



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, December 22, 2024

### *Stronger Together on Our Collective Journey*

Advent is a time of anticipation and preparation, a season of journey. And this season will soon culminate in the birth of Jesus, celebrating the reality that God chose to become human and share in our journey.

Each of us is on a journey. Different as our paths may be, we all can relate to the act of journeying. The **Sisters of Saint Joseph Welcome Center** is a place that certainly embodies an “Advent spirit” by welcoming every dear neighbor without distinction as we seek to be present to the journey of our immigrant friends, as we seek to be present to the everchanging, unfolding rhythms of life.

**Our mission at the Welcome Center is to support immigrants through English and citizenship classes, naturalization services, and outreach efforts that promote self-sufficiency.** Some quick facts about the Center:

- ♥ We are fully accredited by the Department of Justice to accompany our students with citizenship services and the naturalization process.
- ♥ Since our founding in 2003, the Welcome Center community has accompanied 358 students in becoming citizens of the United States!
- ♥ We have 48 classes taught by 53 volunteer teachers; classes occur online and in-person during the morning, afternoon, and evening.
- ♥ We have more than 160 adult learners representing 16 countries and 5 languages.
- ♥ Our students range from ages 18-70+ years old and live in 22 various zip codes in PA and NJ.

As you can see, our community is a diverse fabric of relationships and stories. **At the Center, we are privileged to be a part of the evolution from stranger to friend.** And we are better for it because we are continuously invited to stretch our idea of God’s expansive love.

**Advent reminds us that we are always called to prepare, especially to prepare to perceive God in unexpected ways and unexpected people** – in a migrant family seeking shelter and welcome but turned away as strangers. Because that is the story of the Holy Family. Our God is a God of immigrants.

As we look to 2025 and a new presidential administration, we will need to continue that Advent spirit of preparation, readying our eyes to find God in unexpected people and places. And to do so with hope.

**In the changes that await us in 2025, let us remember that we are not alone and that we are far stronger together.** We are all pilgrims on this collective journey – and while the individual journeys of our lives may indeed be different than those of our immigrant friends, acknowledging that we all indeed walk a path establishes a common ground and shared perspective.

Please know that we love widening our community at the Welcome Center and inviting new partners in mission to encounter the many ways that God’s inclusive embrace takes root. We would love to have you share in our ministry and be a part of our story! [Check out our website and get in touch.](#)

Peace,  
Olivia Sharkey, Executive Director, Sisters of Saint Joseph Welcome Center