

Petition Concerning the Treatment of Immigrants

Whereas the Scriptures proclaim that “There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28). “For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. (Ephesians 2:14);

Whereas the *United Methodist Social Principles* state: “We believe that our primary identity is as children of God... The Church seeks to fully embrace and nurture cultural formation and competency as a means to be fully one body, expressed in multiple ways. We affirm that no identity or culture has more legitimacy than any other. We call the Church to challenge any hierarchy of cultures or identities. Through relationships within and among cultures we are called to and have the responsibility for learning from each other, showing mutual respect for our differences and similarities as we experience the diversity of perspectives and viewpoints.” *The 2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 161.A;

Whereas the *United Methodist Social Principles* also state: “We urge the Church and society to recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants, and to advocate for justice for all. We oppose the immigration policies that separate family members from each other or that include detention of families with children, and we call on local churches to be in ministry with immigrant families.” *The 2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶ 162.H;

Whereas those seeking immigration status in the United States are not criminals. They are individuals seeking specific legal remedies in which our civil immigration legal system guarantees them rights, protections, and due process. The current practice of detaining immigrants for the duration of their immigration proceedings is inconsistent with international treaties the United States is a party to, and incongruent with the civil legal system;

Whereas in this time of a viral epidemic, it is both inhumane and unconscionable to detain any individual seeking asylum, refugee status, or seeking to immigrate in detention facilities where known cases of COVID-19 are present and/or deny immigrant detainees parole (permission to leave detention);

Whereas the practice of local law enforcement agencies contacting Immigration and Customs Enforcement, even if the reason for their interaction with the individual had nothing to do with their immigration status, causes mistrust and reduces safety in the community, by reducing the number of crimes being reported;

Whereas the April 22, 2020 Executive Order severely curtailing immigration for 60 days puts those who are seeking immigration status at risk, and causes undue suffering for families seeking to be reunited; and

Whereas Arizona Justice For Our Neighbors (AZJFON) is the Desert Southwest chapter of a nationwide United Methodist organization offering legal assistance to immigrants in the United States. We welcome our asylee, refugee, and immigrant brothers and sisters as fellow children of God, and neighbors in our Conference, and we work for a time when they will be accepted, valued, and welcomed by their communities, their states, and our nation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Desert Southwest Conference (DSC) petition the General Conference of the United Methodist Church to contact the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Governors of all the states and territories of the United States ask that:

1. Immigration and Customs Enforcement no longer keep immigrants in detention while they are in immigration (removal) proceedings;

2. Local law enforcement agencies stop contacting Immigration and Customs Enforcement if their interaction with an individual is unrelated to their immigration status; and
3. The April 22, 2020 Executive Order be rescinded, so that individuals under the following circumstances would be allowed to enter the United States:
 - a. Those outside of the United States who are seeking a green card;
 - b. Those who have an official travel document that became valid *on* or is issued *after* the effective date of the executive order; and
 - c. Adult children and parents of U.S citizens, and children and parents of lawful permanent residents.

Submitted By:

Arizona Justice for our Neighbors (AZJFON)

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