

Our companions in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala have not only been providing humanitarian aid to migrants as they have left their countries, but in many cases, advocacy with their governments to insure the respect for their rights when attempts were made to close borders. Caravan participants who either voluntarily or involuntarily returned to their countries of origin have been provided with the services offered by companions to reestablish themselves in places where they can safely live, income generation and psychosocial trauma counseling. As mentioned this work is supported through LDR and World Hunger grants.

In addition, the Mennonite Social Action Commission, Honduras and the Salvadoran Lutheran Church, El Salvador have had persons accompanying the caravans from their countries, not only to report on what is happening with caravans but also to provide human rights assistance.

Our companion church in Mexico, the Iglesia Luterana Mexicana, and the Comunidad Teologica have been providing spiritual and humanitarian support to caravan members in Mexico City. The Grupo de Trabajo de Politicas Migratorias, the largest immigration advocacy network in Mexico made up of organizations who work with migrants in a variety of ways has been receiving the information from its organizations who are providing service to the caravans and regularly issue situation reports shared with the AMMPARO network in the region and also have made statements calling on the Government of Mexico to respect the human rights of the migrants as well as provide them with protection and services.

In response to the approaching caravan, In the US, the president issued a proclamation unilaterally changing asylum law. ELCA members joined with other members of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition in pledging solidarity with asylum seekers. In less than 10 days, 3000 faith leaders have already signed that statement. A statement from Bishop Eaton is included in the press release in the attached email. We would encourage synods to share this information.

Other advocacy opportunities are in the process of being organized for December 10 which is the anniversary of UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on December 18 which is UN Migrant Day.

The first caravans have already reached the border at Tijuana. Originally, there were discussions about dividing the caravans to multiple entry points but now it appears, that all will attempt to enter in Tijuana. ELCA members are invited to join a delegation of lawyers and child-related professionals to accompany the asylum-seekers from December 3-5 in Tijuana. We are working on the possibility of organizing other group of lawyers and clergy as well. We are also looking at human rights verification missions.

In addition, there are still hundreds of people still in Tapachula and in Mexico City. The ELCA is working with the ILM, our companion church to look at other accompaniment of these caravans, likely in Mexico City.

Some ELCA AMMPARO pro bono lawyers have received invitations to go to Mexico City to assist the caravan members with Know Your Rights presentations and also be ready to provide assistance at the family detention centers once caravan members are admitted to the US. In fact, I can confirm that the administration is emptying out these facilities, likely to make space for caravan families. The need for pro bono services will be critical in coming weeks.

Our border congregations who engage in ministry with migrants are already seeing huge numbers of migrants released daily and have asked for our continued support. Welcoming congregation accompaniment will continue to be a critical need as migrants are released and have the opportunity to move close to family and friends in the US.

Support for this work can be sent to LDR designated to AMMPARO.

Mary Campbell