

# Strangers No Longer Newsletter

April 2020



The COVID-19 outbreak has impacted us all but especially our most vulnerable brothers and sisters—like immigrant families fearing deportation who are in and near our Circles of Support. This newsletter issue will focus on ways you can make a difference.

## DONATE YOUR STIMULUS CHECK...?

...or any amount and we will get your contribution to immigrant families in crisis that are accompanied by our parish Circles of Support. In this issue, we highlight 4 parish Circles that are closest geographically to the suffering of families, especially those fearing deportation: St. Damien of Molokai (Pontiac), St. Anne (Detroit), Agape Center of St. Clement (Romeo), St. Mary (Ann Arbor). These Circles are asking for help in the crisis.

***Make checks payable to Jesuit Community UDM – send to Strangers No Longer, 19972 Shrewsbury, Detroit MI 48221. You may memo-line preference.***

Soon many of us will receive a government stimulus check of up to \$1,200. Did you know that people



who use Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs)\*\* for anyone in the

family when filing taxes are not eligible for the rebate check, even if some in the family have social security numbers that are valid for employment\*? That means undocumented tax-payers and their family members will **NOT** receive that check. If you are financially able, we invite you to please consider donating a portion of your stimulus check to immigrant families who won't receive this check. 100% of your donation will go toward rent, energy

bills, or other direct needs our undocumented families have in this COVID-19 crisis. Thank you.

\*Recovery Rebate Check – Question and Answers – English, Michigan Immigrant Rights Center  
<https://michiganimmigrant.org/coronavirus/resources>

\*\*The Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) is a tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to ensure that people – including unauthorized immigrants – pay taxes even if they do not have a Social Security number and regardless of their immigration status.  
<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/facts-about-individual-tax-identification-number-itin>

## ST. DAMIEN MOLOKAI CIRCLE (PONTIAC)

Our Accompaniment Shepherds contacted parishioners who know that the real crisis for their immigrant families will come toward the end of April when the next month's rent is due. St. Damien's St. Vincent de Paul committee will appreciate any help so that their new Circle of Support can expand their efforts for their families. The local Catholic Charities group, Casa Amiga can help with food and legal support, but not with rent.

## ST. ANNE CIRCLE OF SUPPORT (DETROIT)

For over 5 years, St. Anne's parishioners have helped dozens and dozens of families fearing and facing deportation. One of their members was a counselor at a neighborhood middle school where over half the students worried that ICE would take their parents while the kids were at school. St.

Anne and St. Regis collaborated in a massive new shoe drive for the children of the school. Recently, St. Anne’s Circle (with partners from Ss. Peter and Paul Jesuit) began a monthly “Sunday Burrito Breakfast” to raise funds for families, but now with COVID the breakfasts are on hold –but the suffering continues as families are laid off with no assistance.

**ST. MARY CIRCLE -- ANN ARBOR/YPSILANTI**

Our community members without documentation work primarily in the service industry, so their jobs were among the first to go with the onset of shelter-in-place. Though tax-payers, they are not eligible for unemployment benefits or the stimulus check. Although there is an eviction moratorium, tenants are still expected to pay rent.



An ACLU lawyer confirmed with us that eviction proceedings could begin as soon as the executive order expires, even before tenants have the chance to work enough to pay their missed payments.

Ann Arbor parishes, St. Mary Student Parish and St Francis of Assisi, are supporting our community in a variety of ways. However, we brace ourselves for a spike in financial requests as monthly bill deadlines approach again. A few weeks ago, dozens of our families told me they had enough saved to pay March bills, but confessed they can’t cover this month’s payments. With the donations that you have already sent to Strangers No Longer, we were able to pay three families’ DTE bills, and help another family with rent. Our usually hardworking community is very anxious about their current inability to support their families. They are incredibly grateful for your generosity.

