



Cabrini Connection Immigration Ministry  
Christ the King Catholic Church, Diocese of Nashville  
Our Formation and Founding Principles

*This document is meant to be shared as a resource if other parishes or churches feel called to minister in a formalized way to our immigrant brothers and sisters in Christ.*

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**Forming an Immigration Ministry at a Parish: How Cabrini Connection Came to Be**

1. Establish trusted, shared leadership between a committed pastor and at least one passionate lay leader through face-to-face conversations.
2. Host a large-scale, publicized event focused on education and action on the immigration issue (this will be difficult because a leadership team for this ministry is not yet established, but it will bear so much fruit!).
3. Establish strong partnerships with local non-profit organizations who are already doing the work (for Christ the King, these partnerships were mostly established as an important component of the large-scale event).
4. Gather interested parishioners and other Catholics (and non-Catholics!) into a database (most people found through their attendance at the event), and host a follow-up virtual interest meeting after the event.
5. Create a leadership team of lay volunteers who will run the ministry with the advice of their pastor. Meet in person to establish trust and choose foundational principles and goals. Root the work in a sense of community and prayer.
6. Formalize the ministry through the creation of an official e-mail address, a webpage, and a name for the ministry that reflects the ministry's foundational principles.
7. Send out the first monthly e-newsletter to establish this as a norm for the ministry, and do so at the same time each month.
8. Begin regular (weekly or monthly, for example) prayer and service opportunities as the core of the work. (For Christ the King, this means once-a-week daily Mass and rosary as well as once-per-month service). Publicize far and wide, always beyond the walls of the parish!

9. Pursue once-per-month additional ministry opportunities, such as another educational event, a prayer and public witness event, or a community meal event. Publicize far and wide.
10. Begin outreach to other parishes and the Diocesan offices, using any existing connections and relying on the wisdom of the pastor. Connect with national efforts to get support and ideas for the future. Support other churches in this work.

### **Cabrini Connection: Our Foundations**

The Cabrini Connection Ministry is rooted firmly in the life of Christ, rooted in both Sacred Scripture and Catholic Tradition. We seek to live out our Catholic faith through living in solidarity with our immigrant neighbors in order to uphold their dignity as children of God.

[St. Frances Xavier Cabrini](#) was chosen as our patron saint because she inspires us in the way we wish to live out our ministry. She was an immigrant who ministered to other immigrants, living in community and among those she served. When her local Church and government pushed back against her sacred calling, she spoke truth to power and persevered in the works of mercy. Prayer was her source of strength, and she saw the face of Christ in the lost, the least, and the left-out. She was the first American saint.

The name *Cabrini Connection* was chosen because the Catholic Social Teaching principle of solidarity is foundational to our ministry. We wish to be side by side and hand in hand with all our neighbors, most specifically those who are immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. We acknowledge our own identities as we do so, knowing that most of our families were once immigrants. We are all *connected* as children of God.

The official founding document of Cabrini Connection is the Special Pastoral Message on Immigration from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, promulgated in November 2025. Please find this document [here](#). Members of the Cabrini Connection Leadership Team all took the USCCB's [Cabrini Pledge](#), and all members of our ministry are also encouraged to do so.

The four pillars of Cabrini Connection are drawn directly from the USCCB's [You Are Not Alone](#) campaign. As we seek to serve and be in solidarity with immigrants, these pillars are:

1. Emergency and Family Support
2. Accompaniment and Pastoral Care
3. Communications and Church Teaching
4. Prayer and Public Witness

