

Ep #8: Tangible Acts of Welcome:
Practical Ways to Walk with Newcomers



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Tracie L. Morgan & Ashley Glimasinski

[Hope In Action: Navigating Immigration with Faith and Care](#)

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Tracie: When we welcome immigrants, we're not making a political statement. We're living out Matthew 25 where Jesus says, "I was a stranger and you invited me in." We're practicing the kind of love that doesn't ask, what does this mean for my image? But instead asks, how can I reflect Christ?

Ashley: So as we think about welcome, let's remember, it's not about being perfect. It's about being faithful. It's about letting scripture, not fear or division, shape the way we see and serve our neighbors.

Hi, I'm Tracie. And I'm Ashley. Welcome to Hope in Action where we offer clear insights, practical tools, and inspiring stories to navigate immigration with confidence, compassion, and faith. Each week, we break down the law, share real-world examples, and help you speak up, live out your values, and make a difference in your community.

Whether you're looking to understand immigration through a faith-driven lens, have courageous conversations with those who matter to you, or take small steps toward justice, you're in the right place. Let's dive in.

Ashley: In Genesis 18, Abraham is sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day when he sees three strangers approaching. He doesn't know who they are, and he doesn't know their motives, but he runs, literally runs to meet them. He offers water, shade, a freshly prepared meal, rest. And here's the thing, he doesn't welcome them because he's obligated. He welcomes them because he recognizes that hospitality is a holy practice, an act of trust, generosity, and faith. And later we learned that these strangers were messengers of God, but Abraham welcomed them before he knew that, before he had any assurance that his kindness would be returned.

Tracie: This ancient story sets a pattern. We welcome not because we know who someone will be or become to us, but because of who we are called to be. And today we're exploring what that kind of welcome looks like

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in our communities, practical, grounded, everyday ways that we can embody hospitality. We want to talk about practice, not just theory. And as an extra treat, we have someone joining us a bit later today from Welcome.US to talk exactly about this.

Ashley: But before we jump into stories, let's define what we mean by welcome. A lot of times people hear the word and think, oh no, someone's asking me to take a family into my house.

Tracie: Right? Would my dogs even like them? But welcome doesn't begin with housing someone. The heart of welcome is really a shift, a movement. Many of us care about immigrants. We read the news, we feel compassion, and we want things to be better. But welcome happens when we move from simply being concerned about immigrants to actually participating in their lives in whatever ways we're able to.

Ashley: And that participation doesn't have to be dramatic or complicated. It doesn't always mean housing someone or making long-term commitment. Most of the time, welcome looks much smaller and much more relational than people expect.

Tracie: Welcome can be relational, like offering friendship, practicing curiosity, or simply learning someone's name and story. It can be logistical, like giving a ride, helping navigate a grocery store, or showing someone how the school system works.

Ashley: It could be emotional, like being a steady presence when someone feels overwhelmed or isolated. It can be spiritual through prayer, accompaniment, or creating spaces where someone feels they belong. It can be material, like sharing a meal, donating household items, or helping someone find affordable housing or work. And it can be communal and legislative where we advocate for laws and policies that create systems where immigrants feel welcome and can flourish.

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Tracie: So there isn't just one way to welcome. The beauty of this work is that it fits a wide range of personalities, capacities, and callings. It's like a puzzle where we get to each have a different size and shape piece. We reflect on our unique gifts, talents, and experiences in life, but eventually, we all fit together to form the image of Christian welcome.

Ashley: Exactly. And welcome isn't about doing everything. That's a lot, but it's about doing something, one step that moves us from sympathy to solidarity, from awareness to action. So we're going to take a little bit of time now to share some of our stories as we've been host or immigrants in our own communities. And many of the stories that I have to share about welcoming are from the two years that I spent living and working in a temporary housing ministry here in my city called Welcome House. And Welcome House is a ministry that's run by a faith organization, and they use church houses that are empty to temporarily provide housing for refugees. The refugees already have a sponsor, like a refugee resettlement agency, but maybe long-term housing isn't available for them yet. And so they would stay at Welcome House for a few days, a few weeks, up to a month.

