

## **UMC on Immigration**

### **Book of Discipline**

F) Migrant Workers—Migratory and other farm workers, who have long been a special concern of the Church's ministry, are by the nature of their way of life excluded from many of the economic and social benefits enjoyed by other workers. Many of the migrant laborers' situations are aggravated because they are racial and ethnic persons who have been oppressed with numerous other inequities within the society. We advocate for the rights of all migrants and applaud their efforts toward responsible self-organization and self-determination. We call upon governments and all employers to ensure for migratory workers the same economic, educational, and social benefits enjoyed by other citizens. We call upon our churches to seek to develop programs of service to such migrant people who come within their parish and support their efforts to organize for collective bargaining. Book of Discipline 163-IV-F

### **Book of Resolutions**

#### 118. Opposition to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Resolution Act

WHEREAS, the Holy Scriptures call us as the community of God to give shelter, protection and help to sojourners living amongst us, reminding us that we, too, were foreigners in other times; and

WHEREAS, the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church through its document To Love the Sojourner has given the various boards, commissions, and agencies of The United Methodist Church direction as we relate to undocumented persons that live in our communities; and

WHEREAS, undocumented persons possess certain inalienable rights named and lifted in the International Declaration on Human Rights, the United Nations charter, as well as the documents concerning immigration of the Geneva Convention, and the Constitution of the United States Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, one of the most critical issues facing the Hispanic community today is the need for amnesty for the undocumented immigrants living within the United States; and

WHEREAS, being an undocumented person is NOT a crime;

Therefore, be it resolved, that we, The United Methodist Church, declare that the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Resolution Act is evil and unjust, and that the enforcement thereof results in immediate and insufferable human rights violations, discrimination, and oppression.

We call the United States government to accountability and insist upon:

1. changes in, and possible abolition of, the 1996 immigration law;
2. the continued existence of a unified Immigration and Naturalization Service, rather than a division into administrative and enforcement prosecutorial branches, and
3. the development of an amnesty program for undocumented persons to be implemented immediately.

Be it further resolved, that the General Conference move to create a task force to be responsible for agencies working on behalf of The United Methodist Church that is

composed of staff from the following church boards and agencies: General Board of Global Ministries, General Commission on Religion and Race, General Board of Church and Society, with a minimum of two bishops, legal advisers, and Methodists Associated to Represent the Cause of Hispanic Americans (MARCHA) representation.

ADOPTED 2000

See Social Principles, ¶ 162.

#### 119. Refugees, Immigrants, and Visitors to the United States of America

United Methodists are called to be faithful to God and to God's actions in the world. As United Methodists we believe that God is the parent of all—that all people are created in God's image and that it is the right of all people to have a full and abundant life. We believe that the resources of creation are God's gift for all people. We believe that as people of God we need to be open to others and welcome especially the sojourners in our midst.

The United States of America prides itself as being open to ethnic diversity. However, United States citizens have not always held to that ideal. While some people have been welcomed, others have remained in the outskirts of U.S. cultural core and fabric.

Furthermore, the reality is that with time U.S. borders have been getting narrower and often a spirit of hostility and racism toward the sojourners in the U.S.—refugees, immigrants, and visitors—has grown to the point of rejection and discrimination.

A glaring example of discrimination and injustice is the denial of entry visas to legitimate invitees from around the world, in particular the delegates to the 2004 General Conference coming from the Central Conferences in Africa and the Philippines. These are delegates of color whose denial of entry by the U.S. government to a legitimate event such as the General Conference—which is well announced and scheduled—is unacceptable and unconscionable.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, rather than helping U.S. citizens become more open and welcoming to the people who seek relief from economic and political pressures as well as from hunger and war in their countries, have blurred their vision and have created a distorted concept of national identity. Refugees, immigrants, and visitors from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and very specially the Middle East are being unjustly harassed and persecuted. In the name of the law, refugees and immigrant families are being separated, and many persons are being sent back to their countries disregarding the political, emotional, physical, and spiritual consequences of such action. There is fear and anguish in the sojourners in our midst. There is mistrust and hostility toward the sojourners in our midst. Visitors' visas to enter the United State have become increasingly difficult and expensive to obtain.

