

Immigrant Support Ministry Team

Small group Crisálida was born in the fall of 2019, made up of 8 members who were open to discovering ways to support immigrants in our community. The group grew to 12 adults plus 7 kids, and finally in January 2022, NIJC reached out to us with a possibility of being a support group for a family coming from Honduras seeking asylum. Our first task was to find an apartment and secure a year's lease, which Michelle Shelly did as part of her role with Safety Networks. We furnished the apartment and prepared to meet Mayra and her two daughters when they finally arrived in March 2022. Our first task was to get the girls enrolled in school and get to know the family. We soon discovered that they needed a lot of dental care which for a couple of them ran into thousands of dollars.

Mayra was able to get her work permit within 6 months, faster than we had anticipated. So she was able to start working at a factory and over the next year gradually took on more and more of her rent, and by the summer of 2023 she was paying her entire rent. By this time, we were hoping to see her establish more and more independence and be less dependent on us as a support group. However, we continued to be involved with social events like birthday parties and events at school.

By the fall of 2023, the small group Crisálida had changed a lot. Many of us had shuffled out and there were very few left of the original members in the actual small group Crisálida. The ongoing support for this family pretty much boiled down to five individuals: Naomi Roots, Joel and Patricia Zwier, Char Yutzy and Leon Bauman. We realized that something needed to shift as members of our small group were getting tired. We worried about burnout and had questions as to where this whole process was going.

We started envisioning a ministry team at Assembly that would continue this work and possibly someday include others who need support coming to our community as immigrants. So we started envisioning different levels of involvement from the congregation, some more involved, some occasionally involved, and some as needed. We reached out to the congregation and were pleasantly surprised to find that there were many people wanting to be involved, so our numbers grew. We held a lunch meeting in December 2023 for anyone interested and started developing the next steps, which included organizing an oversight committee.

About the same time Mayra's financial situation was getting more and more critical as she was borrowing more and more money to pay rent and other debts. Char and Leon offered to share their home with the family for a year, giving them some breathing room to lower stress and get to a healthier place. The group continued to tweak the idea and finally an agreement with Mayra was signed. They moved into 505 S. 6th St. on December 31, in time for the new year.

The ongoing goal of our ministry team is supporting immigrants in order for them to become autonomous in this community. We dream of discovering affordable housing for this family and for others who come to Goshen seeking asylum. This ministry team is responding to a clear call to follow Jesus' lead in welcoming the "other." We are on a learning journey together.

AMC Participants:

Leon Bauman

Char Yutzy

Patricia Ebersole Zwier

Joel Zwier

Naomi Roots

Mari Martinez

Randy Roth

Mary Roth

Patricia Nuyken

Barb Hassan

Natalie Hooley

Brian Roots

Ruth Kauffmann

John Fribley

Sandy Fribley