*-Amy Ketner, Hispanic/Latino Ministry Coordinator, St. Mary Student Parish*

**Donations for any of the efforts listed above are critical right now. Please consider helping.**

**Checks should be made out to Jesuit Community UDM and mailed to Strangers No Longer, 19972 Shrewsbury, Detroit MI 48221.**

*Donations are tax deductible. Questions: Bill O'Brien, 313-549-0421.*



**AGAPE/ST. CLEMENT CIRCLE OF SUPPORT (ROMEO) -- BITTERSWEET JOY**

Here is an example of the challenges immigrants to the U.S. often face: AMY ESTRELLA TELEZ - NUNEZ



was born on April 13, 2020 in Mount Clemens after a long, heartbreaking ordeal for her parents. Marlen, her mom, and Cesar, her dad were deported back to Mexico two years ago. At the beginning of this year they came to the border asking for asylum.

Marlen was granted asylum but, sadly, Cesar was sent back to Mexico. After a fifty hour bus ride Marlen finally arrived in Detroit where her brother met her on March 6th. Marlen and Baby Amy have been joyfully embraced by our Hispanic community!

*-- Sr. Val Knoche, IHM*

## **THANK YOU / GRACIAS**

Just a little note to say a BIG THANK YOU for the donations that have been sent to Strangers No Longer recently to help with Immigrant families. Because of your compassionate giving, I was able to help several families in our Hispanic community at St. Clement of Rome Parish with food.

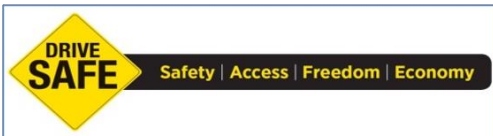
Needs are countless as the majority are not working at this time. The families and myself give thanks to God for you and your generous Spirit and pray that God bless you generously as you bless us. Of course, we pray that your financial giving is able to continue (or may begin) as many will not be able to pay their rent and other bills at this difficult time.

Blessings in abundance to each of you and your families during this Easter - time. PEACE

Love and Gratitude, Sr. Valerie Knoche, IHM

## **ADVOCACY**

One of the goals of our parish Circles is to advocate for more humane policies and practices. A team of ADVOCACY SHEPHERDS work to make sure that the advocacy efforts of our Circles are precise, effective and doable.



### **The Drivers License Campaign is on hold (for now)**

With everything and everyone sequestered we are putting this important initiative on hold.

Once things get back to normal, please contact your representatives!! We will keep you posted when times get better.

## **REQUEST: CIRCLE MEMBERS PLEASE CALL YOUR CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS...!**

RELEASE DETAINEES: An open letter signed by over 3,000 medical professionals has been addressed to ICE to express their grave concern about a COVID-19 outbreak in its facilities, an eventuality that will create a health crisis for the detainees, staff and surrounding communities. COVID-19 poses danger to the immigrant detainees in ICE detention centers. Many SNL Circle members asked their Congressional Reps to press ICE officials in Michigan to release ICE detainees from County Detention Centers in Monroe, St. Clair, Chippewa and Calhoun Counties. These detainees are civil detainees, not criminal, and pose no threat to their communities.

### **It's Not Too Late To Call :**

- Brenda Lawrence: (202) 225-5802, (248) 356-2052
- Andy Levin: (202) 225-4961, (586) 498-7122
- Rashida Tlaib: (202) 225-5126, (313) 463-6220
- Haley Stevens: (202) 225-8171, (734) 853-3040
- Elissa Slotkin: (202) 225-4872, (517) 993-0510
- Paul Mitchell: (202) 225-2106, (586) 997-5010
- US Senator Gary Peters: (313) 226-6020.

Additionally, Victor Liu, St. Mary's Student Parish in Ann Arbor, encourages us to begin a letter writing campaign as well. The writing campaign effort is sponsored by Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice. Participants include individuals as well as organizations and their members statewide. The group has provided detailed directions and sample letters. This demand to release detainees can also be included in other social media channels you may be connected on such as Twitter.

Directions for letter writing:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/18sSZp0ybTcUgISBR5UOpHnwO\\_PUE2jazg9rrXikn\\_9k/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/18sSZp0ybTcUgISBR5UOpHnwO_PUE2jazg9rrXikn_9k/edit)

Sample Letter:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/148z8tGagidPZZD2e62BE\\_x93FEfDhXWpejNBaAY-2t4/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/148z8tGagidPZZD2e62BE_x93FEfDhXWpejNBaAY-2t4/edit)

# EDUCATION

## WE NEED THIS IN MICHIGAN!!

California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Wednesday announced a new program aimed at providing aid to a group that he said makes up 10 percent of the state's workforce: Undocumented immigrants. Newsom said that the disaster assistance program would be jointly funded by the state, to the tune of \$75 million, and philanthropic partners, who will donate \$50 million.

