



Kino Border Initiative  
Iniciativa Kino para la Frontera

# Community Conversation: How to #WelcomeLikeJesus

*Kino Border Initiative 2022*

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## Purpose:

The desire to host community conversations about radical welcome across the US is rooted in the on-the-ground reality people are living at the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, Sonora, México, and what our brother Jesus tells us: that our own salvation is tied up in how we treat

those we have pushed to the margins of society. At this moment when many are tempted to use images or words like “invasion” or “alien” to dehumanize and push away people traveling to the US to seek a better life for their families, we are called to move in closer. We are called to humanize: to listen with our hearts, to let ourselves be changed by people who are both different from and similar to us. We are called to open our minds, our homes and our communities in the same way God is open to the beauty of our diversity, our gifts and our limitations.

Nearly twenty years after the Conferences of Mexican and US Catholic Bishops came together to publish the letter, “[Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope](#),” we continue to respond to their invitation “to exercise [our] faith and to use [our] resources and gifts to truly welcome the stranger among us,” so that families arriving in the US from a variety of circumstances experience that they are “strangers no longer and instead members of God's household.”

We are inspired by Roman Catholic teaching on the “seamless garment of life” as first outlined by Cardinal Bernadin in the 1980's, a teaching which calls us to recognize the sacredness of all life and to oppose attacks on the dignity of life, wherever they appear. A consistent ethic of life calls us to respond when people are murdered or tortured by organized crime groups in northern Mexico; when pregnant mothers waylaid at the border don't have access to needed healthcare; when US officials expel or deport families back to danger or starvation.

We hope that in gathering together, we can

- Share honestly about our own experiences of welcome and exclusion, and the impact that this has on each of us individually and as a community.
- Learn about what motivates people to migrate to the US-Mexico border today and challenges they face.
- Reflect on what it means to #WelcomeLikeJesus, and imagine how we can do this together in our community in a way that moves us beyond our comfort zones.

## Migration Context:

We see the challenge of fear of migrants in our own communities as well as the continuing challenges that are displacing people from their towns of origin in Mexico, Central and South America and beyond: climate change, lack of infrastructure and economic investment in communities, political instability, violence and persecution.

- Regional Trends: From [Hope Border Initiative Report](#)
  - “Rule of law deteriorated significantly in [Central America] in 2021, Guatemala and El Salvador's leaders moved to capture judicial systems, protect corruption, and violate human rights, and Nicaragua also spun further into authoritarianism.”
  - “The pandemic has strongly affected public education (in Central America), pressuring low-income students to study virtually without the means to buy computers or smartphones, thus increasing school dropout rates,” which impact employment opportunities and community development overall.

- “Honduras remains one of the most dangerous places for journalists and civil society leaders, who have been systematically assaulted and murdered for defending their land and basic rights.”
- Broader Global Trends ([Dr. Audrey Hudgins, Associate Clinical Professor, Seattle University February 12.2022](#))
  - “As the world adjusts to life under the continuing presence of COVID-19, all indications are that future migration flows will continue to increase and diversify beyond pre-pandemic levels. Over the next 5-10 years, flows northward will increase despite development investments in the region and will diversify to countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Haiti, India, Venezuela and beyond. ***The demographic nature of flows will continue to reflect those facing acute risks — especially families, women, unaccompanied youth, girls, and LGBTIQ+ people.***”
  - “Human trafficking is increasingly problematic and criminal organizations in Mexico and elsewhere continue to play a significant role, increasing migrant vulnerability.”
  - “El Salvador and Honduras have highest rates of femicide in the hemisphere among women and girls over the age of fifteen.”
  - “The range of nationalities [of those migrating to the US-Mexico border] also increased, from 1% in 2008 to 22% in 2021, reflecting global developments in international mobility”

## Lead Facilitator’s Role:

The Lead Facilitator will **convene a planning team to implement the community conversation**. We recommend that this person gather individuals from different groups or clubs beyond the “usual suspects” who tend to be interested in migration. For example, the congregation hospitality committee or Knights of Columbus, members of student government, the Pro-Life club, Music/Theatre or captain of a sports team. Consider: ***who is a person from my institution/organization who by co-leading this event, could help bring in an important audience?*** As you invite members, be sure to make a personal connection to how this person or group can connect to the invitation to welcome in your community.

