



PEACE SUNDAY – APRIL 19, 2026

Loving, Serving, and Seeking Justice for Immigrants & Refugees

Peace Sunday Information:

9:00 a.m.

How Can We Love, Serve, and Defend Immigrants and Refugees?—a combined learning community in the Fellowship Hall with a panel discussion hosted by Kevin Vereide.

10:30 a.m.

Thinking Biblically About Refugees & Immigration with guest speaker Matthew Soerens, of World Relief.

PERHAPS NO ISSUE in recent American politics has been as polarizing as the current administration's treatment of immigrants and refugees over the past year. Some Christians have supported the detention and deportation of a wide range of immigrants and refugees. But many other Christians have condemned not only these policy goals but also the violent, unconstitutional tactics that government agents have regularly been using to pursue them.

Join us for Peace Sunday 2026, as we focus our attention on why and how followers of Jesus should love, serve, and seek justice for immigrants and refugees.



Our guest preacher Matthew Soerens serves as the Vice President of Advocacy and Policy at World Relief, a global Christian humanitarian organization whose mission is to boldly engage the world's greatest crises in partnership with the church. He is the co-author of three books, including *Welcoming the Stranger* (InterVarsity Press, 2018), and *Inalienable* (InterVarsity Press, 2022). Matthew also serves as the National Coordinator for the Evangelical Immigration

Table, a coalition that advocates for immigration reforms consistent with biblical values.

During our common Learning Community, we will listen to and learn from the experiences of a variety of people: a refugee, a Church World Service employee, and World Relief's Matthew Soerens. Even if we believe that God calls us to love, serve, and defend the rights of immigrants and refugees, many of us may not be familiar with practical and truly beneficial ways to do so. The panel will be hosted by our own Kevin Vereide, who has extensive experience in organizing support for immigrants and refugees. Join us for this opportunity to be informed and to be inspired regarding how we can take actions to "welcome the stranger."

Ingathering Offering: Goal \$10,000

In order to support efforts to promote justice and peace both locally and internationally, our Peace Sunday ingathering offering this year will support two organizations:

(1) **World Relief** works in partnership with churches. During fiscal year 2024, World Relief served 3.3 people globally and supported more than 40,000 immigrants in the US. They do this work by creating welcoming communities; supporting long-term community integration; and helping refugees and immigrants rebuild their futures by finding housing, employment; and long-term support systems. Currently, World Relief is addressing crises in the Middle East, Ukraine, and Sudan, as well as advocating for just immigration policies in the US. More information: worldrelief.org.

(2) **Church World Service Harrisburg** is an arm of Church World Service Global that works to transform communities around the world "through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster." Locally, CWS offers legal services for immigrants and refugees in the greater Harrisburg area, health care support, economic empowerment, and direct client assistance. Last year, most of its federal funding was eliminated, so staffing was cut, many services reduced, and the agency has had to rely significantly on volunteers to carry on this vital work. More information: cwsharrisburg.org.

Practical Ways to Do Justice, Love Mercy, and to Walk Humbly with our God

ALL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS are called to promote justice and to act as peacemakers, but there are many different ways for us to do so. Our diverse approaches and activities will likely reflect our different spiritual gifts, different temperaments, different talents, and different vocations. And yet we should seek guidance from the Holy Spirit and ask ourselves: might God want us to move outside of our proverbial comfort zones, looking for new ways to translate our hopes for peace and justice into practical actions?

Perhaps you may be inspired to engage in various forms of:

- prayer for God's kingdom to come and God's will to be done on earth, as it is in heaven

- personal acts of service to vulnerable and suffering individuals
- public programs in cooperation with others to meet the needs of marginalized and victimized communities
- political actions and campaigns to call upon leaders to enact just policies
- protests that call attention to injustices and that signal solidarity with the oppressed

We encourage you to read the testimonies of fellow congregants below to see how God has called them into faithful actions.



