United Church of Christ
Southwest Conference
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Come and See

A Directory of Immersion Programs and Volunteer Opportunities along the U.S.-Mexico Border

Queridos Hermanos y Hermanas en Cristo:

Many of you have asked Justice and Witness Ministries and the Southwest Conference how you can get involved with border ministries. You want to learn about the reality on the US-Mexico border and how to help migrants as they enter the United States, but you're not sure where to begin. We are happy to share this resource directory with your congregations as a starting place. Women, men, and children continue to cross the southern border at great personal risk. There are ways you and your congregation can get involved, become informed and active, and raise the voices of immigrants. We hope this information is helpful as you prayerfully think about how your congregation can become more involved in the cause of welcoming immigrants.

This directory does two things:

1. It provides information about a variety of educational and religious organizations that offer one-day to seven-day border immersion trips.
2. It identifies volunteer opportunities, listing short-term opportunities, along with ways for "snow birds" and other longer-term visitors to get involved.

It is organized by region, beginning with listings for Tucson, El Paso and Southern New Mexico, followed by two short listings for Southern California. The majority of border crossings now occur in Western Texas and the Tucson district in Arizona, since the Southern California border with Mexico has been so fortified that few people cross there without documents. Full listings for border-immersion programs include details that will help you find a good fit for you, and all listings include contact information, so you can do further research.

Dr. Patricia Rumer prepared the directory in 2015 in collaboration with the Rev. Tyler Connoley, Immigrant Care Coordinator for the Southwest Conference. The project was funded by a Partners-in-Service Grant from the Volunteer Ministries of the United Church of Christ (UCC), along with funding from the Justice and Witness Ministries of the UCC under the direction of the Rev. Linda Jaramillo, and the Immigrant Welcoming Fund of the Southwest Conference.

As Jesus said to his disciples, “Come and See.” We hope you will accept that invitation and join us in seeing and hearing what God is doing along our southern border.

Dios te bendiga en tu viaje.

Organizations in Southern Arizona and Sonora

Border Community Alliance

Location: Tubac, Arizona

Contact: Pat Trulock

Email/Telephone: ptrulock@gmail.com, 520-398-3229

Website: www.bordercommunityalliance.com

Focus: Specifically-designed one-day immersion tours that highlight community and economic development projects in Arizona and Sonora. They want participants to see Nogales as an exciting, emerging, urban area. Customized tours available upon request with housing in Nogales, Sonora.

Size of Group: Twelve people is ideal.

Cost: $80 per person

Length of Trip: One day (usually third Thursday of each month, except July or August)

Age: Open – will take youth under age eighteen if accompanied by a parent.

LGBT-Friendly: Yes.

Accessibility: Limited due to stairs in Mexico. *Note:* This tour visits a wheelchair factory, which makes wheelchairs suitable for use in Mexico.

Background: BCA works in partnership with its Mexican partner, Fundación Del Empresariado Sonorense A.C. (FESAC), a Sonoran Economic Development Foundation that supports social entrepreneurship projects.

Other Information: The mission of the BCA is to support the educational, political, social, cultural, and economic development needs of the Arizona/Sonora border region to improve the quality of life for border communities.

Volunteer Opportunities: Six-week Summer Internship program for university students. Stipend and housing provided.

BorderLinks

Location: Tucson, Arizona

Contact: Fernanda Morillon

Email/Telephone: education@borderlinks.org, 520-628-8263

Website: www.borderlinks.org

Focus: BorderLinks facilitates educational immersion trips to the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. These educational trips offer a chance to explore and experience life in the borderlands of Southern Arizona and Northern Sonora. Beyond-the-Border Immersion Trips include Chiapas, Mata Ortiz, the Copper Canyon, and other U.S. border communities.

Size of Group: They welcome groups of all sizes, and have arranged delegations for groups of up to twenty-five people.

Cost: *Border Trips* cost $750 for five days. Includes lodging, meals, and all transportation during delegation.

Mata Ortiz Pottery through Agua Prieta and Colonia Juarez costs $725. Includes lodging, meals, transportation, and all travel during the trip. Minimum: ten persons.

Chiapas Travel Seminar costs $1,600 plus airfare to Mexico City. Includes room and board, travel in Chiapas, and program-related activities. Five to seven days.

Copper Canyon Delegation costs $1,300. Includes lodging and two meals a day, train ride, and program-related activities. Twenty-plus persons. Five to seven days.

