



# CHURCH & SOCIETY

The United Methodist Church

Living **FAITH** Seeking **JUSTICE** Pursuing **PEACE**

## SANCTUARY NOT DEPORTATION: A Faithful Witness to Building Welcoming Communities

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.” Psalm 91:1-2

As the faith community, we are called to accompany our community members, congregants and neighbors facing deportation.

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## Sanctuary Movement and the Immigrants' Rights Movement

People of faith from all traditions called on Congress to pass immigration reform, yet Congress failed to move forward on meaningful legislation. Meanwhile, the deportation machinery grew stronger becoming more advanced under the Obama Administration, with an alarming rate of more than 1,100 people being deported every day, totaling nearly 2.5 million deportations over under this administration. The organizing efforts of undocumented youth in 2012 pushed the administration to create the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which has allowed close to a million undocumented students to travel and work legally.

In [2014 a resurgence of the Sanctuary Movement](#) began out of need in the community to stop deportations at a case-by-case level. In May of 2014 [Daniel Neyoy Ruiz](#) took Sanctuary in Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson Arizona, the same church that helped nearly fifteen thousand political refugees escape the tragic civil wars in Central America during the 1980s. Daniel won a stay of removal after 27 days of living in Sanctuary. As this spread through the media at a time when President Obama was delaying Executive Actions on immigration, many more immigrants facing a deportation order looked to congregations in their region to take refuge and fight to keep their families together. Over the next years more than a dozen people came forward to take refuge in Sanctuary, the majority were able to win a stay of removal or an order of supervision within several months, but the Immigration Customs Enforcement delayed justice on many occasions such as with Rosa Robles-Loreto who only found victory after 461 days of Sanctuary. Some left the church with a written promise from ICE they would not be deported, but they continue to fight their case to gain some sort of relief from deportation.

This resurgence of the Sanctuary Movement has created a platform to raise up the prophetic and moral witness while at the same time lifting up the stories of those leaders who are brave enough to speak out against the injustice of deportation. This surly brought significantly increased public pressure on the Obama Administration to announce the President's Executive Action on Immigration on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Now the Sanctuary Movement again is playing a critical role in responding in the post-election reality wherein fear, discrimination and xenophobia has taken a new precedent in our countries politics. With the promise of the Trump Administration to deport millions, people of faith we have a moral responsibility to act. Sanctuary is a tool that helps escalate these efforts by offering our neighbors who face a deportation order safe refuge and sanctuary in our congregations.

[Faith Pledge for Sanctuary](#)

## What is Sanctuary?

### ***An Ancient Tradition of Faith Communities***

Sanctuary is one of the most ancient traditions that we have as a people of faith. The ancient Hebrew people had allowed temples and even whole cities to declare themselves places of refuge for persons accused of a crime they may not have committed, a practice that allowed those wrongfully accused to escape swift and harsh retribution until the matter could be resolved. In the late Roman Empire fugitives could find refuge in the precincts of Christian churches. Later, during the medieval period churches in England were recognized sanctuaries, offering safe haven for a temporary period to accused wrong doers. In the United States the first practical provision of anything like sanctuary occurred in the years before the Civil War. The Underground Railroad came into being to help slaves flee the South and find safety in many congregations throughout the country. Sanctuary is about providing safe space to those who are victims of unjust laws.

### ***The Sanctuary Movement in the 1980s***

When refugees from the Civil Wars in Central America began to flee to the United States in the 1980's, the U.S. government did not recognize them as political refugees. Many were deported and received by death squads upon their return. From this dire injustice, the Sanctuary Movement was born. It peaked with over 500 congregations establishing an underground railroad whereby refugees move through the United States to safe houses and safe congregations. Many clergy in the Tucson area were indicted and eventually acquitted for their involvement in assisting Central American refugees. The Sanctuary Movement sought to remind the United States government of its own asylum and refugee laws, which they were not following when it came to the refugees of Central America.

### ***Sacred Texts***

- God calls people of faith to remember that they once were strangers in a strange land and they must, must welcome the stranger as an expression of covenant faithfulness (Leviticus 19:33-34)
- We must "learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:17)
- We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27)

LINKS on Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s

[The Public Sanctuary Movement: A Historical Basis of Hope](#) by Eileen Purcell

[The Origins of a Political Trial: The Sanctuary Movement and Political Justice](#) by Sophie H. Pririe  
<http://sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>

### ***Current Day Sanctuary Movement***

Drawing on this tradition, communities of faith have once again seen the need to declare Sanctuary for immigrants as the rise of deportations continues to separate families. In the 1980's we were compelled by the call to welcome the stranger, as we opened our doors to newly arriving refugees. Now we are moved by the call to love our neighbors as ourselves, as those who are entering into Sanctuary are most often long term members of our communities - our neighbors.