And as the manager for this household and the other houses, I got to work with both the refugees who came through our doors and the Americans who volunteered. And it was really interesting to see that welcome was always best done as a collaborative effort where everyone can contribute what they feel ready for. For example, for my volunteers, not everyone was ready to meet a refugee face-to-face. They said, "I would much rather clean the toilets." Well, thank you. I would love for you to clean the toilets was always my response. But they would help get the house ready for the refugees before they arrived. They would clean in between families so that a new and clean house was ready for them when the family got there.

Some of the volunteers were ready to meet the refugees, and not only meet them, but teach ESL or come over for tea and teach them how to

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bake something in the oven or even take them out to learn how to ride the bus, to go visit the downtown area, just to get out and see their new community. And so each volunteer had their own gifts and their own skills that they wanted to bring to share in this place. And it was really helpful for them to get to know the refugees or maybe just help with the house. All of these things were so important. Not one was more important than the other. And I really appreciated the volunteers who stepped up in those places. And they also, our volunteers made sure that our guest always had a culturally appropriate meal and groceries when they arrived at the house.

I think that was so important because when you've had a journey that's taken years and maybe you haven't been in your home culture in five, 10, 15 years, when you get to a new place that you know is going to be home and everything is different, the language is different, the culture is different. But then you get to the place where you're going to stay and you see groceries that you recognize. You see fruit and vegetables that you recognize or you see a meal and you're like, "Oh, I know that smell. That is the smell of home." That can make such a difference in how someone feels welcome when they come to this place. Think about a time when you might have been traveling, whether overseas or even here in the United States and you saw a restaurant chain or a store that was familiar to you and everything else around you might be different. But that store or restaurant is familiar, you're like, "Oh, I know that." And that just gives you a little sense of comfortability and home in a different place. And I think that's what we were able to provide for so many of the guests that came to Welcome House.

Tracie: I love that. I was just thinking about how when I studied abroad in Italy, I'm surrounded by all this amazing food, but I don't know if I've ever been more excited to get nachos than when I went to the Hard Rock Cafe in Rome and could get some good sour cream, salsa, corn tortilla chips. I was in seventh heaven. So, I mean, that was just a few months of me being away from the United States. So thinking about it in terms of years is just

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eye-opening. And Ashley, you talked about groceries and, I've done some trainings with refugee resettlement workshops, learning about how to welcome people.

And one of the things that I took away was a story about how in many sub-Saharan African countries, the picture on the product indicates what it is. If it's chicken soup, there's a picture of a chicken. So imagine being a newly arrived refugee, you go to the grocery store and you see a jar of Gerber baby food and it has that cute little baby staring at you. What kind of horror must you face as like the shock, like where have I gotten myself to? And so if you're walking with someone through that, you would quickly explain that, oh, these are our marketing practices. This is a food for babies, not made out of them. And I think that's just something I always keep in mind when working with somebody from another country when we go through these cultural experiences.

And then I also remember the look of shock on another friend's face recently come to the United States and I pointed out the chicken in the freezer and she's like, "That's not chicken." I'm like, "Of course it is. It says chicken. It's a bag of chicken thighs." And she's like, "No, a chicken is like the whole chicken. Where are the feathers? Where's the neck? Where's the body?" And so just thinking through experiences like that, they make me smile, but they also make me realize just how different things can be from culture to culture.

Ashley: Yes, things can be different from culture to culture and I did experience that when I lived at Welcome House as a house host. I got to share a lot of meals with our guests and just experience a lot of different spices and different textures of foods, things that I had never seen or heard of before or smelled, for example, the smells could be really amazing sometimes. And I realized that even if we didn't share a language and I couldn't communicate in English with the guests or through Google Translate or whatever other app we were using, I found that meals were a

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time for us to come together and share those cultures, share our spices, our ingredients, a smile and laughter and gestures as we tried to cook together. And I found that a lot can be shared in a meal and often that's more than just food. Like we come to a common table and we break bread together and that can break down barriers between us.

And through these meals, like you said, Tracie, I also came to see some of the cultural differences and also learn to understand them, if not to really embrace them. I'll never forget there was one night, a family had arrived from Afghanistan a few days earlier. There was, I think there was about seven people in the family. And my husband and I were getting ready for bed one night. We were brushing our teeth. We'd already gone into our room. We were, we were out for the night. And then there was a knock on the door at about 10:00 and we opened it and there was the family there and they said, "Come eat. Come eat." And they had made a huge meal with chicken and rice and the bread that is so amazing and so many other foods that they just wanted to share with us. They wanted to say thank you. Thank you for welcoming us here. So even though we'd already eaten dinner and we were definitely ready for bed, we did join them at the table. And Afghan food is delicious, so it was not a hardship for us, but we got to experience that culture with them. And I'm not used to eating so late, but I would do it again with that family anytime they knocked on my door.

