- Worked with other national faith partners to establish a website of asylum resources, located at www.faith4asylum.com. RIM worked to help organize a national vigil on Capitol Hill, held on the first anniversary of the institution of Migrant Protection Protocols (often called "Remain in Mexico" policies) on January 25th. [Support Asylum Seekers after the 1st Year of Tragic "Remain in Mexico" Policies](#) 01/25/2020



- RIM Director served as an immigration resource as she traveled in mid-November of 2019 together with GMP Hord Owens and multiple Disciples Regional Ministers and clergy, in a border trip led by Disciples NBA to Tijuana.
- Helped lead and spoke at a December Prayer Vigil outside the national office of Customs and Border Protections, in memory of the 9 children killed during 2019 under CBP and DHS custody.

- Supported the action with the Southern Border Communities Coalition's [Border-Wide Actions on the 25th Anniversary of Operation Gatekeeper](#), held October 1st through the 26th at various border locations.



- Developed and shared a [Faith 4 Asylum toolkit](#) in January to encourage congregations to hold prayer vigils for asylum seekers, and to join in the “Laces & Faces” efforts requested by border shelters. Shelters shared in December how returned children and adults sent back across the border were easily identified by and became subject to targeting and abuse by human traffickers, as CBP had removed their shoelaces. Congregations (such as Foothills Community Church in Glendale, AZ., visited by RIM’s Director in January) and others used shoelace displays in Sunday School and worship emphases to raise awareness. RIM also developed family friendly resources about asylum in partnership with Disciples Family & Children’s Ministry. Find it [on this page](#).



- Engaged Disciples to help organize and lead, with Disciples clergy Martha Jolly, in a Valentine’s Prayer Vigil (broadcast thru FB live) at the Border in Brownsville, Texas on February 14, [Join Prayers Today at the Border](#)
- Continued to educate about changing asylum policies, and ways persons of faith can help support protections: [This Tuesday: Support DACA and ASYLUM Actions!](#) 03/07/2020
- Submitted extensive [comments](#) on April 23 to the administration’s ban of asylum seekers at the border through use of the Department of Health and Human Services’ interim final rule, titled “Suspension of Introduction of Persons Into United States From Designated Foreign Countries or Places for Public Health Purposes,” DHS Docket No. CDC-2020-0033, in the Federal Register at 85 FR 16559, issued March 20, 2020.



- Joined multiple national faith partners in speaking out about the elimination of asylum due processes in a [Press Release](#) on April 24.
- During the pandemic, Asylum seeking migrants, adults and [children, continue to be deported](#) to unsafe conditions and without adequate COVID-19 testing. RIM continues to [raise faith and human rights voices](#) to speak out against these practices which are tragically exporting COVID-19—especially to Haiti and Guatemala, and are [denying rights of due process and protection](#) to asylum seekers.

Doing “What Is Just & Right” for Persons in Detention & At Risk for Deportation

- Worked repeatedly during this report period to offer deportation defense support to Disciples leader in Arizona, Ramon Bejar (father of Disciples Immigration Response Specialist Valeria Bejar.) In late January before Ramon’s court appointment: [SIGN ON to Support Disciples Leader Ramon—before his Jan. 22 Court Appointment!](#) 01/20/2020, and again in early March before his court date: [SIGN ON for Disciples Leader Ramon!](#) 03/07/2020, RIM used its advocacy networks, and joined with our Disciples Immigrant Response Specialist to gather over 500 signatures of support for the release of Ramon—who has served as a leader in the Hispanic Convention of Arizona, and who was only ever detained because he sought to unite with and work to support his family. Though Ramon was tragically deported in March, he nevertheless said, “I can never say how much it means to me and my family to feel my Disciples family gather for me.”
- Advocates for protections of Southeast Asian refugees, by serving on the Board of Southeast Asian Resource Action Center (SEARAC), and by opposing and publicizing the repeating, recent deportations of Cambodians who had entered the US legally as child refugees. Thirty Cambodians had been deported in late August, and another group of thirty were also deported in January. The [New Way Forward Act](#) is one bill introduced in recent months which could offer protections.
- Advocated under COVID-19 for about 35,000 migrants who are still being held in [long recognized unsanitary](#) ICE & CBP detention cells: As these cells are now are spreading infection during COVID-19, RIM has joined [3000 health leaders](#) and [human rights workers](#) to urge detained migrants be protected and that non-criminal detainees be released to families.

RIM produces “Holy Days & Holidays” resources, & compiles other resources, at: <http://bit.ly/RIMHolyResources>, <http://bit.ly/RIMVideoList>, and: <http://bit.ly/IICHolyDays>. Contact Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries, sstanley@dhm.disciples.org, 202-957-7826, @StanleyRea on Twitter & <http://bit.ly/RIMFacebook>

**Disciples Home Missions
Refugee and Immigration**

| | 2019 Budget | Actual December 31, 2019 |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Income | | |
| Week of Compassion | 65,000 | 65,000 |
| Week of Compassion - Emergency Assistance | 0 | 250 |
| DHM | 41,984 | 34,161 |
| Contributions | 6,500 | 19,949 |
| Total Income | 113,484 | 119,360 |
| Expenses: | | |
| RIM Director Salary and Benefits | 90,307 | 90,413 |
| Administrative Assistant Salary and Benefits | 17,385 | 17,385 |
| Travel | 4,000 | 9,157 |
| Telephone | 792 | 795 |
| Office and Postage | 400 | 114 |
| Materials and PR | 600 | 322 |
| Casework Grants | 0 | 1,175 |
| Total Expenses: | 113,484 | 119,361 |
| (Expenses over Income) | 0 | 0 |