



## **Interfaith Platform on Humane Immigration Reform**

As our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our brothers and sisters with love and compassion—regardless of their place of birth—we call on the new Administration and 111<sup>th</sup> Congress to enact humane and equitable immigration reform in 2009.

We call for immigration reform because each day in our congregations, service programs, health-care facilities, and schools we witness the human consequences of a broken and outdated system. We see the exploitation of undocumented workers and the plight of separated families, as well as the escalation of community fear due to indiscriminate raids and local police acting as federal immigration agents. Humane immigration reform would help put an end to this suffering, which offends the dignity of all human beings.

The Hebrew Bible tells us: "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). In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger, for "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me" (Matthew 25:40). The Qur'an tells us that we should "do good to...those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet" (4:36). The Hindu Taittiriya Upanishad tells us: "The guest is a representative of God" (1.11.2).

Therefore, we call on the new Administration and 111<sup>th</sup> Congress to commit to:

### **Uphold family unity as a priority of all immigration policies**

Recognizing the importance of families to the creation of healthy individuals and strong communities, we call on the new Administration and Congress to 1) expeditiously reunite immigrant families separated due to lengthy visa backlogs; 2) revise family preference categories and per-country caps to prioritize family unity; and 3) remove bars to reentry and adjustment of status for individuals seeking to reunite with their family members. Attempts to devalue the family, such as denying birthright citizenship to the children of immigrants or placing family-based and employment-based visa applicants in competition with each other on a point-based or other system, must be rejected in order to maintain and promote family unity.

### **Create a process for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status and eventual citizenship**

We urge the Administration and Congress to enact immigration reform that allows undocumented immigrants and their families to earn lawful permanent residency upon the satisfaction of reasonable criteria, with a pathway to citizenship. The workability of such a program should not be hindered by overly punitive criteria, such as mandating that immigrants leave the country or pay exorbitant fees, or by making the process conditional upon the implementation of enforcement measures. Communities and congregations around the country are prepared to provide legal services to those eligible, as people of faith are committed to an effective and humane system that keeps families together and values the dignity of our friends and neighbors.

### **Protect workers and provide efficient channels of entry for new migrant workers**

We call for an expansion of legal avenues for workers who seek to migrate to the United States to work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner. Their rights must be fully protected, including the ability to bring their families with them, travel as needed, change their place of employment, and apply for lawful permanent residency and eventually citizenship. As currently structured, electronic employment verification programs have proven detrimental to both employers and employees due to increased discrimination and unfair hiring and firing practices. All workers benefit, however, from the enforcement of health, safety, wage, and hour laws, as well as the right to peacefully organize.

**Facilitate immigrant integration**

Many immigrants desire to naturalize but lack the necessary tools. The U.S. immigration system should empower them to this end by providing financial support to state and local governments and community organizations that offer language and civics education, outreach, and naturalization application assistance. Citizenship should be made more affordable by reducing naturalization fees and making fee waivers more easily accessible. Moreover, the processing of application backlogs and security checks should be streamlined to reduce waiting times. Counterproductive laws prohibiting immigrants from accessing social services and mandating that local police act as immigration officials should be revoked. These barriers to integration decrease community safety and discourage immigrants from pursuing education and community involvement. Faith based organizations and congregations around the country will continue to assist in integration efforts by providing social services and helping immigrants learn English, find jobs, and thrive in the United States.

**Restore due process protections and reform detention policies**

Immigration policies should respect human rights and ensure due process for all persons. We have witnessed how indiscriminate immigration raids have caused trauma and hardship for thousands of individuals. Such raids separate families, destroy communities, and threaten the basic rights of immigrants and U.S. citizens alike. The suffering caused by the increase and severity of Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in homes and workplaces underscores the problems with current U.S. immigration policies and the urgent need for reform. Many faith organizations administer services to those impacted by raids, as well as to immigrants in detention facilities. Witnessing the toll of incarceration on detainees, their families and our communities, we urge the new Administration and Congress to reduce the use of detention for immigrants and improve detention conditions by enacting clear, enforceable reforms that include rigorous medical treatment standards and increased access to pastoral care, legal counsel and legal orientation programs. Furthermore, the government should expedite the release of individuals who pose no risk to the community and expand the use of community-based alternatives to detention, which are more humane and cost effective.

**Align the enforcement of immigration laws with humanitarian values**

For the past twenty years, the federal government has dramatically increased fence construction, border patrol presence, and the deportation of immigrants, which have proven ineffective at decreasing undocumented immigration. During this time, we have witnessed the desecration of sacred sites and the violation of environmental and religious freedom laws, as well as the unnecessary suffering of community members whose loved ones have suffered or died seeking entry into the United States. Currently, vast resources are being used for fence construction and the mass arrests, detention, and deportation of immigrants who contribute to the U.S. economy and culture. To truly decrease undocumented immigration, the United States should improve access to the legal immigration system by increasing the number of ports of entry, expanding visa availability, and eliminating application backlogs to increase processing efficiency. Border policies must be consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the United States to implement its immigration laws and identify and prevent the entry of persons who commit dangerous crimes. All immigration laws must respect the dignity of all persons, prioritize the cohesiveness of families and communities, recognize the economic contributions of immigrants, and uphold our moral obligations to provide refuge and welcome the stranger.

**Immigration: A matter of human rights**

As people of faith, we call attention to the moral dimensions of public policy and recommend reforms that uphold the God-given dignity and rights of every person, each of whom are made in the image of God. We are dedicated to immigration reform because we value family unity, justice, equity, compassion, love, and the humane treatment of all persons. It is our collective prayer that the new Administration and 111<sup>th</sup> Congress enact just immigration reform based on these tenets.