Tracie: Oh my gosh, Afghan food is so amazing. One of the advantages to living in a big city like Atlanta is that you can find most anything here. And that's probably one of the best meals of my life was going to an Afghan restaurant with some, some friends of mine who had worked as interpreters on some of our cases.

And you talked about tea a little earlier and that reminds me of a trick that I use when I meet with clients. It's kind of a small but I think profound practice for helping clients feel welcome. These are people I'm about to ask to relive some of the most traumatic, horrible experiences of their lives. And

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so I need to gain some trust. I want people to feel comfortable, but the emotional weight is really heavy. So these small details can really help. So I've changed how I offer someone a drink. Instead of just asking, hey, can I get you anything? That question that might make someone feel like a burden? I ask, I'm having some tea. What can I get you? It communicates equality, inclusion, presence. It shows that I'm willing to, you know, take a service position to my client, that I'm not above them in any means. They belong there. And I want them to trust me, I want them to be there. So little gestures like that can really change the tone and establish trust and the foundation for a good relationship.

Ashley: That's right. Speaking of those little gestures, it is sometimes just the smallest things that matter. I remember when I moved to Japan for work and I had a house waiting for me that was owned by my Board of Education, my employer. And when I got there, it was lightly furnished. There was a bed, there was a table and chairs, a couch, like the essentials of things. But my supervisor took me shopping the first day that I arrived and I was able to pick out just the little things like the towels that I liked in the color that I liked, or a pillow that I felt comfortable with, little dishes and things that were they spoke to me. I even got a plant. And I just remember how much that made me feel like this place that was so strange and foreign, that there were people who cared about me enough to say, what color towels do you like? Let's go get them. Just the little things like that. And it transformed this house into a home. It made it feel like it was a place that I wasn't just temporarily living, but I could come to and be relaxed and feel comfortable in. So I'll always remember my supervisor doing that for me and I try to do the same now for newcomers making sure that there's little details like that I can pay attention to that make them feel just a little more welcome.

Tracie: I love that. And welcome is about asking questions just like your boss in Japan did. In college, I worked with international students helping them gain orientation to college life in the United States. And often, these

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were students who were visiting or living in the United States for the very first time. So during orientation, we would ask them what they were most excited or nervous about. Every now and then, someone's expectations were shaped by the media in ways that would surprise me

Like I remember we had a student from Senegal who genuinely wondered if all African-American families, if they lived like the Cosbys. I'm dating myself here, but that was a very popular show and that's what he knew about the United States. I also had students who asked if they were able to go to a shooting range, thinking, this is Kansas, it's the Wild West, guns are everywhere. And we always said, "No, that is not part of our plans for you while you're here." But I like to think by creating this safe space for people to ask questions, that they could do it in a way that they wouldn't be ridiculed later on, because you just wonder, like would they be able to ask these questions to a roommate who may not have experience with an international student before, or a professor or someone else. So being able to create these safe spaces to ask questions, I think was really important to get them going on the right foot.

Ashley: That's right. The little spaces, the welcoming spaces, even the training for people who may not have that international experiences, those can be really important as we learn to welcome our neighbors from abroad or from overseas. And these moments that we've shared remind me that welcome isn't only about grand gestures. It's also about sensitivity, curiosity, and the willingness to meet people exactly where they are. Little acts of kindness, small shifts in language, and gentle explanations can make people feel seen, safe, and understood in a brand new world.

Tracie: Absolutely. And we don't always have to do it on our own. Churches offer support that can be through meals, companionship, rides, ESL support, childcare, other community connections. I mean, the list goes on and on. In Atlanta, we're fortunate to have an organization called La Amistad, which provides tutoring and after-school programming for Latino

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children. Their programs often take place in local churches and are staffed by church members who want to invest in kids right there in their own neighborhoods. Not every student in the program is an immigrant or the child of immigrants, but it's a meaningful way to care for the broader community in a discreet and, you know, not a time-consuming sort of way.