The United Methodist Church's position has been clear on the issue of immigration, including those who while working in the U.S. and making their contribution do not have the needed documents for residence. The 2000 General Conference adopted a resolution that specifically charged The United Methodist Church to declare the "Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Resolution Act" evil and unjust and to call the United States government to accountability and insist upon changes and possible abolition of the 1996 Immigration law, the continued existence of a unified Immigration and Naturalization Service, rather than a division into administrative and enforcement

prosecutorial branches, and the development of an amnesty program for undocumented persons (Resolution #118, "Opposition to the Illegal Immigration, Reform and Immigrant Resolution Act").

WHEREAS, the immigrant and refugee community, as well as, from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific are currently suffering the effects of discriminatory immigration policies. We therefore call The United Methodist Church;

1. to affirm and remind the church through the Council of Bishops, United Methodist Communications and the General Board of Church and Society, the position of The United Methodist Church regarding the rights of refugees, immigrants, and undocumented persons to seek a better life in the United States;
2. to affirm and remind the President of the United States of America, the U.S. Congress, and other government officials of The United Methodist Church's position on immigration as described in the Resolution on Immigration (Resolution #118) adopted by the 2000 General Conference and on this resolution;
3. to promote and distribute both resolutions through the Council of Bishops, United Methodist Communications, and the General Board of Church and Society;
4. to call local churches to seek ways to welcome, assist, and empower the refugee, immigrant, visitors, and undocumented persons in their neighborhood, and to denounce the persecution of the sojourner in the U.S. as prejudicial and racist;
5. to request the General Board of Church and Society to work for public policy that is hospitable to visitors to the United States in every step of entry and visit to the U.S. from visa application to the time while they are enroute to and are accepted entry into the United States;
6. to request that immediately upon adoption by the General Conference, the Secretary of the General Conference will send a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, the President of the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. Secretary of State.

ADOPTED 2004

See Social Principles, ¶ 162.

#### 264. Assistance, Sanctuary, and Deportation Relief for Central American, Caribbean, Salvadorean, and Other Refugees

As Christians we are called by God to show compassion for refugees. The Bible directs us to care for the "foreigners" in our midst (Exodus 23:9, King James Version) and reminds us that we too are "sojourners" (Leviticus 25:23, Revised Standard Version). Jesus and his family had to flee to Egypt to escape persecution (Matthew 2:13-15). We are told in Hebrews 13:2 (RSV), "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

According to the terms of the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States accords refugee or asylum status to persons who cannot return to their countries of origin because of persecution or fear of persecution, for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Refugees from Central America and other areas of Latin America and the Caribbean are fleeing to the United States to escape the persecution, torture, and murder of their civil-war-torn homelands. Many of these refugees have been tortured and murdered when forced to return to their homelands.

We call upon The United Methodist Church to:

1. strongly oppose the deportation of Central American, Caribbean, Salvadorean, and other refugees from the United States; and call on the President of the United States, the United States attorney general, the Department of State, and the Congress to grant "permanent resident" legal status to Central American, Caribbean, Salvadorean, and other refugees;
2. request that annual conferences and local churches assist in ministries to Central American, Caribbean, Salvadorean, African, and other refugees by providing them with legal assistance, bail bond funds, food, housing, and medical care;
3. encourage congregations to resist the policy of the Immigration and Naturalization Service by declaring their churches as "sanctuaries" for refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala, and other areas of the Caribbean and Latin America; and
4. urge the United States government to follow the United Nations definition of refugees.

ADOPTED 1984, REVISED AND ADOPTED 2000

See Social Principles, ¶ 164A.

