

## *Pilgrim's Progress: The Journey Toward Welcome* Ambassadors of Dignity (AOD) Newsletter #1

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Hi Jeff,

This newsletter exists to inform and inspire through story, reflection, and Scripture, inviting deeper formation of the heart and mind for meaningful and compassionate engagement with our immigrant neighbors.

### Listening to one family's story reshaped my understanding

Would you entrust your young children to a total stranger?

About ten years ago a young couple fled Mexico with their two small children. Cartel violence in their area had made them fear for their lives.

To escape their desperate situation, they paid a coyote (smuggler) to help them cross the border.

When the coyote looked at their two small children, he told the parents that the children would not survive the mountain journey on foot. The terrain was too harsh, the distances too long. Instead, he said the children would be taken across separately by car.

In that moment, when the parents realized they would be separated from their small children, the nature of the risk changed dramatically.

The danger was no longer just the mountains. The deeper danger was separation.

The parents would have to entrust their small children to strangers and hope they would see them again on the other side.

[read the full story...](#)

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### Wrestling With the Complexity

*An honest look at some of the tensions and questions this story raises*

#### **Questions the story raises**

*How common are stories like this?*

Stories like this are more common than many of us realize. While not every situation is the same, many who arrive at the southern border are fleeing violence, instability, or urgent need, not simply seeking opportunity.

*How many undocumented immigrants are there in Kansas?*

Estimates vary by source and, by the nature of the issue, are not exact. A generally accepted range is 60,000 to 75,000 undocumented immigrants in Kansas. Many families are mixed-status, with parents and older children lacking legal status while younger children are U.S. citizens by birth. Undocumented immigrants make up a

significant portion of the workforce in industries such as agriculture, meat processing, construction, and service jobs like restaurants, hotels, and cleaning work.

### **One Common Objection**

*If a migrant enters the country illegally, it seems like that should disqualify them from receiving sympathy.*

Respect for the law matters. But from a biblical perspective, a person's need and dignity are not erased by how they arrived. Scripture consistently calls God's people to show compassion to the vulnerable, even when their situation is complex or imperfect. We may not condone how they entered, but we also resist condemning them for choices we might have made under similar circumstances.

### **One Common Misconception**

*If migrants really wanted to come legally, they could simply "get in line" and wait their turn.*

For many migrants, there isn't a clear or accessible "line" to enter legally. The immigration system is complex, expensive, and unforgiving. Legal pathways are often unavailable to those fleeing urgent danger, which is why many feel they have no real option but to come without authorization.

### **Questions for Reflection**

*What assumptions do I tend to make about families like this, and how might those assumptions change if I knew their story?*

*When I hear stories like this, what emotions rise up in me, and what might those emotions be revealing?*

## The Next Right Thing

*One simple, clear invitation to act*

### **Practicing Welcome in Everyday Family Life**

Parenting young children offers a unique and powerful opportunity to shape how the next generation sees the world. Parents can practice *the next right thing* in age-appropriate, life-giving ways, weaving values of welcome, kindness, and dignity into everyday family life.

Simple practices like the stories you read, the language you use, the prayers you pray, and the questions you invite can help children grow with compassion rather than fear. You do not need to have all the answers. Faithfulness here looks like modeling curiosity, empathy, and love of neighbor in small, consistent ways that take root over time.

[explore this further...](#)

[Volunteer](#)

AOD News

### *AOD in action*

- At Ortiz Elementary, 38 volunteers are reading weekly with second and third graders, building relationships that go far beyond literacy.
- We recently expanded to Colvin Elementary, where 12 volunteers are already showing up each week for Reading Buddies. Last week marked week three, and the Colvin students are excited about the individual attention. One student told his Reading Buddy that he is now practicing his reading at home!
- Both schools have a high percentage of immigrant families, and we are finding that schools are an excellent place to build relationships and connect with immigrant families.
- This year, over \$10,000 has been given to help dozens of immigrant families meet urgent needs, offering both practical support and a reminder that they are not alone.


This is a glimpse of what it looks like to build bridges with our immigrant neighbors.

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**Jeff Stukey | Executive Director**

**Ambassadors of Dignity**

*Building Bridges with Our Immigrant Neighbors*

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