



NEW HAMPSHIRE CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Immigrant and Refugee Support Group
140 Sheep Davis Road, Pembroke, NH 03275

April 9, 2018

Dear Friend:

As we experience the turbulence of each day's news, we are reminded of the moral imperative we all share to bridge divides, heal wounds and make our communities a sanctuary of welcome and safety. We are disheartened that our own tax dollars are being used to fund a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency now operating under a lamentable directive to step up their efforts to imprison and ultimately deport hardworking immigrants and desperate refugees in our midst. Out of this ICE-engendered despair, **we in the NH Conference, United Church of Christ Immigrant and Refugee Support Group (IRSG) strive to be a beacon of hope as we help ICE detainees in New Hampshire cope with and ultimately obtain release from ICE detention and rebuild their lives post-detention. With this compelling mission in mind, we appeal to you for your financial support of our work.**

The IRSG and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) are the founders and co-coordinators of the NH Immigrant Visitation Program at the Strafford County jail in Dover, NH. The jail serves as a regional ICE detention center. Each Monday, our trained volunteers visit immigrants in ICE detention to provide emotional and spiritual support as well as "know your rights" information and access to free legal consultations with a volunteer immigration attorney. Through this work during the past four years, the IRSG has come to recognize that ICE detainees at the Strafford County jail have urgent financial needs, including funds for telephone and commissary accounts, photocopies of self-help legal guides, translation services and, very significantly, bond funds for those with no family or friends who can assist them.

Over the past year, we have been able to secure the release of several people from ICE detention because generous donors have stepped forward to provide the needed bond funds. Once detainees have been bonded out of ICE incarceration, we have also seen that they need financial support in the months immediately following their release until they are authorized to seek employment. Thankfully, lodging and food for these individuals have been provided by volunteer host families who open their homes for a very special form of immigrant welcome and hospitality and who receive no reimbursement for the support they provide. Expenses that post-detainees face include personal hygiene items, access to a cell phone, transportation costs, cold weather gear, and other items (and, in one case, support for the needs of a detainee's young children).

As we formalize our ICE detainee and post detention support initiative, we have set some preliminary fundraising goals based on our estimates of the need for the next year:

- Detention Support: \$10,000 to build a revolving bond fund and to provide small cash supports to detainees.
- Post-Detention Support: \$15,000 to provide very modest monthly stipends for personal expenses for those who are recently released from detention (until they are authorized to work in the U.S.). Such funds are urgently needed for the post-detainees we are now trying to support.

We are deeply moved by the extraordinary generosity of the host families and community members who have donated everything from clothing to car seats to computers and professional services (including legal aid and health care), and more. But there are additional post-detention supports for which we are seeking much-needed cash donations. To date, we have raised and expended over \$15,000 from friends, family members and active volunteers to support ICE detainees, to secure detainee release through bond support, and to provide some basic post-detention assistance. Now we need your help to grow a bigger community of donors and to replenish our depleted support funds.

Your tax-deductible donation of any size to the UCC Immigrant and Refugee Support Group's ICE Detainee and Post Detention Support Program will make a real difference in the lives of our immigrant brothers and sisters. We also appeal for your help in spreading the word far and wide about this need. Please consider passing on this communication to all those in your personal networks who may share our concern about our nation's treatment of immigrants and refugees. The people with whom we work simply strive to escape imminent threats to their very survival in the country they have left, and they very much want to become good contributing community members here in New Hampshire.

Your contribution may be made payable to NHCUCC (New Hampshire Conference/United Church of Christ), with Detainee Support and/or Post-Detention Support written in the memo line of your check, and mailed to the NHCUCC, 140 Sheep Davis Road, Pembroke, NH 03275.

Your support truly matters and will be greatly appreciated.

With gratitude,

Nancy

Nancy Pape, Chair, NHCUCC Immigrant and Refugee Support Group

Gray

Gray Fitzgerald, Chair, NHCUCC Justice and Witness Ministry

P.S. You can also contribute online through the NH Conference, UCC website (nhcucc.org). Use the following link to get directly to the NHCUCC online donation form. Then indicate your contribution as "Other" and designate IRSG Detainee or Post-Detention Support:

<https://bit.ly/2GibJnx>