## 265. Immigrants and Refugees: To Love the Sojourner

### I. Biblical/Theological Basis

The Bible is full of stories of sojourners, strangers without homes, whom God called people to protect. The Israelites were themselves sojourners for forty years after the exodus from Egypt, as they sought the Promised Land. God did not let the Israelites forget that they had been without a homeland for such a long time; the ethic of welcoming the sojourner was woven into the very fabric of the Israelite confederacy. It was more than an ethic, it was a command of God. "Do not mistreat or oppress a stranger; you know how it feels to be a stranger, because you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9, Revised Standard Version, adapted).

A sojourn implies uprootedness; sojourners are uprooted people. At times uprooted people in the Bible were looking for a home, but other times they were not. Often they were telling those who would listen that the real home was a spiritual home-with God providing accompaniment. Sojourners were messengers. The message they sent then as well as today is that the Spirit of God is with each of us as we sojourn through life. We are all on a journey, and God is with us. Such was the message of Moses and many of the prophets; such was the message of John the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness; and such was the message of Jesus Christ, whose own life was characterized by uprootedness. The infant Jesus and his family had to flee to Egypt to avoid persecution and death; they became refugees, sojourning in Egypt until they could come home. Jesus was a person on the move. Jesus' ministry occurred throughout the countryside of Judea, and his life was marked by uprootedness: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). Jesus made a point of spending time with the poor, the powerless, the despised and rejected. Jesus did so while spreading the word of God's steadfast love, the same love spoken of in the Book of Hosea: "I will betroth you to me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness and justice, and in loving kindness and mercy" (Hosea 2:19, New King James Version).

Jesus embodied the love of God to the world and modeled how we are to act with love and compassion for the sojourner. In fact, Jesus' most pointed description of how human

beings should behave once they are aware of God's love is in the story of the good Samaritan, in which the love of God is expressed through the compassion of a stranger: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10:33-34, King James Version). This is the radical love of God as expressed by Jesus Christ. It transcends race, nationality, and religion and is a love that cries for justice and peace; it is a love that is sorely needed today.

## II. Global Uprootedness

We live in a world where there are over 13 million people who are refugees, another 26 million who are internally displaced persons (IDPs), and millions more who seek asylum or are migrants looking to find a way out of poverty. No nation can afford to turn a blind eye toward these realities. People who must flee their land because they have no choice are today's uprooted populations. They are given different labels depending on their circumstances: refugees—persons who have been officially recognized by the United Nations as having a well-founded fear of persecution because of their political affiliation, religion, race, nationality, or membership in a particular social group or opinion; asylum seekers—those who have left their homeland and are applying for political asylum in the country to which they have fled (in the United States, applying for asylum is a right that can be exercised); internally displaced—people who are displaced within the borders of their own lands because of civil strife but who cannot receive the protection of the international community because of the principle of national sovereignty; economic migrants—those who flee dire poverty in search of employment and a way to feed their families. No matter what label they are given, they are usually vulnerable people in need of compassion and protection. Most of them are women and children; often, the women are subjected to the brutality of sexual violence.

Many issues emerge from violent conflict. Even when refugees feel they can return home safely, they face immense problems in restarting their lives, including possible injury or death from landmines strewn wantonly during periods of conflict. Refugees now returning to Sri Lanka, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, and Angola, face these horrors, and landmines still remain in parts of Mozambique, Cambodia and Bosnia, even after years of de-mining efforts.

Other issues are political and economical. A potent mix of unstable governments, political and economic injustice, and ethnic and religious strife combine to produce violence, terror, and refugee flight. More people are displaced every day. Uprooted people need the protection of the international community in the months and years before they can safely return home.

Nations of the Global South are particularly concerned about the migration of people from rural to urban areas and the loss of young generations of strong leaders to other countries. These people often do not want to migrate; they feel pressured to do so by the promise of education, job opportunities, and economic security for themselves and their families at home. Underlying their need to migrate is an unjust global economic system that drains their countries' resources, and thereby undermines local and national economies. These economic patterns combine with war in some areas and colonialism in others to increase migration.