In recruiting and gathering a planning team, the Lead Facilitator should try to include a prayer and check-in at the beginning of each meeting to center the group in their purpose and develop community together.

## Other Recommended Roles:

- **Communication Captain** - create and send invitations, make sure announcements are made at masses or over the intercom at school, create other materials like posters or graphics to post on social media.
- **Logistics Captain** - Take the lead on everything needed for the physical space: making the initial reservation, AV setup, recruiting others to help with tables, chairs, etc., snacks

and drinks for the event. (NOTE: This doesn't mean the logistics captain does all the work, but recruits key people for these roles.)

- Outreach Captain - Take the lead on targeted invitations to particular groups generally not interested in solidarity with migrants, and follow up conversations with leaders of those groups to invite and confirm attendance. Possibly visit club meetings, classes or groups to share the purpose of the event and invite.
- Event Emcee - Prep any other speakers (for example, if someone shares a personal testimony or prayer), and guide those gathered through the program, including facilitating share-back from tables.
- Table Facilitators - These folks don't necessarily need to be part of the planning team, but will participate in a training to keep each table conversation on track and deal with conflicts that arise.

## Process:\*

2.5 - 4 months before event:

- Talk with relevant institution leadership to plant the idea, garner support
- Recruit planning team
- First planning team meeting - Spend time sharing why each person is at the table, set date, time, location and make any necessary reservations, set goals for event attendance and targeted audiences to participate.

6-9 weeks before event:

- Assign key roles, practice how to invite others
- Begin targeted invitations
- Recruit any needed speakers
- Set date for Table Facilitator Training, recruit table facilitators

4-6 weeks before event:

- Targeted invitation push - start getting folks to sign up, see how sign-up numbers and individuals compare to your group goals for attendance and target audience.

1-4 weeks before event:

- Meet with planning team to check in on logistics, attendance and event agenda
- Host Facilitator training

Week leading up to event:

- Rehearsal with speakers
- Phone bank: reminder calls, email reminders to people who signed up to attend
- Logistics captain - final details for an impactful event

*\*NOTE: Every institution/organization is different. Some will require much more advanced notice for an institution-wide event, or others may be able to pull it all together within 2 months. Adjust*

*this proposed process based on what you know to be true about your institution/organization and its required sign-offs or processes.*

## Community Conversation Template: How to #WelcomeLikeJesus

### A) Laying the Groundwork (15 min)

1. Emcee: Welcome everyone! Housekeeping announcements, invite up prayer leader
2. Opening Prayer (See **Appendix A** for prayer possibilities)
3. Agreements to Create a Welcoming space:
  - a. Lean into personal awareness, away from defensiveness
    - i. (Example: feelings are normal, and this can be an emotional topic. When hard feelings arise, be aware and take a breath rather than react out of those feelings.)
  - b. Lean into curiosity, away from judgment
    - i. (Example: if someone shares something at my table that I disagree with, ask questions to better understand rather than assuming why the person holds that view.)
  - c. Lean into active listening, away from distractions
    - i. (Example: put our phones away; we are trained to be ready with a response when we listen to someone else speak. Instead, let's try to really listen to others and let go of our own thoughts. If that means we need a moment of quiet to get back in touch with our thoughts, that's ok.)
4. Emcee: Why we're here
  - Emcee (or someone else) - model sharing 1-2 minutes what motivates you to be part of this conversation
    - **Best practice: invite someone whose ideas about migrants have shifted over time, or who is present because they struggle to understand why people migrate.**
  - Bigger picture of "Why?"
    - Jesus invites us to welcome and gives us a clear model of what that looks like.
    - Twenty year anniversary of [Strangers No Longer](#), joint pastoral letter from the Bishops of US and Mexico. Following US Catholic Bishops' lead
    - "Seamless garment" - Catholic teaching invites us to consider a consistent ethic of life. What does it mean to protect the lives of people migrating?
    - The Kino Border Initiative, a Roman Catholic binational organization inspired by the spirituality of the Jesuits and the Missionaries of the Eucharist, is inviting us to this conversation. We see that people in our communities across the US feel uncertainty about migrants, and we also see that people approaching our southern border to seek protection are facing uncertainty with shifting policies. ***This begs the question for all of***

