

DIOCESAN MIGRATION MINISTRY RESOURCES: 2020 Annual Report

Early in the year, Refugee Resource Group's committee members decided to change its name, in order to more accurately describe a wider range of people to serve. We became Diocesan Migration Ministry Resources (DMMR) and expanded our mission to include immigrant and all forms of migrant populations. Our webpage on the diocese's website was updated to provide an explanation about the informational resources that we have made available.

'**Shut Down Berks Detention Center**' was a partnering project we were involved with beginning in January. The facility, located in Leesport (Berks County), housed separated refugee children, with or without a family member, under the direction of U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Although we formed a group of people to demonstrate outside of the facility in May, our plans were set aside when Pennsylvania entered social gathering restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We did engage with another organization to learn about its strategy to confront opposition about welcoming migrants in to our communities.

The pandemic also interrupted our plan to offer **travel grants** to parishioners wanting to observe the refugee crossing crisis along our country's southwest border. We wanted to announce the grants during March, but 'stay at home' orders were issued and prevented people from boarding aircraft travel to Arizona and Texas. When travel returns to a more predictable manner, we will consider offering travel grants to the Borderland Pilgrimage of the Diocese of the Rio Grande.

We wrote a script for a to-be-released graphic mini-book, entitled '**Dandelions**'. The publication uses an asset vs. detriment comparison between how the Dandelion is viewed as a weed or a nutritional resource, in order to refute negative perceptions about immigrants. The narrative material was given to our diocesan Communications office. With the cancellation of in-house worship and the diocesan convention, we pulled back from having a paper, comic-style version printed. We hope that 'Dandelions' will soon appear in our webpage.

Members of the committee researched a federal, migrant-related policy know as **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals** (DACA) and prepared an informative timeline about its background and current presence. The policy allows some individuals, who were brought into the United States as children, to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for a work permit here. The report appears on the DMMR's webpage.

Driving PA. Forward is the latest initiative we are looking to support. An organization, MILPA, is collecting at least 10,000 signatures on a petition to enable people to obtain a Pa. driver's license, regardless of their residential status. MILPA wants to introduce Pa. legislation creating a law allowing people with a Tax Identification Number to once again be eligible for a driver's license. In addition, it wants assurance that driver's license information will be kept private, unless there is a criminal warrant to access it.

During monthly meetings, committee members report updates from immigrant organizations including, but not limited to, Church World Services, Catholic Charities Harrisburg, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Movement of Immigrant Leaders in Pa., Pa. Immigrant and Refugee Women's Network and Episcopal Migration Ministries/Partners in Welcome. DMMR meets monthly on the third Tuesday at 1 PM and welcomes having interested people join us. COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Gerry Garber, Fred & Rosemary Hartman, Joan Horn, David W. Martin, The Rev. Beth Mollard, Carolyn Patterson, The Rev. Dr. Gregory Welin and Sam & Margie Ward. ADVISORY MEMBERS: Sandra Elion, The Rev. Daphne Messersmith and The Rev. Rebecca Myers.