In 2007, an initiative known as the New Sanctuary Movement took shape with coalitions of congregations in major cities throughout the country. As work place and neighborhood raids escalated, these congregations opened their doors to provide refuge to those facing deportation. See [NSM toolkit here \(http://imirj.org/new-sanctuary-movement-toolkit-for-congregations/\)](http://imirj.org/new-sanctuary-movement-toolkit-for-congregations/).

The New Sanctuary Movement helped win [the Morton Memo and Prosecutorial Discretion](#) in 2011 and [President Obama's Executive Actions on Immigration in 2014](#), which has helped stop thousands of deportations through case-by-case advocacy. Those entering sanctuary are generally eligible for Prosecutorial Discretion, but local ICE field offices have been very reluctant to offer this relief from deportations in which the community has had to engage in public advocacy to win stays of removal or an order of supervision and in most cases.

With a Trump Administration we could potentially lose these victories, so we must work together to advocate and fight to keep prosecutorial discretion guidelines where community members can still win a stay of removal and be able to keep united with their families while having the opportunity to get a work permit and drivers license.

### ***Executive Actions on Immigration***

After countless actions, vigils, prayer services and even civil disobedience as a prophetic witness the Obama Administration set forth the Executive Actions on Immigration on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 that would benefit 5 million undocumented people. This was a huge victory for the immigrants' rights movement. As expected, our opponents hit back hard attacking the President's announcement, attempting to move legislation against Executive Action (which failed to pass) and 26 Republican Governors filed a lawsuit in Texas. The judges ruled according to partisan lines and enjoined the Executive Actions that would expand Deferred Action. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court, but there were only 8 justices and so the decision on DAPA was tied 4-4 meaning it went back to the lower court decision and DAPA was never put into affect.

### **[New guidelines for Prosecutorial Discretion](#)**

### **[Expansion of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA+\)](#)**

### **[Deferred Action for Parents of Americans \(DAPA\)](#)**

The Trump Administration has promised to rescind Executive Actions of President Obama, and so these Prosecutorial Discretion guidelines are expected to change.

### ***Central American and Haitian Humanitarian Crisis***

In the summer of 2014, an influx of unaccompanied children and families fleeing gang violence in Central America's Northern Triangle began presenting themselves at the U.S.- Mexico border seeking asylum. Many of these children and families who have lost their asylum cases because they were unable to find legal counsel or due to "rocket dockets" that are meant to expedite trials but in reality deny due process. These children and families should have the opportunity to appeal their case with adequate representation.

The overall deportation numbers of fiscal year 2015 was 235, 413 significantly lower than the 2012 all time high of 409, 849 as a result from Executive Action. However, the Obama administration seems to have made

the political calculation they need to get their quotas up and have chosen to target Central American asylum-seeking families for deportation.

Haitians have begun presenting themselves at the border for asylum at new levels. Advocates have called to provide Temporary Protective Status for Haitians because of the 2010 earthquake and 2016 Hurricane Matthew, but the Obama administration has responded with expedited removal proceedings instead, giving little time for Haitians to present their asylum case.

The Trump Administration may try to ignore the asylum seekers all together and deport them immediately. We will have to stand up and protect our asylum laws and ensure that asylum seekers actually get their case heard with legal assistance and enough time to prepare the case. The Sanctuary network will be extremely important in supporting Central Americans and Haitian asylum seekers.

## Sanctuary Goals and Strategy

As the faith community, we are called to accompany our community members, congregants and neighbors facing deportation. By offering sanctuary we can fight individual cases, advocate to stop deportations, and make it possible to win deferred action at a case-by-case level to keep families together.

- Amplify the moral imperative to stop deportations by lifting up the stories of sanctuary cases and ensuring the prophetic witness of the immigrant taking sanctuary is heard at the national level.
- Defend administrative policies such as [Prosecutorial Discretion](#) so that we can still win stays of deportation case by case and keep sacred spaces and schools protected under the [Sensitive Locations](#) guidelines
- Work alongside undocumented students to defend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival program (DACA)
- Support local work to defend Sanctuary cities or local detainer policies and push back against unjust enforcement policies such as the [Priority Enforcement Program](#) or [287 g in the jails](#)
- Participate and help create protection networks to provide know your rights education, sanctuary space, legal assistance, housing assistance, family planning and bail support funds
- Stop the Trump border wall and any attempt to increase criminalization or mandatory sentencing for immigrants
- Defend asylum seekers by pushing back against expedited removal and helping provide critical resources such as legal assistance so they can defend and win their case.