***us: how can we move beyond fear and embrace the hospitality  
Jesus is calling us to?***

B) What does it mean to #WelcomeLikeJesus? (25 min, select 1-2 of the options below, depending on timing of your event)

Before we can dive in to what it means to #WelcomeLikeJesus, let's get in touch with our own experiences of welcome or exclusion.

**Option A: Guided reflection** (with quiet music): Invite participants to get into a reflective posture, they can write if they prefer, or just close eyes, listen and consider the questions.

- a. What does it mean to feel welcome? Consider emotions, how does it show up in your body?
- b. Bring to mind a time or place where you felt really welcome. What happened? Who was there and how did they interact with you? What images come to mind when you think of welcome? What difference did it make in your life to be welcomed like that? What would you want to say to the people who welcomed you if you could talk to them now?
- c. Now consider a time when you felt unwelcome. What happened? Who was there and how did they interact with you? How did you feel, how did you respond? What difference did it make in your life that you did not feel welcome? What would you want to say to the people who refused welcome to you if you could talk to them now?
- d. Bring consciousness back to the present
- e. Invite a few folks to **share 1 word** about what it was like for them to participate in this reflection.

**Option B: "I Feel Welcome" Activity**

- a. **(PRIOR SETUP:** Put up signs across the room for "ALWAYS" and "NEVER")

Ground Rules:

- i. I will read a statement aloud and invite you to walk along the spectrum between "ALWAYS" and "NEVER" depending on how true the statement is for you.
  - ii. Be honest, take the time you need. You can stand anywhere along the spectrum, but try not to stick to the middle for every answer.
  - iii. Do not discuss your response with anyone
  - iv. Judgment free zone
  - v. No pushing, running, physical violence
1. (Read aloud) I feel welcome at my school
    - a. Facilitator: Look at where you are standing, look at where others are standing, pay attention to how you feel. (*Pause for a few seconds. Repeat after each following statement.*)

2. I feel welcome at my local grocery store
3. I feel welcome among my extended family
4. I feel welcome at my workplace
5. I feel welcome at my place of worship
6. I feel welcome at my best friend's place of worship
7. I feel welcome in my city
8. I feel welcome when walking around my neighborhood
9. I feel welcome at high end restaurants
10. I feel welcome at the local bank

- f. Group conversation: What did I notice in myself, in my responses and others' responses? What keeps me from welcoming others? What keeps others from welcoming me?
- g. Depending on time, ask a few tables to share brief responses to the full group

### Option C: How Jesus Welcomed

1. Emcee (or another leader) - Invite individuals to take a few minutes to think and write:
  - a. How would you describe the way Jesus welcomed? What words or actions did He use to demonstrate welcome? What are examples from the Gospels? How did people respond to Jesus' way of welcoming? How do you feel about Jesus' way of welcoming?
  - b. Who did Jesus welcome, and who did Jesus not welcome?
2. Share at tables
3. Share back to full group (depending on group size, could be sharing back from each table, or Emcee selects 3-4 tables to share)

### C) Current Reality (30 min)

1. Emcee (or another leader) - Jesus was able to welcome a variety of people in meaningful ways because he was connected to them, he listened, he built relationships and he knew what everyday people were facing.
  - a. Examples:
    - i. When Jesus encountered the man at the Pool of Bethesda, before healing him, **he asked** him if he wanted to get well, **and listened** to the man share the obstacles he had faced to getting into the pool.
    - ii. To welcome everyday people in, Jesus used parables: **he told stories** that they could relate to.
    - iii. When Jesus invited the apostles to follow him, as in the case of Matthew, they **connected over ordinary things they have in common** - they ate a meal together. (First thing he did after he called Matthew to follow him in Matthew Ch. 9) With the woman at the well, he asked for a drink of water.
    - iv. **Jesus asked questions to welcome people into conversation or learn more about them**, even the scribes and Pharisees who opposed him.
      1. Who do you say that I am? (Matthew 16:15)
      2. Why are you so afraid? (Matthew 8:26)

