



SPONSORING A VIGIL AT THE IMMIGRANT DETENTION CENTER

Why a vigil?

Prayer vigils give powerful expression to prophetic voices on concerns facing our communities. People of faith, regardless of status, open the space for immigrant voices to be heard and also lift up the sacred texts of our faith traditions, offer prayer, reflection, meditation and song as a way to stand in solidarity with the struggles of the immigrant justice movement.

Prayer vigils also communicate to public officials, the business community and others the concerns of people of faith for justice, and can provide a moral perspective on those issues.

Vigils can:

- Remember or commemorate
- Keep watch or bear witness
- Bring people together
- Express a community or an individuals' emotion
- Connect information and experience to your heart, head and soul

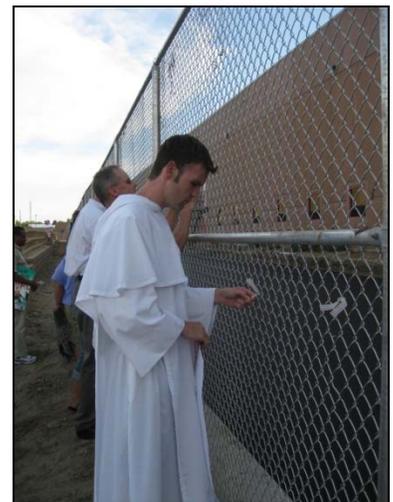


History of AFSC Detention Vigils

The Colorado office first started working on immigrant detention in 2008 when it became clear that GEO Corporation was planning to construct a new wing, expanding from 400 to 1,500 beds. We were one of many organizations working to convince the Aurora City Council to oppose the expansion. We delayed the approval by several months, but in the end the City Council voted in favor of the expansion. During our campaign to stop the expansion we realized most people in our community had no idea that immigrant detention happens in Aurora.

A few months later, in February of 2009, we held our first vigil at the GEO detention center to raise awareness, to demonstrate to the community and to those detained that our opposition had not waned, to pressure ICE not to contract with GEO corporation for the additional beds, and to work towards ending immigrant detention. Since May 2009 we have held vigils the first Monday of every month with speakers ranging from people who have been detained at the facility to state Senator Morgan Carrol and Congressman Jared Polis.

The vigils are a place to connect the immigrant rights movement with heart, soul and creativity. Since November of 2009, each month a different group plans the program, helping us engage new people and keeping the creativity flowing. The vigils have included silence, tying ribbons on the fence, flowers, theater, rap, poetry, song, and valentines!





Some Tips to keep in mind...

- ❖ **Detention Center Vigils are held outside** and participants need to stand and/or walk. There are plenty of distractions outside so keep speaking short, strong and to the point. **Also, in winter months it is bitter cold** as the vigil happens after sundown so the more the program involves moving/dancing/walking/huddling together, the better!
- ❖ **Without a permit**, we are limited to the sidewalks around GEO and the open space about 2 blocks away. This is important to think about in terms of how much people can hear/see and what you are hoping to do in terms of community interaction and engagement
- ❖ What **messages** do you want passerby to understand? Do your banners and signs reflect this message? AFSC practices non-violence and believes in speaking truth to power. Our philosophy of non-violence includes refraining from personal insults and name calling. Our philosophy of speaking truth includes calling out the failed/misguided policies of decision makers, even those who have been allies in the past.
- ❖ At GEO we can park where there is street **parking** along 30th Avenue and Oakland Street. The center is on several bus routes, off Peoria
- ❖ **Speakers** should keep it short and remember that everything they say needs to be translated. If you need help with translation please let us know.
- ❖ **Can be as simple** as a welcome and lighting of candles with a designated time for silence.