**National Organizations and Denominations:**

American Friends Service Committee  
American Jewish Committee  
American Society for Muslim Advancement  
Anti-Defamation League  
Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice  
Center of Concern  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Refugee and Immigration Ministries  
Christian Reformed Church in North America, Office of Social Justice  
Church Communities International  
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program (CWS/IRP)  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)  
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, USA-E  
Daughters of Wisdom US Province  
Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ)  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)  
Interfaith Worker Justice  
Irish Apostolate USA  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Mennonite Central Committee, Washington Office  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA  
National Ministries, American Baptist Church USA  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
New York State Council of Churches  
North American Dominican Justice Promoters  
Pax Christi USA: National Catholic Peace Movement  
Progressive Jewish Alliance  
Sikh Council on Religion and Education  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
The Episcopal Church  
The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
United Methodist Church, General Commission on Religion and Race  
Ursuline Sisters of the Eastern Province, USA, Leadership council  
Women of Reform Judaism

**Local Organizations, Congregations, Diocese, and Religious Orders:**

Adrian Dominican Sisters, Adrian, MI  
Arlington Street Church, Boston, MA  
Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, KS  
Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel, OR  
Bethany United Church of Christ, Chicago, IL  
Blauvelt Dominican Sisters Justice Ministry  
Brooklyn Council of Churches  
California Council of Churches IMPACT  
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program, Lancaster, PA Office  
Colorado Council of Churches  
Congregation Chaverim, Tucson, AZ  
Congregation Justice Committee, Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Indiana  
Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Faith, Downey, CA  
Damaris McGuire, Director, New York State Episcopal Public Policy Network  
Dominican Sisters of Great Bend, Kansas  
Dominican Sisters of Houston, TX  
Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose, CA  
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill New York  
Dominican Sisters, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon  
Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, Silver Spring, MD  
Executive Committee of the Racine Dominicans  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Daytona Beach, FL  
First Unitarian Church, Los Angeles  
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska  
Irish Pastoral Centre, Quincy, MA  
Jewish Community Action, St. Paul, MN  
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona  
Jewish Family & Career Services of Atlanta  
Jewish Family & Children's Service, Pittsburgh, PA  
Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis  
Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte, Inc., NC  
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley  
Judson Memorial Church  
Justice and Peace Committee of St. Norbert Abbey, De Pere, WI  
La Iglesia Episcopal de Nuestra Senora de las Americas, Chicago, IL  
Lane Center for Catholic Studies and Social Thought, University of San Francisco  
Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross, Green Bay, Wisconsin  
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, Colorado  
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, New Mexico  
Lutheran Advocacy, Illinois  
Lutheran Community Services Northwest  
Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry in New Jersey  
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois  
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area  
Lutheran Statewide Advocacy -- New York



Marycrest Franciscans, Denver CO  
Methodist Federation for Social Action, NY Chapter  
Miami Baptist Association, Miami, Florida  
New Jersey Synod, Ev. Lutheran Church in America, Immigration Task Group  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
Presentation Sisters, New York, New England  
Refugee Immigration Ministry, Malden, MA  
River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Bethesda, MD, Latin America Taskforce Network  
San Andres Episcopal Church, Yonkers, NY  
School Sisters of Notre Dame Global Justice & Peace Commission  
School Sisters of St. Francis, International Leadership Team, Milwaukee, WI  
Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province, Renton WA – Inland Northwest, Idaho and  
Montana, West Coast – Washington, Oregon, Montana  
Sisters of St. Anne, St. Marie Province  
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa Leadership Team  
Sisters of St. Francis, Savannah MO  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, Western Province  
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, U.S.-Ontario Province Leadership Team  
Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate, San Antonio, TX  
Skagit Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Mount Vernon, WA  
Social Action Committee, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, CT  
St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis, Leadership Team  
St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Lyons, Kansas  
St. Pius V Parish, Chicago, IL  
The Board of Directors of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles.  
The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, Fond du Lac, WI  
The Dominican Sisters of Great Bend Kansas  
The Episcopal Church of the Advent, Chicago, IL  
The Episcopal Church of the Advent; La Iglesia Episcopal de Nuestra Senora de las Americas  
The Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service (IRIS)  
The Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida, Immigration and Social Justice Ministries  
The General Council of the Adrian Dominican Sisters  
The Leadership Council of the IHM Sisters of Monroe Michigan  
The Leadership Team, Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN  
The New Mexico Conference of Churches  
The Sisters of the Holy Family, Fremont, CA  
The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring – New Jersey Region  
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Las Vegas, NM  
United in Faith Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL  
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### **Individual Faith Leaders:**

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Rabbi Eric M. Solomon, Beth Meyer Synagogue  
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Rev. Denver Bitner, Zion Lutheran Church, Rockford, IL  
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Rev. Dr. Ken Brooker Langston, Director of the Disciples Justice Action Network and Coordinator  
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Rev. Linnea B. Wilson, St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mt. Prospect, IL  
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Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, U.S./Caribbean Province  
Superior, Rev. Jeffrey Duaine, C.S.Sp.  
The Rev. Ben L. Somerville II (Retired), St. John's Episcopal Church, Diocese of Arizona  
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The Rev. Edward Benoway, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Florida Bahamas Synod

The Rev. Floyd M. Schoenhals, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod

The Rev. Gerald L. Mansholt, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Central States Synod

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The Rev. John David Schleicher, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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The Rev. Margaret Payne, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, New England Synod

The Rev. Michael Rinehart, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

The Rev. Murray Finck, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Pacifica Synod

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The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, Assistant Bishop of California

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