In Europe, many governments are implementing policies that are designed to prevent asylum seekers from successfully finding refuge within their borders. The recent increase in the number of uprooted persons demonstrates that the international community, including the churches, must focus more attention on understanding and alleviating the causes of forced human uprootedness, as well as responding to the consequences. Most refugees and IDPs, are temporarily accommodated in stark situations in camps or urban centers, then wait an average of ten years before conditions in their homeland stabilize and permit a safe return. For refugees whose lives are in imminent danger, their last hope is often to seek asylum in North America, Europe, or Australia. Yet these wealthy nations lack the political and moral will to provide safe havens in the face of other demands. Uprootedness is seen by the governments of the industrialized nations as a problem to be dealt with by leaving other countries to solve their own problems or by exercising force, rather than grasping the complex phenomena that need coherent and human solutions on a global scale.

### III. Immigration and Asylum in the United States

In the wake of September 11, 2001 (9/11), uprooted people in the United States are not only looked upon as the cause of societal problems, but are often seen also as threats to national security. The effect on asylum seekers arriving in the United States has been to set back hopes for reform of the asylum process. Since 1997, most asylum seekers are detained until their case is adjudicated and they are either granted asylum or deported. They are denied due process and held in conditions as bad or worse than those of convicted felons—conditions which heap further suffering on those who have fled persecution and even torture. Additionally, the response to September 11 was not only a setback for asylum seekers in the United States but seriously damaged the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program for which refugees are interviewed and approved overseas. In the four years prior to September 11, the United States accepted an average 70,000 refugees for resettlement each year. Refugees approved for the U.S. program had always been the most thoroughly scrutinized of any persons coming into the United States. No refugee had been involved in the events of September 11, and the lengthy scrutiny involved in entering the U.S. as a refugee would deter any terrorist from attempting that route. Yet it was the Refugee Program—designed to provide refuge to persons who had themselves been victims of terror—that the government targeted with some of its first anti-terrorism measures.

The consequences of these actions were to halt refugee flights through December 2001, stop all refugee interviews for four months, require all refugees to be fingerprinted, impose a maximum number of 35 refugees to a flight, and limit them to four ports of entry (now eight). A new security rule requiring an FBI check for all males from Africa and the Middle East between the ages of 15 and 45 can hold up an entire family for eight months until the member in that category is cleared. By adding to this the simultaneous introduction of an improved procedure for verifying the relationship of refugees joining family already in the U.S., the government developed a protracted process resulting in only 28,000 of the 70,000 possible refugee visa slots being filled in Fiscal Year 2002 and a loss of 40,000 refugee places; these slots do not carry over into the next year.

The commitment of the U.S. to the resettlement of refugees speaks to its concern for the plight of victims of persecution and terror and serves as an example for other nations. Refugees should be the last people to be the target of anti-terrorism policies—yet, since

September 11, at least 50,000 refugees have lost a chance to restart their lives in the U.S. A restored generous refugee admissions policy would not jeopardize national security and would add to the benefit of the nation and its relationships with nations across the world.

The reduction in refugee admissions adds urgency the United States and international community, including the churches, to address the causes of uprootedness and endeavor to restore the commitment to the protection of refugees.

Nearly all the citizens of the United States have ancestors who emigrated from other parts of the world. Since the seventeenth century, millions of immigrants have come to the United States, often to seek freedom from religious persecution and broader opportunities in a new land. No other nation has welcomed so many immigrants from so many parts of the world, and no other nation has taken such pride in its immigrant roots. Nevertheless, the history of immigration policy in the United States has been heavily influenced by economic and labor-force needs, as well as by systemic racism. The United States has at times encouraged the presence of immigrants who could provide the cheap hard labor to build canals and railroads, help with the harvesting of crops, and supply industry with needed workers. At other times, however, U.S. laws have systematically excluded immigrants because of racial, ethnic, religious, or other prejudicial reasons. Examples are the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Immigration Act of 1924, the Immigration Act of 1965, and the Immigration, Reform, and Control Act of 1986.