What might a vigil include? Sample Program

- **Welcome & Introduction**
 - **AFSC staff person or Coloradans For Immigrant Rights member** can do the Welcome and explain how the vigils came about. We'll also introduce your group.
 - **MC, key speaker or vigil leader presents the focus of the vigil.** Who are we? Why are we here? He or she can do the opening prayer (or introduce the person who does) and review the vigil program and explain why people of faith care about this issue. Make sure to consciously refer to people directly affected by immigrant detention and why the vigil is important to them. You might invite an immigrant to speak or bring other materials produced by families affected. *(AFSC can help with this).*
- **Opening prayer or statement** (Remember, no longer than 3-5 minutes with translation)
- **Testimony:** speech, play, spoken word or poetry, song from those most affected.
- **Group connection**, an activity that binds the group together: lighting of each other's candles, go around the circle sharing thoughts, taking turns reading, singing or chanting together, art, theater, dance, holding hands or drumming.
- **Invitation to Action:** Sign a petition, invite people to an upcoming meeting or action, sign people up for the AFSC email list, invite people to make a meaningful personal commitment.
- **In Closing**, thank people for coming and use an activity to close the space. Sing a closing song, yell a final chant, do a clap or drumbeat together.



Roles at the Vigil (*AFSC can help fill in where you need help*):

- ✘ **MC** will Welcome and introduction of speakers, activities, songs, chants and provide interpretation of the program into English or Spanish.
- ✘ **Opening Prayer/blessing/meditation.** Cleric or lay person will guide the reflection from their faith tradition, connecting values to our resistance to immigrant detention. Begins by sharing their faith tradition, inviting others to join them and explaining they will use inclusive language where ever possible.
- ✘ **Marshalls** will keep participants safely on the sidewalk or designated areas and focused on the vigil. Marshalls will also direct the movement of the group safely through traffic lights and around cars or other traffic. If necessary, **Security** will work to isolate provocateurs or counter protestors from the vigil group and work in communication with police.
- ✘ **Press Point Person** will greet any members of the press, get their contact information, explain the program to the press and then direct the press to people to be interviewed.
- ✘ **Historian** will take pictures and/or video and provide to staff for follow up press release or internet use.
- ✘ **Song/Chant/Activity Leaders:** A couple of people who can confidently sing the song or chant the chant first and then lead the group. Volunteers who can put on their camp counselor/teacher/coach hat. =)

Vigil Checklist

- Program:** Ready to go at least 2 weeks before the vigil. Confirm speakers, gather materials and create a flyer that fits the theme of your program.
- *Flyers:** Ready to go at least 2 weeks before the vigil to ensure good turnout. *AFSC can help in designing the flyers and translating all materials.*
- *Press Materials:** An AFSC staff member will work with you to develop a press release.
 - **AFSC has a press list**, however, if your group has personal relationships with religious or secular press, please let us know. It would be great to have YOU reach out to them!
 - **Press Advisory** distributed several days before the vigil.
 - **Press Release** distributed at the vigil and emailed after.
- Historian:** One of your members who can do **ONLY** this and provide to staff for follow up press release or internet use to **post photos and videos** within 48 hours.
- *Printed copies** of the program for those who have a part and for the press.
- *Printed copies** of songs and chants you'd like the group to participate in. Ask people to share and print double sided!
- Candles** with some kind of container (Dixie cups, etc) to keep the wind from blowing them out. *AFSC can bring these. Also ask your group to bring their own.*
- Lighters** (matches are no fun in the wind)
- Bullhorn or sound system:** really important as most vigils occur outside where it's difficult to hear. *AFSC has both.*
- Interpretation:** Very important to ensure that everyone is welcomed and valued. Think of the speakers you're having. Ask them if they'd like to interpret for themselves or if they'd like someone else to do it. *AFSC can do this if needed.*
- Signs and banners** that reinforce the purpose or emotion of your vigil. *AFSC has some but please also make/bring some of your own.*
- Guitars, drums, noise makers!** *AFSC has some but please also make/bring some of your own.*

* AFSC can print ANY black and white flyers/programs/song sheets/and press materials if they are sent to us electronically.



American Friends Service Committee

a Quaker organization

Strengthening the Movement for Immigrant Justice!

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