

The statement below, dealing with immigration, was developed at a series of community meetings held this past summer and fall at our church. Many immigrant families, as well as church members from several denominations in the Salem area, participated in these gatherings. The statement was endorsed by our Church Council at their meeting on November 14, with the understanding that specific actions would be brought back to the appropriate Church bodies for approval before moving ahead.

In January we will have three Adult Learning Hours devoted to the subject of immigration. These sessions will provide a great opportunity to become more informed on this important issue facing our congregation, our community, our state and nation.

IMMIGRATION STATEMENT

October 3, 2007

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:33-34

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

Matthew 2:13-15

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door

The Statue of Liberty

These texts from the Judeo-Christian traditions and from Lady Liberty in the New York harbor lift up the value of every person, regardless of our place of national origin. They also set standards of treatment of the stranger, the alien, the immigrant in our midst. Lady Liberty reminds us that the United States was created by successive waves of immigration: all of us arrived as part of one wave or another. The United States of America has been formed by people fleeing misery, oppression and poverty in their homeland. Those same factors drive immigration today.

Now, however, we are faced with another time of great upheaval about immigration. With the recent failure on the part of Congress to pass immigration reform, the status of 10-12 million undocumented persons in the United States is in greater jeopardy. The July raid at Portland's Del Monte plant brings the trouble close to home and makes evident the vulnerability of undocumented people who are our neighbors and friends. Their fears and concerns are real; their future, uncertain.

As people of faith and as the season of Advent approaches, we remember the plight of Jesus' parents as political realities in their homeland forced them to travel to a foreign country to preserve the life of their first born child. In our day, we have heard the concerns of the immigrant community and feel that God is calling us to a message of hope and justice that leads us to these actions:

- Educate church leaders and communities about the causes of immigration and the lives of immigrant people who are our neighbors. Suggest action they can take to stand in solidarity with immigrants.
- Offer English as a Second Language courses and Citizenship classes at little or no cost in locations convenient to the potential students.
- Train legal observers to be present if and when there are raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.
- Provide "Know Your Rights Training" for members of the immigrant community.
- Provide "Family Information Packets" so that immigrant families can prepare all necessary documents should raids or the threat of deportation occur.
- Create two accounts and seek donations for "Legal Aid" and "Crisis Needs" for those in Marion/Polk counties.
- Establish a Family Resource Center in the area where the immigrant community can gather in times of need to share information, receive assistance, and communicate with one another.
- Identify area attorneys willing to provide legal advice to immigrants.
- Create places of sanctuary.
- Make our voices heard in the media as the immigration issue is debated.
- Stand and work together as we help shape solutions to the immigration issues that face us.
- Push for immigration reform with Congressional and other elected leaders.
- Resist atmospheres of hate by standing in solidarity with all God's children.