The 1980s and early 1990s witnessed an influx of persons seeking asylum in the United States from Central America, including Haiti and Cuba. All of these groups fled a combination of dire poverty, government repression or persecution, and general strife in their homelands. This influx of refugees to the United States was unexpected, and many—particularly the Haitian, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan people—were denied the protection of asylum they so desperately needed. Recent laws enabled many of these people to adjust to permanent residency, although many others are still undocumented. Since 1996, the United States immigration law and policies have been moving toward greater restriction on immigration and less protection of immigrants' and refugees' rights. Immigrants are singled out for harsh punishment under immigration law for minor and even very old criminal violations. Their eligibility for the social safety net is limited. Immigrants' rights to due process of the law are increasingly being circumscribed by nearly all the branches of government, using tactics ranging from judicial review to detention without bond.

The U.S.A. PATRIOT ACT of 2001 mandates the development of a technological system that will ensure the inter-agency sharing of information and tracking and monitoring of foreign visitors' entry and exit. However, it was the then Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) under the current administration that had shaped and developed policies beyond the expressed mandate of Congress. In the wake of 9/11, the INS increased its use of secret evidence in immigration hearings, citing threats to national security and barring the immigrants from proceedings or access to evidence against them. It instituted a "Special Registration" program, requiring male nationals of certain countries—predominantly Muslim—to register by providing fingerprints and all key information such as addresses, bank accounts, and credit cards. This program has resulted in the arrest and prosecution of many undocumented immigrants, even those with pending applications for immigration benefits.

In another area of policy, the U.S. Attorney General has issued a directive that is resulting in serious abridgement of immigrants' rights to due process. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) has been ordered to clear its backlog of immigration appeals, and it has attempted to do so by increasing the use of one-judge review, instead of a panel of three, and dispensing with opinions supported with analysis, issuing instead one-sentence boilerplate decisions. Coupled with the drastic limitations on judicial review imposed by the 1996 law, this means that immigrants' rights to appeal are severely curtailed. In many of the above instances of legal and policy shifts, the government has cited national security as justification. As history has demonstrated, however, when a measure is adopted which affects a broad base of the population without regard to individual circumstances, and where preservation of national security comes at the cost of human dignity and civil rights, such laws or policies often prove unjustified and unjustifiable in the final analysis. The Japanese internment during WWII and the McCarthy investigations are two prime examples.

In a time when our nation and world is desperate for peace, security, and community, people of faith and good will are needed to encourage leadership at home and abroad and, especially, in our churches; and to have the courage to speak up for the newly vulnerable people put at risk in the rush to provide for our own safety. We must remember that God's household is bigger than our own.

Therefore, we call upon The United Methodist Church, in collaboration with other ecumenical and interdenominational organizations, to urge the government of the United States as well as all other governments:

1. to encourage and support international economic policies that promote sustainable development and that use capital, technology, labor, and land in a manner that gives priority to employment for all people and the production of basic human necessities, thereby reducing migration pressures;
2. to alleviate conditions of uprootedness by working toward the elimination of all forms of warfare and by supporting agrarian reform, social justice, and an adequate measure of economic security for all peoples;
3. to take decisive action to eliminate the sale and international trade in land mines and provide technical assistance to facilitate their removal from lands to which refugees are returning;
4. to withhold all support—military and financial—to governments with a documented recent history of abuses and disregard for human rights, particularly the right of asylum;
5. to provide a fair and generous resettlement policy as one of the ways of ensuring meaningful protection and a durable solution for refugees;
6. to adopt reasonable standards for consideration as refugees for those seeking asylum and to prevent and/or eliminate within the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Bureau for Customs and Border Control, and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigrant Services of the Department of Homeland Security all abuses of civil and human rights, including such practices as the violation of due process, denial of bond, detention of noncriminal asylum seekers, and hasty deportation of people who are undocumented or overstayed;
7. to insure that the rights and dignity of all immigrants and foreign visitors are fully respected in all national security measures developed to combat terrorism, and to end Special Registration requirements;

8. to monitor all attempted reforms on immigration and refugee policy and practices in order to ensure fair and adequate process in regard to asylum petitions, judicial review, refugee resettlement priorities, and immigrant categories;
9. to review and reject all legislative measures that propose summary exclusion for bona fide asylum seekers, to end the practice of detaining asylum seekers during the asylum process, and to ensure access to counsel and meaningful review of asylum claims by an immigration judge; and
10. to ensure protection of the basic human rights of immigrants and refugees, such as the right to an education, adequate health care, due process and redress of law, protection against social and economic exploitation, the right to a cultural and social identity, and access to the social and economic life of the nation whether in documented or undocumented status.