## Expanding Sanctuary Beyond the Congregations

Congregations, schools, and hospitals are considered “sensitive locations” under the [ICE Sensitive Locations](#) policy, but this policy could be revoked. Students are beginning to organize on college campuses to call on university administrations to create safe spaces on campuses and not collaborate with ICE. Campus organizers will be working to protect undocumented students by organizing to keep the DACA program intact. Sanctuary cities have come out declaring they will continue to be Sanctuary cities in midst of a Trump Administration. We must protect and expand Sanctuary spaces.

### Sanctuary in the Streets

As a result of announcement of increased raids by the Obama Administration last year, many have organized rapid response networks. New Sanctuary Movement Philadelphia created the [Sanctuary in the Streets](#) to bring faith communities to protect people in their homes, should ICE arrive.

### Know Your Rights

It is imperative to educate all immigrant communities on know-your-rights resources. The most important information is DON'T OPEN THE DOOR to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), police or anyone else if they do not have a warrant signed by a judge.

[AFSC- Know Your Rights- Conozca Sus Derechos](#)

[United We DREAM Know Your Rights](#)

[Guide to sharing your story of rights abuses, raids and deportation](#)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XC2NgdEgD94>

Report When A Raid Is Happening:

HOTLINE: 1-844-363-1423

TEXT ALERTS WATCH ICE: 877877

### Find Partner Organizations

[National Day Labor Organizing Network](#)

[United We DREAM](#)

[Fair Immigration Reform Movement](#)

[Not1more Deportation](#)

[PICO National Network](#)

## Talking Points/ Messaging

### General Talking Points:

- As the faith community, we are doing what Congress has refused to do: protect immigrant families from an immigration system that is separating families and deporting people who are woven into the fabric of their communities and congregations.
- The immigrant community is very concerned about the prospects of a Trump Administration, but they are also ready to fight against unjust immigration policies expected to come. The role of the faith community is to walk in solidarity and accompany immigrant leaders in this struggle for civil and human rights. We are preparing to build out our movement for Sanctuary and for those of us who are ready to resist, we will put our bodies between ICE and our undocumented community members.
- The intention to focus on immigrants with criminal convictions is designed to criminalize the entire immigrant community. Undocumented immigrants might have an immigration related conviction or they may have been targeted by a policing system that is racially biased focused on low-income people of color. We are the faith community, we believe in transformation and forgiveness, even if someone has made a mistake in the past doesn't mean they should be deported and separated from their family.
- We know that Sanctuary Cities or limited detainer policies actually create a safer community for all people, so that law enforcement can try and build trust with the immigrant community and victims or witnesses aren't scared to come forward.
- We are seeing a widespread and growing commitment by faith communities to provide sanctuary to our community members who will need sanctuary because of the expected harsh policies expected in the next administration.
- Our congregations open their doors to provide sanctuary we stand in solidarity with immigrant leaders fighting to keep all families together, regardless of immigration status.
- The Trump Administration should not target Central Americans, Syrians, or Haitian families seeking asylum, but should instead utilize their resources towards to provide legal representation to those who have been unable to attain assistance.
- Detention and deportation has become a money making business that is feeding the prison industrial complex and lining the pockets of private corporations with billions of dollars.
- We have worked hard to hold the Obama administration, ICE and DHS accountable to their and we will continue to fight, and make sure the Trump Administration listens to the voice and stories of immigrant leaders who deserve justice, not deportation.

- We are praying for the future administration will take a position of discernment, compassion and morality with the understanding to protect the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival that has benefited nearly a million undocumented youth.

