



# #Faith4Asylum Vigil Toolkit

**A PRAYER VIGIL UPLIFTING MIGRANTS HARMED BY  
MPP POLICIES AT 7 U.S. BORDER PATROL SECTORS**

***On the Occasion of the 1 Year Anniversary of MPP***

**January 29, 2020**



## **Suggestions As You Prepare for Your #Faith4Asylum Vigil**

Go to [www.Faith4Asylum.com](http://www.Faith4Asylum.com) to register and promote your vigil on the national map; endorse the campaign as a congregation/organization or person; and find resources to help organize your vigil. Don't forget to invite media, community, and legislative leaders! Vigil resources available at: <https://faith4asylum.com/join-the-campaign-2/>.

**PREPARE VISUALS AND RESOURCES:** In order to gather meaningful visuals and educational resources for your vigil, consider doing some/all of the following:

- Print a large image of the map above (right) of the 7 U.S. Border Patrol sectors which have begun implementation of Remain in Mexico Migrant Protection Protocols, resulting in the return of over 57,000 asylum seekers in the first year of the program. Map, together with a new report on impacts of MPP by Human Rights First, may be found at: <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/resource/year-horrors-trump-administration-s-illegal-returns-asylum-seekers-danger-mexico>
- Tie together 57 shoelaces to represent 1 per each 1,000 migrants returned to Mexico in the first year of MPP. Stretch these laces around the vigil space, to be held by vigil participants, or in the shape of the border sectors where MPP is operating. Or, tie together 7 shoelaces to represent the 7 border sectors implementing MPP. Learn from 31+ border shelters in their statement from December, 2019 about the ways returned migrants are targeted (in appendix.)
- Request participants wear a looped shoelace (as above, left) in honor of migrants whose shoelaces are removed when apprehended, and who are targeted by traffickers upon return. Learn and share more about the important symbolism of shoelaces in this campaign through the handout, "Why Are Shoelaces An Important Symbol in Support of Asylum Seekers?" (in appendix.)
- Invite participants to bring shoes without shoelaces, to be placed in the center of your worship space; 57 (for each 1,000 migrants returned) or 7 (for each border sector crossing implementing MPP).
- Write first names of migrant children returned whom you may know personally, or from stories, onto printed images of "laceless shoes," which you can find in the appendix of this toolkit. Many stories are available for reading and printout on the [www.Faith4Asylum](http://www.Faith4Asylum) website.
- Make signs for each of the U.S. and Mexico-side cities of each of the 7 key border crossing areas, to help educate where the policies are operating that harm families. Make signs that communicate that 58,000 migrants have been returned, including at least 16,000 children and 500 infants as of October 11, 2019. Consider printing other facts and images from infographics such as the one from Latin American Working Group here: <https://www.lawg.org/updated-infographic-remain-in-mexico-impacts/>

- Gather testimonies from faith and shelter partners which speak of impacts of MPP, such as one called “Heartbreak at the Border” from an Arizona pastor, found in the appendix.
- Adapt and print a flyer with your own information and logo to promote your community’s vigil. A sample is provided in the appendix.

## WELCOME & GATHERING SUGGESTIONS

- Gather meaningful and interfaith scriptures, and faith leaders to share them, as you welcome participants for your vigil, especially related to journeys, exhaustion, care and comfort for the vulnerable, justice for those seeking protection. For example:

Isaiah 40:31, *“Those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”*

Psalms 82:3-4, *“Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”*

Proverbs 31:8-9, *“Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”*

Isaiah 1:17 *“Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”*

Also, consider highlighting the passage in Genesis 18, referring to Abraham’s tent: “Looking up, [Abraham] saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, he said, “My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant” (Genesis 18:2-3). We learn in the midrash, stories about the stories in the Torah, that Abraham’s tent was open on all four sides to indicate that any potential guest was welcome to his and his family’s hospitality.

For Muslim audiences, consider recalling the story of the Prophet Muhammad’s earliest followers being granted safety and [asylum](#) by the King of Abyssinia when they were being persecuted in Mecca. Additionally, consider what surah [5:32](#) means in this context: “And whoever saves one [life] – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.”

