

February 27, 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

This is a difficult time in many of our congregations. Last week, the Department of Homeland Security released guidelines that greatly increase the number of immigrants to this country who are at risk for deportation. Many people who are now fearful that they will be arrested and deported are parents, children, leaders in our congregations, and valued members of our communities.

We ask especially that you pray individually and together for people who now must worry each day about suddenly losing their jobs, homes, families, and hopes for stable and safe lives in this country. We also invite you discern how God may be calling you to respond. In each of our judicatories, we are [making available resources and practical support](#) to our immigrant members. Each of our denominations is also exploring additional ways to support our immigrant members in these difficult times, and we will keep you informed.

We understand that securing the borders of the United States is important work. But scripture commands us to welcome the strangers in our midst and to care for widows and orphans. The Trump administration's new immigration priorities go far beyond seeking the deportation of dangerous criminals; they call for the arrest and deportation of millions of people whose only offense may have been to enter the country without documents or to get a driver's license. Many of these immigrants have lived among us for years, and we have embraced one another as sisters and brothers in Christ or faithful companions in other traditions. Soon we could find friends and fellow congregants taken from us without due process or right to appeal, without a chance to say goodbye to their citizen children and families, and without hope of returning.

We value the diversity of beliefs and political persuasions in our churches. But regardless of your partisan leanings, we invite you to see in our immigrant communities and congregations what we see—parents working to support families, young people seeking an education, once-declining communities revitalized by new people with fresh energy, thriving congregations full of people created in the image of God. None of us wants to see the vibrant hope of these immigrant stories and lives diminished or cruelly ripped apart, but we fear that these new enforcement policies can lead to just that outcome.

The book of Exodus tells us that we “shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” Whether you are today afraid of deportation, or whether your ancestors came to this country long ago, were brought as enslaved people, or were native people stripped of their land and rights, we implore you to remember that as Christians, we have all been aliens in need of welcome and hospitality. We will resist both spiritually and practically the mass deportation of people in our care and in our communities, and we invite you to join us.

Faithfully,

Bishop Sally Dyck, Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church  
Bishop Jeff Lee, Episcopal Diocese of Chicago  
Bishop Wayne Miller, Metropolitan Chicago Synod