



Planning Toolkit: Welcome With Dignity Faith Vigil

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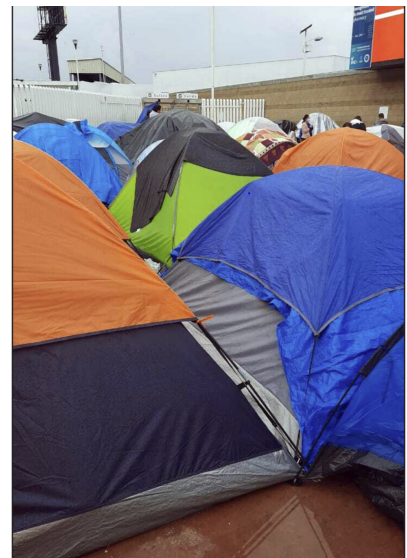
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Background

Members of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition invite you to hold virtual and in-person vigils (using Covid-safe protocols) in your home, faith community, neighborhood, and in spaces of significance for immigration justice (such as outside ICE offices, detention centers, legislative offices, etc.). The vigils will provide a public faith witness and grow awareness in this time when repairs to the U.S. asylum system are desperately needed.

Together, we seek to:

1. Demand an immediate end of Title 42 and its harmful separation of immigrant families, and call for the restoration and improvement of humanitarian processing of asylum seekers.



Haitian migrant tents in Tijuana

(Image from: [The Invisible Wall](#))

2. Celebrate and consider joining the Welcome with Dignity campaign.

The Welcome With Dignity campaign is committed to transforming the way the United States receives and protects people forced to flee their homes to ensure they are treated humanely and fairly. See more [here](#).

3. Prepare our faith and local communities to support and welcome asylum seekers.
People of faith and conscience can build awareness, work and pray for justice, and take action in solidarity with people seeking asylum to repeal and strengthen; heal and transform. Learn more [here](#) and [here](#).

Sample Vigil Program

Below is an example of how a vigil might be ordered, but use your creativity to alter as you wish for your community. Consider the resources that exist within your community or core planning group (such as an exceptional church choir or cantor, local poet, sign-language translator, artist, etc.), and use them in your vigil!

Preparations

Before the event, print out multiple words of “Welcome” from various languages. For inspiration, see links like [this](#), or copy, enlarge, print, and cut out words of welcome in various languages from an image like the one shown to the right. Try to print out as many “words of welcome” as you may have people, so that each participant can g

Identify a door (if you are holding the vigil in your home), or purchase a used door frame which you might have at your site for imagery during your vigil. As participants gather, distribute the words of welcome to them (with tape on the back of each word). Participants will be asked during the vigil to affix the words to the door. Also, print out (2 sided, with flip on short side) and distribute this [End T42 Asylum Vigil Welcome Card.pptx](#) at the close of the vigil.



Welcoming Remarks

Invite a faith leader to share a few words about the focus and purpose of your vigil, addressing questions such as: Why now? What's the concern? Who's affected? How can this vigil convince your members of congress to support humane asylum processing? Below is a sample opening message:

Each Abrahamic faith tradition in recent weeks has uplifted gratitude for the abundance made possible through the blessing and gifts of the One called Allah, God, or Yahweh, and calls believers to share bounty generously and practice justice with all who are in need.

Ramadan has recently called Muslim believers to develop more generous love through the practice of fasting, and to remember that "Allah does not love the arrogant...who are miserly and bid others to be miserly and conceal the bounty which Allah has bestowed

on them” (Quran 4:36). Shavuot, in Jewish tradition, has retold the harvest story of the book of Ruth to emphasize God’s call to “leave the gleanings for the poor and the stranger” as instructed in Leviticus 23:33. Pentecost has reminded Christians of the gift of the Holy Spirit sent by God to strengthen love and give witness to unity possible in God’s community where there is “neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, nor...male and female.” (Galatians 3:28) .

Therefore, we gather today around this doorway--aware of the values of our faith--to strengthen our capacity to honor the dignity in each person. We gather to grow our confidence in the abundance of blessings from our Creator.