- Summarize for your vigil’s participants the terrifying harms of MPP.
- Clarify the meaning of visual imagery of shoelaces, lace-less shoes, 7 sector locations signs, etc. that you have chosen for your vigil.

**OPENING PRAYER:** Invite a faith leader to share a prayer that calls attention to human suffering under MPP, and to current traumas being experienced by migrants who have been returned to Mexico.

## LITANY:

- Select 7 leaders, representing each of the 7 southern border sectors implementing MPP. Give each a sign/name of one of the 7 U.S. side/Mexico side of border crossing locations, corresponding to those listed in the litany parts. One by one, as each reads their line, have them stand at a different location along the path of shoelaces, or around the circle of laceless shoes.

**MUSIC:** Choose well known music related to justice and welcome themes, such as “This Land Is Your Land.”

Here is one new set of lyrics to an old hymn: **“O God, You Give Us Neighbors” (to the tune of “The Church’s One Foundation”)**--included here in the toolkit.

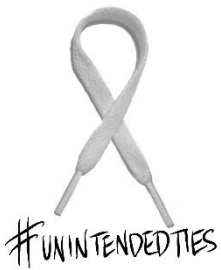
**SUGGESTED TESTIMONIES:** Invite testimonies of individuals or children harmed, and/or of impacts upon shelters of MPP policies. Invite the sharing of faith statements, or of community and legislative partners, against MPP.

**MUSIC AND PRAYER:** Invite a faith leader to offer songs/chants/a prayer that calls participants to ongoing engagement to end MPP. Urge participants to keep checking the [www.Faith4Asylum.com](http://www.Faith4Asylum.com)

website for more actions and resources--as the campaign continues to grow! Follow and mobilize together on Twitter at: #Faith4Asylum, and be sure to sign and encourage other individuals, and congregations and organizations, to endorse the Faith4Asylum campaign to end MPP!

**CHARGE--to go forward to remember the suffering of asylum seekers, and to never tire of fighting to protect their rights, and to ensure their protection by ending MPP funding and policies.**

**(SEE A SAMPLE VIGIL ORDER FOR ADAPTATION AND PRINTING BELOW.)**



## **#Faith4Asylum**

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### **VIGIL ORDER**

#### **WELCOME & GATHERING**

#### **OPENING PRAYER**

#### **LITANY FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS DENIED RIGHTS AND TRAUMATIZED BY MPP POLICIES**

**LEADER--San Diego/Tijuana:** Violence, poverty, and root conditions in which our own nation has been complicit drive adults, families, and children to leave their homelands. Remembering MPP started one year ago in Tijuana, let us not wait to seek to end merciless policies--for we know there are many like Diana and her daughter from Ecuador. They waited weeks in Tijuana, risked safety to show up at a required 3:30 a.m. CBP appointment at the border, and then were returned to Mexico to wait again despite fears for their safety.

**PEOPLE:** *Bring justice to migrants held captive, now denied the right of protection at our border.*

**LEADER—Calexico/Mexicali:** Many held at the border have valid asylum claims and little access to legal counsel to address these claims. Javier and his son are among the 98% of asylum seekers under MPP who lack legal representation. While lawyers on the U.S. are seeking to respond, unsafe conditions below the border and lack of facilities mean most must cross back to the U.S. after only brief stays, and often before dark daily.

**PEOPLE:** *Bring justice to migrants held captive, and denied the right of protection at our border.*

**LEADER—Nogales, AZ./Nogales, Mx.:** Studies continue to show that psychological trauma multiplies as children are kept in unsafe and insecure conditions. Yet while over 31 shelters on the U.S. side of the border have said there is clearly “room in their inns,” nonetheless shelter



supplies are left full, and welcoming arms of volunteers in communities and congregations are left empty, until senseless “Remain in Mexico” policies can be ended.

**PEOPLE:** *Bring justice to migrants held captive, and denied the right of protection at our border.*

**LEADER—El Paso/Juarez:** Many migrants are subject to additional forms of violence, such as sexual assault and capture, on their journeys to the U.S. and upon return to Mexico. Too many are like Kimberlyn and her 5 year old daughter, who were kidnapped just outside the Instituto Nacional de Migracion office shortly after being returned to Ciudad Juarez. Though her family was forced to pay a ransom for her release, police officers refused to allow her to make a police report, telling her “nothing had happened.”

