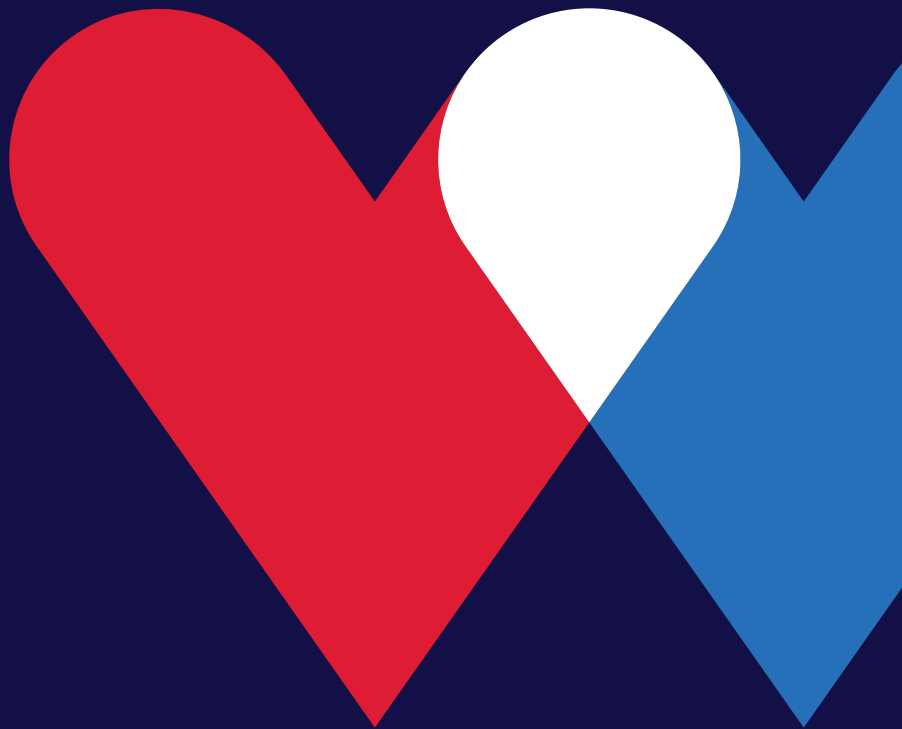




# WELCOME TABLES: A HOSTING GUIDE

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Welcome Tables bring people together to build bridges, create understanding, and inspire community-driven action. By inviting neighbors and community members to your table, you can expand the Welcomer community by sharing stories, learning about newcomers' journeys, and exploring ways to support private sponsorship. This Welcome.US guide equips you with practical tips for hosting your Welcome Table, including a discussion guide, educational resources, and next steps for participants. Thank you for extending your table to share the transformative impact of welcoming and how it strengthens communities.

## Why host a Welcome Table?

Americans in all 50 states and more than 12,000 zip codes have welcomed newcomers to their communities and helped them build new lives in safety. While the U.S. government has recently paused or ended private sponsorship programs, Americans continue to support newcomers already in their communities and champion safe, legal, and orderly newcomer pathways. For this reason, Welcome Tables aims to:

1. **Build community connections:** Grow your network of community members who care about the work of welcoming.
2. **Foster awareness and understanding:** Share personal stories or watch educational materials together to understand the newcomer experience and how welcoming strengthens our communities.
3. **Take action together:** Inspire your network to take action to support newcomers and private sponsorship programs.

## Anyone can host a Welcome Table

A Welcome Table is a gathering where people can come together to share a meal, stories, and conversation. Whether you're new to welcoming or are already involved, everyone has a seat at this table. This is a highly flexible format centered on community and connection, and we encourage you to use this guide to help organize your own gathering.

Here's how:

- [Planning your Welcome Table](#)
- [Preparing for a meaningful conversation](#)
- [Continuing the work of welcoming](#)

# PLANNING YOUR WELCOME TABLE

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## Invite your guests

Planning for 5 to 15 guests is ideal for a gathering with thoughtful discussion. When creating your invite list, think about including the following:

- Neighbors who have expressed curiosity about supporting refugees
- Friends involved in other volunteer or civic service activities
- Members of local faith, civic, or community organizations
- Leaders in the community
- Sponsors or those who are interested in sponsoring newcomers
- Newcomers in your community who are interested in sharing their story

## Choose your venue

You may decide to host your Welcome Table in your home, but other options include:

- A public space, such as a park, reservable library room, or community center
- A place of worship
- The home of a community member
- A refugee or immigrant-owned restaurant

## Set the agenda

Your Welcome Table agenda might include:

- Welcome and introductions
- Sharing the purpose of your gathering
- A “main course” film, book, personal testimony, or educational content along with a meal or snacks
- Guided discussion inspired by the conversation tips and questions below
- Next steps that everyone can take

## Plan the “main course”

Consider planning your Welcome Table around a testimony, short film, documentary, or book to help spark meaningful conversation.