Ashley: Yeah, churches can partner in those small discreet ways too because maybe it's not running a full tutoring program or launching an ESL ministry. That can feel really out of reach for a church that's just starting. But it could be something small like a food drive, a blanket drive, or collecting school supplies for a nearby school that has a high immigrant population. Things like that can be much less intimidating, especially because churches are often already running different drives of sorts, and so it's an easy thing to add to their list but stretches them in a new direction. And I bet you could also find an organization that's already serving immigrants in your community. And I also bet that they have programs already running and they just need volunteers like you and your church. An advantage of helping an organization like this, rather than trying to start something on your own, is that they usually offer training and have structures in place that will walk you how to welcome people and will provide that support as you're trying to figure out what does it mean to welcome in my community.

Tracie: And these kinds of efforts all still communicate, we see you, we care. And they allow congregations of any size to participate in welcome.

Ashley: So far, we've shared our own stories and experiences with welcome, and now we're honored to introduce a very special guest for this episode, Krista Kartson with Welcome.US, who is joining us to talk about her organization and also her experience as a private sponsor for newcomers. So Krista, thank you so much for joining us today.

Krista: Thank you Ashley and Tracie. Really, it's a privilege to be here.

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Tracie: Thank you so much. So Krista, tell us a little bit about what Welcome.US does and how did you get involved with it?

Krista: Absolutely. So Welcome.US was founded in 2021, so we're a relatively new organization and we're designed to really help create more opportunities for Americans to be involved in the work of welcoming newcomers. So if you recall what 2021 looked like, that was when thousands of Afghans arrived in our country and we didn't have the national capacity to welcome them and help them integrate. And so Welcome.US was one of the flagship organizations that helped to equip American communities across the country to welcome our Afghan allies, get them integrated into our communities, and supported in their new countries. At that time, I was actually working with another organization, a Christian organization that had equipped churches to do this work and welcome was an organization that helped us do that. And so when that program sunset, I ended up joining Welcome.US as the director of sponsorship initiatives to help sponsors to continue this work of welcoming. Not only were Afghans allowed to be part of this program, but also later Ukrainians and refugees of all kinds of different countries were part of this work. But our North star and the community that we really support as Welcome.US are the American welcomers who are doing this work. So that's how I got involved and that's who we are.

Ashley: That's so amazing, Krista. And I know also from our conversations that you've cared about immigrants for a longer time than that, I think and from your own experiences. So can you tell us a little bit about what motivated you to care about immigrants and really brought you to this work?

Krista: Absolutely. So this is so much integrated into my own life journey, but I'll try to keep it short. Welcome.US is not a faith-based organization, but I am a Christian and I grew up in the church knowing the Bible verse, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son

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that whosoever should believe in him will not perish but have eternal life." And those words rang through my head as I grew and considered what career path to choose. For God so loved the world. And it was just embedded in me that God loves this world and he, he created people and he loves them. And so gave me an imagination for what does it look like for me to reflect his heart for the world.

And so I went into international aid and development. I lived in places like Iraq where there were people who were displaced from their homes because of violence. And I journeyed with people who were able to return home after a violent period in their communities and then other families I worked with could never return home because of very systemic violence against them. And so later on with the opportunity to help Afghans in my own country, in my country of the United States, that experience echoed in my mind to think about what does it look like for me and the church community who sent me overseas to be involved in this work of welcoming and loving the world, not from an ocean away, but right in our own neighborhoods.

Ashley: I love that. And as you thought about your own journey and how you wanted to welcome immigrants right here in your own country, is that what led you to then become a sponsor? I mean, you were already working with Welcome.US. What prompted that shift from just organizing programs to stepping in yourself?

Krista: Again, I give credit to the Lord. I was working to equip and support sponsors and something nudged me inside that said, "That's great. You're equipping other churches to do this work and now it's time for you to participate and for you to welcome yourself to be able to really speak with authority and from your own experience to walk alongside other Americans who are just starting this work." As I mentioned before 2021, I was not involved in the work of welcoming newcomers to my own country. So I've learned a lot in the last four years and for me, that meant doing this work

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myself and it to me it echoes like the proximity of the sponsorship experience was really important for me to share my own experience with others and you know, we're recording right now in December. We're preparing for the Christmas season and that word of proximity is echoing in my mind even now. That's what Jesus did. He became a person and lived among us and so sponsorship to me was the opportunity to participate in the work that I'm helping to guide other people along in and really understand from a first-hand perspective what that was.