**PEOPLE:** *Bring justice to migrants held captive, and denied the right of protection at our border.*

**LEADER—Eagle Pass/Piedras Negras:** Unspeakable murders and suffering lie in the hearts of many whose feet have chosen to flee their homelands. Compounding common death threats are also other misfortunes, like the cancers and illness we all would hope to avoid. We remember migrant guests to our nation like Giselda, who made her journey with tears and sadness from Central America and all through Mexico with her mother and young sister. Yet still, they were all returned to Mexico this year, too.

**PEOPLE:** *Bring justice to migrants held captive, and denied the right of protection at our border.*

**LEADER—Laredo/Nuevo Laredo:** We dare to pray for justice, and want to trust in our U.S. court system to offer due process. And yet so called “tent courts” have no judges in person, but require migrants like 28 year old Alejandra to go at 4:30 a.m. with her children and 50 others to a tent appointment in Laredo. There, she had no chance to meet a lawyer, and saw a judge only briefly on video before she was again sent back into Mexico to wait months until a decision.

**PEOPLE:** *Bring justice to migrants held captive, and denied the right of protection at our border.*

**LEADER—Brownsville/Matamoros:** We give thanks for the blessings in our own lives of family and friends. Yet, we grieve how a growing number of migrants at our borders are feeling so desperate for protection for their families that some are allowing their children to cross alone in order to seek a chance of protection. This includes loving Moms like Emma, who accompanied her 16-year old son to the edge of the Rio Grande near Matamoros, and sent him recently as an “unaccompanied minor” to the United States. “It broke my heart” she said, “but his fear was growing every day, because he didn’t want to go back to the threats he’d escaped in Honduras.”

**PEOPLE:** *Power of All Love, and God of All Names who always offers refuge and calls us to be Beloved Community, hear our prayer--and empower our compassion and love to do all things possible to help bring justice to migrants held captive, and denied the right of protection at our border! AMEN.*

**SONG:** “O God, You Give Us Neighbors” (to the tune of “The Church’s One Foundation”)

**LEADER TESTIMONIES—Harmful Impacts of Migrant Protection Protocols**

**MUSIC AND CLOSING PRAYER**

**CHARGE**

**O God, You Give Us Neighbors, AURELIA 7.6.7.6 D (“The Church’s One Foundation”)**

O God, you give us neighbors for whom your love abounds.  
They've come here seeking refuge; they work here in our towns.  
Their children go to school here; they come to church and pray.  
O Lord, we grieve when neighbors are being sent away.

O God, you give us neighbors in this world that divides.  
We see them at the border; they're struggling for their lives.  
They're hurting by the roadside, and by the river, too.  
You call us to show mercy to neighbors loved by you.

O God, you give us neighbors and call us all to see  
our common fears and longings, our shared humanity.  
You call us all to listen to burdens they have known,  
to hear the truth they tell us, to see the love they've shown.

O God, you give us neighbors; and now, what must we do?  
This question asked of Jesus is one we ask anew.  
May we not make excuses and choose to walk on by  
these neighbors fleeing violence — some sent back now to die.



God, may we work for justice for those who live in fear;  
may we show Christ's compassion, and pray and persevere —  
and by your Holy Spirit, in all we do and say,  
may we stand up for neighbors now being sent away.

*Biblical References: Luke 10:25-46; Leviticus 19:33-34; Leviticus 24:22;  
Matthew 25:31-46*

*Tune: Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864 ("The Church's One Foundation") [\(MIDI\)](#)*

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### **Support Chants:**

No Hate! No fear! Immigrants are welcome here! No Hate! No fear! Refugees  
are welcome here!

Se ve, se siente! El pueblo esta presente! (It can be seen. It can be felt. The  
community is here.)

When immigrants are under attack, what do we do? Stand up, LIGHT (or FIGHT)  
back!

What do we want? JUSTICE! When do we want it? NOW!

To show your welcome, do this more—Open hearts & open doors!

No estan solos! (You are not alone).



