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An Open Letter to United Methodists in Texas and All People of Good Will

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We, the United Methodist Bishops of the State of Texas, greet you in the love of Christ. We call upon those who claim the title “Christian” to remember that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, began his life as a homeless refugee, fleeing with his family to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15). Just as the Holy Family was forced to flee their homeland and seek safety, too many flee for their lives in our violent, terror-plagued world.

In the face of such human tragedy in our world today, we, the bishops of The United Methodist Church in Texas, call upon all United Methodists to see Christ in the refugees of today, regardless of their nationality and/or social, religious, economic, or political background.

We share with others a common sense of frustration, hopelessness, and confusion as we view the unfolding images of today’s refugees in the news. We desire to welcome the sojourner, love our neighbor, and stand with the most vulnerable among us, while also being concerned for the security and well-being of our communities, state, and nation. It is legitimate and proper to be concerned about the safety of our neighborhoods and our country. It is also proper and right that we reflect Christian compassion and values in our response. Jesus was explicit in his teachings when he said, “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” (Matthew 10:40).

We cannot let fear rule the day; we must let love champion our actions. We are a nation founded on immigration and forged by the courage of shared values to be a “light on the hill” and a beacon of hope in a broken world.

As Christians and as Texans, our values are grounded in respect and hospitality toward strangers. We recognize that these are difficult and complex times that call for the best of America’s values and our highest witness as followers of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, we call upon President Trump, Governor Abbott, and the leaders of our nation and state to seek a more compassionate response to immigrants and refugees. Joining with those who desire a safer America, we pray for a just and caring response to those most in need of our help and love.

Yours in Christ,
The United Methodist Bishops of the State of Texas

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

"So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty. (Malachi 3:5)

For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:14)

He makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly; he loves the foreigners who live with our people, and gives them food and clothes. So then, show love for those foreigners, because you were once foreigners in Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)

Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt. (Exodus 23:9)

"Long ago I gave these commands to my people: 'You must see that justice is done, and must show kindness and mercy to one another. Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners who live among you, or anyone else in need.'" (Zechariah 7:9)

I am the Lord, and I consider all people the same, whether they are Israelites or foreigners living among you. (Numbers 15:16)

Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. (Ezekiel 16:49)

See that justice is done – help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows.(Isaiah 1:17)

If you give food to the hungry and satisfy those who are in need, then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon. (Isaiah 58:10)

Remember to welcome strangers in your homes. There were some who did that and welcomed angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:2)

"Whoever has two shirts must give one to the man who has none, and whoever has food must share it."(Luke 3:11)

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. (Leviticus 19:9-10)

"As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name— for they will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when they come and pray toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name. (1 Kings 8:41-44)