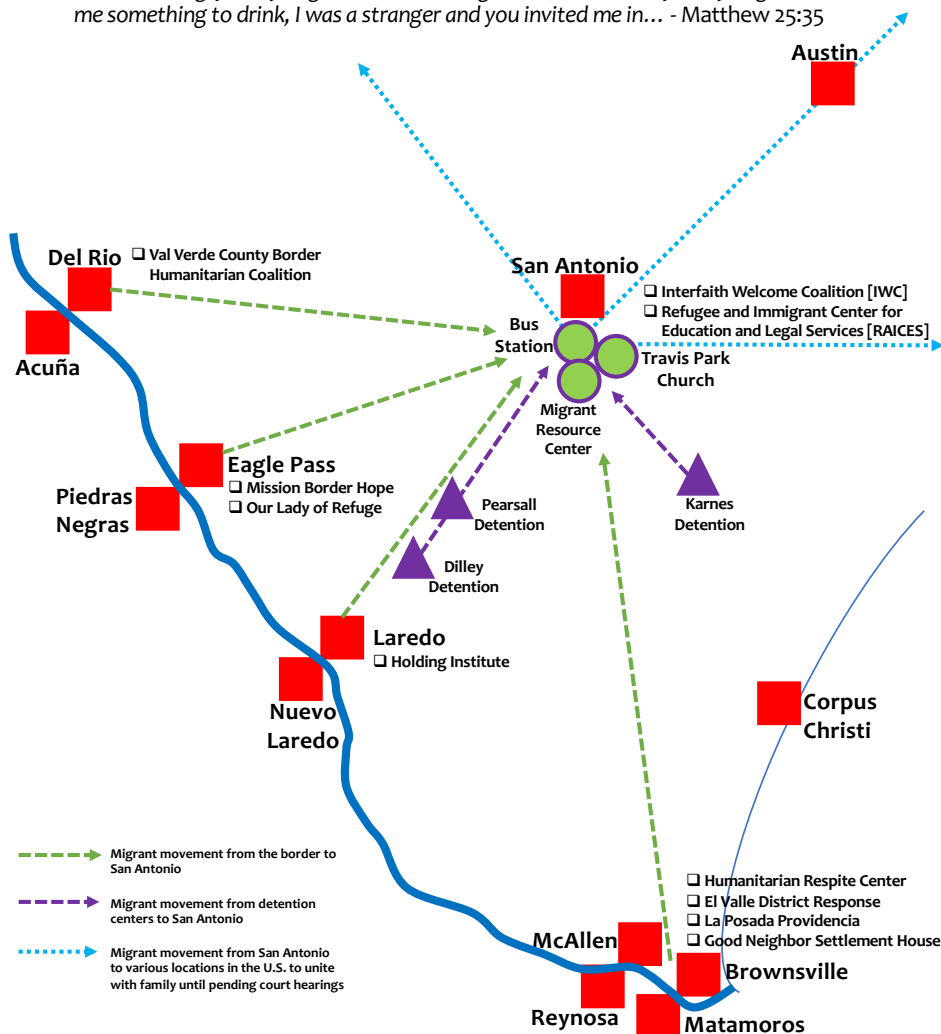


## Welcoming Sojourners in Our Midst: Our Growing Response

*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in... - Matthew 25:35*



The reality of global migration and the various push factors are an ever-present reality for us in the Rio Texas Conference. Our ministry and mission context is stewarding presence and relationships along 460 miles of the U.S. / Mexico border. [U.S. Customs and Border Protection reports](#) that over the first quarter of 2019, a total of 98,876 apprehensions of family units, unaccompanied children, and single adults have occurred, as reported by the Del Rio, Laredo, and Rio Grande sectors.

As an annual conference, we find that our definition of the humanitarian response mandate and systems of support needed grows sharper each week as the flow of migration increases. Ministries on the border are in conversation and in coordination with one another and with ministry response in San Antonio, which is the point of departure for migrants travelling to unite with family members in various parts of the country, where they will stay awaiting their asylum petition court date.

### How You Can Help:

Each of the ministry areas described needs assistance of some sort. Go to <https://riotexas.org/immigrationresponse> to find out how you can give to a particular humanitarian response ministry.