As people of faith, we are called to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). We must work for justice and peace for all people and envision a world where institutions are transformed into true servants of the people, full of the compassion exemplified by Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in addition to advocating for the above measures, we call upon United Methodist churches and agencies:

1. to support international efforts to promote sustainable development policies designed to alleviate human suffering and counteract some of the root causes of forced migration;
2. to advocate for protection of uprooted women and children against all forms of violence and to call for full legal protection of uprooted children in the midst of armed conflict;
3. to provide assistance for projects of relief to refugees and displaced persons;
4. to provide assistance for projects of economic development for refugees and returnees;
5. to provide sponsorships for refugees through local congregations;
6. to denounce and oppose the rise of xenophobic and racist reactions against newcomers in the United States and elsewhere, and to support any and all efforts to build bridges between people of diverse ethnicities and cultures;
7. to denounce and oppose government policies that use the threat of terror to target people who are in violation of minor immigration regulations, and criminalizes them as threats to national security—actions which amount to racial and ethnic profiling;
8. to continue to work with community-based organizations to provide forums for citizens to voice concerns, educate one another, and confront the problems of racism and xenophobia as obstacles to building community;
9. to work with civic and legal organizations to support communities that are now or will be affected by harsh immigration laws passed since 1996 and the heavy-handed national security measures such as the U.S.A. PATRIOT ACT of 2001;
10. to provide pastoral care and crisis intervention to individuals and families who are refugees and asylum seekers; and
11. to speak out, make declarations, and adopt resolutions to condemn and delegitimize violence against foreigners.

We recommend that the General Board of Church and Society and the General Board of Global Ministries:

1. monitor cases of possible human-rights violations in the area of immigration and give guidance to United Methodists in responding to such cases;

2. advocate for human rights (including political, economic, and civil) for all people, and especially for the strangers who sojourn in the land;
  3. advocate for repeal of the harsh provisions of the immigration laws and policies passed since 1996;
  4. continue explorations of solutions to the problems of asylum seekers and undocumented people;
  5. lead United Methodists throughout the United States in the fight against nativism and continue to respond to the current threat against refugees and immigrants;
  6. lead the churches throughout the United States and the world in recognizing the contributions newcomers have made that have culturally and economically enriched that nation;
  7. provide technical and financial assistance to local churches in active ministry with refugees and asylum seekers;
  8. continue the task of educating United Methodists about issues related to refugees, immigrants, and migrants;
  9. develop materials to educate churches on immigration and refuge issues as well as encourage churches to be in ministry with refugees and asylum seekers; and
  10. assist the churches in advocating for fair and just immigration laws and practices.
- ADOPTED 1996, AMENDED AND READOPTED 2000, AMENDED AND READOPTED 2004  
See Social Principles, ¶ 164A.

## 266. Immigrants in the United States: Ministries of Hospitality, Advocacy, and Justice

Our Christian roots are centered among people who were sojourners in the land. Throughout history, people have been uprooted under conditions similar to that of Mary and Joseph, who were forced to flee to save the life of their son. Most of our own forefathers and foremothers were immigrants to this country. The Bible is clear about how we should treat these wanderers:

When strangers sojourn with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. . . .

