

***Call to Action for Immigration Reform  
Resolution Presented to 2010  
Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference***

Throughout Scripture we see evidence of God's call to welcome the sojourner. Throughout Scripture we also see God sharing good news to those who practice hospitality through the presence of the sojourner. As affirmed by General Conference in 2008, we believe that, "there is theologically and historically an implied nature of mutuality in migration. Both the migrant and the native are meant to benefit from migration. Welcoming the migrant is not only an act of mission, it is an opportunity to receive God's grace."

As receivers of God's grace we are called to engage in justice on behalf of those rejected and oppressed. As United Methodists we believe that,

Jesus' presence on earth initiated the Kingdom reality of a new social order based on love, grace, justice, inclusion, mercy, and egalitarianism, which was meant to replace the old order, characterized by nepotism, racism, classism, sexism, and exclusion. The broken immigration system in the United States and the xenophobic responses to migrants reflect the former social order. The calling of the people of God is to advocate for the creation of a new immigration system that reflects Jesus' beloved community. (*Welcoming the Migrant to the U.S.*, 2008 General Conference)

The current immigration debate has too often been characterized by fear and ignorance. Irresponsible language by the media and some members of Congress has generated a dangerous atmosphere that has led to racism and xenophobia against immigrants.

This has resulted in the passage of Senate Bill 1070 in Arizona in April 2010. This legislation is set to be enforced in August of this year and will:

- Require policing officials in the state to determine the immigration status of any person within which they come into lawful contact, if the officer has reasonable suspicion that he or she is unlawfully present in the U.S. If suspected of being here unlawfully, the person shall not be released until their identification is properly verified. If they are found guilty, they are not eligible for suspension of sentence, probation, or commutation of sentence until the full sentence is served. They will be turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement,
- Declare that any person found present on public or private land within the state that is not in possession of some form of U.S. identification or authorization will be fined, incarcerated, and turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement,
- Give Arizona citizens the right to bring suit against any official or agency that they feel does not enforce these requirements,
- Make it illegal for any person to stop, pick up, or solicit day laborers if they stop or impede the normal flow of traffic, and
- Make it illegal to transport, conceal, harbor, or shield an unlawful immigrant in any building or means of transportation.

Though immigrants come to the United States from throughout the world, this law will potentially result in racial profiling against Latinos and immigrants of color. Though we are called to love and serve all immigrants, regardless of their legal status, this law could possibly criminalize those who minister among immigrant communities. This legislation will force police officers to abandon their responsibilities to

protect and serve communities and force them to become federal immigration enforcement agents. This legislation has created a climate of fear and terror and has done nothing to repair the broken immigration system.

The United Methodist Church advocates for comprehensive immigration reform which consists of:

- An opportunity for legal status for all undocumented migrants. Any pathway created for undocumented migrants should have minimal obstacles and those requirements should not be designed to preclude migrants from eligibility for legalization,
- Clearing the backlogs and reunifying families separated by migration or detainment,
- An increase in the number of visas for short-term workers to come into the United States to work in a safe, legal, and orderly way. Opportunities for legalization should be available for those who wish to remain permanently,
- The protections of all workers who come to stay for a certain period of time as well as for those who stay permanently. The right to bargain for higher wages, to protest against poor working conditions, and to preserve their human rights should be maintained by all workers, documented and undocumented alike.

It is clear that the Arizona law, SB 1070 falls short of the principles called for by the 2008 General Conference and therefore this legislation, and all other bills like it should be opposed by United Methodists.

Therefore, we call upon the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference to stand with our brothers and sisters in Arizona. We call upon all United Methodist churches within the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference to:

- Work closely with the leadership of the Rapid Response Team, and the Committee on Church and Society to spread awareness about the need for immigration reform,
- Commit to engage in specific ministries of hospitality to newly arrived migrants,
- Begin a visitation program for migrants at a local detention center,
- (If the local church is predominantly Anglo) develop mutual, egalitarian relationships with immigrant churches,
- Participate individually, and as the Body of Christ during the public corporate prayers times during the Week of Prayer during the week of June 12 in support of our sisters and brothers in Arizona, and Pennsylvania, as well as the other 19 states which will be considering similar legislation.
- Joining faith coalitions within Pennsylvania that advocate for the principles of comprehensive immigration reform.

Furthermore, we are asking this body to request that the Council of Bishops send an Episcopal Letter of Response to this crisis for the people need to know that their Bishops stand behind them in this time of uncertainty and fear.

Submitted by,

Immigration Rapid Response Team of the Eastern PA Conference