## Detailed Timeline of the Formation of Cabrini Connection:

- **July 2025** - Fr. John Raphael becomes Pastor of Christ the King, bringing his passion for Church teachings on immigration
- **August and September 2025** - Fr. John connects with interested parishioners in order to create a parish-wide educational event; Elizabeth Elfers (future chair of Cabrini Connection) takes on a leadership role in planning the event; various non-profits commit to being panelists or tabling organizations for the event (these partnerships continue after the event)
- **October 16, 2025** - Christ the King hosts Whatsoever You Do - Immigration: A Catholic Response and Call to Action. This event draws 200 participants from across and beyond the Diocese. If you'd like to learn more about how to host a similar event, the to-do list, flyer, and event program are all available to interested parishes - just email: [immigration.ministry@ctk-nashville.org](mailto:immigration.ministry@ctk-nashville.org). Read more about this event [here](#).
- **November 2025:**
  - Elizabeth Elfers commits to lay leadership with the support of the parish and pastor
  - A database is created using the online RSVPs from the October event, hard copies of sign-up sheets at the same event, a follow-up survey to event attendees, and through soliciting participation via the Church bulletin
  - An initial Zoom meeting happens for all interested parishioners (and beyond) with primary goals of maintaining positive momentum and finding leaders for a potential leadership team
  - An official email address ([immigration.ministry@ctk-nashville.org](mailto:immigration.ministry@ctk-nashville.org)) is established to formalize the ministry
- **December 2025:**
  - The name Cabrini Connection is chosen to invoke the guidance and prayers of our patron, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini
  - A lay leadership team of 7 active, committed parishioners is established. A first planning meeting for the leadership team happens. The leadership team adopts their founding documents and principles. The team sets goals for 2026 and begins dividing up leadership responsibilities.
- **January 2026:**
  - Key components of the ministry begin by month's end. These include:
    - Weekly daily Mass (Saturdays at 9 am) followed by the Rosary to pray specifically for immigrants through the intercession of St. Cabrini (with a promotional graphic created and disseminated widely).
    - Once-a-month service opportunity (food distribution) through partner non-profit Conexion Americas, one of the non-profits

involved at our October event (with a promotional graphic created and disseminated widely).

- A monthly e-newsletter created with Canva and distributed to 100+ people on the listserv (if interested parishes would like to see this e-newsletter or be added to our list, just email: [immigration.ministry@ctk-nashville.org](mailto:immigration.ministry@ctk-nashville.org))
- Once/monthly leadership team meeting to continue indefinitely (sometimes in person, sometimes via Zoom)

- **February 2026:**

- All of the above continues in addition to the items below:
- Continued strengthening of our relationship with other non-profit partners (for ex: In their leadership role with Cabrini Connection, Elizabeth and Jim Elfers work to connect a large humanitarian aid organization, Matthew 25 Ministries, to Catholic Charities of Middle Tennessee. Matthew 25 Ministries ends up bringing an entire tractor-trailer's worth of goods to provide storm relief after Winter Storm Fern). Various non-profit partners are featured in our monthly e-newsletter to provide volunteer and donation opportunities for parishioners.
- Cabrini Connection begins to support other churches and Dioceses in their work through sharing documents and ideas. For examples:
  - Christ Church Cathedral (Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee) utilizes all our materials from the Whatsoever You Do event in order to host a similar event on March 3.
  - Holy Family, St. Henry, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Philip, St. Ann, and St. Stephen parishioners join our listserv and request more involvement and collaboration.
  - Conversation begins with Bishop Spalding (request to be added to our listserv) and Bishop Beckman (Diocese of Knoxville), who links Elizabeth with their Director of Hispanic Ministries to continue the conversation.
- A webpage is created as part of the parish website to achieve the goals of the ministry
- Planning also begins for future events:
  - Adult Faith Formation Evening Event (Legality and Morality of Immigration Panel Discussion) to take place on March 19
  - A "Mercadito" (food market) in partnership with another partner non-profit, The Remix Way, all proceeds supporting immigrant vendors to take place on April 26
  - A possible direct aid event that is also in the works
  - A possible prayer/public witness event that could be Diocesan-wide

*The Cabrini Connection timeline was created on February 13, 2026 and will be updated as this ministry continues to progress.*