Length of Trip: One to seven days

Age: All ages are welcome. Youth under eighteen require a letter of permission from parent or guardian.

LGBT-Friendly: Yes.

Accessibility: Limited accessibility in Mexican communities. They are willing to work with delegation organizers to develop alternatives.

Background: Developed in 2000 to provide religious groups and college students the opportunity to experience the border reality. BorderLinks offers year-long internships to college or seminary students who provide theological reflection to interested delegations. Also, has a Summer Engagement Program for college students.

BorderLinks (Continued)

Other Information: Educational Model: "Our educational programs are organized around the idea of See, Judge, Act based on Paolo Freire educational methodology. We seek to create dialogue as a way of solving problems, regardless of educational level, economic status, race, gender, or class. We value the human experience as a teaching tool."

Friends of HEPAC

Location: Nogales, Arizona

Contact: Scott Nicholson, Long-term volunteer missionary with Global Ministries

Email/Telephone: scott.friendsofhepac@gmail.com, 520-907-0491

Website: hepacnogales.weebly.com

Focus: Educational delegations focused on the reality of life in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico; the difficulties of the migrant journey into the U.S.; and the work of grassroots organizations to provide humanitarian aid and work for social justice. They work closely together with their sister organization, the Home of Hope and Peace (HEPAC) – a community center located in an impoverished neighborhood just three miles south of the border wall that separates Nogales, Sonora from Nogales, Arizona.

Size of Group: They welcome groups of all sizes, and have arranged delegations for groups of three to twenty-five people. The ideal group size is between five and ten people – which makes it easier to listen well to the *testimonios* (lived experiences) of people that have been affected by U.S. economic and immigration policies, and to facilitate sharing within the group.

Cost: A contribution of $70 per person per day, which includes lodging, three meals, and program activities. The group is responsible for arranging its own transportation. Friends of HEPAC can provide suggestions about vehicle rentals.

Length of Trip: One to seven days

Age: All ages are welcome.

LGBT-Friendly: Yes.

Accessibility: Unfortunately, the facilities that Friends of HEPAC visit in Nogales, Sonora are not accessible for people with certain physical disabilities. ***(Continued.)***

Friends of HEPAC (Continued)

Background: Their sister organization, the House of Hope and Peace (HEPAC) community center in Nogales, Sonora provides lunch for schoolchildren; enables adults to complete their elementary, middle, and high school education; offers Culture of Peace workshops to provide people with tools for healing from trauma and violence, and for transforming conflict; organizes Kids Camps during school vacation that focus on the Culture of Peace and teach the children about their rights and ways to defend their rights; and operates a women's artisan cooperative. The vision of HEPAC is to create a healthy and sustainable community in Nogales, Sonora so that people don't feel forced to risk arrest and death in the desert of southern Arizona in a desperate attempt to migrate to the U.S. in order to provide for their families.

Special Project: A Mission group from Casas Adobes UCC in Tucson, AZ works with the women's artisan cooperative. They work in partnership with the HEPAC women's group and recently have committed to raise funds to reopen the day care center and to support a community garden project. If interested in their project, email them at needlework4nogaleschildren@gmail.com.

The Good Shepherd United Church of Christ

Location: Sahuarita, Arizona

Contact: Rev. Dr. Randy Mayer

Email/Telephone: bienshphrd@aol.com, 520-625-1375 (office), 520-401-5048 (cell)

Website: www.TheGoodShepherdUCC.org

Focus: This congregation is very involved in various immigration and border projects, Green Valley Samaritans, free Legal Clinic, and customized border immersion experiences for UCC congregations, as well as university, seminary, and other groups. The border trips include desert walks, water runs, Operation Streamline in Tucson, as well as visiting shelters in Nogales, El Comedor (a migrant aid station), and HEPAC. Randy Mayer and other Samaritans work with interested delegations to plan a trip that meets each group's interests.

Size of Group: They welcome groups of all sizes, and have arranged delegations for groups of up to twenty-five people and have had individuals, journalists, and pastors/teachers on sabbaticals come for customized times and experiences.

The Good Shepherd United Church of Christ (Continued)

Cost: Contributions of $10 per day per person are requested to cover expenses for housing groups. Lodging is sleeping in various classrooms – the church has a number of sleeping pads, and mattresses. The church has showers and bathrooms and a kitchen for food preparation. The church has four vehicles for its border ministries, but groups must organize their own transportation for trips on the Arizona side of the border.

