

## **Global Ministries statement regarding immigration issues**

Tuesday, 23 May 2006

As the Senate continues its debate on comprehensive immigration reform legislation, Global Ministries, a common witness of the Division of Overseas Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ expresses strong support for the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 (S.1033): McCain, Kennedy, Kolbe, Flake, and Gutierrez Bill.

April 19, 2006

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist  
509 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

House Majority Leader John Boehner  
H-107 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
Dear Sirs:

As the Senate continues its debate on comprehensive immigration reform legislation, Global Ministries, a common witness of the Division of Overseas Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ expresses strong support for the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 (S.1033): McCain, Kennedy, Kolbe, Flake, and Gutierrez Bill.

As people of Christian faith and conscience, we understand that the United States of America was built on the contribution of immigrants from around the world. Throughout our history our society has reflected diversity of culture, faith, language, customs, values and dreams that woven together have become the fabric of our society. Our Christian perspective on social justice demands that we support immigrants who contribute to our economy and workforce and who suffer discrimination, abuse, exploitation and hardship as a result of their status as undocumented residents. The time has come for the President and Congress to work together to enact comprehensive legislation that rewards work, reunites families, restores the rule of law, reinforces our nation's security, respects the rights of U.S.-born and immigrant workers, and redeems the American Dream. The following common principles emerge from our faith traditions and teachings and are offered to help guide your actions on immigration reform:

All persons have the right to find economic opportunities that will allow them and their families to live in dignity (the "pursuit of happiness," as framed in our Declaration of Independence).

If those economic opportunities are unavailable in their homeland, then persons should be allowed to migrate to support themselves and their families. God instructed Abram and Sarai, the parents of our faith, to migrate to a new land; today, the voice of God continues to direct people to paths of migration and immigration. Our faith traditions also call on us to welcome the stranger among us and to promote hospitality toward the migrant, the refugees, and the exiled in our communities. Our traditions also recognize that all the goods of the earth belong to God and are intended to be shared by all people.

C. Those fleeing violence and persecution should be afforded protection. The global community should protect those who flee wars and persecution, as many people from our own faith traditions have been forced to do throughout history. This requires that migrants be allowed to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their asylum claims fully considered by a competent authority.

The human dignity and human rights of all migrants should be respected. Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected, and we must develop policies that safeguard this dignity. We must seek policies to safeguard the rights and inherent dignity of all migrants, particularly the undocumented, including their rights as workers. Family unity among migrant and immigrant families should be protected and upheld.

Our faith and moral imperatives transcend borders and compel us to act on the basis of justice and love. From this basis, we set forth the following policy recommendations in support of comprehensive immigration reform that is responsible and humanitarian.

1. Current Border Enforcement Strategy is a failed policy that must be re-evaluated. Since 1998, more than 2500 migrants – men, women, and children – have lost their lives in the deserts of the U.S. – Mexico borderlands, trying to make their way into the United States. We recognize the right of the nations to control their borders, but border control strategies must be humane.
2. The status of undocumented persons currently living in the U.S. must be addressed. Workers and their families currently living in the U.S. must have access to a program of legalization that offers paths to permanent residency and eventual citizenship for workers and their families. Earned legalization (not blanket amnesty) of the undocumented workforce helps stabilize that workforce as well as their families. A stable workforce strengthens the country.
3. Family unity and reunification must be the cornerstone of U.S. immigration policy. Migrants enter the United States either to find work, to escape war or persecution, or to reunite with family members. Families must be allowed to reunite legally and in a timely manner as well as to immigrate together as a unit.
4. An employment-focused immigration program must allow workers and their families to enter the U.S. to live and work in a safe, legal, orderly, and humane manner through recognized ports of entry. International workers' rights must be recognized and honored in ways that protect: the basic right to organize and collectively bargain, job portability, easy and safe travel between the U.S. and homelands, and achievable and verifiable paths to residency.
5. Immigration policy must recognize that root causes of migration lie in political as well as environmental, economic, and trade inequities. Trade agreements must be negotiated in ways that build mutual and just international relationships. New strategies must include incentives for the public and private sectors to invest in economically and environmentally sustainable development in the sending communities.
6. Immigration policy must protect individuals and organizations who/which act as Good Samaritans without regard to the immigration status of the persons they serve.

As leaders of the Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ, the common entity that oversees and is responsible for our world mission and ministries, we believe these principles and recommendations will significantly reduce, if not eliminate, the unnecessary tragedies occurring on our borders. Please support the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of our Board of Directors,

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Chair, Division of Overseas Ministries Board  
Co-Chair, Common Global Ministries Board

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Chair, Wider Church Ministries Board  
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