**El Valle District Response** – coordinates recruitment of volunteers for hospitality support, relief supplies, and presence at the Humanitarian Respite Center - McAllen, La Posada Providencia Refugee Center - San Benito, and Good Neighbor Settlement House – Brownsville. A forerunner in migrant response, the El Valle District has coordinated over 50 group immersions to the South Texas / Mexico border over the past year. Additional response has been feeding migrants on the border bridges and hosting teams offering presence by supporting refugees during their asylum court proceedings.



**Travis Park Church – San Antonio** offers shelter for migrants as needed in coordination with the Interfaith Welcome Coalition and the City of San Antonio Migrant Resource Center. Routinely, the Interfaith Welcome Coalition has also coordinated hospitality responses with the detention centers in Karnes City, Pearsall, and Dilley which bus migrants to San Antonio daily. Because of increasing numbers of migrants arriving in San Antonio from the border, the pattern has been disrupted. The increase has necessitated a broader coordinated effort with the City of San Antonio, Catholic Charities, Interfaith Welcome Coalition, Travis Park, and others.



**Holding Institute – Laredo** houses migrant families, upwards of 40 to 60 persons weekly, providing refuge and coordination of “next step” services. Recently, Holding was asked to attend an emergency meeting called by Customs and Border Protection [CBP]. CBP indicated that Laredo has experienced only secondary effects until now. Southwest Border stats indicate a 122% increase in apprehensions fiscal year to date. At this time in 2018, 220k migrants crossed the border at Laredo and at this time in 2019, 489k migrants. CBP projects 990k persons arriving by the end of the year. Laredo receives 38% of all crossings spread across the Southwest border with no particular signs of ebbing. Essentially, safety concerns force CBP to begin releasing refugees as soon as possible. CBP’s plan is to begin releasing 188 refugees in Laredo daily beginning Friday 5/10/19. This does not include releases from the port of entry directly. Daily means Saturday and Sunday also.

What does this mean for Holding?

- Holding is working as hard and fast as it can to process as needed.
- Holding is working in collaboration with our Catholic and Baptist brothers and sisters for placements.
- Holding is hosting at 100 + persons every night
- Holding is prepping 3 meals daily and running short on basic supplies daily.
- Holding could use prayer, hygiene supplies/kits, HEB/Walmart gift cards, socks, underwear, used shoes, and monetary donations.

<https://www.lmtonline.com/local/article/Laredo-shelter-filled-to-capacity-with-migrants-13630879.php>



### **Val Verde County Border Humanitarian Coalition**

As the arrival of migrants in Del Rio has recently increased, First UMC, Principe de Paz UMC – Del Rio, and the Methodist Healthcare Ministries Wesley Nurse have worked with community partners and the City of Del Rio towards the formation of a coalition as a means of offering hospitality to migrants enroute to San Antonio and other parts of the U.S. Working with the City of Del Rio, the coalition has established a transitional shelter and the coordination of resources and support services for arriving migrants. The new shelter is now at high use given the increase of migrant arrivals to Del Rio due to CBP transporting migrants by air to alleviate processing overflows in the McAllen area. See reference stories:

- <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=a8qfjOwc9X8>
- <https://www.ksat.com/video/del-rio-housing-large-influx-of-migrants-after-closing-port-of-entry>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DChbgnU5Mm4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykCOLtFVToU>
- <https://www.krgv.com/news/immigrants-flown-from-rgv-to-del-rio-for-processing/>



**Mission Border Hope – Eagle Pass** since November 2018, has steadily responded to the increase of migrants arriving in Piedras Negras, to those seeking asylum and waiting for days to present themselves to Customs and Border Patrol [CBP] at the international bridge, and to those processed and released in Eagle Pass seeking passage to connect with family or sponsors within the U.S. Recently, a more unified response is coalescing in Eagle Pass with Mission Border Hope, Our Lady of Refuge, CBP, bus transportation services, and other partners to discuss sheltering and other stabilizing responses. <https://www.khou.com/article/news/as-shelters-overflow-asylum-seekers-awaiting-decisions-left-in-freezing-temps/285-622781071>