Length of Trip: Weekends to five days

Age: All ages are welcome. Youth under 18 years of age require a letter of permission from parent or guardian in order to cross the Mexican border.

LGBT-Friendly: Yes.

Accessibility: Church building is accessible. There is limited accessibility in Mexican communities. They are willing to work with delegation organizers to develop alternatives.

Background: The UCC congregation with its pastor the Rev. Randy Mayer helped found Humane Borders, the first humanitarian aid organization that established water stations in the desert for migrants. They have been at the heart of the U. S. Border and Immigration issues since 2000 and work with all of the border humanitarian groups as well as having a presence in advocacy work in Washington DC. They sponsor an annual Border Issues Fair in mid-January and a Common Ground on the Border event in mid-March.

Other Information: See also www.gvsamaritans.org.

Other Organizations

Casa Mariposa is a shared communal house dedicated to peaceful, non-violent resistance. Several volunteers live in the house and provide long-term shelter for people released from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention. In addition, they sponsor The Visitation Project whereby visitors drive up weekly to Eloy or Florence to meet with four to five detained immigrants. They also write letters to detainees identified by the Florence Project who have no family in the vicinity.* Volunteers needed. restorationproject340.wordpress.com. ***(Continued.)***

** Indicates projects that could be replicated or implemented in non-border communities.*

Other Organizations (Continued)

Catholic Community Services in Tucson has the ALITAS PROJECT that operates a transition shelter for women and children released on humanitarian parole from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Volunteers are needed to assist in the house: cooking, cleaning, laundry, driving women to bus station, and providing conversation and friendship. www.ccs-soaz.org/donate/aid-to-migrant-women-and-children.

Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project provides and coordinates free legal services and related social services to indigent men, women, and unaccompanied children detained in Arizona for immigration removal proceedings. It is a member of Detention Watch Network, a coalition of more than one hundred nonprofit organizations that work with immigration detainees. Volunteers needed. www.firrp.org.

HEPAC (Hogar De Esperanza y Paz/Home of Hope and Peace) is a community center three miles south of the border wall in Nogales, Sonora. They provide educational classes – GED equivalent, Culture of Peace Workshops, educational Kids Camps – and operate a women's artisan collective. Also organizes educational delegations that enable people to witness the reality of life in Sonora. Program fee covers dormitory stays and meals. HEPAC was started by Borderlinks. *Note:* A U.S. global missioner with UCC/Disciples works with them and provides translation for visiting groups. www.hepacnogales.weebly.com.

Keep Tucson Together is a legal clinic sponsored by No More Deaths.* The clinic provides free advice to aid people to prepare a documentation package to be presented to prosecutors in order to have their case closed and to remain in this country. The clinic occurs on the first and third Saturday of each month at Southside Presbyterian Church, and every Thursday evening at a local high school. Margo Cowan, attorney, is the legal supervisor. forms.nomoredeaths.org/volunteers-help-stop-deportations-and-keep-tucson-together/.

Kino Border Initiative is a bi-national project operated by the Jesuits and the Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist, a Roman Catholic order of nuns in Nogales, AZ and Sonora. They operate an aid shelter on the Sonora, Mexican side of the border that provides two meals daily to deported migrants, distributes clothing, administers medical services, and refers people to Mexican government services. They also operate Nazareth House,

Other Organizations (Continued)

a shelter for migrant women and children. In addition, in collaboration with BorderLinks and the Samaritans, they offer immersion experiences and conduct research and advocacy. www.kinoborderinitiative.org

No More Deaths/No Mas Muertes is a humanitarian aid organization based in southern Arizona. Its mission is to end death and suffering on the US/Mexico border. They provide water, food and medical aid to individuals crossing the Sonoran desert. They host an Alternative Spring Break in March and a volunteer program in the summer months. In addition, they have established a field office in Arivaca, Arizona that assists migrants, as well as a medical aid camp in the same vicinity. In Mexico they work with KBI aid shelter, and assist with phone calls and property recovery for deportees. www.nomoredeaths.org.