### Personal testimonies:

- Share your experience of private sponsorship, welcoming a newcomer, or even immigrating yourself. Whether you’re a sponsor, a Welcomer, or still learning about sponsorship, your story is meaningful and can impact others.

- Invite other speakers, such as a sponsor or newcomer, who can share their experience.
- Arrange for a representative from a local organization serving refugees to talk about their work.
- Share your family’s generational history of how they came to America, and ask participants about their history.
- Check out a few testimonials from sponsors on our [website](#).

#### **Short-form videos (30 minutes or less):**

- “[One Good Reason](#)” is a brief documentary exploring motivations for sponsorship.
- “[Communities in America come together](#)” is a short Welcome.US video showcasing the collaborative efforts of Welcomers.
- “[America is a nation of Welcomers](#)” is a short Welcome.US video that highlights America’s history of welcoming newcomers.

#### **Longer documentaries (consider showing excerpts):**

- “Human Flow” (2017) is a documentary about the global refugee crisis.
- “Simple as Water” (2021) follows five Syrian families on their harrowing journey fleeing their homeland in search of safety.
- “Midnight Traveler” (2019) follows an Afghan family’s journey captured on smartphones.
- “God Grew Tired of Us” (2006) is the story of Sudanese refugees navigating the challenges of resettlement in the U.S. after fleeing their war-torn homeland.

#### **Books:**

- “The Ungrateful Refugee” is a personal memoir by Dina Nayeri, telling her story of fleeing Iran as a child.
- “We are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World” by Malala Yousafzai.
- For more suggestions, see Welcome.US’ list of [5 books by refugee authors](#).

#### **Educational resources:**

- Visit Welcome.US’s [guide to supporting sponsorship](#), which includes talking points on private sponsorship.
- Join a “[Welcome.US at the Table](#)” webinar or watch previous sessions on-demand.

## **Consider a meal**

Food brings us together. If you choose to include a meal in your gathering, [check out our recipe collection, which includes Ukrainian borscht and Afghan dumplings](#). If you are planning to eat out, consider a restaurant that newcomers founded.

# PREPARING FOR A MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION

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As you facilitate a Welcome Table, it's helpful to approach conversations with an awareness of diverse beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences. Talking about sponsorship and other immigration topics may feel daunting, and knowing where to start can be challenging. Here are [five tips for holding a meaningful dialogue](#):

## 1. Start with openness

- a. Try: Setting a goal to engage and connect, not to argue and win.
- b. Avoid: "You don't understand" or "You are misinformed on immigration..."

## 2. Embrace different viewpoints

- a. Try: Speaking with an "also/and" perspective.
- b. Avoid: Conversations with an "either/or" approach.

## 3. Use language that emphasizes our shared humanity

- a. Try: "We all deserve safety and security."
- b. Avoid: "We need to help them."

## 4. Listen to learn

- a. Try: "Tell me a little more about why you feel that way."
- b. Avoid: Assuming someone is "less moral" because they may disagree with you.

## 5. Share stories and personal experience

- a. Try: "Refugee families sacrifice for stability. Once welcomed, they rebuild their lives and give back."
- b. Avoid: "Statistics show that thousands of refugees need our help."

## Discussion questions to consider

### 1. General

- a. What is the significance of the meal you're serving?
- b. What does welcoming mean to you?
- c. What experiences do you have with newcomers in your community? Have you ever sponsored a newcomer?
- d. How do newcomers strengthen your community?

## **2. “Main course” discussion questions**

- a. What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
- b. What resonated with you most personally and why?
- c. Did anything surprise you?
- d. Which stories or examples stood out to you, and why?
- e. How does this content connect to your own experiences?
- f. How does what we watched/read/discussed relate to our local community?

## **3. Action-oriented questions**

- a. What challenges exist for the newcomers in our community right now?
- b. What resources exist that we could tap into, and what skills do we have to help newcomers?
- c. Who else in our community should be part of this conversation?
- d. What can we do now to support newcomers and sponsorship programs?
- e. What’s one small step each of us could take this week?