CIUDAD JUAREZ



**SAN YSIDRO**



**TIJUANA**

CALEXICO



MEXICALI

**NOGALES**



**NOGALES**



**PIEDRAS NEGRAS**

**LAREDO**



# NUEVO LAREDO



BROWNSVILLE

MATAMOROS



Image from Human Rights First, "A Year of Horrors: The Trump Administration's Illegal Returns of Asylum Seekers to Danger in Mexico", January 2020





#UNINTENDED TIES





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CamScanner



## **“Heartbreak at the Border”**

### **A Testimony of Changes and Impacts When MPP Came to Tucson Border Sector**

***By Pastor and Shelter Volunteer,  
Rev. Ailsa Guardiola González, Pastor,  
First Christian Church, Tucson, AZ***



*(Images from an Arizona shelter—well supplied and ready to welcome, but without migrants allowed to enter.)*

It was April of 2019 when we received our first guests: families seeking asylum in need of a temporary place to stay until they travel to their sponsor. For a week each month since then, we continued to offer hospitality with a place to sleep, launder clothes, eat, relax on a couch, and make phone calls to family. Most importantly, we provided a place for families to feel human again. A place to restore dignity and recover a sense of value. A place that says, “No matter what you have encountered, you matter.” A place to feel loved. Over the next months we hosted close to 300 people from a few months old to adults in their 60’s.

Then the call came. It was from the coordinator of the local shelter with whom we partner, saying, “Your overflow shelter is not needed this month. MPP is now being implemented in the Tucson sector. We don’t know what the future holds.” Our volunteers were already ready to host. The cots and play area were set up. Snacks and sandwiches for travel bags we send with the families were ready. Volunteers from our church and those from the wider community who have been helping us these months had purchased food for meals, clothing items that tend to run out, diapers, formula, and other items.

We were ready, but what we had dreaded for months now became reality. Parents who feared for the future of their children, had risked everything to seek their safety, and endured a dangerous journey to the U.S. border would now confront one more barrier. After legally presenting themselves to U.S. officials to seek asylum and being processed, they would now be released on the Mexico side of the border to await their U.S. court hearing. However this court hearing will not take place anywhere near the Tucson sector, but miles away in El Paso, TX. Moreover, they will not have one court hearing but a series of hearings with wait time in between.



We are heartbroken for these families. Heartbroken because the stories of prior guests have taught us all that people endure to make a decision and complete a trip. Heartbroken because we know there is room here in Tucson, in our shelters, in our church, and in shelters across the Southwest. Heartbroken because of the danger in which this policy places families. First, they are released in an impoverished place with thousands of people already waiting to present themselves to U.S. officials. Shelters there cannot house everyone. Second, they are targets upon release because U.S. officials send them back with their belongings in plastic bags and no shoelaces (shoelaces, bras, and belts are taken from them in custody). This makes them easily identifiable to those who wish to extort them. Third, once they travel to El Paso and have their first court hearing, they must continue waiting on the Mexico side for their other hearings. Will families be safe waiting in Juarez, a city known for its violence, extortion of vulnerable people, and lack of resources for the number of similar families already there? Will families instead attempt to travel back to the border with Arizona to be safe, even if it means needing more resources every time they have a court date?



MPP adds one more layer to the injustices that strip away the dignity of these families. It sends people back into Mexico more vulnerable than when they presented themselves at the U.S. border. We must speak out against this policy, because our faith claims something different—that every individual is created as good and valuable, because we are created in the image of God. Our faith affirms the sanctity of every life. We must keep working until this is the truth of how every person experiences life in this world and on our border.

For more ways you can help end harmful MPP policies, see [www.Faith4Asylum.com](http://www.Faith4Asylum.com) & follow #Faith4Asylum on Twitter



## Why Are Shoelaces an Important Symbol in Support of Asylum Seekers?

*Returning Families to Mexico Delivers Them to Traffickers*

Display a Shoelace, Urge Protection for Asylum Seekers

Policies called “Migrant Protection Protocols;” sometimes referred to as “Remain in Mexico” started on January 29, 2019, and have returned over 56,000 migrants seeking protections to Mexico during the first year. Among this number were at least 16,000 children and more than 500 infants in the first 10 months of the program.