And that was coming from my more academic or theoretical experience of like, "Oh, I want to experience this to help other people, help other Americans know how to do this work." But in the process, I was transformed just by my own individual sponsorship experience, walking alongside both Ukrainians and Afghan families as a sponsor, helping them navigate life here. Just yesterday I visited an Afghan family who I sponsored. I brought with me a poinsettia. It's going to be their first Christmas here in the United States and so I got to tell them about why poinsettias are such a Christmasy flower and just how they bring us joy in a time of darkness. They're so red and vivid. There was another Afghan family earlier this year who I had the privilege to walk alongside and I was able to talk with them about what are their rights and responsibilities now that they're in America.

And going over rights and responsibilities really made me examine how proud I am of like the rights and responsibilities we have as Americans and it made me reexamine how they didn't have those rights in other countries and now they do. And so whether I'm speaking with a newcomer about the joy of poinsettias or the joy and privileges of our rights and responsibilities in America, it's been a really fun way for me to reexamine my life and my culture and share that with other people who are now going to be the ones to embrace their new lives and their new culture alongside me.

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Tracie: That is so amazing and admirable. As an immigration attorney, I am always looking to maybe separate myself from my work and have clear distinctions and you've gone the opposite route and it sounds so fulfilling and I am curious, how has your sponsorship journey evolved? How has it influenced your work and vice versa? Maybe some specific questions I or specific examples. I love the story with the poinsettia, but how has it all kind of merged together to create your unique journey?

Krista: Well, I've been really blessed by not just being a sponsor and having it benefit the work that I do and the outreach that I can do to other with other sponsors, but also engaging my own community, in particularly my church community in this work. In my sponsorship experience, there were three friends from three different churches in my community who came alongside, we formed a sponsor group and welcomed this Afghan family.

One family in our church, they have a basement apartment that they specifically set aside as their ministry that they let this family stay in for eight months to get their feet out under them as a landing pad. Others I called upon to, send a quick bundle of diapers when we needed it. I didn't even mention this family has a little baby that has been the joy of my life this year and it's given other opportunities for members of my church and my community to really come alongside a family who they may not have known otherwise. But because we intentionally sponsored them, we created a space for them, we prepared a way for them. Now they're able to be in proximate relationship with this family and they're also benefiting from knowing them from this relationship that they now have, whether it's, like a meal train. I think, Hope in Action is the name of this podcast and that's what sponsorship embodied in our community. It gave us an action for the hope that we have of building relationship across cultures.

Ashley: Krista, I love what you said about the aspect of Jesus coming down to earth. Jesus did not leave us where we were. He came to be with us to experience this life as a human and to walk alongside us in this journey.

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And I think about how you led your community, you talked to your friends, maybe in working with Welcome.US, you've also helped other sponsors jump into this work. What has it been like to lead people on that path, to encourage them to jump into walking alongside immigrants and newcomers?

Krista: I've been so encouraged. I've always said throughout these last four years, it's a good day when I get to speak with a sponsor because they're just such grounded, generous, compassionate, curious people that inspire me. So where we work to help equip and inspire Americans to do this work, it's actually had the effect of inspiring me and my colleagues just speaking with these tremendous, generous Americans. And we've seen them engaged in many different ways from sponsorship to just coming, simply coming alongside newcomers to help support them, integrate in their new communities, understand American culture and how to navigate their new country.

And now that some of the policy shifts we're seeing affect newcomers is particularly in including those who have been sponsored, we've also seen Americans take a different role in contacting their representatives on behalf of their friends and their neighbors to say, "We want to see these folks protected and they did follow all the legal procedures and we want to continue to support them." And that's been really transformative to me. As I mentioned, I'm new to this. So most of the journey that any of our sponsors are on, I'm also learning right alongside them and also taking new actions right alongside them because of this. Now I'm more active in engaging my representatives and I haven't that hasn't been something that I've been prone to before. Previously, I was more about action. I'll move overseas, I'll sponsor a family, I'll do the action to show that I care. And now part of that action in the sponsorship community is contacting our representatives and being a voice for people who are vulnerable. And so that's been a real interesting turning point, but also, again, it's proven the that sponsors are the real deal and how they act and what they say.

