**Interfaith Talking Points on**

**Honduran/Migrant Caravan/Family Detention & Family Separation 2.0**

*October 25, 2018*

*Please share these background points below with your congregations and communities,*

*and contact: Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries for further information, and to share about your responses and actions!: Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea,* [*sstanley@dhm.disciples.org*](mailto:sstanley@dhm.disciples.org)*, 202-957-7826*

**We are called to welcome the stranger and care for the least of these.**

* Welcoming others and caring for the most vulnerable are part of our core beliefs as people of faith.
* We believe U.S policies should reflect the core values that are grounded in our faith.
* Our government should provide protection for vulnerable families, children, and people seeking protection.
* U.S. policies on immigration and the treatment of children and families should recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of immigrants and refugees, ensuring justice & protection for all.
* Our faith tradition(s) have presence around the world. Families are fleeing their communities due to violence, desperation, and persecution, and have faced incredible challenges in hopes of seeking protection.
* The caravan does not represent a massive influx of individuals to the U.S. Even with the latest figures, border crossings remain at historic lows compared to past decades. The United States has an orderly asylum system and is capable of processing protection claims by caravan members and all individuals who claim asylum. The U.S. can and should treat asylum seekers, migrants, and others seeking protection humanely, respect their rights, and follow ourU.S. and international law, as well as uphold our nation’s moral obligations.

**We are called to uphold our moral and legal obligations, not turn our backs or close our doors.**

* People fleeing violence in Central America should be welcomed, not illegally turned away or criminalized for seeking protection. They should not be coerced or threatened with family separation or incarceration, either. This is a false, cruel choice.
* People have the right to seek asylum in a country where they will be safe. The United States cannot legally reject asylum seekers based on the possibility that they could potentially seek asylum in Mexico. The U.S. and Mexican governments should uphold due process, the right not to be detained indefinitely, to not be returned to danger, and the right to not be separated from their families.
* Deterring individuals with protection concerns from leaving their home country constitutes a violation of international human rights law. Returning individuals to danger without screening for protection concerns constitutes a violation of the right to *non-refoulement*, non-return to danger. The U.S. should not pressure Central American governments to stop their citizens from leaving.

**We must address the root causes of displacement.**

* Nonprofit organizations and faith groups have reported high levels of displacement in Honduras due to escalating violence and an increased lack of trust in government institutions since the 2017 election. A lack of progress on anti-corruption efforts, the unavailability of medicine in the public healthcare system, and continued corruption within the police and military compound the violence that Hondurans face and are also driving individuals to seek safety.
* The administration cut off a key path to protection in the United States for Central American children by ending the Central American Minors (CAM) Program. Abandoning nearly 7,000 children and their parents who were seeking protection in the U.S. through the program left many in danger and with no option but to flee in search of safety.
* While many community members and humanitarian organizations in Mexico are prepared to welcome those traveling as part of the migrant caravan, Mexico remains an unsafe option for the majority of people seeking protection.
* The dangers facing refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants seeking protection in Mexico are well-documented, and numerous reports and articles have highlighted the murder, kidnapping, rape, human trafficking, and extorsion endured by migrants in Mexico. According to research conducted by [WOLA](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.wola.org/analysis/access-justice-migrants-mexico-right-exists-books/&sa=D&ust=1541002180495000), migrants in Mexico are frequently victims of abuse by criminal organizations and corrupt Mexican migration and security agents, and these crimes are almost never properly investigated or punished. Mexico’s systems for protection are chronically under resourced and poorly functioning, and 99% of crimes against migrants remain in impunity.

