

# BEYOND BARRIERS:

Faithful Action for Migrant Justice

A 4 to 6 week journey of  
compassion, courage, and action.



★ TEXAS IMPACT

# BEYOND BARRIERS:

Week 0 (OPTIONAL): Introduction and Foundation

Week 1: Immigration 101

Week 2: Texas and the U.S.-Mexico Border

Week 3: Advocacy Skills

Week 4: Toward Action

Week 5: Community Action Project I

Week 6: Community Action Project II



## Guide for Using the Curriculum: *Beyond Barriers: Faithful Action for Migrant Justice*

This curriculum is designed to guide faith-based and interfaith communities through a four-to-six-week journey of learning, reflection, and action in support of immigrant justice. Rooted in shared values of compassion, justice, and hospitality, it provides participants with foundational knowledge, practical advocacy tools, and opportunities for meaningful community engagement.

### Curriculum Structure:

- **Week 0 (Optional): *Introduction and Foundation*** — This session introduces participants to the themes of immigration and advocacy. It can be offered as an optional gathering, depending on the needs and readiness of the community. Facilitators may choose to use this session to establish group norms, build trust, and provide context for the series.
- **Weeks 1–4:** These core sessions build understanding of immigration systems, explore legal rights and policies, and develop advocacy skills grounded in faith and moral values.
- **Weeks 5 & 6: *Community Action Projects*** — These sessions focus on implementing advocacy and service projects. Facilitators have the flexibility to combine these weeks into a day-long event, weekend retreat, or immersive community outreach experience if that better suits the group's schedule and goals.

Week	Theme	Focus	Key Activities
Week 0	Introduction and Foundation	Immigration context and faith perspectives	Reflection, discussion
Week 1	Immigration 101	Drivers of migration and immigration basics	Group discussions, reflection
Week 2	Know Your Rights	Legal rights and border policies	Role-play, rights review
Week 3	Advocacy Skills	Engaging elected officials	Letter writing, advocacy planning
Week 4	Toward Action	Action planning and strategy	Group brainstorming, action plan creation
Week 5	Community Action Project I	Implementing advocacy	Project execution, community outreach
Week 6	Community Action Project II	Reflection and sustainability	Reflection, commitment to ongoing action

**Seasonal and Faith Contexts:** This curriculum is well-suited for the Christian season of Lent, inviting participants into reflection, learning, and preparation for meaningful action. Facilitators may choose to implement action projects after Easter to extend the spirit of renewal into advocacy and service. However, the curriculum can easily be adapted for any season within different faith traditions or used in interfaith and secular settings. Leaders are encouraged to tailor the timeline and reflections to align with their community's spiritual or social justice rhythms.

**Adapting the Curriculum:**

- **Flexible Scheduling:** Sessions can be adjusted to fit weekly, biweekly, or retreat-style formats. The content can also be expanded or condensed based on the group's needs.
- **Audience Consideration:** While designed for faith-based settings, the material is accessible to interfaith and secular audiences with minimal adjustments. Facilitators are encouraged to tailor discussions and reflections to resonate with their specific community.
- **The Week 5 Advocacy Project** would ideally be a large legislative advocacy event such as a legislative visit day, letter writing event, or something similar. However, acknowledging that not all communities will be comfortable with this, or that some communities may be large enough to necessitate breaking up into smaller groups, there are more suggestions available in the Week 5 section.

**Facilitator Role:**

- Foster a welcoming and respectful environment for open dialogue.
- Encourage active participation and reflective discussion.
- Guide the group from learning to action, helping participants connect their faith and values to advocacy.

**Suggested Materials:**

- Handouts and reflection prompts for each session.
- Advocacy tools, such as letter templates and contact lists for elected officials.
- Visual aids (infographics, videos, maps) to support learning.
- Materials specific to action projects (for Weeks 5 & 6).

This curriculum is not meant to be the end of the journey but a starting point for ongoing commitment to migrant justice. Facilitators are encouraged to guide participants in developing long-term advocacy plans and partnerships that extend beyond these sessions.

Thank you for leading this work! Your leadership in guiding this program fosters a more just, compassionate, and welcoming community. Together, we can move beyond barriers and stand in solidarity with our immigrant neighbors.

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*"Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."*

— 1 John 3:18

## **Week 0: Introduction and Foundation (Optional In-Person Session)**

**Theme:** Understanding the Context of Immigration and Faith

### **Objective:**

- Introduce participants to the purpose and structure of the 6-week curriculum.
- Provide a foundational understanding of immigration issues, specifically Texas Senate Bill 4 (S.B. 4), and their impact on communities.
- Explore the spiritual and ethical call across diverse faiths to welcome and support immigrants.

*Session 0 is an optional session for communities that find it helpful to have introductory sessions regarding large or long-term projects. This information could also be provided to a community or group by other means should they desire to do introductory work on their own rather than in an introductory session.*

### **Materials Needed:**

- Sacred texts or teachings from various faith traditions
- Handouts summarizing S.B. 4 and its implications
- Reflection questions (printed or projected)
- Comfortable seating for small group discussions
- Candles or symbolic items for creating a reflective space (optional)

### **Session Script:**

#### **1. Welcome and Opening Reflection (10 minutes)**

**Facilitator:** "Welcome, everyone. I am so glad you could join us today for this important conversation. Over the next several weeks, we will explore immigration through the lens of our diverse faith traditions. This week, we'll lay the foundation for understanding the complexities of immigration and how our spiritual and ethical beliefs call us to respond. Let us begin with a moment of reflection."

**Opening Reflection:** "Let us take a moment to center ourselves. May we open our hearts to compassion, our minds to understanding, and our spirits to courage as we learn and reflect. May we be guided by the values of justice, love, and hospitality that resonate across our diverse faiths."