Talking Points for Specific Sanctuary Cases:

- As people of faith, we are called to welcome the sojourner and love our neighbor. In the case of INSERT NAME, he/she has been part of our community for a long time. He/she is not a stranger but our neighbor and we are accompanying him as he stands up for his right to stay united with his family
- INSERT NAMES want to make sure their family stays together and that INSERT NAME does not become one of the hundreds of people unnecessarily deported each day under the current administration's policies.
- One of our key belief statements as the DENOMINATION is: INSERT STATEMENT. As in the tradition of the prophets and apostles, God calls the church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted. We are responsible to a higher calling, a higher law that takes precedent over our flawed and outdated immigration laws.
- The church has been a space of sanctuary for those wrongly persecuted for thousands of years. The ability to provide humanitarian sanctuary defines who we are and our call as people of faith to care for the most vulnerable among us.
- We witnessed the power of the Sanctuary Movement was in the 1980s. The church was able to protect Central Americans from being deported and returned to death squads in the Civil Wars they faced at home, which the United States refused to recognize. Thousands upon thousands of lives were spared because of the Sanctuary movement.
- Now in the midst of a new Administration that has promised extreme measure persecuting immigrants, faith communities once again must demonstrate leadership and action to keep families together, to keep parents with their children, to protect our brothers and sisters like INSERT NAME, from this grave injustice.

## Who are those seeking Sanctuary?

Most Sanctuary cases begin with a lawyer or legal service clinic identify someone who has been working to stop their deportation order without success. The legal service team assesses whether someone will be eligible for prosecutorial discretion. Those who enter into Sanctuary should have a reasonable potential of receiving a stay of removal, order of supervision or some other form of administrative relief.

The legal service team then consults with Sanctuary organizers and involved pastor to begin a conversation about a potential Sanctuary case. Ideally this happens months in advance, but sometimes the individual comes to a legal clinic or local organizers in the 11th hour, requiring a congregation to act quickly.

Each case is different, sometimes there is a family linked that would be separated, but not always.

## How do we “Declare Sanctuary?”

**The public aspect of the Declaration of Sanctuary is critical.** It is by bringing attention to the case, mobilizing the community, and advocating for the individual that we are able to successfully get cases closed. We encourage every community of faith to enter into a time of prayer and discernment so that when cases arise, they are ready to act. Once a congregation has made the decision to declare Sanctuary for an individual it is publicly announced at a press conference and prayer vigil, at which time the individual and their family enters into the premises of the house of worship. The individual in need of Sanctuary remains at the house of worship until they are granted a stay of deportation. Of course, an individual may decide at any time to leave Sanctuary for any reason and should have the full support of the community to do so. Living within Sanctuary is not an easy thing; the financial cost of not working, the media attention, and the strain on a family can all be burdensome.

There has been liturgy developed by Southside Presbyterian Church, Shadow Rock UCC in Phoenix, and Arch Street United Methodist Church in Philadelphia that can be adapted for a prayer vigil declaring Sanctuary, but individual congregations should develop liturgy that is appropriate to their own religious background and setting.

## Advocacy

One of the most important aspects to Sanctuary is the advocacy that we do on behalf of an individual. In partnership with legal service providers and immigrants' rights organizers a strategy is developed and a multitude of different people are identified as the focus of our efforts, local ICE field office, ICE headquarters, Department of Homeland Security and the White House in general. They and other members of the administration are the focus of phone calls and letter writing. There is also a great deal of work organizing a broad base of support for the individual as well as finding key allies. Often the City Council and the Board of Supervisors as well as local religious leaders are approached to use their power and influence to get the individual's case closed. We are always working to get more letters of support, more petitions signed, phone calls dialed in and more congregations working with us. We have developed relationships with key allies in Washington, DC and partnerships with national organizations who have worked closely with us on cases. Having an effective media plan is extremely important in garnering the type of attention needed to sway decision makers to close the deportation case.

The type of case by case advocacy to win a stay of removal is likely to become much more difficult under the Trump Administration, but we will fight to keep Prosecutorial Discretion guidelines that weigh positive equities of each case and continue to allow our undocumented community members to win a stay of removal to defer their deportation order.

Petitions with Groundswell:

<http://action.groundswell-mvmt.org/petitions/tell-the-obama-administration-save-rosa-from-being-deported>

<http://action.groundswell-mvmt.org/petitions/tell-the-obama-administration-stop-luis-from-being-deported-keep-your-promise>

Sample Letter of Support from Good Shepherd United Church of Christ

<http://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/8-24-14-GoodShepherdUCC-Sanctuary-letter-University-Presbyterian.pdf>

Work to get Denominational Support

[http://www.ucc.org/justice\\_immigration](http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration)

<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2014/9/17/letter-president-support-sanctuary-and-hope/>

## Leadership of those in Sanctuary

This is perhaps the most important aspect of Sanctuary; we are not the leaders of this movement, those in Sanctuary are. It has been the courage and the faith of those who have come out of the shadows to say, “we are undocumented and we are unafraid” that has inspired our work. Those taking Sanctuary are putting everything on the line and are often risking a great deal for the benefit of the larger movement; their leadership, their voice, their opinions and wisdom should be prioritized at all times. They should be involved in every aspect of the campaign as they choose to be. Sanctuary is hard work and requires great sacrifice - if at any time a family wishes to leave Sanctuary, their wishes should be respected and celebrated. We should always remember that Sanctuary is not something that we do for our undocumented brothers and sisters; it is something we do *with* them. This is a great leadership development opportunity for those taking Sanctuary, please share leadership development resources, as you are able with the broader network.