The program will provide individual assistance of \$500 and household assistance up to \$1,000.

Newsom pointed out that undocumented immigrants not only are over-represented in essential work sectors including health care, agriculture and food, manufacturing and construction, they also pay into the system — last year paying more than \$2.5 billion in taxes — without receiving benefits, whether it's unemployment or the stimulus checks sent out by the federal government.

"Regardless of your status, documented or undocumented, there are people in need. And this is a state that steps up always to support those in need, regardless of status," Newsom said. Newsom said that he is also allowing undocumented immigrants, through the state's Medi-Cal system, to get tested at community clinics, allowing those clinics to get reimbursed not just for the test, but also treatment related to COVID-19.



"Remember, in the United States of America we have universal health care. It's in the emergency rooms. And you as a taxpayer pay exponentially more on the back end than providing the kind of preventative care on the front end that costs you less as a taxpayer and helps keep more of us healthier and safer," Newsom said.

"This is a good health strategy, and it's the right moral, and ethical, and I would argue economic, thing to do," Newsom said.

## MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP CIRCLE – SUPPORT FOR CASA SAMARITANO

Last fall, Circle members of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Oak Park/Ferndale decided to make monthly donations to support "Casa Samaritano" in Bojay, Hidalgo Mexico, a shelter run by 5 Sacred Heart nuns.

**If you would like to contribute to Casa Samaritano, please make checks out to Alianza Americas because they are set up to get money to the shelter. On the note line please write Casa Samaritano. Mail checks to:**

Rosemary Insley  
2851 Buckingham Ave  
Berkley, MI 48072

What follows is a summary of a call with Sr. Luisa of Casa Samaritano, by Carmen and Mike Kelly from Our Mother of Perpetual Help Circle:

We were given a WhatsApp live video tour of the infirmary and the first aid station. As they arrive, most of people need to be treated for cuts or feet injuries. If they need more serious treatment such as operations or amputations the sisters call the ambulance to take them to the hospital. They usually come back afterward to recover and get ready to continue the journey.





It seems that every space in the house is used. In the halls Casa Samaritano has shelves to store blankets, sheets and bed covers. In the space next to the showers there are racks to dry out towels that are washed immediately after the guests take their showers or wash up.

She also took us virtually to the front of the house with a very visible sign “Casa Samaritano”. There in the street, right in front of the house, are the tracks for the Bestia, the freight train that many asylum seekers risk boarding in the run to get closer to the Northern border. Suddenly, the Bestia went rolling noisily past, very close to the front door. We were impressed by the length of the train with many old cars covered in graffiti. Sister Luisa said that it used to stop or at least slow down to pick up passengers in front of the house but now it only slows down a little if at all. We noticed several men who seemed to be waiting to try to get on if possible. Although it was just out of the scope of the image Sister was sending, she said she saw one of them fall from the train. We heard voices from a distance saying that he’d been injured, we hope it was not too gravely.

Without the train, the journey to the border has become much harder since people have to walk all the way or risk trusting offers of help which may result in their being trafficked, robbed or at least cheated. In some cases all of these awful fates. Of

course all of those on this hard journey are impoverished and otherwise vulnerable. They usually walk at night to avoid robbers and thieves.

We saw that getting on the train is now even more difficult and dangerous than ever but Sister said that even if one manages to survive getting on there are policemen on the train who may throw them off sometimes very violently.

In response to a question Sister said they were aware of the impending Covid-19 crisis and in fact are concerned that they may be forced to curtail their work so helpful for people so vulnerable and desperate.