#### **2. Setting the Stage (10 minutes)**

**Facilitator:** "Today marks the start of a journey—a journey of learning, reflecting, and acting. This curriculum is designed to help us understand immigration issues, particularly in Texas, and consider how our faith communities can respond. Over the next several weeks, we will cover key topics, culminating in taking real, meaningful action."

**Week 0 Handout - Understanding Texas Senate Bill 4 (S.B. 4)**

**Overview:**

Texas Senate Bill 4 (S.B. 4), passed in 2023, significantly expands the role of local and state law enforcement in immigration enforcement. This law allows Texas peace officers to arrest individuals suspected of entering the state unlawfully and authorizes state magistrates to issue deportation orders during initial court appearances. This measure challenges federal jurisdiction over immigration and has sparked widespread concern among advocacy groups and faith communities.

**Key Provisions of S.B. 4:**

- **State Enforcement of Immigration Laws:** All Texas peace officers can arrest individuals they suspect have entered the state unlawfully.
- **Deportation Orders by State Judges:** State magistrates are empowered to issue deportation orders at a person's first court appearance.
- **Criminalization of Migration:** Creates state-level offenses for unlawful entry, unlawful reentry, and refusal to comply with deportation orders.
- **Enhanced Penalties:** Individuals arrested in counties under a disaster declaration face harsher penalties for offenses like trespassing.

DISASTER DECLARATION - JULY 2024			
BORDER COUNTIES*	NON-BORDER COUNTIES		
Brewster	Atascosa	Jim Hogg	Refugio
Cameron	Aransas	Jim Wells	San Patricio
Culberson	Bee	Kenedy	Schleicher
Dimmit	Brooks	Kerr	Shackelford
El Paso	Caldwell	Kimble	Sutton
Hidalgo	Chambers	Kleberg	Throckmorton
Hudspeth	Crane	La Salle	Uvalde
Jeff Davis	Crockett	Lavaca	Victoria
Kinney	Coleman	Live Oak	Wharton
Maverick	Colorado	Mason	Wilbarger
Presidio	DeWitt	McCulloch	Wilson
Terrell	Duval	McMullen	Zavala
Val Verde	Edwards	Medina	
Webb	Galveston	Menard	
Zapata	Goliad	Midland	
	Gonzales	Pecos	
	Jackson	Real	
*the list above includes only counties that share a border with Mexico			

## Week 4: Toward Action — Transforming Learning into Advocacy

**Theme:** Moving from Knowledge to Action

### **Objective:**

- Reflect on insights gained over the past weeks and identify actionable steps.
- Develop a community action plan to support immigrant justice.
- Encourage participants to commit to sustained advocacy and support.

### **Materials Needed:**

- Large sheets of paper or whiteboard for brainstorming
- Markers or pens
- Handouts with action planning templates
- Reflection prompts (printed or projected)

### **Session Script:**

#### **1. Welcome and Opening Reflection (10 minutes)**

**Facilitator:** "Welcome back, everyone. We have spent the last few weeks learning about immigration, understanding policies, and exploring how our faith and values call us to respond. Today, we turn that knowledge into meaningful action. Let's begin by reflecting on why we are here and how far we've come."

**Opening Reflection:** "Take a moment to think about the stories, facts, and ideas that have stayed with you during this journey. What emotions have surfaced? What convictions have deepened? May we open our hearts and minds today to be led into purposeful action."

**Optional Reading:** *Facilitator invites participants to share a teaching or passage from their tradition that calls for action and justice or reads from the words offered here.*

- **Judaism:** "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" — *Isaiah 58:6*
- **Christianity:** "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." — *James 1:22*
- **Islam:** "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice." — *Qur'an 4:58*
- **Bahá'í Faith:** "Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements." — *Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings*
- **Zoroastrianism:** "A faithful friend is the medicine of life." — *Avesta*
- **Buddhism:** "If you light a lamp for somebody, it will also brighten your path." — *Sutta Nipata*

*It is best to focus on ideas which are in alignment with your community and which seem feasible. Dreaming big is good and important and those big dreams are also facilitated and motivated by smaller achievements.*

**Discussion Question:**

- "Which of these actions align with our community's strengths and resources?"

**4. Building a Community Action Plan (30 minutes)**

*You'll notice that one major focus in this curriculum is policy advocacy. While all avenues of aiding and allyship towards the migrant community are valuable, we highly recommend that one of the groups in this step be focused around a legislative policy advocacy event which was covered in Week 3. Ideally, your Week 5 project will be centered around this legislative policy advocacy.*

**Facilitator:** "Let's move from ideas to concrete plans. In small groups, choose one or two actions and develop a basic plan for how we could implement them."

**Action Plan Template:**

- **Goal:** What do we want to accomplish?
- **Steps:** What actions need to be taken?
- **Who:** Who will lead and who will support?
- **Timeline:** When will each step be completed?
- **Resources Needed:** What support or materials are required?

**Activity:**

- Break into small groups to develop action plans.
- Each group shares their plan with the larger group.

**5. Overcoming Barriers to Action (10 minutes)**

**Facilitator:** "Taking action can feel overwhelming. Let's discuss any concerns or barriers that might prevent us from moving forward and how we can overcome them."

*As stated in the previous section, one of the barriers to advocacy can be that none of the options seem to quite fit. As you think about activities that are other than legislative advocacy, consider keeping your activities in a relative balance of justice for all and compassion for all that seems right for your community. Ultimately, it would be beneficial if these projects afforded your community the opportunity to get to know the immigrant community better in order to help dispel myths and stereotypes while also having a clearer understanding of their needs.*

**Discussion Questions:**

- "What challenges might arise in carrying out these plans?"
- "How can we support each other to stay committed?"



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