## What are the logistics of Sanctuary?

### ***Living Arrangements***

Ideally, the family will have space on the grounds of the house of worship that will not be used for any other purpose for the duration of Sanctuary. They should be encouraged to arrange the room in whatever way they would like and to make it as much like home as they can. Easy access to showers, bathrooms, and a kitchen should be considered in designating a space for the family (sometimes showers will need to be configured in some way for those locations without permanent showers). Because the entire purpose of declaring Sanctuary is to keep a family together, the entire family is invited to stay at the house of worship. While the individual living in Sanctuary does not leave the premises, the family comes and goes as they choose. At times visitors and media can overwhelm the family. They should be encouraged to establish whatever boundaries they need.

It is the practice of immigration officials and law enforcement agencies to respect the sanctity of houses of worship by not coming on their property for the purpose of apprehending an individual who has an order of deportation.

It is possible that under the Trump Administration we will see the need to house many undocumented people at once or that allies will have to go to where an enforcement action is happening to try and block that deportation.

### ***Legal Questions***

Everyone always wants to know - are we breaking the law? Law is a lot like scripture - its up to your interpretation. There is a law against bringing in and harboring persons not authorized to be in the U.S. (insert footnote. INA Sec.274) While we are clearly not bringing people in, whether we are harboring someone is up for interpretation. Some courts have interpreted harboring to require concealment of a person, when we declare Sanctuary for an individual we are bringing them into the light of the community, not concealing them in the dark of secrecy (U.S. V Costello, 66 F.3d 1040, 7th Cir. 2012). Other courts have interpreted harboring to be simple sheltering (U.S. V Acosta de Evans, 531 F.2d 428 (9th Cir. 1976)).

Those who are entering sanctuary will most likely have an opportunity to win relief from deportation, this means that they are not a high priority for deportation and that ICE can and should grant them prosecutorial discretion. In essence, the Sanctuary Movement is holding the administration accountable to their own standards and guidelines as put forth by the President's Executive Actions.

There is risk in offering Sanctuary, however, the field practice over the last forty years shows that no congregation has been prosecuted for allowing undocumented people to find shelter and safety in their house of worship.

[New guidelines for Prosecutorial Discretion](#)

[ICE Sensitive Locations](#)

The space of sanctuary is sacred. Immigration officials know that if they went into a house of worship to arrest a pastor they would have a public relations nightmare on their hands. To date no one has ever been arrested for offering Sanctuary.

New Sanctuary Movement Legal Toolkit <http://lynnhopkinsgroup.com/Toolkit1.pdf>

### ***Insurance Questions***

The General Liability Insurance should cover any mishaps that could occur while someone is living in Sanctuary. We have never had any incidents wherein a congregation had to make an insurance claim, however, if you would like to talk with your insurance company please do.

### ***What is "Private" Sanctuary?***

This is a tactic often used before a public sanctuary case is launched. Many coalitions have taken someone into Sanctuary, and used the threat of going public in negotiation processes with ICE officials with the intention of winning a stay of removal before launching a public cases. The Sanctuary Movement has won many cases this way and should be considered a part of the strategy before going public to the media.

### ***Community Support***

Families living in Sanctuary are often in need of support in a multitude of different ways. Most importantly they need the support of our friendship - so plan game nights, hang out with them, do what you can to make them feel at home and a part of your congregational family. It is also important that they are able to retain some normalcy as a family - enabling them to cook for they can help with this. You may find that congregation members will want to show their love and support by bringing food, which may be helpful a few nights a week, but it is important that the family is able to care for themselves and control as much as possible in a situation that is very much out of their control. Instead of bringing meals, encourage people to bring food that they can cook with.