And we gather now, aware we will soon approach the end of the first six months of the new administration, to deepen our resolve to urge for just policies for asylum seekers--and to end the Title 42 order which continues to further traumatize those desperately seeking safety and fresh hope.

Opening Prayer

Ask a faith leader or a key lay leader to open with a prayer. See sample prayers below.

Jewish Prayer

Dear Source of Life, Accompanier of the migrant, you have placed within us a wandering spirit and the desire to seek out goodness. Guide us on our journeys so that we encounter what is safe, kind and welcoming. Allow the gifts we bring with us to be received and illuminate our humanity so that everyone we encounter can glimpse that we too, are created in the Image of the Sacred Sojourner.

Dear Listener to the oppressed, raise the cry of the detained so what has been hidden becomes revealed. May Your movement be felt in the midst of detention. Break the shackles of the inhumanity present in our immigration system. Deliver those who are detained to a safe destination.

Dear Rooted One, Foundation of the citizen, you have provided us with shelter under the canopy of wholeness. Remind us of our responsibility in our homes to all who wander, all who journey, because we too once were travelers migrating from place to place. Direct us to our hearts that love the migrant, because we too know the heart of the migrant. Urge us towards justice that embraces rather than separates, supports rather than divides.

Dear Source of Unity, together may we enrich one another’s lives benefiting from all that we have to offer and all that we learn together. Let us be made strong as we challenge an unjust system and let us be made whole. Protect us on our wanderings and bless us in our dwellings, may we know the sacred in each step towards our destination and peace in the spaces we call home.

Christian Prayer

God of all nations, cultures and peoples, we pray for all of our brothers and sisters forced to flee their homes and make the difficult journey in search of safety at our door. Help us to see you in the face of each stranger and to hear your voice in the cry of every child. They ask only for the chance to live free from fear, free from violence, and free from the poverty that robs their souls.

God of abundant welcome, open the doors of our hearts and our home. Give us the grace to welcome these newcomers as we would welcome you. Grant we pray that we may be a nation of compassion and our borders places of encounter with you, the living God. May all those arriving in this land find welcome, protection, opportunity and the invitation to join their gifts with ours.

We pray this, in the name of the One who loves us all unconditionally and who calls us to do the same.

Muslim Prayer

As Muslims, we remember Allah's love for migrants, and the call for us to "...do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbor from among your own people, and the neighbor who is a stranger, and the friend by your side, and the wayfarer..." (An-Nissa 4:36). We must do so, for Allah's message in the Qur'an reminds, "When my servant cries out to me, then I am near to him. I answer the call of every caller when they call unto me, so that they will respond to my call and believe in me. So that they will find guidance."

Music

A singer, choir, or instrumentalist can perform; a few singers can lead participants in a song; or you may wish to play or sing a "welcome themed" songs like these from YouTube:

- ["Room at the Table for Everyone"](#) by Carrie Newcomer
- Hymn: ["Let Us Build a House"](#)
- [Chardi Kala](#) by Sonny Singh
- ["Crowded Table"](#) by the Highwomen

Prayer or Litany

One person may lead the prayers or invite several faith leaders to pray according to their traditions. Involve vigil participants in praying a refrain throughout your prayer time, or pray in a circle so everyone has the opportunity to share. Consider offering prayers in multiple languages. Draw inspiration for your prayers through these resources, and see a sample litany below:

- Blog: [Witness at the Border](#)
- [Haitian Bridge Alliance](#)
- [A Guide to Title 42 Expulsions at the Border](#), American Immigration Council
- Toolkit: [Title 42](#)

- Report: [The Invisible Wall: Title 42 and its Impact on Haitian Migrants](#)
- Article: [Over 2,100 children crossed border alone after being expelled with families to Mexico](#)
- Article: [Title- 42 Policy Fuels Kidnappings of Migrant Families at Border & Extortion of US Relatives](#)

Suggested Litany

Leader 1: Since March 2020--despite widespread outcries from faith, immigrant, healthcare, legal, and human rights leaders--the order called "Title 42" has led to mass expulsions of more than 750,000 migrants who'd fled violence and trauma in their homelands to seek hope and new life.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to urge the immediate ending of Title 42!