3. What did you go out into the desert to see? (Matthew 11:7)
  4. What is it you want? (Matthew 20:21)
  5. How many loaves do you have? (Matthew 15:34)
  6. Why are you thinking these things? (Mark 2:8)
  7. What is your name? (Mark 5:9)
2. Before we can discern together our call to radical hospitality, we need to listen and to understand a bit more what people arriving at our borders are facing. We're going to watch 2 videos: one to set the context for what people fleeing danger and seeking protection face when they seek to migrate to the US, and a video testimony from someone who recently was waylaid at the border trying to seek protection with their family. **NOTE: Insert in-person migrant testimony here, if relevant**
    - a. As you watch and listen, consider:
      - i. What feelings or questions arise for me?
      - ii. How is the person sharing their story facing welcome or exclusion along their journey?
      - iii. What do I have in common with this person? How would I describe them?
  3. Show 2 videos:
    - a. [Title 42: Policy Context - Obstacles to Welcome](#)
    - b. Choose 1 of the 3 [testimonies](#) based on your audience, and/or invite a community member who has migrated to the US to share their story
  4. Pair and share - responses to above 3 questions
  5. Invite 3-4 individuals to share with the full group any shifts that happened for them as they watched the videos or talked in pairs.

#### D) Our Call to #WelcomeLikeJesus

1. Show [Supporting Voices video](#)
2. Have a volunteer from the parish (prep beforehand) share their testimony of radical hospitality (1-2 min)
  - a. What motivated them to welcome?
  - b. What did welcome look like?
  - c. How did they grow, what did they learn in the process?
3. THINK AND WRITE (3-5 min silence or quiet music)
  - a. How am I being called to #WelcomeLikeJesus?
  - b. What are 2-3 first steps I can take toward this welcome?
4. Share at tables
5. Hand pick a few folks to share back (**ideally listen in at tables and select a variety between migrant solidarity warriors and people who are still opposed or questioning but want to learn more**)
6. Next Steps commitments (see [Participant Handout](#) or select from below)
  - a. Ask for all participants:
    - i. Commit to watching 2 other testimonies and praying the rosary for the person they heard from
    - ii. Share what you heard and learned today with 3 other people
  - b. Facilitator: Share proposed congregation commitment here

- i. Sponsor a family for asylum
  - ii. Host a migrant to share their story during the homily at all masses for the 20th Anniversary of Strangers No Longer January 23, 2023
  - iii. Organize delegation meeting with elected officials
  - c. Share Next Steps suggested items from Kino
7. Closing Prayer - commissioning of those committed to #WelcomeLikeJesus

## Appendix A: Opening Prayer and Reflection Resources

### Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi (read or sung)

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
 where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
 where there is injury, pardon;  
 where there is doubt, faith;  
 where there is despair, hope;  
 where there is darkness, light;  
 where there is sadness, joy.  
 O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
 to be consoled as to console,  
 to be understood as to understand,  
 to be loved as to love.  
 For it is in giving that we receive,  
 it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
 and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

### Quote from Rainer Marie Rilke

“Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.”

### Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967 Christmas Sermon:

“It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality. Did you ever stop to think that you can't leave for your job in the morning without being dependent on most of the world? You get up in the morning and go to the bathroom and reach over for the sponge, and that's handed to you by a Pacific islander. You reach for a bar of soap, and that's given to you at the hands of a

### Prayer for Openness by Joyce Rupp

Remember the Holy One is with you.  
 Bring to mind this loving presence within you  
 and around you as you pray the following:  
 Open my mind to remember  
 your presence.  
 Open my mouth to speak  
 your wisdom.  
 Open my heart to extend  
 your love.  
 Open my hands to serve  
 you generously.  
 Open my whole being  
 to you.