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Tracie: Amazing. Thank you so much for doing what you do. Now, our listeners might be wondering how to get involved in welcoming. Maybe even with Welcome.US. What does that look like?

Krista: That's a great question, Tracie. Thank you for asking it because if you're listening to this podcast right now, chances are you are interested in engaging and helping to support newcomers and Welcome.US might be the place for you to do that. I'd encourage folks whether you're already connected with a newcomer or you're looking for a new engagement opportunity to help support newcomers in your area or even ways to talk about your experiences with your friends and family who haven't had the same experiences. I'd encourage folks to take a look at our website. Like I mentioned, we're recording this in December, but we're going to have new opportunities and new offerings in 2026. So I'd encourage you to go to our website, which is Welcome.US, so it's easy to remember.

There you'll find opportunities to host a welcome table, you'll find language around what could it look like to contact your representative. You could sign up to receive emails to be informed about some of the new offerings and opportunities that we have, but I'd also encourage you, feel free to reach out to us at hello@Welcome.US if you're an American and you're looking for more ways to engage your community. I'd love to partner with you in navigating what that could look like to get more folks involved in this work of welcoming.

Ashley: That's amazing, Krista. I know that you are going to be such a good resource and Welcome.US will be such a good resource for our listeners, especially as they think about their journeys. You've just exemplified that and how you stepped from caring to action and how you moved in your hope and your faith into those places. So thank you for joining us and thank you for sharing the wisdom and all the experience that you've gathered and also the joy and the challenges of welcoming. I know it's not always easy to be a sponsor, but we're grateful for the work that you're doing and the work

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that Welcome.US is doing to encourage Americans to create those welcoming communities. And we pray that God continues to sustain you and to walk alongside you as you walk alongside the Afghan family and also so many others that you're helping.

Tracie: Yes, Krista, thank you. We appreciate you, your work, your expertise, your heart for this work. And Krista's story, you've heard us talk about different experiences of welcome and all of our stories are different, but I promise you, it's joyful, hard, and worthwhile work, but it does take some effort to sustain it.

So as we look across all these stories, different churches, different families, different communities, a pattern starts to emerge. There are certain qualities that show up again and again in the efforts that really do work.

Ashley: The first one is consistency over intensity. It's not the people who sprint the fastest at the beginning who make the biggest impact. It's the ones who show up in small, steady ways over time. Things like a weekly ride, a monthly check-in, a familiar face at church, school, or ESL class. Consistency like this communicates, "You can count on me." And really, to run the race of welcome with endurance, you do have to take it slow for both yourself and the person you're walking alongside. I've seen it personally. The fastest way to burnout is to jump all in and try to take on every need at once. And that leads us to our next point of how to welcome well.

Tracie: Which is having a mindset of walking with, not rescuing. Welcoming newcomers isn't about swooping in with solutions or trying to fix everything. It's about companionship. It's about being willing to be alongside someone as they find their footing. It honors your strength instead of centering on our own and empowers them to take back control of their lives. I will admit, struggling with this idea as a lawyer. I want to swoop in and fix everyone's legal issues, but I have to step back and remind myself that it's not my goals that matter. It's what do my clients want and how do I get them there.

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Ashley: And that flows into the next characteristic, listening before acting. The best welcome work begins with questions like, "What do you need right now?" or "How can we support your goals?" Listening keeps us from making assumptions and helps us avoid the trap of doing things for people instead of with them.

Tracie: A fourth theme is that true welcome is a community effort, not a solo project. No single person can meet every need or carry the emotional weight of someone's transition to life in the United States. But when a group shares a load and their unique giftings be that rides, meals, tutoring, prayer, friendship, you name it, everyone contributes something small and together it becomes something transformational.

Ashley: I saw that embodied at Welcome House like I said, not everyone wanted to spend time with the refugee family, not everyone wanted to make the beds or sweep the floors, but it was always a communal effort. And I think Krista's organization Welcome.US does that also when they encourage people to sponsor in groups, not just individually. That encourages everyone to take on a piece of welcoming and it doesn't put it all on one person. So all of these things that we've told you about now are grounded in respecting the autonomy and dignity of newcomers.