Leader 2: Under two administrations now, Title 42 has resulted in tent cities of refugees at our southern border, and has blocked opportunities for families and adults from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cuba, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Russian, Somalia, Venezuela, and Yemen to legally seek their right of asylum.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to urge the immediate ending of Title 42!

Leader 3: Begun with a pretext that health concerns of the pandemic necessitated migrants not be granted humanitarian protections to enter, we have instead continued to watch transport for business across the border unabated, and have seen thousands transported on deportation flights that themselves have at times promoted spread of disease internationally.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to urge the immediate ending of Title 42!

Leader 4: Pushed towards desperation and denied opportunities to seek protection together, many migrant families have felt compelled to make the unbearably painful decision to separate, resulting in fractured families, children crossing the border unaccompanied, the detention of 20,000 children in large scale detention, and irreparable trauma to both kids and their parents.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to urge the immediate ending of Title 42!

Leader 5: Affecting Black migrants egregiously, returns of 2,000 Haitian children and adults on more than 30 deportation flights have placed them in extreme danger amid political instability, and reports confirm almost 500 violent assaults, kidnappings, attacks, and threats against asylum seekers expelled or left stranded in Mexico.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to urge the immediate ending of Title 42!

Leader 6: Our hearts can do better! Our nation must do better! Our faiths that call us to "welcome the stranger," "remember we were once strangers," respond to the cries of the

vulnerable, and recognize the sanctity in every person, empower us to welcome asylum seekers with dignity. Ending Title 42 is one step towards respect--and we pray for President Biden to courageously choose humanity, and revoke Title 42 now.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to urge the immediate ending of Title 42!

Speaker

A local community member can share a personal story of how the broken immigration system has impacted them, their neighbors, or others in the community. You can also read stories and quotes such as these written by migrants who have suffered and been expelled under Title 42:

- Story of "Claudia," through Witness at the Border, "[Walk for the Children](#)," 4/21/2021
- Story of Tani in LA Times, [Title- 42 Policy Fuels Kidnappings of Migrant Families at Border & Extortion of US Relatives](#)
- Story of Muhamed in The Intercept, [New Report Documents Nearly 500 Cases of Violence Against Asylum Seekers Expelled by Biden](#)
- Story of "Justine" in [The Invisible Wall: Title 42 and Its Impact On Haitian Migrants](#), p. 42
- Find all above story excerpts compiled [here](#)

More than one story can be integrated throughout the program as well.

Ritual

Integrate creative symbols or rituals from faith traditions that draw attention to the importance of welcome, hospitality, and pursuing immigration reform.

A suggested ritual is below, where participants will be invited to place words of welcome on the doorway centered in the vigil, followed by prayers as the doorway is opened. Be prepared with pens, pencils, and crayons in a box in front of the door for people to sign the Welcome Words.

Leader: The door is one of the most important parts of our home. Through it we come and go, receive visitors and say goodbye to old friends. It is a place of sadness and joy, departures and entrances. Today, we are clearly indicating to all those who seek protection, welcome, and hospitality are at the core of our community.

For too many months, deeply vulnerable yet incredibly strong migrants who have been coming to our border have been denied protection through our government's use of "Title 42." We urgently pray today for the quick ending of Title 42, in order to instead demonstrate our value that sojourners are welcome.

*Leader to encourage one or two people to affix their "Welcome Words" to the doorway.
Following, invite all to say together:*

All: All races, nationalities, beliefs, fears, and hopes are welcome here.

Leader: When you enter through this door – you are welcome. In a time where divisiveness and polarization exist, we choose to welcome, not only those who agree with us but all people open to civil discourse and upholding human dignity.

*Leader to indicate one or two people to affix their “Welcome Words” to the doorway.
Following, invite all to say together:*

All: All races, nationalities, beliefs, fears, and hopes are welcome here.

