



RESOLUTION ON COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

Adopted by the Vestry of All Saints Church, Pasadena, on October 7, 2008

PREAMBLE

We are, all of us, in some sense immigrants and sojourners, strangers in a strange land seeking a homeland. Some of us or members of our families have personally experienced hardships and, at times, unspeakable indignities, in coming to America. Others of us fortunate to have been born here have trekked into the desert wilderness to see for ourselves the migrant path of tears and triumph. We felt the sand beneath our feet. We saw the abandoned water bottles and children's backpacks amid the cactus thorns. We listened to their stories. We touched the cold steel of border walls. We prayed in the presence of border guards. Now, we are once again called by Christ to love our neighbors as ourselves. As a people of faith committed to dismantling oppressive systems and building structures and communities that reflect God's compassion and justice, we must do no less than make straight a highway in the desert for our sisters and brothers.

Whereas, the Holy Scriptures make known to us that we are created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26-27) and that one of our great commandments from Jesus is to "Love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:28-31);"

Whereas, the Vision Statement of All Saints Church calls on us to "embody the inclusive love of God in Christ through Spirituality, Community and Peace & Justice;"

Whereas, All Saints Church is committed to dismantling oppressive systems and to building structures and communities that reflect God's compassion and justice;

Whereas, All Saints Church participated in the Sanctuary Movement during the 1980s in solidarity with Central American immigrant refugees fleeing their war-torn countries of origin;

Whereas, the current immigration system is broken and the crisis continues to worsen with increased enforcement-only actions such as workplace raids and border militarization;

Now, Therefore be it resolved that the Vestry of All Saints Church urges the President and Congress to adopt comprehensive immigration reforms that promote a more humane immigration system consistent with our faith and values and that include the following:

1. A clear and workable path to citizenship for immigrants already in the U.S.
2. Reforms in the family-based immigration system which promote family reunification and reduce the waiting times for separated families
3. Legal protections and due process rights for all persons and labor protections for all workers regardless of immigration status
4. Reforms to eliminate existing barriers to naturalization and reduce the backlog in the naturalization process; and

Now, Therefore be it resolved that the Vestry of All Saints Church calls on the Parish to:

1. Participate in educational events and forums, such as those developed by the All Saints Immigration Task Force, partner ministries, and community allies, to learn about the plight of immigrants, to listen to people's experiences of enforcement and its impact on their lives and families, to learn about the root causes of migration, and to discuss long-term solutions to the immigration crisis both in the U.S. and abroad; and
2. Join the parish Immigration Task Force and community-wide organizations in supporting vigils, fasts, marches and advocacy campaigns for comprehensive immigration reform, and provide pastoral support and assistance to immigrants with special needs, such as those who cannot support their families, are ineligible for government-funded services, seek protection from detention and deportation, or whose parents or spouse have been detained or deported due to their unlawful immigration status.

BACKGROUND

As a church and as a nation we are confronted by a humanitarian crisis, where human anguish, oppression, inhospitality, and the deaths of thousands betray our highest ideals as people of faith and citizens of the United States.

At the heart of this crisis are immigration laws, which understandably seek to enhance border security in a time of transnational criminal enterprises and terrorism, but fail to offer a timely, workable and legal framework so that millions of hard working and honest immigrants residing in the U.S. may remain in the U.S. legally without fear of deportation, and others may enter legally to live, work, and contribute to the U.S. economy. Meanwhile, global economics and unfair trade policies continue to push people out of their homelands and pull them into another.

Absent comprehensive immigration reform, narrowly drawn immigration laws which seek to respond to fears but not to human hopes are self-defeating. History teaches and our faith proclaims that the human spirit will not forever be bound by walls, whether those of cold steel and razor wire, or those which hobble the human heart. Desperation born of abject poverty and injustice abroad dares to hope. Love seeks to reunite families separated by the need of a provider to earn their daily bread, or splintered by imprisonment and deportation for those who are caught.

It is a costly hope.

It is a costly love.

Since 1994, when the U.S. stepped up security more than 4,000 migrant men, women and children have died crossing the U.S-Mexico border. The Government Accountability Office—the watchdog agency of the United States Congress—has reported that by 2005, annual deaths had doubled to 472. By comparison, the number of people killed trying to cross the communist-era Berlin Wall between 1961 and 1989 was an estimated 263, of which 125 were confirmed by researchers. When people do get across, their journey is far from over as they encounter a world full of alienation and uncertainty. Lacking legal recourse or labor protections, many undocumented workers go to work each day fearing a workplace raid, and come home with the threat of ICE agents knocking on their door. This fear is magnified for LGBT immigrants, who face discrimination and lack of protection on multiple fronts.

As people of faith, we must choose a different path. We will choose to love at all costs. We will say no more to the deaths at the border, and no more to the fear of living in the shadows.