This is a time, friends, when we are reminded that our suffering occurs in solidarity with one another and with all of creation. The words of Etty Hillesum, the Dutch writer and spiritual seeker who

died in Auschwitz, may speak to our current condition:

***“I am not alone in my tiredness or sickness or fears, but at one with millions of others from many centuries, and it is all part of life.”***

The shelter’s Facebook link:

<https://www.facebook.com/casadelmigranteelsamaritano.sccc/>

## **IS YOUR CIRCLE THINKING ABOUT SPONSORING A FAMILY?**

Gesu Sanctuary Committee met with a representative of Xavier University's Bellarmine Chapel to learn more about how Xavier went about making a commitment to sponsor a family from El Salvador.



The following specific recommendations for Strangers No Longer parishes considering sponsoring an individual or family were given to us:

1. Sit down with the Pastor and be sure you have his buy in.
2. Dive into the financials — take a very serious look at just what kinds of financial resources will be needed.
3. Identify your team leadership and know what kinds of commitments they are willing to make.
4. Language was a real issue, especially after the Pastor, who spoke fluent Spanish moved to a new assignment. It's important to be able to draw on parish staff and parishioners that speak the language of the individual or family you are sponsoring.
5. Be sure to take into account how much time will be required to coordinate everything for the individual or family. He estimates 10-20 hours a week for their family.

For more detailed information, please contact Kathleen Rogers, Gesu Parish Sanctuary Committee, at 248.909.9144 or kmrogers210@gmail.com.

## **DACA UPDATE**

DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) is a federal program in the spotlight right now. Sr. Karen Donahue, St. Aloysius and SNL Advocacy Shepherd, has provided an update for us:



A ruling from the Supreme Court on the future of DACA could come by the end of April.

In 2017 the president announced that he was terminating DACA, a program which protects young migrants brought to the United States as children from deportation, allows them to pursue educational and career goals and obtain drivers licenses and work permits. Lower courts have protected DACA by blocking implementation of the president's order, but in June, 2019 the Supreme Court announced that it would take up the DACA case during the Supreme Court session that begins in October 2019 and issue a ruling by June 2020. However, with the coronavirus pandemic raging, the high court has cut back on its schedule and plans to issue opinions by the end of April.

There are three possible outcomes. the court could:

- Rule in favor of DACA
- Issue no ruling
- Uphold the president's termination order

The fate of almost 700,000 DACA recipients hangs in the balance. A ruling to uphold the president's directive would mean that these young people would lose their educational benefits, work permits

and driver's licenses and would be in danger of deportation by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).



Immigrant advocacy groups across the country are devising contingency plans to be

implemented when a ruling is announced. If the Supreme Court abolishes DACA immigrant advocates stand ready to protect Dreamers.

Victor Liu, St. Mary's Student Parish in Ann Arbor and SNL Advocacy Shepherd, has done some research on the DACA program in Michigan:

According to Migration Policy Institute's data (2019), Michigan has 16,000 DACA-eligible individuals, 5270 of whom are active out of a total of 800,000 active DACA individuals nationwide.

According to USCIS's data (2019), the Detroit/Warren/Dearborn core statistical area has 2290 DACA persons, and the Grand Rapids/Wyoming area has 1410, leaving by deduction about 1570 in the rest of the state. (USCIS - U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a component of the United States Department of Homeland Security.)

Victor had a conversation with Catherine Gillette, Grassroots Mobilization Coordinator of NETWORK. Ms. Gillette indicated that that in the event of DACA termination by the Supreme Court in late April, NETWORK will put in place rapid-response actions. They are also working with other organizations on a legislative fix.

*(NETWORK was founded by Catholic sisters and has become a Catholic leader in the global movement for*

*justice and peace. The group educates, organizes and lobbies for economic and social transformation.)*

### **ZOOMING Together in these Unbelievable Times**

Our world has changed so much in the last weeks... We have gone from frequent human contact to complete isolation.

Yet a new tool is emerging to help us all stay connected. The ZOOM platform used via your computer, IPAD, or phone allows you to have virtual interactive contact with friends, family and Strangers No Longer Circle members.

Although it may seem awkward at first, it is amazing how quickly you can get used to a screen full of people! St. Regis, Our Mother of Perpetual Help and Nativity/St. Charles Borromeo have used it for hour-long check in meetings with members with great success!

The platform is free – if you need help setting it up for your Circle, contact us at

[strangersnolonger11@gmail.com](mailto:strangersnolonger11@gmail.com).

