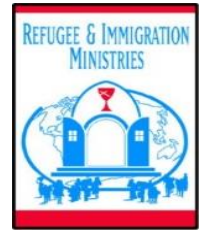




Mother's Day Press Call Message, May 9th, 2018 "Honoring Immigrant Moms, Protecting Immigrant Families"

Rev. Terri Hord Owens



(The following was shared by our Disciples GMP on a national Mother's Day Press Call, in support of unity of refugee and immigrant families, held on May 9, 2018.)

Listen to Rev. Owens and other Testimonies at: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/tbk79p61iicqdd/MOTHERSDAY>

My name is Rev. Terri Hord Owens, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), U.S. & Canada. As one who also claims a heritage as an African American in the U.S., I can testify that the same tactics of using unjust practices to separate families--now used against immigrants and refugees--were likewise at work during slavery. I am a descendant of African slaves, who were themselves "involuntary immigrants", torn away from their families and enslaved around the world. The separation of families and children through the sale of slaves was a consistent trauma that helped to reinforce the institution of slavery by dehumanizing black mothers, fathers, and children. When we disrespect family, we disrespect their humanity. The trauma of the forced separation of moms, children and families will unfortunately continue to reverberate through history, just as it has for the descendants of the African slaves. Let us commit to not let this happen to immigrants and refugees today who simply seek to escape poverty and war, and live in hope and freedom in the United States, where we say we value those dreams.

People of faith from all over the world have joined together to proclaim strongly and clearly that we believe in the sanctity of family unity and we welcome immigrants and refugees. As people of faith, we know that families are the foundation of our communities, and we read about the importance and wisdom of families throughout the sacred scriptures of my faith, as Abraham and Sarah join as covenant partners to fulfill God's plans. Moses' mother strategizes to save her son from death. Mary and Joseph escape to avoid violence from Herod. Ruth rebuilds hope and stability in her mother-in-law Naomi's life. Protecting families puts our faith in action, as we urge our elected leaders to reflect our values and put families first.

Yet ahead of Mother's Day this Sunday, I am deeply troubled by the way our nation is treating vulnerable immigrant and refugee moms. It is especially heartbreaking to see closed doors and discrimination toward immigrant and refugee families. Rather than being a beacon of hope, like the Statue of Liberty embodies holding her torch at our nation's door, our administration has given into nativist, anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-family sentiment that devalues motherhood and the intrinsic bonds between mothers and their children.

Such views conflict directly with our call to "welcome the stranger" in Matthew 25. It is the faith community's duty to remind the nation that how we treat the most vulnerable among us is how we treat God, but

- Right now, this administration is tearing moms away from their children -- in their homes, outside their schools, and at the U.S. border -- to detain and deport them.
- Right now, Customs & Border Protection (CBP) is intentionally separating parents from their children - and then prosecuting the parents - as they seek protection in the United States.
- Right now, refugee mothers are separated from their sons and daughters because of this administration's multiple refugee and Muslim bans.
- Right now, this administration is promoting policy changes that would keep mothers from sponsoring their adult children, and would stop adult U.S. citizens from being able to sponsor their mothers and fathers. I was struck by Representative Meng and Representative Jayapal's
- Right now, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is detaining pregnant immigrant women in facilities with abhorrent medical and pre-natal care.

We simply MUST do better to welcome "the least of these" brothers and sisters of God!

I'm reminded of the parable of the Good Samaritan. In Jesus' time, Samaritans were actually considered foreigners of a different religious sect. And this parable of one reaching out to another teaches us not only to love and accept Samaritans among us, but also reminds us that we have much to learn from individuals who are ostracized by society. So too will upholding family unity and welcoming immigrant and refugee families teach us about love without bounds.

My heart aches. How is separating and keeping a mother from her child making our country safe? This is outrageous! The values of mothers to risk much to show love for their families must be respected--and I call on Congress to hold the administration accountable, to protect the sanctity of family unity, and to end these cruel and immoral policies. We pray to God that our nation might live up to its ideals of being a nation that values the sanctity of human life, and that values human unity.

For additional information on ways you can support refugee and immigrant families, contact: Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries Director, sstanley@dhm.disciples.org, 202-957-7826. Please visit our website: bit.ly/DisciplesRIM, & Facebook page: <http://tinyurl.com/RIMDOC>. Sign Up for our "RIM WRAP" news at: bit.ly/RIMWRAPSignUp, and follow us on Twitter at: @StanleyRea