# CONTINUING OUR WORK OF WELCOMING

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End your Welcome Table by inviting participants to take the next steps. We encourage your group to brainstorm ways you can take action locally, such as volunteering or fundraising to support newcomers already in your community.

## Learn more and get involved

- [Contact your federal representatives](#) in support of private sponsorship.
- Consult our [Guide to Supporting Sponsorship](#) for 5, 10, and 15-minute ideas for taking action.
- Donate to help newcomers and sponsors through [Welcome.US](#) or other local organizations.
- Stay connected by joining our [email list](#) and following us on social media ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#)).
- Share what you've learned with others in your community by facilitating more conversations about sponsorship.

# THANK YOU FOR HOSTING

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We're grateful for the time, energy, and heart you put into creating a space for connection and conversation. Your Welcome Table gathering is part of a nationwide movement based on our shared value of welcome.

**Please share your experience with us!** We'd love to hear from you via [this short feedback form](#). Learning about your experience will help us celebrate the impact of Welcome Tables across the country and tell the good story of Welcomers like you.



# APPENDIX

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## Sample agenda

<b>5:00 p.m.</b>	Guests arrive
<b>5:15 p.m.</b>	Welcome and introduction to the gathering; purpose and expectation-setting
<b>5:30 p.m.</b>	Film screening: “One Good Reason”
<b>6:00 p.m.</b>	Dinner served: Ukrainian borscht
<b>6:15 p.m.</b>	Eat while discussing the film; guided conversation
<b>7:30 p.m.</b>	Next steps and closing

## Sample invitation email

### Subject: Join me for a Welcome Table dinner

Dear **[GUEST’S NAME]**,

I’d like to invite you to a dinner I’m hosting called Welcome Table. It’s an opportunity for our community to come together around good food and meaningful conversation about our shared value of welcoming for newcomers.

#### Event Details:

**What:** A community meal

**When:** **[DATE AND TIME]**

**Where:** **[LOCATION]**

**What You Can Bring:** **[FILL IN]**

A Welcome Table brings people together around a shared meal to build bridges, create understanding, and inspire community-driven action. It’s an opportunity to learn more about refugee sponsorship while enjoying a delicious meal and connecting with others who care about this topic.

#### The evening will include:

- A delicious meal featuring recipes shared by newcomers
- A short documentary about [Fill in]
- Guided conversation about our shared value of welcoming
- Information about ways to support newcomers and private sponsorship programs
- Connections with others who care about these issues

This gathering will be small and informal and is open to anyone interested in learning and connecting. Please let me know if you can join us by **[RSVP DATE]**.

I hope you can make it!

Warmly,

**[YOUR NAME]**

**[YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS]**

**[YOUR PHONE NUMBER]**

# We Choose Welcome.



We hope that this toolkit equips your community with the resources to flourish alongside our newcomer neighbors. If you would like to include faith-motivated reasons for choosing to welcome into your “Welcome Tables” community event, here are some ideas:

## Ground your call to action in the welcoming love of Jesus

**Prepare your heart.** Prior to your event, spend some time considering how creating a welcoming community is a way to partner in the welcoming work of Christ, and how it offers an opportunity for members of the Body of Christ to [use their unique gifts to make a difference](#). Consider incorporating some of this language as you craft invites and share your vision with your guests.

**Invite others into thoughtful discussion.** As you prepare prompts for whole-table discussions, include prompts that encourage consideration of the biblical call to “welcome the stranger.” Some examples:

- How should the radical welcome of Jesus—extended to enemies, strangers, and outcasts—inform our discussion of welcome today?
- What are some of the spiritual gifts that you see in yourself? What gifts do you recognize in others at the table?
- Where have you seen themes of migration or displacement [in Scripture](#)? What do you think that means for us in modern times?

## Include a time of prayer for refugees and for your group as you thoughtfully consider ways to get involved

Acknowledge the heaviness of the refugee crisis, and allow attendees to lift up questions and concerns in prayer as they process the information that you’ve shared in the meeting. As you plan your event schedule based on page 9 of the guide, consider including 5–10 minutes of corporate prayer during your discussion time. Consider asking a designated person to lead this time.

## Get your church involved

The private sponsorship group model is a great on-ramp for churches to get involved in refugee resettlement. Check with your pastor or small group leaders to share this opportunity and gauge interest. Perhaps what starts as one community dinner can grow into multiple community dinners where each small group walks through this discussion together and prayerfully considers their next steps!