Operation Streamline *is not an aid organization,* but a government program that activists are trying to stop through the presence of volunteer witnesses. No More Deaths and Samaritans observe Operation Streamline proceedings and have participated in acts of non-violent civil disobedience to prevent the detainees from being moved from the federal courthouse as well as working with the ACLU to document abuses in the system. The program is an initiative of Homeland Security whereby unauthorized entrants are charged with criminal violations of federal law, facing prosecution for "Illegal Entry" as well as "Illegal Re-entry" if they have previously been deported. Magistrate judges conduct en masse hearings during which up to eighty defendants may be tried simultaneously. These hearings are held daily. www.EndStreamline.org

Southside Presbyterian Church was the first Sanctuary congregation in 1982.* In August of 2014, it began offering Sanctuary to Rosa Robles Loreto, and continues to be a place where people can connect to volunteer in the struggle for immigrant justice. www.southsidepresbyterian.org/sanctuary.html

Tucson Samaritans is a voice of compassion and a healing presence in the Arizona desert. Since 2003, they have provided medical care, food, and water to migrants in distress in the Tucson sector of the borderlands. Trained Samaritan volunteers travel along migrant trails to bear witness and offer aid to those in need. This is a volunteer opportunity in Tucson and southern Arizona. www.tucsonsamaritans.org.

** Indicates projects that could be replicated or implemented in non-border communities.*

Organizations in Southern New Mexico, El Paso, and Chihuahua

Annunciation House

Location: El Paso, Texas

Contact: Ruben Garcia, founder

Email: Trip/Volunteer Coordinator, Bae@annunciationhouse.org

Website: www.annunciationhouse.org

Focus: University and religious delegations with an educational focus.

Size of Group: Up to fifteen persons.

Cost: $90 a day per person: includes van, food, housing, and program fee for setting up the itinerary. Housing is at Casa Vides – Dorm Style.

Length of Trip: Five to seven days (or a weekend). Longer volunteer opportunities are also available (see below).

Age: College students and older. No high school age groups.

LGBT-Friendly: Yes.

Accessibility: Only the ground floor is accessible with a few steps. Casa Vides is not accessible.

Background: Annunciation House was founded in 1978 to provide basic shelter, food, and clothing for migrants. As many as sixty to ninety people a day enter the House. They have been released from ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) on humanitarian parole. As asylum seekers they can use the Annunciation House address for work permission.

House Information: It is an older building with dormitories for migrant guests on the second and third floor. Delegations share meals several times a week during their stay.

Volunteer Opportunity: Four to six volunteers work for a year without stipend but receive housing and food, and live at the shelter. After one year of service, volunteers receive a stipend of $400 a month. There is a volunteer program for the summer (ten weeks), and a volunteer house one block away.

Border Servant Corps

Location: Las Cruces, New Mexico

Contact: Kari Lenander, Executive Director

Email/Telephone: info@borderservantcorps.org; (575)522-7119, ext. 16

Website: www.borderservantcorps.org

Focus: Border Servant Corps hosts groups interested in first-hand cultural immersions focused on education about border issues. This program is designed for undergraduate missions, alternative spring break programs, seminarians, and church and young-adult groups. Border Servant Corps receives groups after other programs that offer border immersions are full.

Size of Group: Ten to fourteen persons.

Cost: $350 per person for a seven-day immersion, which includes housing, some meals, and a program fee for setting up the itinerary. Transportation is provided by the immersion group (rented, if arriving by air).

Length of Trip: Long-term (six to seven days) immersion groups typically arrive Saturday afternoon or evening and depart Friday morning. Short-term (three to four days) immersions typically include one to two working days, plus the weekend. Longer volunteer opportunities are also available (see below).

Age: College-aged and older.

LGBT-Friendly: Yes.

Accessibility: Limited.

Background: Border Servant Corps was founded in 1997 as a ministry of Peace Lutheran Church in Las Cruces, New Mexico and is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). Border Servant Corps seeks to provide an opportunity for volunteers to work for justice, serve their neighbor, and walk humbly with their God.

Housing Information: Participants stay at Peace Lutheran Church (Las Cruces, NM). Air mattresses and bedding are provided. Shower facilities are available for participant's use.
(Continued.)

Border Servant Corps (Continued)

Volunteer Opportunities: Border Servant Corps hosts full-time volunteers and short-term interns that live in intentional community, learn about living simply, work for social justice, and explore spirituality. Volunteers work with issues such as poverty, immigration, domestic violence, education, and health care with opportunities to work in churches, shelters, legal centers, after-school programs, clinics, and other social service agencies within the unique context of the border region.