They're not projects or problems to solve. They are neighbors, peers, and partners in the process. Respect means involving them in decision-making, honoring their preferences, even and especially when we might disagree or make a different choice for ourselves and our family, and recognizing the expertise that they bring from their own lives and cultures. You have to remember that they have lived whole lives before they met us, and they've often made many difficult decisions on their journey to the United States. Those decisions have sustained them and their families to this point. So trust them to continue making the next decision that they believe is right for themselves and for their families.

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Tracie: And here's the part we really want to emphasize. The backbone of welcome work isn't made up of experts. It's made up of ordinary people who just decide to say yes. People who don't speak the language, people who've never worked in immigration, people who simply care enough to take one step towards connection.

Ashley: It turns out you don't need special credentials to welcome someone. You need humility, you need patience, and you need a willingness to show up again and again in small, faithful ways. That's what makes welcome work, not heroism, not expertise, just everyday people, like you and me, choosing to walk with others in love.

Tracie: When people hear the word welcome, we often see this immediate wave of hesitation. Like we talked about earlier, oh my gosh, does that mean you want them to live with me? There's a sense that this work is huge or specialized or only for certain kinds of people.

Ashley: You know, and we hear that same misconception over and over again. The first one I would hear from volunteers or potential volunteers is that I don't have enough time because most of us picture welcome as a massive, ongoing commitment. But in reality, some of the most meaningful acts take just a few minutes, like dropping off a meal, that hot meal that I mentioned, sending a text, giving a ride, donating supplies. It doesn't have to take over your schedule to make a difference for someone.

Tracie: Another hesitation we hear is I'm not qualified. People imagine that they need social work training or immigration expertise or cross-cultural degrees to make this work. But welcome work is mostly human work, kindness, presence, curiosity, flexibility. Ordinary people, not specialists, make this ecosystem thrive. And I will 110% attest to this because, again, as an immigration lawyer, I have my specialty, but I cannot do all the other things that we've talked about offering rides, figuring out school systems, going to the grocery store. It really does take a community and it takes all of us. So really, when you're contributing things that you're already doing,

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you don't realize it. That smile, that hello, all of those things add up. And just because you don't know the language, you know your community, you know your culture, you know the way that things are done and you can help someone navigate that. So your cultural know-how may seem really small and inconsequential to you, but to someone who is familiar with a different system and a different culture, your help can make all the difference in the world.

Ashley: And then we also hear something like, "Oh, my church isn't big enough to welcome a newcomer family." But we've seen tiny congregations with 20 people who contribute more relational warmth and practical support than churches that are 20 times their size. Welcome scales up or down. And for every church, every small group, even every family, everyone has something to offer that is unique to them. It's like that puzzle we mentioned. Everyone has a piece of the puzzle that we all need to make the bigger picture of welcome.

Tracie: Exactly. So let's talk about what involvement can actually look like because there's a whole spectrum depending on your capacity. At the smallest end, there's one-time support. Things like providing diapers, hosting a meal, donating household items, or giving someone a ride to an appointment. These acts are quick, simple, but still deeply helpful.

Ashley: Next would be an occasional commitment. Maybe once a month you volunteer at an ESL class. You might help navigate paperwork or join a community dinner. You're present, but it's flexible.

Tracie: And then there are regular check-ins. This is where relationships begin to form, like texting to see how someone is doing, meeting for coffee, helping with the job search. And here's where consistency, not quantity, is what matters.

Ashley: Further along the spectrum is sponsorship or co-sponsorship. That's what Krista was talking about where she sponsored a family. This is

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where a group walks with a newcomer family over several months. It's more involved, but it's also shared. Like we said, no one person carries the whole load.

And finally, there's behind-the-scenes logistics. Like what I was doing at Welcome House as a volunteer manager. Some people love organizing drives or coordinating volunteers, managing communication, or handling transportation schedules. They may never be on the front lines of welcome, but without them, none of this would hold together.

Tracie: The point is there really is a place for everyone, including you. You don't have to do everything. You just have to do something, one step that matches your capacity, your gifts, and your season of life.

Ashley: Welcome becomes possible when we stop assuming we need more, more time, more expertise, more people, and we start recognizing that what we already have is enough to begin.

Tracie: As followers of Jesus, our understanding of welcome isn't rooted in trends or politics. It's rooted in scripture. Hospitality is woven throughout the entire biblical story, from the laws of Moses to the ministry of Jesus to the letters of the early church.