There may also be the need for financial support, particularly if the individual in Sanctuary normally works. People should be encouraged to give to the family, either directly or through the house of worship (these donations to benefit an individual are not tax deductible). Care should be taken to respect the pride of the family in these situations. It is difficult for all of us to be in a situation where we have to depend on others. We have often reminded individuals that by being in Sanctuary, they are engaged in hard work; both for their families but also for the movement and that work should be compensated.

### ***Training Congregations***

Once churches have created a core team of leaders who are interested in the work of Sanctuary, the church should explore hosting a training. Ideally instead of only one or two congregations taking on the work of Sanctuary, it is important that other congregations also show support. Coalition congregations join together in advocacy efforts, joint sign-on letters, logistical support, vigils and cooking. Having other congregations engaged creates training opportunities for leadership from other congregations to become accustomed to the work of Sanctuary, an experience they can bring back to their congregation as they prepare themselves for a future opportunity of offering Sanctuary.

For more information about Sanctuary trainings, or to schedule one, please contact your local Sanctuary coalition ([www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org](http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org)) or the General Board of Church and Society.

# UMC Resolution in Support of Sanctuary

## **3281. Welcoming the Migrant to the US**

### ***The Historical Context***

From the dawn of creation human beings have migrated across the earth. The history of the United States is a migration narrative of families and individuals seeking safety, economic betterment, and freedom of religious and cultural expression. The reasons for those who immigrated willingly are numerous and varied depending on the context, but what all immigrants share is the promise of what they believe lies in another land other than their own. Migrants today continue to travel to North America because of the effects of globalization, dislocation, economic scarcity, persecution, and other reasons.

The arrival of migrants to the United States from so many parts of the world has also meant that there is a diversity of cultures and worldviews. The diversity of cultures, worldviews, and languages has placed an enormous strain upon migrants. To effectively deal with this trauma and ease the process of acculturation, migrants should be encouraged to preserve strong cultural and familial ties to their culture of origin.

The arrival of new cultures has also felt threatening to US citizens, and this has too often resulted in conflict and even violence. Throughout the history of the United States, the most recently arrived group of migrants has often been a target of racism, marginalization, and violence. We regret any and all violence committed against migrants in the past and we resolve, as followers of Jesus, to work to eliminate racism and violence directed toward newly arriving migrants to the United States.

### *The Biblical and Theological Context*

Regardless of legal status or nationality, we are all connected through Christ to one another. Paul reminds us that when “one part suffers, all the parts suffer” as well (1 Corinthians 12:26). The solidarity we share through Christ eliminates the boundaries and barriers which exclude and isolate. Therefore, the sojourners we are called to love are our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, our sons and daughters; indeed, they are us.

Throughout Scripture the people of God are called to love sojourners in our midst, treating them “as if they were one of your citizens” and loving them as we do ourselves (Leviticus 19:33-34 NRSV). Love for the sojourner is birthed out of the shared experience the Israelites had as a people in sojourn searching for the Promised Land. The attitudes and actions required of God’s people were to emanate from the reflection of their liberation from slavery by God’s hand. As the people of God were liberated from oppression, they too were charged to be instruments of redemption in the lives of the most vulnerable in their midst—the sojourner (Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19; 16:12; 24:18, 22—all NRSV).

In the New Testament, Jesus’ life begins as a refugee to Africa when he and his family flee to Egypt to escape Herod’s infanticide (Matthew 2:13-18). Jesus fully identifies with the sojourner to the point that to welcome the sojourner is to welcome Jesus himself (Matthew 25:35). Jesus teaches us to show special concern for the poor and oppressed who come to our land seeking survival and peace.

In Scripture, Jesus continually manifests compassion for the vulnerable and the poor. Jesus incarnated hospitality as he welcomed people and ministered to their greatest need. 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.

The fear and anguish so many migrants in the United States live under are due to federal raids, indefinite detention, and deportations which tear apart families and create an atmosphere of panic. Millions of immigrants are denied legal entry to the US due to quotas and race and class barriers, even as employers seek their labor. US policies, as well as economic and political conditions in their home countries, often force migrants to leave their homes. With the legal avenues closed, immigrants who come in order to support their families must live in the shadows and in intense exploitation and fear. In the face of these unjust laws and the systematic deportation of migrants instituted by the Department of Homeland Security, God’s people must stand in solidarity with the migrants in our midst.

