

“As Christians committed to God’s call to welcome the stranger and to promote the wholeness and well being of families, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) leaders have for years called upon our political leaders to move beyond our current system that leaves our neighbors in the shadows, divides us against one another, and devastates children by tearing apart their families. We therefore welcome an opportunity to achieve immigration reform that is not only comprehensive and bipartisan, but also consistent with our basic values of justice and compassion.” Rev. Dr. Ronald J. Degges, President of Disciples Home Missions

Statement in Support of Just, Humane, and Compassionate Immigration Reform from Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a denomination of approximately 700,000 members and 3,500 congregations that was born from an immigrant movement on the American frontier. Our body was founded on the principles that all are welcome at the Table of Christ, and includes a large number of congregations with first generation Americans. We recognize the strength of the United States emerges from the diversity of its immigrants, and affirm that immigration has played a major role in the development of our countries and in the advancement of our economies.

Disciples commend the U.S. Congress and the Obama Administration in recognizing the priority need for immigration reform that repairs and updates our current broken immigration system. We welcome immigration reform that is comprehensive and bipartisan, but continue to advocate for reform legislation that is “just, humane and compassionate.” To do so falls in line with our sacred scriptures, where “the presence of a stranger is seen as an opportunity for hospitality—the sharing of one’s home and resources” (resolution on “Faith and Our New Neighbors,” 2007.)

We applaud the principles outlined in the February 5, 2013 letter by Senators Leahy, Hirono, Blumenthal, and Coons which urge commonsense laws that affirm the equality of all persons, seek fair hearings and due process, reject unnecessary detentions, and require accountability and transparency in enforcement practices. As Disciples, we are compelled to speak against mistreatment of the stranger as we remember God’s command that “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:21 NRSV). We support reform policies which reflect our church’s historical call to “ensure adequate legal representation and appropriate civil liberties to all immigrants being targeted and detained for national security reasons” (resolution “On Assuring Civil Liberties and Equal Justice to Immigrant Communities in the United States,” 2003.)

We further insist that security for our country should not result in racial discrimination, threats of deportation, or targeting immigrants on the basis of national, ethnic and religious identity. We support the right of our nation to defend our borders and to ensure the integrity of the workplace through enforcement. However, our nation has pursued policies focused upon enforcement for over twenty five years, and unnecessarily punitive and disproportionate enforcement must not deprive immigrants of their basic human and civil rights.

Therefore, last week we joined our denominational voice with diverse ecumenical partners in the “Christian Churches Together” network from Catholic, Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Protestant, Orthodox, and Historic Black churches, to highlight these unified principles for fundamental immigration reform:

- An earned path to citizenship for the 11 million people in the United States without authorization.
- The priority of family reunification in any immigration reform.
- Protecting the integrity of our borders and protecting due process for immigrants and their families.
- Improving refugee protection laws and asylum laws.
- Reviewing international economic policies to address the root causes of unauthorized immigration.

We pray for legislators in their important work of building legislation that reflects our values for just, humane, and compassionate immigration reform.