

Toward a Just and Compassionate Immigration Reform

Adopted on the Consent Calendar as amended

BACKGROUND:

Spring 2007 witnessed an increase in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in many cities in the California-Nevada Annual Conference, particularly among Latino communities, resulting in the detention of hundreds of undocumented workers and the separation of these persons from their children, who in many cases were young children.

Currently, the U.S. Senate is debating immigration reform legislation that will call for a dramatic increase in militarization at the border – including the continued building of a wall at the U.S./Mexico border – and continued raids in the interior U.S. and at worksites nationwide. The proposed legislation under consideration does not bring relief to immigrant communities but, rather, terrorizes and separates hardworking families that contribute greatly to the fabric of American society. Several sources report (including the 2005 Current Population Survey and Pew Hispanic Center) that there are an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Reports say that Mexicans make up 56 percent of undocumented immigrants. An additional 22 percent come from other Latin American countries, mainly in Central America but also including Cuba and Haiti. About 13 percent are from Asia, and Europe and Canada combine for 6 percent.

As Christians and United Methodists, we find the inhumane treatment of immigrant peoples and their children to be deplorable and inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ. We embrace our biblical mandate to “love the stranger” (Deut. 10:19) and “not to oppress an alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Ex. 23:9). Furthermore, we find this witness clearly articulated in the 2004

Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, especially # 266, which states, “With grace and concern, the church must address the legal, economic, social, and human rights conditions of people who are legal or undocumented immigrants, and it must oppose the introduction of legislation by Congress or any state that would cause human suffering and a denial of such individual's rights as interpreted through our biblical understanding of God's grace to all peoples, but especially to the sojourner.”

RESOLUTION:

This document affirms the inherent worth and dignity of all of God's people. As the body of Christ and as United Methodists we recognize the urgency to strive for humane, just, compassionate, and comprehensive immigration reform. *Be it therefore resolved that we:*

Appreciate and affirm the dignity and work of immigrant peoples and understand these peoples to be citizens of the world and children of God. Assert that immigrant

peoples and their children have a right to education, medical, legal, and social services and assistance, a voice in the decisions that affect their lives, and full access to the justice of our society. Call for immigration reform that reunites families, ensures the civil and labor rights of immigrants, increases options to legal permanent residency and citizenship for undocumented families, workers and communities, allowing immigrants who want to live and work an opportunity to contribute to our society and provide for their families.

Call for an immediate stop to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids that terrorize our communities and a critical examination of ICE's detention and removal plans, including "End Game" and ICE's current raids action called "Operation Return to Sender" to deport 12 million undocumented immigrants, including families, children and workers.

Shall not be silent in the face of unjust treatment of immigrant peoples nor participate in any activities that demean, oppress, persecute, or criminalize immigrant peoples and their children and families that live in the United States.

Shall support ordained clergy, probationary members, licensed local pastors, faith workers, laity, immigrant advocates, and community allies who work with immigrant people.

Shall support local churches and their appointed clergy that God calls to provide sanctuary to undocumented immigrants and their families.

Be it further resolved that:

We shall take the following steps within our annual conference in the next 12-18 months:

Form a **Special Immigration Taskforce** that will address the long- and short-term needs of immigrants living in our communities. This special taskforce shall develop an action plan that encourages local congregations and individuals to testify to the gospel of Jesus Christ with immigrant communities in service and in word. The Special Immigration Taskforce shall report back to the Annual Conference in 2008 with a study plan for the AC, workshops for each District, the Cabinet and AC officials, as well as for congregations.

Coordinate with the General Board of Church & Society and other community-based organizations in Northern California Convocation **on Just Immigration** to educate AND broaden the understanding of our congregations on the challenges of immigration

Educate congregations on the **New Sanctuary Movement**, and how they can participate in this program to protect immigrant families from being divided through detentions and/or deportations.

Sponsor a ***Trip to the US/Mexico Border*** for ministry and examination of the militarization of the border and its affect on the human dignity and rights of migrants and border communities.

Finally be it resolved that the Conference Secretary by June 30, 2007 send a letter articulating our stance for just, compassionate and comprehensive immigration reform, including a copy of this resolution to the Governor of the State of California and the Governor of the State of Nevada and to state legislators of each house in each state who represent members of this Annual Conference and to the U.S. senators of California and Nevada, to the U.S. Representatives from California and Nevada who represent members of this Annual Conference, to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, to the President of the United States, George W. Bush and to Vice-President Richard Cheney for their guidance and consideration.