Ashley: One of the clearest teachings on this comes from Hebrews 13:2, "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing, some have entertained angels without knowing it." And this first reminds us that welcome isn't optional. It's an expectation of God's people. Hospitality is a posture, a way of seeing the stranger as someone who carries the image of God.

Tracie: Scripture also grounds us in loving our neighbor. In Luke 10, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, someone who crosses social, cultural, and religious boundaries to care for a person in need. And Jesus ends with a simple command, "Go and do likewise." And that's Luke 10:37.

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That story isn't about nationality or background. It's about compassion expressed through action.

Ashley: We also see the theme of accompaniment throughout the Bible. In Galatians 6:2, we're told, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you fulfill the law of Christ." Welcome is one way we bear burdens, not by fixing everything, but by walking with people as Christ walks with us.

Tracie: Speaking of themes throughout the Bible, another theme we see is where God welcomes us. Although the Hebrews were originally God's only chosen people, the Bible tells us that God has a plan from the beginning to reconcile all peoples to God through his son Jesus. There are so many stories where those who are considered outsiders are welcomed into the kingdom, like Hagar, Rahab, and Ruth. Finally, we come to the book of Acts where Peter is told by God to welcome the Gentiles and baptize them after they receive the Holy Spirit. And Peter says, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right." And that's Acts 10. Finally, Paul testifies in Galatians 3:28 that "There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Ashley: And one of the most frequently repeated commands in scripture is to care for the foreigner. In Leviticus 19:34, God tells Israel, "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt." This isn't framed as charity. It's identity shaping. God says, "This is who my people are." Which brings us to an important point. Welcoming immigrants is not a political identity. It's a discipleship practice. It's not about choosing a side, it's about choosing to follow Jesus. It's about aligning our hearts with God's heart for the vulnerable, the displaced, and the stranger.

Tracie: When we welcome immigrants, we're not making a political statement. We're living out Matthew 25 where Jesus says, "I was a

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stranger and you invited me in." We're practicing the kind of love that doesn't ask, what does this mean for my image? But instead asks, "How can I reflect Christ?"

Ashley: So as we think about welcome, let's remember, it's not about being perfect, it's about being faithful. It's about letting scripture, not fear or division, shape the way we see and serve our neighbors. Welcome is part of the rhythm of a Christ-centered life. It's one of the ways we embody the gospel in the world.

Tracie: Now, as always, we like to end each episode with something practical, something you can say and something you can do. So here's today's conversation tip. Imagine someone hears about welcome work and says, "Wow, that sounds too intense or too risky for regular people." A gentle, confidence-building response might be, "Well, most welcome work isn't big or dramatic. It's just ordinary people doing small, steady things that make someone feel seen and supported." This reassures them that welcome isn't about expertise. Again, it's about presence, about showing up in ways that fit your life.

Ashley: That's right. So we also like to give you an addition to a conversation tip, a small action step that you can take each week as you listen to the podcast. This week's small action is pick one simple step, just one that helps you lean toward welcome. For example, you could introduce yourself to an immigrant neighbor or co-worker. You could look up a local welcome team or a co-sponsorship program at your local refugee resettlement agency. You could also offer a ride, share a meal, or attend a community welcome event, or pray for discernment about one step God might be inviting you to take this month. And if you'd like a slightly larger step and are interested in some reading, I know I love to read about things like this. I suggest checking out the Allyship Guide written by Chasing Justice and We Choose Welcome or the book No Longer Strangers: Transforming Evangelism with Immigrant Communities. Both resources

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offer guidance on how to draw close in solidarity with and honor our newcomer and immigrant neighbors. And of course, we'll have links in the show notes for you to find those easily.

Tracie: Remember, small steps create momentum. Small steps build courage. Small steps open doors. And remember too, that welcome begins not with a program, but with a person, and it often it's just a simple choice for us to reach out.

Ashley: That's right. If this episode resonated with you, we encourage you to share it with someone who may be struggling to reconcile their faith with their views on immigration. Thank you for listening to Hope in Action, navigating immigration with faith and care. We'll see you next time.

Tracie: This podcast is to inform, educate, and entertain and does not constitute legal advice. If you are making decisions related to immigration or any legal matter, please consult a licensed attorney in your state of residence.