Frenchman. And then you go into the kitchen to drink your coffee for the morning, and that's poured into your cup by a South American. And maybe you want tea: that's poured into your cup by a Chinese. Or maybe you're desirous of having cocoa for breakfast, and that's poured into your cup by a West African. And then you reach over for your toast, and that's given to you at the hands of an English-speaking farmer, not to mention the baker. And before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half the world. This is the way our universe is structured, this is its interrelated quality. We aren't going to have peace on Earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of all reality."

### Scriptures:

Luke 21:13-32 The Road to Emmaus  
1 Samuel 3:1-10 Revelation to Samuel  
1 Corinthians 12:12-26 One Body, Many Parts

## Appendix B: Video Resources

Testimonies:

- [A Honduran Father's story: "I never thought about leaving my home."](#)
- [A Mexican Mother's Story: "That was how it all started."](#)
- [A Honduran Father's Story: "That's what it's about - saving your loved ones, however you can."](#)

Informational:

- [Title 42: Policy Context - Obstacles to Welcome](#)
- [Faith & Community Leaders: How to #WelcomeLikeJesus](#)

## Appendix C: [#WelcomeLikeJesus Community Conversation Participant Handout](#)

- Feel free to create a copy of the handout to add an opening prayer or your own invitations to next steps

## Appendix D: [#WelcomeLikeJesus Community Conversation Evaluation](#)

## Appendix E: Key Points from “Ultimate Messaging Guide” 2022

1. **SHOW DON'T TELL** how the asylum process impacts the lived experience of real people.
  - a. This includes showing the **harms** people seeking asylum face in their home country and in the current asylum system, as well as uplifting **success stories emphasizing the joys of gaining asylum**.
  - b. Describe for people the concrete harms caused by the current policies, with images or words, in a vivid and evocative manner. Use descriptions that allow people to **paint a picture of the harm** in their own minds rather than relying on a label or declarative statement merely asserting that these policies are “bad” or “harmful.” **A little description goes a long way—these details do not have to be overly graphic or retraumatizing to be impactful.**
2. **Foster audience identification through shared values**
  - a. “Elevate values such as caring, family, safety, protection, and hard work.”
  - b. “Messaging should open with shared values and incorporate them throughout.”
3. **Paint a picture of the problem and connect the dots to the solution.**

### **Behavioral Cues to normalize learning and reflection:** (p. 109)

“When I reflect on it... • When you step back... • In the real world... • I really had to think... • When I put myself in their shoes... • I thought about the example I wanted to set...When I got some perspective... • If I was honest with myself... • I was surprised to learn...”

Name that immigration is complex! People are not alone in feeling unfamiliar with the complexities of immigration law

### **Model a journey story!** (P. 112)

- Foster identification with personal details
- Name inner conflict
- Name positive outcomes

### **Humanizing Terms to use:** Instead of “refugee” or “asylum seeker”...

- A person who is an immigrant/ asylum seeker/refugee
- Our neighbor who is an immigrant/asylum seeker/ refugee
- A person migrating to the U.S.
- A person who is seeking safety/opportunity in the U.S.

Effective message to **balance concern about pandemic with need for access to a process**, P. 105

“Once coronavirus border restrictions have been eased, the government should ensure a fair, efficient, and humane process for people seeking asylum at our southern border to have their cases heard and determine if they qualify for protections in the U.S.”

Message to **connect with someone who expresses an underlying value for freedom:**

“Unless your ancestors were native to these shores, or forcibly enslaved, most Americans can trace their family history back to a **decision to leave behind everything that was familiar in search of freedom, new opportunities, and a new life here in the United States.**

Generations of immigrants have come to this country with little more than the clothes on their backs, the hope in their hearts, and a desire to claim their own piece of the American Dream. It’s the reason we have constantly been able to renew ourselves, to grow better and stronger as a nation, and to meet new challenges. Welcoming immigrants and refugees is essential to who we are as a nation, our core values, and our aspirations for our future.”