### **PRAYER SERVICE HELD ON APRIL 11TH AND A REFLECTION ON RESURRECTION**

SNL offered a virtual prayer service that was led by Rosemary Insley, lead of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Circle and Chairperson of Strangers No Longer. The Holy Saturday reflection was attended by 50+ people and broadcast through the technical services of Amy Shannon of Alianza Americas and Jim Russo of the St. Francis Ann Arbor circle. A big thanks to both of them!

Rosemary Insley reflection moves us into Resurrection:

We are now in Easter Week and you may not feel the spirit of Resurrection. We continue to monitor or deal with illness, death, and anxiety over finances and the future for ourselves and our



families, friends, and those on the front lines. For many we accompany, crises are pushing them over the edge. We are hearing of the critical needs in SE Michigan and those traveling north through Mexico.

At the same time, the daffodils and crocuses have popped out and the blooms on trees open to the spring wind. New life pokes forth in the midst of our struggles. Our families/friends/churches and entertainers have brought us together virtually to connect/pray/uplift during this Easter Week. There is something very deep in us that reaches for what is good, what is life-giving.



The question is, how do we hold these seemingly two realities in the creative tensions present in our hearts?

How did Jesus' Resurrection equip his close friends who were afraid that they could be called out and punished or killed; who were confused and disappointed that Jesus didn't rescue them by overcoming the Romans or their temple leaders?

What they initially saw was what wasn't there – Jesus' body and presence as they knew them. How they came into the Resurrection is presented in John's Gospel in a nutshell version of Resurrection and Pentecost.

John places us in the scene that first evening. Jesus' friends are huddled together for comfort and out of fear. The first thing Jesus offered them is his peace. I sense he knew peace is what they needed the most. When we are frightened, it's hard to take in anything else.

Second, he offered the reassurance that it was him by showing them not his glory, but his wounds. He was still with them. It must have been both confounding and deeply reassuring. They knew he really died and they were beginning to take in that he was really alive, even though so different.

Finally, he kept his promise to give them an Advocate, his Spirit which readied them, emboldened them, led them to the sending out to join Jesus in his mission of freeing and healing, 'As the father sent me, so also I send you'. After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (Jn. 20-22). They were offered peace, reassurance in presence, the power of the Spirit, missioning with Jesus. From the stories we hear in the Acts of the Apostles, they accepted the offers.

### **FIRST MEETING OF THE NEW SNL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

On Saturday, April 4th, the new SNL Board of Directors met virtually via ZOOM. The new board consists of 20 members representing their circles and 11 at-large members continuing from the original SNL strategy team. This makes a total of 31 members. The meeting was well-attended with 24 members present.

The bulk of the meeting was a general get-to-know each other session with each member introducing themselves to the group. Eleven of the new directors gave Circle updates. Rosemary Insley was introduced as the SNL chairperson, Sharon Bender as the treasurer, and Kathy Faba as the secretary. The members agreed to support an initiative to contact our US Representatives to release ICE detainees at risk because of COVID-19. The next virtual meeting will be May 9th at 10am.





## CIRCLE UPDATE



- 25 active Circles
- 7 parishes are in the process of creating their Circles.

If your parish would like to start a Circle of Support, email :

[strangersnolonger11@gmail.com](mailto:strangersnolonger11@gmail.com)

We have a Start-Up guide to get you started!

## CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION



Listen to this podcast from Latino USA entitled **“Immigrants in ICE Detention Face the Threat of COVID-19.”** You can download the podcast or listen to it on your computer. Latino USA is

produced by The Futuro Media Group, an independent nonprofit organization producing multimedia journalism that explores and gives a critical voice to the diversity of the American experience.

<https://www.latinousa.org/2020/04/07/immigrants-ice-covid19/>



### **Open Borders: The Science and Ethics of Immigration**

Bryan Caplan and Zach Weinersmith. First Second, (256p) ISBN 978-1-250-31696-7

“The combination of Caplan’s deep research and Weinersmith’s snappy storytelling adds up to a persuasive treatise that sees open policy around immigration as historically positive and a future potential rising tide of consumers and producers together lifting boats and bottom lines.” (Review from Publishers Weekly, August, 2019)