Leader: When you enter through this door – you are welcome. We boldly proclaim our welcome to all by posting our welcome on the outside of our door indicating that we begin relationships with trust, inclusion, story sharing, and listening.

*Leader to indicate one or two people to affix their “Welcome Words” to the doorway.
Following, invite all to say together:*

All: All races, nationalities, beliefs, fears, and hopes are welcome here.

Leader: When you enter through this door – you are welcome. As people are being told “the US is not your home,” or “We will keep you separated from your family,” or “You are not welcome,” we declare that at its very core, our home welcomes, our faiths welcome, and this nation must welcome!

Leader to invite all who have not yet done so to come up to affix your words of welcome to the doorway, and/or to sign the Welcome Words and leave a message for all being affected by Title-42, if you so choose.

Together let us affirm once more:

All: All races, nationalities, beliefs, fears, and hopes are welcome here.

Closing

ACT NOW to Welcome Asylum Seekers & End Title-42!



- **SHARE** <http://bit.ly/HighLevelFaithLeadersEndTitle42> letter with your Congress reps & **SIGN** on to the <http://bit.ly/FaithLeadersandOrgsTitle42> letter by 6/16!
- **SIGN** this <http://bit.ly/WelcomeWithDignityPledge>.
- **SPONSOR** <http://bit.ly/EndTitle42Vigils> in your faith community to raise the need to end Title-42 ASAP.
- **GO HERE:** <http://bit.ly/ICFaith4Asylum> for faith resources to welcome & advocate for asylum seekers.
- **LEARN MORE** in this <http://bit.ly/Title42Factsheet> & by attending this <http://bit.ly/WWDWWebinarJune2>.

Reiterate the focus and purposes of your vigil, and give each participant an [End T42 Asylum Vigil Welcome Card for VIRTUAL Use](#) or an [End T42 Asylum Vigil Welcome Card for IN PERSON Use](#).

(Note: each link will take you to a separate online Powerpoint file. Print out each page front & back, and choose “flip on short side” to make your own cards for use! The links are spelled out in the “in person” version so that persons can find the documents online following your event—as in the picture at left. The documents are hyperlinked below the words on the “virtual” version.)

Emphasize the follow up action opportunities on the card, and send attendees forth with a call to welcome

newcomers and advocate for compassionate immigration reform. You could further conclude your vigil with a song, benediction, or a procession or march to another symbolic and strategic location.

Suggested Follow Up Actions:

Actions Highlighted on the Welcome Card--

- Share this [high-level faith leader letter](#) to end Title-42 with your Congress reps & Sign & Share [this faith letter](#) for individuals and organizations by 6/16!
- Sign the #WelcomeWithDignity Pledge [here](#).
- Sponsor [vigils](#) in your community & congregation to raise awareness of the need to end Title-42 ASAP.
- See these additional [faith resources](#) about welcoming & advocating for asylum seekers.
- Learn more about Title-42's impacts through this [factsheet](#) & by attending this June 2 [webinar](#).

Additional Resource and Actions to Support Asylum Seekers--

- View and Take Action through our [IIC Welcoming Migrants Toolkit](#).
- Use these additional prayers and vigil resources:
 - [Vigil and Prayer Resources](#) for groups to grow compassion and build solidarity with migrant children and families.
 - [View these general guidelines for prayer vigils](#) to help you plan.
- Engage children in your family, congregation, and community to share their support for welcoming and protecting asylum seekers thru these family-friendly actions:
 - [Care Bear Prayers to Elected Officials](#). Use this child-friendly resource to send letters to your elected officials letting them know that you care about and are praying for migrant children.
 - Use these [teddy bear images](#) during a virtual or in-person vigil or on social media to advocate for migrant children.

Additional ways to take action to to end Title 42:

- View policy solutions [here](#).
- Learn how Title 42 impacts Haitian migrants [here](#).
- See U.S. CBP statistics about refugees expelled in 2020 under Title-42 [here](#).

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