Testimony: A Call to Love and to Serve Immigrants

by Kevin Vereide

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY about immigrants and refugees? This question prompted me to begin a personal Bible study that has had a significant impact on my life. I am amazed how often the Bible addresses the treatment of the foreigner, stranger, resident alien, or immigrant. For example, we are to love (Lev. 19:34), not oppress (Dt. 24:14), and not exploit or mistreat (Jer. 22:3). Some of the judgement passages grab my attention (Dt. 27:19 and Mal. 3:5). In these many passages I discover God's heart. God loves the immigrant and hates when these vulnerable people are mistreated.

After this Bible study I had a profound sense of God asking me, "Kevin, are you biblical?" I knew what God was asking. To be biblical is not just having Bible knowledge but it also acting on the teachings of the Bible. Therefore, my wife, Lindy, and I volunteered to welcome a newly arrived family from Somalia. This family became close friends. From this volunteer experience I joined with other like-minded believers in Columbus OH and we started a nonprofit organization to mobilize the Church to love immigrants and refugees. When we decided to hire a director, I felt God's call to leave my insurance job to start this new role. We initiated projects such as an after-school program for Somali children and we helped start a refugee resettlement agency.

I am now retired but volunteer with Church World Service Harrisburg. There are many joys in this work. It is an honor to get to know families from many parts of the world and experience their cultures. Many of these cultures value hospitality so I have been the recipient of some amazing food. However, sometimes this work is very hard. Entering into the suffering of others can be overwhelming. But that is exactly what Jesus did for us.

Testimony: Participating in Protests as a Follower of Jesus

by Gretta Owen

*On Capitol Hill
Walking down the street
planning to get arrested;
holding on to hope.*

*\$50 and an ID
Security line:
All the pockets hold the same,
except mine holds leaves.*



I wrote these two haiku poems after taking direct action/civil disobedience with Mennonite Action in Washington, DC this past September. This was the third action I had participated in with Mennonite Action, and the second time I was planning to get arrested. As I walked toward the Senate Hart building on a sunny, clear, September day, I picked up a couple of leaves from the sidewalk to hold in my pocket through the duration of the day. We had clear instructions and plans about how the day was to unfold, but uncertainty had followed me from Mechanicsburg, and I was less convinced that this was really a meaningful and faithful Christian response than I had been the first two times I'd participated in actions.

Our action was to request a meeting with Senator Mark Warner of Virginia. Many in our group from Virginia had been part of an organized phone campaign to call him regularly for the past month, advocating for three things: an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, an opening of the borders to allow full access to humanitarian aid, and an end to US sending weapons to Israel while Israel continues to violate international humanitarian law. As we expected, the Senator was not able to meet with us, so we sat down in the hallway, blocking the entrance to the office and refused to leave until he would meet with us. We would then spend the

rest of the time singing until Capitol Police were notified, we were given the required three warnings, and then we were all under arrest.

My misgivings were more about whether this was effective action than what may happen if I accrued another

incommoding arrest on my record. Was this really making a difference for Palestinians, or was it just another social media post?

My answer came in many ways throughout the day, but the most moving moment for our group came when we sat down outside the office and began to sing, as another advocacy group exited. A group of Palestinian Americans looked at our blockade first in wary surprise, then in recognition as they saw our banners and heard us begin to sing, Freedom, freedom, freedom is coming... With tears in their eyes, they thanked us, "future generations will look back at you and thank you for standing up for human rights." In that moment, they knew they were not alone. Not only were they not alone, but they knew that there were American Christians sharing the message that Jesus stands in solidarity with them, sees their pain and longs for peace, freedom, and justice for all humanity. Was the protest effective? Not immediately, but it was disruptive. And as one of our leaders said, "When business as usual includes continuing to fund a genocide, then we have a responsibility as followers of Jesus, to disrupt that business."

The purpose of the Peace & Social Justice Commission is to help educate, inform, and empower Grantham Church to address injustice without mixing the gospel with partisan politics. We exist to help create a church culture that values peace and justice in the way of Jesus.