**Why are shoelaces an important symbol to show our support for asylum seekers being kept away from needed protection under “MPP”?**

**In December 2019, a network of 31 border shelters on the US side met in Laredo, Texas, and shared this statement:**

*“As border shelters, we are ready to provide places of safety and welcome to asylum seekers. We know that when the US government returns families to Mexico to await court dates, the very process of return identifies them as targets for organized crime and heightens their risk of trafficking. **US officials remove asylum seekers’ shoelaces purportedly so that they don’t harm themselves while in detention. But when they are sent back to Mexico, the cartels identify families with missing shoelaces as easy prey for kidnapping and trafficking.** These unintended ties between US border policy and cartel violence harm families and strengthen organized crime. According to Human Rights First, there are 636 publicly reported cases of violent attacks against asylum seekers returned under MPP, and the vast majority of such attacks are not reported. We know from our firsthand experience that we can avoid feeding such violence by allowing families to seek asylum from within the US, instead of returning them to Mexico. We, the representatives of 31 shelters are ready and eager to welcome asylum-seeking families. We oppose US government practice and policy that instead subject them to suffering and call on the US Administration and Congress to immediately end MPP.”* (Contact: Teresa Cavendish, 520-670-0800, [teresac@ccs-soaz.org](mailto:teresac@ccs-soaz.org))

**Faith Communities have also seen and understand the importance of Shoelaces, and their connections with asylum seekers:**

*Under MPP policies, hundreds of Central American migrants who sought safety in America have been returned to Mexico including hundreds of families, women, and children. When we visited one of the border-bridges that links El Paso to Ciudad Juarez, our host took us to a receiving area run by Mexican immigration authorities. There we had the opportunity to greet Central Americans being returned from El Paso where their plea for safety for themselves and their children fell on deaf ears. Almost to a person they were turned back and would be forced to remain in Mexico until their scheduled day in court. It might be 6 weeks, even 6 months or longer before they had their chance to make their case for asylum.*

*They came into the tent with nothing; all their belongings, including their shoelaces, having been taken from them by U.S. Customs and border protection. We joined the volunteers who greeted the deeply disappointed asylum seekers with a smile and a simple bag lunch. We offered clothing, toiletries, diapers for the babies and scrunchies for the little girls. By far and away, the most popular item was shoelaces. There are few options for shelter in Juarez and fewer opportunities to support families. Churches have opened a few shelters but need far out paces the ability of the people of Ciudad Juarez to welcome these migrants. Migrants stuck in Mexico are easy prey for the unscrupulous, the human traffickers, and the criminal syndicates. Kidnapping, rape, and murder are all too common.”--Ann Scholz, SSND, PhD, Associate Director for Social Mission*

*“MPP adds one more layer to the injustices that strip away the dignity of asylum seeking families. It sends people back into Mexico more vulnerable than when they presented themselves at the US border, as US officials send them back with their belongings in plastic bags and no shoelaces (shoelaces, bras, and belts are taken from them in custody) --making them easily identifiable to those who wish to extort them. We must speak out against this policy, because our faith claims something different—that every*

*individual is created as good and valuable, because we are created in the image of God. Our faith affirms the sanctity of every life. We must keep working until this is the truth of how every person experiences life in this world and on our border.*— Rev. Ailsa Guardiola González, Pastor, First Christian Church, Tucson, AZ

For more info., go to: [www.Faith4Asylum.com](http://www.Faith4Asylum.com), hold vigils in your area, and ACT to END MPP!  
#Faith4Asylum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 9, 2019

Contact: Teresa Cavendish, 520-670-0800, [teresac@ccs-soaz.org](mailto:teresac@ccs-soaz.org)

### **US Shelters for Asylum Seekers Declare: There is Room at the Inn**

LAREDO, TEXAS – Today, representatives of 31 US border shelters who have collectively provided temporary shelter to welcome over 320,000 asylum seekers in 2019 demand an end to the misleadingly named “Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP).” In a two-day convening this weekend in Laredo, Texas, the shelters shared testimonies of the difficult decisions families make to leave their homes and seek safety for themselves and their children at the border. We also discussed the extraordinary work of people of goodwill along the border who have volunteered their time and donated resources for asylum-seeking families because they are motivated by an understanding of our common humanity. Within our border communities, we reject the message that our capacity to help is overwhelmed.

