

United Methodist Church Northern Illinois Conference



Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Statement on the Need for Immigration Reform
May 14, 2010



Do not mistreat the foreigners who reside in your land. The foreigner who lives among you must be treated like one of your own. Love them as you love yourself, for you too were a foreigner... I am YHWH.

Leviticus 19:33, The Inclusive Bible

May 9, 2010 marked the second anniversary of [one of the largest immigration raids in the nation's history](#) that swept up nearly four hundred undocumented persons at a meat processing plant in Postville, Iowa. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers took these persons into custody for arrest and deportation, separating many children who are U.S. citizens from their immigrant parents. The separation of families is taking place every day in the United States of America in larger and larger numbers and is of deep concern to people of the Abrahamic faith traditions that value the sacredness of human life and the importance of the family in nurturing and sustaining life.

Clearly, the nation's immigration system is broken. So, too, it appears is the United States Congress' ability or willingness to address substantive change in our broken immigration system. The result is a rash of conflicting national, municipal and state laws, leaving immigrants and their families in peril.

In recent weeks, the issue of immigration has returned to the national spotlight with the passage of [Arizona Senate Bill 1070](#), "Support Our Law Enforcement & Safe Neighborhood Act," signed into law by Governor Jan Brewer on April 23, 2010. The law would require each state and local law enforcement officer to verify the immigration status of anyone the officer suspects may be an unlawful alien. Upon signing the controversial bill, Governor Brewer noted the failure of the Federal government in addressing the issues. While the law has many supporters, critics of the new law have declared it to be the harshest immigration law in the nation.

Even some police departments are opposing the law: while the law and a subsequent executive order mention the prohibition of racial profiling, it is unclear what criteria a highway patrol officer will use to justify the "reasonable suspicion" of someone's residency status. Police may be put in legal jeopardy, while anyone in Arizona who does appear to be a citizen could be harassed.

We pray for the nation's leaders to muster the political will to pass comprehensive immigration reform and to create an immigration system and policies that are just and compassionate to citizens, immigrants and law enforcement officers alike. We pray that our local congregations will oppose unjust local and state laws ordinances that seek to deprive undocumented persons of basic social services including the access to adequate housing and protection under the law.

As United Methodists, we have long supported the rights of immigrants and foreign workers and the position of The United Methodist Church is clear:

UMC Book of Discipline, Paragraph 162 H

We recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God. We affirm the right of all persons to equal opportunities for employment, access to housing, health care, education, and freedom from social

discrimination. 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.

UMC Book of Discipline, Paragraph 163 F

Foreign workers also need a religious fellowship, and we call for the churches to include these in their care and fellowships and to support them in their efforts for better conditions.

We pray, not only for our brothers and sisters in Arizona, but for immigrants everywhere, whether they are struggling to integrate into new countries, or frustrated by long waits for legal immigration, or separated from their families in order to provide a better life for them.

God of all people, have mercy in Jesus' name, Amen.