

IMMIGRATION LITURGY

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Jesus said, "Follow me. Be my disciples and do what I do."

P: "But," we say, "Jesus—you spent most of your time healing. How can those of us who are not doctors or nurses heal like you?"

L: We can heal those who come to our borders. They are in such desperate need of our healing—terrified, starving, blustered from walking in the heat, desperate enough to chance drowning. They are like the desperate crowds that followed Jesus.

P: They run to us from dangers so terrible we can't even imagine what it's like—no way to get work, farms that no longer produce crops, gangs that maim and kill children unless paid by their families not to do so.

L: Having no other option they run to us, a nation they thought cared for all people, longing to be healed from past terrors, longing for just a little kindness only to have that hope dashed from their hands—their children ripped from them—their current situation as terrible as the one they ran from.

P: They are like the crowds who ran to Jesus, pushed out even by friends and family because they feared their wounds and pain were catching and any contact would make them imperfect before God.

L: But Jesus showed the people of his time—and ours-- that God doesn't want perfection—God wants compassion and the healing that comes when we open the door to those shut out. So let's do as Jesus did and welcome the stranger and the immigrant into our midst.

OPENING PRAYER Dear God, help us to be instruments of your love, even when it causes us to see what we don't want to see. May your love infuse us, power us, with newfound strength and courage each time we are able to take the first step to recognize and understand why people are hurting. Hold us secure in your love whenever we open our eyes and see that it is we ourselves or our beloved nation that is causing that hurt to vulnerable people at the border, immigrants who have nowhere else to go. Fill us with your unstoppable love so that we may put our hands in yours and let you teach us how to truly be your disciples with the courage to stand up for the best part of ourselves, our Christian beliefs and our nation. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURES—Leviticus 19:33-34 and others ; Mark 12:28-31, Matthew 19:30; Matthew 25:31-40; Hebrews 13:1-3

PASTORAL PRAYER: O God, save us from fear—fear that comes from hearing bad news from too many places at once, from hearing too many possibilities that could mess up the future and trying to find the culprit causing all our problems so that we might have a simple solution and put an end to our worries. Forgive us when we end up blaming the most vulnerable of people who are just asking us for a drink of water. Keep us from fearing that we will be swamped by other people's needs or that your unstoppable

love will not be enough to sustain us if we reach out to those coming over our borders or from other countries. O God, please, please keep us from ending up like those people sitting on the boat far away from those drowning as they did when the Titanic sunk. Help us be healers like Jesus by avoiding ready-made excuses that distance us from the turmoil at the border. Instead, may we do whatever is necessary to see for ourselves what is really happening and who is truly being mistreated and dehumanized. Keep us from feeling hurt if we find out that we or people like us or even our beloved government might be destroying helpless children and their families. Help us instead be glad that God gave us the gift of a government where we can make our beliefs, our discomfort, our horror known to our lawmakers and tell them to do something about it. Help us instead be glad that God has opened our eyes and given us another chance to be the loving, kind welcoming Christians we truly want to be in reality as well as in our thoughts. Help us to see what you want us to be is not perfect but growing in love that matters to those who seek our help and our nation's help. Guide us in the kind of love that truly makes America Great. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.