



## The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee advances human rights through grassroots collaborations.

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### Solidarity Through Accompaniment

Congregational program connects immigrants with host congregations.



By UUSC Staff on May 28, 2025

UUSC's Congregational Accompaniment Project for Asylum Seekers (CAPAS) began in 2019 when Rev. Dottie Mathews, who had been connecting asylum seekers to sponsors, sought organizational support to expand her work to meet the increasing need. She approached UUSC and the UU College of Social Justice to make this happen as one of its human rights priorities is Central American Migrant Justice.

The CAPAS program works with interested congregations to prepare them to sponsor individuals or families seeking safety in the United States. The program guides each congregation as it puts together a local team to support the work, centers the work in Unitarian Universalist faith and values, identifies a housing sponsor, and prepares for all aspects of partnering with a potential guest.

The CAPAS coordinator then maintains a list of congregations ready for sponsorship, and when a front-line partner alerts them to an individual or family in need of sponsorship, the coordinator connects them to the best match based on what they know about the congregation and the individual or family being placed. The coordinator and UUSC/UUCSJ staff continue to support the congregation as they journey with their guest(s) through settling in, the asylum process, and more. The collaboration also provides a space for sponsoring groups to learn from each other with monthly calls for all approved CAPAS congregations (whether they are currently sponsoring someone or not).

**Learn more about the CAPAS program**

Since CAPAS has started, it has placed 28 asylum-seekers in UU congregations or with other faith groups. It has worked with 39 congregations by either placing asylum seekers with them, preparing them for welcoming an asylum-seeker in the future, or supporting the work they started outside of the CAPAS program. It has also worked with congregations to provide short-term assistance to 64 individuals through the family reunification program run by UUSC/UUCSJ partners at *Al Otro Lado*.

Being a CAPAS congregation invites members to witness, listen, and show up for migrant neighbors; it is a practice of being human together in the face of extremely dehumanizing systems and circumstances. For those who are not directly targeted by ICE, accompaniment like this brings them closer to the violence of the nation's immigration and criminal punishment systems, creating opportunities to build relationships with those who are most impacted. As a result, many people who engage in this work become deeply transformed and grow more committed to disrupting these harmful systems and acting for a more liberated future for all.

If you are interested in having your congregation join the CAPAS program, visit [www.uusc.org/capas](http://www.uusc.org/capas) to learn how to get started.

Photo Credit: Kino Border Initiative

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