**The administration is trying to exploit this humanitarian crisis in order to change the laws so that they can indefinitely detain children and families, and resume acts of family separation.**

* Our faith traditions teach us to love our neighbors - not separate, prosecute, or incarcerate immigrant families or asylum seekers. Many children and families who would be separated are seeking protection in the U.S., fleeing violence, impunity, and political instability. This administration is traumatizing children and families who have already fled dangerous situations in their communities.
* Families belong in communities, not prison. People of faith have stood strongly against family separation and family detention, because it hurts some of the most vulnerable among us.
* Detaining mothers and fathers with their children leads to long-term trauma for children and creates barriers to legal representation for people who should receive protection in the U.S. It is inhumane and dehumanizing to put families seeking protection in detention.
* Family incarceration serves only to punish children and parents who have already been through a difficult journey to seek protection in the U.S.
* Faith-based organizations have piloted community-based alternatives to detention (ATDs) for asylum seekers and vulnerable community members that are humane, cost-effective, and successful. Faith-based and secular organizations with such expertise should be permitted to provide services to children and families that honor their God-given humanity and follow child protection and due process standards while they go through their legal process.
* Non-restrictive, community-based ATDs are the most appropriate response for families, children, and asylum seekers. ATDs are less expensive and allow for individuals to have access to services in the community while they wait for fair adjudication of their immigration and asylum claims.
* Family separation is also caused by deportation. Federal immigration enforcement has already proven that it cannot responsibly carry out its functions, by targeting all undocumented immigrants, including a[Methodist lay leader in Kansas,](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://hispanic.umc.org/resources/umc-lay-leader-detained-by-immigration&sa=D&ust=1541002180496000) a[mother in Arizona](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://kfor.com/2017/02/09/protests-erupt-after-learning-phoenix-mother-will-be-deported-after-22-years/&sa=D&ust=1541002180496000), and a[beneficiary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN15T307&sa=D&ust=1541002180497000). State-by-State stories of heartbreaking deportation and family separation can be found [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1A_PffORjXNepf1zqDEy-HhDTDJuwEI8ZC2gUjrZ5Pfs/edit%23gid%3D0&sa=D&ust=1541002180497000).
* Families, asylum seekers, and others searching for protection is NOT justification for border militarization. The dramatic militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border region has already stifled the economic vitality of U.S. border communities. [Eleven cities across the Rio Grande Valley of Texas have adopted resolutions opposing a border wall](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/super-tuesday-for-border-wall&sa=D&ust=1541002180497000). Throwing more money at an irresponsible agency that has operated with [impunity](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://link.gmreg5.net/x/c?c%3D1185412%26l%3D850f4d63-33c0-46d1-b532-354eccc5c9c3%26r%3D360691d7-9e70-4b38-b2dd-6528cf4abccf&sa=D&ust=1541002180498000) for years is fiscally wasteful.
* People of faith have started ministries to serve arriving immigrant and asylum seeking families. Ripping children away from their parents in extremely stressful and traumatic circumstances can cause lifelong damage to a person’s health and wellbeing. These actions violate the sanctity of family, the promise of safety, and the commandments to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger. For more talking points on family separation 2.0, please click [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://docs.google.com/document/d/1t314gUnc1DF3W32yKqyLFGjQJInLqGloUeKe5KyT-Ac/edit&sa=D&ust=1541002180498000).

**Additional Resources**

* For a call-to-action, please click [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UhiqH0aynbQZJO_xZBtJhud8AeJWMhMsq4X8itjsyds/edit?usp%3Dsharing&sa=D&ust=1541002180499000).
* For CWS Statements, please click [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://greateras1.org/safe-third-country-agreement-would-endanger-refugees-families-seeking-protectio/&sa=D&ust=1541002180499000) and [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://greateras1.org/cws-demands-administration-uphold-the-right-of-all-people-fleeing-violence-to-seek-asylum-and-legal-protection/&sa=D&ust=1541002180499000).
* For additional talking points, please click [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oAlNcMxd8B8xhhwvq19qADsVmdozQ2Zq2kM2hrm1k9M/edit&sa=D&ust=1541002180500000)and [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9nNNtzZdJLIbjg2RnFDTWtjdG1aT1ZlN24ydDQ4UWVLY29n/view&sa=D&ust=1541002180500000).
* For a call tool to share this message with your Members of Congress, please click [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://greateras1.org/protectasylum&sa=D&ust=1541002180500000).
* For more information, please click [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/debunking-president-trumps-tweets-migrant-caravan&sa=D&ust=1541002180501000).