Columban Mission Center

Location: El Paso, Texas

Contact: Rev. Dr. Robert E. Mosher, Doctor of Missiology/Director of the Center

Email/Telephone: bmosher@columban.org, 402-689-8936 (cell)

Website: www.facebook.com/columbanmissioncenter

Focus: Educates groups about the border. Topics include: the political economy of the border, historical issues of the border, and interviews with Border Patrol. They will adjust itinerary to each group's interest. They provide a daily reflection time (either Father Bob or a group leader/reflector leads these). Columban Father's mission or praxis is, "To accompany the poor."

Size of Group: Prefer twelve but can handle up to twenty persons.

Cost: $100 per day per person: includes van, food, housing and program fee for setting up the itinerary.

Length of Trip: Five to seven days (or ten days or a weekend)

Age: College students and older. No high school age groups.

LGBT-Friendly: Yes

Accessibility: Ground floor is accessible with bathrooms but bedrooms are on second floor. No elevator.

Background: The Missionary Society of St. Columban is an international order of approximately four hundred priests with lay associates. They work in fourteen countries worldwide. The El Paso Center opened in 2007 and provides border immersion experiences for university and religious delegations.

Columban Mission Center (Continued)

House Information: It is an older house that has been remodeled using recycled and ecological building materials. It has a strong "sustainability" focus with a community garden and water conservation devices. No air conditioning but attic fans (strong) that remove the hot air during the summer.

It is a two-story house: Ground floor has kitchen, dining room area, a chapel/reflection room and a large conference room with technology equipment for PowerPoint, etc. There are two bathrooms on the ground floor. The second floor has four bedrooms and four bathrooms and shower facilities. It has eighteen twin beds and can sleep up to thirty to forty people in cots or sleeping bags on the floor.

The Center is located a few blocks from the downtown area of El Paso. It is a modest house but comfortable.

Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey

Location: El Paso, Texas

Contact: Rose Mary Sánchez-Guzmán, Senior Pastor

Email/Telephone: borderimmersion@gmail.com; 915-544-6545

Website: iglesiacristorey.wix.com/borderimmersion

Focus: Cristo Rey Border Immersion Program seeks to educate participants about border issues through shared learning, experience, work, and prayer.

Size of Group: Seven to fourteen persons.

Cost: $350 per participant fee; $200 non-refundable deposit (applies toward group total); $200 cash gratuity for cleaning & transportation costs; Food & other personal expenses

Length of Trip: Seven days (or a weekend)

Age: Minimum participant age is fifteen. Church, high school groups, universities, and seminary students participate.

LGBT-Friendly: Yes.

Accessibility: Limited. ***(Continued.)***

Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey (Continued)

Background: Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey ("Christ the King Lutheran Church") belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Located in the heart of a low-income Hispanic district in central El Paso, Texas. Cristo Rey ministers to people on both sides of the international border. The worshiping congregation provides an inclusive place for cultures to meet and share their gifts. The congregation primarily consists of first-generation Mexican immigrants and their families, and welcomes people from all backgrounds.

Cristo Rey's Immersion Program considers border issues through a Christian perspective. As Christians, our reality cannot be separated from the lives of our sisters and brothers in Christ. Every individual has gifts to share and a need to learn. The Border Immersion Program may be considered a reverse mission trip because the border and its people will teach and minister to your group. When you return home, you will have stories and reflections to share with family and friends.

Housing Information: Groups stay in two dorm-style rooms complete with bunks, shower facilities, towels, and linens. Free Wi-Fi available.

Southern California and Baja California

We have no full listings for Southern California, but include the following two organizations as a possible starting place for those who wish to visit this border region. Additionally **The Presbyterian Church USA** and the **United Methodist Church/Southern California Conference** as well as the **Ecumenical Council of Churches in Southern California** have designed specific delegations to the border area, but currently do not sponsor border immersion trips.

The Romero Center in San Ysidro provides border immersion trips upon request. Pacific School of Religion collaborates with the Romero Center on an annual seminary intersession each January. For further information, email immersions@theromerocenter.com. www.theromerocenter.com.

The University of San Diego's Center for Community Awareness and Social Action sponsors day trips to the border. It is an all-day trip, and people sixteen years of age and older are welcome. It is primarily designed for college students but is open to members of the public. $20 fee. For information, contact Michelle Padilla, mpadilla@sandiego.edu or 760-235-5365. www.sandiego.edu/mccasa/documents/border012315.pdf