

Reference Letter Recommendations for the Department of Immigration

Have you ever had to write a reference letter for someone seeking asylum? Have you been asked by someone seeking asylum in your congregation to discuss his or her Christian faith with the Department of Immigration? It can be hard to know what to say and what not to say in such a serious situation. One of our pastors has generously shared a reference letter that he wrote for a member of his church who was seeking asylum. A copy of the letter (minus identifying information) is posted below, followed by some other helpful tips for conversations with the Department of Immigration.

Example Letter

Reference for NAME

To whom it may concern:

From DATE, I have been serving as the Senior Pastor for NAME OF CHURCH. During my time there, I have had the opportunity to meet and get to know NAME OF APPLICANT, who has demonstrated himself/herself to be a consistent attender and member of the church since DATE.

NAME has been able to develop friendships within the church community and is recognised by church office-bearers as a reliable and dependable person at the church. NAME is a man/woman who has an authentic and genuine faith in Jesus Christ, which he/she demonstrated by being baptized on DATE. NAME continues to be a vital member of our church community, participating in our church community events and discipleship programs.

If I can assist with any further questions, I would be more than happy to be of assistance.

Yours faithfully.

NAME

Additional Recommendations

The pastor who wrote this letter said that the Department of Immigration called to ask follow-up questions that related directly to the reference he gave. This had not happened on previous occasions. The questions were about church attendance, where/how the applicant receives discipleship, and whether the church is still supporting the applicant.

The pastor said that the follow-up phone call really stressed to him the importance of including dates, details of the applicant's involvement in church and the value that the applicant provides to the church community. The pastor also said that the interviewer from the Department of Immigration wanted clear yes or no answers to the questions. It didn't feel like a conversation that the pastor would have normally had about a person's faith. The pastor said that, "Clear and definite answers that show that you are fully in tune with the person's circumstances are important."