

Shireen Miles, Immigrant Advocate, Trinity Cathedral-Sacramento

Shireen responded to a large group of migrants who were unexpectedly dropped-off at offices of the Catholic Diocese in Sacramento. She mobilized resources to provide care and support for these families. Here is her story.



When 36 confused migrants fleeing violence and economic devastation in their home countries—primarily Venezuela—were dropped off outside the Sacramento offices of the Catholic Diocese in June with only the clothes on their back, not even knowing where they were, it didn't take courage for me and the other members of Sacramento Area Congregations Together's 40+ faith communities to respond. Clergy and congregants of Trinity Cathedral stepped up immediately. The message of the gospel in Matthew 5, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me," seemed to us to be the only appropriate response. It's been a whirlwind of activity since then. Through these subsequent months, our team listened with lumps in our throats to the stories of their harrowing and dangerous pilgrimage through multiple countries as they sought relief. We tapped into local resources and the generosity of donors to find them clothing and lodging, arranged for volunteer immigration attorneys and English lessons, secured urgently needed medical and dental treatment, taught them how to get around their new city and found them odd jobs to tide them over before they get official work permits. We also shared their joy. We enjoyed delicious meals they prepared for us to share their own cuisine. I was honored to be asked to stand up and stood up as a witness at the marriage of one couple. It has been a humbling and inspiring reminder of how much we share as humans.

When our guests express gratitude and ask how they can ever repay our hospitality, we simply remind them of the tenets of our faith and suggest that they can help others someday when they are flourishing.