In Scripture, sojourners are also identified as heralds or messengers bringing good news. This is seen in many stories of the Bible:

- ï Abraham welcomed three visitors and then was promised a child even though Sarah was past the age of bearing children (Genesis 18:1-11);
- ï Rahab hid the spies from Israel, and her family was ultimately spared (Joshua 2:1-16);
- ï the widow at Zarephath gave Elijah her last meal and received food and ultimately healing for her dying son (1 Kings 17:7-24); and
- ï Zacchaeus, upon welcoming Jesus into his home, promised to share half his possessions with the poor and repay those he stole from four times the amount owed. As Jesus entered Zacchaeus's home he proclaimed that salvation had come to his house (Luke 19:1-10).

All of these stories give evidence to the words of the writer of Hebrews who advises the listeners to “not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (13:2 NRSV). God's people are called to welcome the sojourner not only because of God's commands to do so, but because God's people need to hear the good news of the gospel incarnated in their stories and in their lives. Welcoming the sojourner is so vital to the expression of Christian faith that to engage in this form of hospitality is to participate in our own salvation.

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. The globalization of international economies and the continuing movement of migrants have created an increasingly diversified US population and should be reflected in United Methodist congregations and national church leadership.

Therefore, The United Methodist Church understands that at the center of Christian faithfulness to Scripture is the call we have been given to love and welcome the sojourner. We call upon all United Methodist churches to welcome newly arriving migrants in their communities, to love them as we do ourselves, to treat them as one of our native-born, to see in them the presence of the incarnated Jesus, and to show hospitality to the migrants in our midst, believing that through their presence we are receiving the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### *The Current Context*

Immigration to the United States has changed in the last 20 years largely because the world has changed. Globalization has lessened the geographical distance between the poor and affluent, but it has also greatly exacerbated the chasm between those with access to resources and those denied that same access. Vast inequities between the global North and South are a continuing source of conflict and a draw of resources and people from the South to the North. Globalization has localized issues which used to be hidden or detached by geographical boundaries, but has not created forms of accountability or mediated the necessity of cross-cultural reconciliation between those victimized by international economic policies and those who benefit from them. Global media enable the poor of the global South to see the lifestyles of the affluent in the global North, while rarely seeing the intense poverty that also exists there. This creates both tensions and a draw to attain that same lifestyle.

Although unregulated trade and investment have economically benefited some, many more have been sentenced to a lifetime of poverty and marginalization. In poorer countries natural resources have been removed by transnational corporations which have no stake in the continuing welfare of the local people, the enhancement of their cultural traditions, or their ecological environment. The lack of these resources often leads to a drastic reduction in jobs, wages, and labor protections. Public social benefits are eliminated and the nation sinks deeper into debt as it turns to such institutions as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.<sup>1</sup> As the affluent North continues to expand its wealth, this expansion occurs at the expense of the impoverished South. Every region in the world is affected in some way by the global economic divide. Yet, while money and products easily flow across borders, the movement of people who have been forced to migrate because of intolerable economic conditions is increasingly restricted.

When those whose livelihoods have been eradicated in favor of corporate globalization attempt to sojourn to North America to work and provide for their families, they receive a mixed message that is confusing and ultimately oppressive. Immigrants have moved into areas of the United States where there are economic opportunities that US citizens have largely ignored. Employers often prefer undocumented workers in order to increase profit margins. Until all jobs provide a livable wage employers will be able to pit US citizens against undocumented workers in a downward spiral that undermines the labor rights for all.

Because the US immigration system has not kept up with the changing pace of migration and the US economy, the population of undocumented migrants has grown dramatically. Yet, the growing population of undocumented migrants

has not yet been harmful to most US workers because they are not competing for the same jobs. While the United States labor force is growing older and more educated, the need for unskilled workers remains strong. The Migration Policy Institute reports that the economic necessities for repairing the immigration system are clear, as they predict by 2030 immigrant workers will comprise between one-third and one-half of the US labor force.<sup>2</sup> Testifying before the Senate Committee on Aging in 2003, then-Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Alan Greenspan, called for increased numbers of migrants to sustain an aging labor force and a continued economic vacuum among low-skilled workers.

Although the economic necessity of migrant workers is clear, any immigration or economic system which calls for a perpetual class of second-class workers cannot be supported by people of faith. Undocumented migrants are exploited for their labor and economic contribution to the United States. They are denied their rights to collectively bargain for livable wages and safe working conditions, and they are shut out of access to the social services of which they support through their difficult labor. Any reform of the immigration system must also allow for the full protections of all workers which includes the opportunity to gain legal status for all migrants.