Collectively, we are here to let the US government know that there is room in our inns.

Instead of allowing us to welcome these families, through MPP the US government is returning them to Mexico, where they face homelessness and danger from human traffickers and cartels.

As border shelters, we are ready to provide places of safety and welcome to asylum seekers. We know that when the US government returns families to Mexico to await court dates, the very process of return identifies them as targets for organized crime and heightens their risk of trafficking. US officials remove asylum seekers’ shoelaces purportedly so that they don’t harm themselves while in detention. But when they are sent back to Mexico, the cartels identify families with missing shoelaces as easy prey for kidnapping and trafficking. These unintended ties between US border policy and cartel violence harm families and strengthen organized crime. According to Human Rights First, there are 636 publicly reported cases of violent attacks against asylum seekers returned under MPP, and the vast majority of such attacks are not reported. We know from our firsthand experience that we can avoid feeding such violence by allowing families to seek asylum from within the US, instead of returning them to Mexico.

We, the representatives of 31 shelters are ready and eager to welcome asylum-seeking families. We oppose US government practice and policy that instead subject them to suffering and call on the US Administration and Congress to immediately end MPP.



# Jan. 29, Join the #Faith4Asylum Day of Prayer!

Add Your  
Logo  
Here.



*"Kids Crossing" the image above, by Paula Wendland depicts 2 unaccompanied children—a brother and his younger sister, on their perilous journey north.*

In recent months the U.S. government has systematically dismantled the asylum system, leaving many in danger.

Faith leaders and organizations, including **(Name of Your Organization)**, invite you to **join us January 29** in witnessing our **#Faith4Asylum** in a day of prayer and action on both sides of the US border—on the occasion of the **1 Year Anniversary of the "Migrant Protection Protocols"/MPP** (sometimes called "Remain in Mexico") which are making it impossible for migrants to seek protections through the international right of asylum.

Our prayers will join with 21+ border shelters who are seeking an end to U.S. government policies like "Remain in Mexico" that harm asylum-seekers and reject their sacred humanity. When asylum seekers are apprehended, their shoelaces are removed; and when returned to Mexico to await asylum consideration, they are identified as vulnerable and made victims of human trafficking and extortion at alarming rates.

## What can we do to make a difference?

- 1) **ATTEND the #Faith4Asylum VIGIL ON CAPITOL HILL if near DC**, 11 a.m. Wednesday, January 29. (Contact [sstanley@dhm.diciples.org](mailto:sstanley@dhm.diciples.org) for details). **Or, SIGN UP TO HOST OR ATTEND A PRAYER VIGIL** in another community at [www.Faith4Asylum.com](http://www.Faith4Asylum.com)!
- 2) **SIGN ON AS A CONGREGATION AND/OR AS AN INDIVIDUAL** at [www.Faith4Asylum.com](http://www.Faith4Asylum.com) to show your support to protect asylum seekers.



- 3) **LIFT UP IMAGERY OF SHOELACES** (as requested by border shelters) to raise awareness of dangers faced by asylum seekers. Join 56 shoelaces to represent the 56,000 migrants returned in the first year of "Remain in Mexico" policies. (See how Foothills Community Church in AZ. did this in their sanctuary recently—at right!) Or, tie together 7 laces to represent the 7 U.S. southern border sectors where migrants are

Human Rights Violations Faced by Returned Migrants	
 Extortion Due Process Violations Family Separation Physical/Verbal Abuse	Sexual and Gender Based Violence Kidnapping Homelessness Torture Death 

being returned.

Image from: <https://www.lawa.org/updated-infographic-remain-in-mexico-impacts/> by Latin American Working Group

#Faith4Asylum is a project of the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](http://www.interfaithimmigrationcoalition.org) (IIC). The January 29 prayer vigils are just the first in an ongoing series of actions that will seek to #SaveAsylum. *"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the*



*stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 19:33-34)*