



The United Methodist Church

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A Pastoral Letter to the Northern Illinois Annual Conference

Re: A Response to Executive Orders on Immigration

From: Bishop Sally Dyck, Resident Bishop of Northern Illinois Conference

Who is Our Neighbor?

What does the Bible say?

“Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.” (Lev. 19:34, CEB)

What does the United Methodist Church say?

“We recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God...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.” (Social Principles, par. 162H)

What does our country say?

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!
--Emma Lazarus' poem on the Statue of Liberty

What does the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church say?

“The very soul of our country is at stake. When we abandon strangers who are at risk of bigotry, xenophobia, and violence, we not only destroy their hope, we destroy our own souls... Christ calls us to tear down the walls around our souls that we might live fully and abundantly.”

--Bishop Bruce Ough, President of the Council of Bishops

But what do you say?

While I stand firmly within the traditions and values listed above on welcoming the immigrant, I understand that some United Methodists disagree with those principles and resolutions. Nevertheless, I call all of us to action:

- **Study what the scriptures say** about welcoming the immigrant. I recommend that you do so with the Common English Bible which translates words like “alien” or “foreigner” as “immigrant.”
www.relevantmagazine.com/god/what-bible-says-about-how-treat-refugees
- **Study the United Methodist Book of Resolutions** on immigration. (see below)
- **Have a conversation** with someone who disagrees with your opinion by telling the story of how your family came to the US (unless of course you are Native American and/or African American—these are other painful stories that reveal what happens when we don’t regard our neighbor as ourselves).
- **Attend the Northern Illinois Annual Conference’s Summit on “Who Is My Neighbor?” hosted by our Hispanic/Latinx leadership on April 22, 2017 at Schaumburg: Our Saviour’s UMC.** More details to come. It will be an opportunity to learn more about immigration policies as well as our biblical and UM traditions, how to be supportive of immigrants (of all nationalities), what it means to be a sanctuary church, how Justice for Our Neighbors is helping, etc. Most of all, I hope it will be a time when we truly build relationships across our cultural divide.
- **Pray! Pray! Pray!** Pray for our President, our country, and the communities of immigrants who are uncertain and afraid.
- **Support Justice for Our Neighbors** with a monetary gift. Our two lawyers, Jenny Ansay and Megan Davis, are working diligently to provide free legal advice to people in critical situations.

I am providing a list of resources that you can access online to begin studying and talking with one another. As you do, I trust that the prayers of our people will begin to rise on behalf of our neighbors.

Keep the faith!



Bishop Sally Dyck

Online Resources:

Bishop Bruce Ough's Council of Bishops' statement on Trump immigration order: www.umc.org/news-and-media/bishop-ough-issues-statement-on-trump-immigration-order

Welcoming the Migrant to the United States #3281, a resolution from 2016 General Conference: umc-gbcs.org/resolutions/welcoming-the-migrant-to-the-united-states

Resources from the United Methodist Church: www.umc.org/topics/topic-immigration

UMCOR resources: www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Programs/Refugees/Refugees

UMW Global Migration and Immigration Rights
Resources: www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/what-we-do/service-and-advocacy/mission-focus-issues/global-migration

A message from Thomas G. Kemper, general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries www.umcmission.org/learn-about-us/news-and-stories/2017/january-/0127ministrywithmigrantsandrefugees

Follow this link for a video that shares how United Methodist Churches around Germany are welcoming refugees and migrants: umc-gbcs.org/faith-in-action/living-love

Follow this link for resources from the General Board of Church and Society regarding immigration: umc-gbcs.org/issues/immigration Some of the resources include small group study guides.

Since the November election, more than 800 places of worship nationwide vowed to shelter and protect immigrants in danger of separation from their families or being returned to countries they fled. Follow this link to learn more: www.umc.org/news-and-media/united-methodist-churches-offer-sanctuary