(Leviticus 19:33-34, Revised Standard Version)

Immigrants come to the United States because communities throughout our world are suffering from war, civil conflict, economic hardships, environmental destruction, and persecution for political, religious, ethnic, or social reasons. They come seeking food and shelter-refuge, but instead they are met with closed doors and detention centers fueled by attitudes of racism, fear or hatred of foreigners and hostility. Immigrants with or without legal status are vulnerable to human rights abuses starting with coyotes, or people who provide illegal transportation into the United States to the sub-standard working conditions and low-wages that swell business profits. Often immigrants are forced into prostitution and other forms of illegal work in order to pay their transportation debt. For these reasons, we stand firmly opposed to state or federal legislative action such as the federal Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, California's Proposition 187, or any similar legislation which discriminates against immigrants and that may have the following effects:

- Public Schools: Districts are required to verify the legal status of students enrolling for the first time. The status of parents or guardians of students must also be verified.
- Higher Education: Undocumented immigrants are barred from community colleges and public institutions of higher learning.
- Health: Undocumented immigrants as well as legal immigrants are ineligible for public health services, except for emergency care.
- Welfare: Undocumented immigrants as well as legal immigrants are already ineligible for major welfare programs. Most child-welfare and foster-care benefits are also eliminated.
- Law Enforcement: Service providers are required to report suspected undocumented immigrants. Law-enforcement agencies must verify the residency status of individuals arrested or suspected of being in the United States illegally. When legal residency cannot be proved, the person will be reported to the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service.

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. Our faith, grounded in Christ and in the Wesleyan call to work for prophetic justice, calls us to follow our Social Principles and respond in appropriate and direct ways to prevent harm to the sojourner. Jesus teaches us to show special concern for the poor and oppressed who come to our land seeking survival and peace. We call upon United Methodist individuals and churches in the United States and through general boards and agencies throughout The United Methodist Church to do the following: (1) actively oppose anti-immigrant legislative action and support legislative action that protects the poor and oppressed in their quest for survival and peace; (2) urge stringent policing and penalties for coyotes (illegal transporters); (3) urge that humane and fair treatment be extended to all immigrants by business and agricultural groups; (4) advocate human rights (political, economic, and civil) for all people, including the strangers who sojourn in our land; (5) support communities and congregations by prayer and action where anti-immigrant measures are implemented; (6) continue to work with community organizations to provide forums for citizens to voice concerns, educate one another, and confront the problems of racism and fear or hatred of foreigners as obstacles to building community; (7) continue to work with civic and legal organizations to support communities who are now, or will be, affected by the destructive, deteriorating social issues raised by anti-immigrant measures; (8) support the legal needs of immigrants through church-based immigration clinics.

Finally, we call upon United Methodists to practice hospitality and express our commitment to an inclusive church and society through all our ministries in the spirit of our biblical tradition:

Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.

(Exodus 23:9, New International Version)

ADOPTED 1996, AMENDED AND READOPTED 2000

See Social Principles, ¶ 164A.

## 267. Civil Rights of Undocumented Workers and Employee Benefits

It is a well known fact that the economy of this country depends on the labor of both documented and undocumented workers. They work in industries such as: agriculture, manufacturing, sweatshops, etc., and their contribution is indispensable. They deserve the right to a safe, secure, just working and living environment. Such a just working environment should include equitable living wages, health care, and other social benefits provided by public and private agencies.

WHEREAS, a great number of Hispano/Latino and other immigrants contribute significantly to the economy of the country and engage in the most difficult jobs; and, WHEREAS, a great number of Hispano/Latino and other laborers are undocumented and are not paid equitable salaries; and,

WHEREAS, we recognize the work of those Hispano/Latino and other undocumented workers as essential for the economic growth of the nation; and

WHEREAS, the U.S.A. PATRIOT ACT has created more fear and unjustly oppresses undocumented workers; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that injustices are committed against Hispano/Latino and other undocumented workers and that it is against God's will;

Be it resolved, that the General Conference requests the General Board of Church and Society to strongly advocate the United States government for the establishment of more just laws to protect and enforce the human and civil rights of undocumented workers.

Be it further resolved, that the General Conference demand, by way of the General Board of Church and Society, that the government require employers provide adequate health care and encourage employers to provide other social benefits provided by public and private agencies.

ADOPTED 2004

See Social Principles, ¶ 164A.