Even though migrants have proven a tremendous benefit to the United States' economy, migrants have been systematically excluded from receiving any benefits. Excluding access to health care promotes an increase in the demand on emergency rooms to provide that daily care or it forces migrants fearful of seeking medical care to live in continued pain and suffering. The United States benefits from migrant labor, but migrants have been forced to live in the shadows, unable to fully contribute or receive appropriate care.

### *Immigration: A Human Rights Issue*

Since 9/11 the debate surrounding immigration has unfortunately been framed as an issue of national security. All of this emphasis on border security has not stemmed the flow of undocumented migration, even though the United States has poured billions of dollars into militarizing the border.

The use of local law enforcement as immigration agents should be stopped as well. When local law enforcement officials engage in immigration enforcement, migrants are often unwilling to report crimes and are forced to live in situations where they are exploited, abused, and victimized.

All nations have the right to secure their borders, but the primary concern for Christians should be the welfare of immigrants. Between 1994 and 2009, according to the Department of Homeland Security Border Safety Initiative, more than 3,860 migrants have died crossing the border between the United States and Mexico ([https://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/immigrants/humanitarian\\_crisis\\_report.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/immigrants/humanitarian_crisis_report.pdf)). Raids of workplaces, homes, and other social places have often violated the civil liberties of migrants. Migrants should be given due process and access to adequate legal representation. Due to these raids and the ensuing detentions and deportations that follow them, families have been ripped apart and the migrant community has been forced to live in a constant state of fear.

To refuse to welcome migrants to this country-and to stand by in silence while families are separated, individual freedoms are ignored, and the migrant community in the United States is demonized by members of Congress and the media-is complicity to sin.

### *A Call to Action*

The United Methodist Church affirms the worth, dignity, and inherent value and rights of all persons regardless of their nationality or legal status. United Methodist churches throughout the United States are urged to build bridges with migrants in their local communities, to learn from them, celebrate their presence in the United States and recognize and appreciate the contributions in all areas of life that migrants bring. We call upon all United Methodist churches to engage in the following:

- advocate for legislation that will uphold the civil and human rights of all migrants in the United States and will provide an opportunity to attain legal status for all undocumented migrants currently in the United States, as well as for those arriving in the future;
- begin English as a Second Language classes as part of a ministry to migrant communities and advocate for federal and state support of expanded ESL classes;
- denounce and oppose the rise of xenophobic, racist, and violent reactions against migrants in the United States, and support all efforts to build relationships among people, instead of building walls among diverse ethnicities and cultures;

- welcome newly arriving immigrants into our congregations;
- oppose the building of a wall between the United States and Mexico, which the communities of both sides of the border are in opposition to;
- call the United States government to immediately cease all arrests, detainment, and deportations of undocumented immigrants, including children, solely based upon their immigration status until a fair and comprehensive immigration reform is passed;
- provide wherever possible pastoral care and crisis intervention to refugees and newly arrived migrants, identifying and responding compassionately to their spiritual, material, and legal needs;
- work with civic and legal organizations to support migrant communities affected by harsh immigration laws and over-reaching national security measures;
- **support those churches that prayerfully choose to offer sanctuary to undocumented migrants facing deportation;**
- continue the work of the United Methodist Task Force on Immigration composed of staff from the general boards and agencies, representatives of the Council of Bishops, and members of caucuses and national plans that was created by the resolution, "Opposition to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Resolution Act" (2004 *Book of Resolutions*, #118).

Further, The United Methodist Church is urged to advocate for the comprehensive reform of the US immigration system. The Executive Action taken by President Obama in 2014 was a necessary temporary step that allowed certain groups of immigrants to apply for temporary legal status, though not citizenship. Therefore, we acknowledge that legislative change is the permanent step that is needed.

Any legislation to reform the US immigration system must affirm the worth, dignity, and inherent value and rights of migrants, and must also include:

- an opportunity for citizenship 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;
- elimination of for-profit detention centers;
- elimination of indefinite detention, incarceration of children, and the expanding prison population, which also benefits privately owned detention centers and prisons;
- preservation of due process and access to courts and to adequate legal representation for all migrants regardless of legal status.

**ADOPTED 2008  
AMENDED AND READOPTED 2016  
RESOLUTION #3281, 2008, 2012 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS**

See Social Principles, ¶¶ 162H and 163F.

1. Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia D. *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, p.28.
2. B. Lindsay Lowell, Julia Gelatt & Jeanne Batalove, *Immigrants and Labor Force Trends: The Future, Past, and Present*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, July 2006, p. 1.\