

Overture from Session regarding immigration

The Session of Southside Presbyterian Church overtures the Presbytery de Cristo to overture the 220th General Assembly (2012) to adopt and publish the following statement and call to action in regards to immigration.

Whereas, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) has consistently taken actions which have been faithful to the scriptural admonitions to care for the least of these (Matthew 25:31-46) and for the sojourners amongst us (Exodus 22:21), including:

- the adoption of the “Call to Presbyterians to Recommit to Work and Pray for a Just and Compassionate U.S. Immigration Policy” by the 206th General Assembly in 1994
- and the call for a commitment from both Presbyterians and the government to work towards welcoming immigrants into our communities and to provide for just laws that affect those who live and work in the United States in both 1999 and 2004

Now Therefore, Be It Resolved that we call for the following actions by the General Assembly and by the General Assembly staff:

To urge congregations to consider their Biblical mandate to care for the alien among us and to see Jesus in the alien by offering sanctuary to individuals facing deportation orders who have U.S. born children and any other individuals facing deportation to whom a congregation might feel called to offer sanctuary.

To encourage churches to practice Biblical hospitality by providing a safe space for day laborers to gather to wait for work in acknowledgment that every human being has the right to work and to provide for their families.

To draw attention to the human rights crisis along the border region between Mexico and the United States that has led to the deaths of thousands of migrants and to affirm the right of individuals and organizations to provide life-saving humanitarian aid in the border regions and to urge judicatories and congregations to support humanitarian aid efforts.

To join a multitude of other communities of faith in adopting and endorsing the *Interfaith Platform on Humane Immigration Reform*¹ which calls for the Obama Administration and Congress to:

- Uphold family unity as a priority of all immigration policies
- Create a process for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status and eventual citizenship
- Protect workers and provide efficient channels of entry for new migrant workers
- Facilitate immigrant integration
- Restore due process protections and reform detention policies
- Align the enforcement of immigration laws with humanitarian values

To direct Mission Responsibility Through Investing (MRTI) to study the relationship between the private prison industry and legislative initiatives that criminalize and detain immigrant populations and to recommend investment policies to the General Assembly Council.

To urge the Office of the General Assembly to call on Congress to pass the Dream Act immediately and to urge the Obama Administration to provide temporary legal status to Dream Act eligible students.²

To urge the Obama Administration and Congress to end the use of detention for immigration enforcement and improve detention conditions by enacting clear, enforceable reforms, including 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.

¹ <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/interfaith-immigration-platform-2009.pdf>

² Passage of the Dream Act would allow for a process towards permanent residency for those who arrived in the United States prior to age 16, have proof of residency for five consecutive years, who are of good moral character, and who are either enrolled in community college, university, or serve in the U.S. military. For more information: <http://www.immigrationforum.org/policy/legislation/the-dream-act-in-the-111th-congress>

To direct The Office of the General Assembly to urge the Border Patrol to cease the practice of lateral repatriation which separates migrant families.

And, to direct The Office of the General Assembly to urge the Obama Administration to end policies such as Secure Communities³ and 287g programs which lack oversight and transparency and have led to racial profiling and have undermined the stability of communities and their trust of law enforcement agencies.

³ <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/secure-communities-fact-sheet>

News from the Southside Worker Center



We want to start out by thanking all of you who attended our second annual fundraising dinner! It was a wonderful evening of great food, lots of dancing, and an inspiring talk by Kim Bobo, Executive Director of Interfaith Worker Justice. We had about 200 in attendance and raised just over \$2500.00! This money will help us to continue to provide a safe space for workers to wait for work, to negotiate fair wages, and to develop their leadership capabilities so that the Southside Worker Center can continue to be a force for change in our community and in individual workers' lives.

In December, the Center officially became a member of Interfaith Worker Justice and we are excited about the opportunities that this partnership will offer us.

Our other exciting news is that we were recently awarded a grant for \$16,667.00 through the Susan Harwood Fund of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The goal of the grant is to strengthen and expand existing health and safety education programs for migrant day laborers. We are excited for this opportunity to provide occupational safety training to the workers of the center and to train them to be trainers to their peers, all while ensuring that they are able to stay safe in what can often be dangerous working conditions.

All of our celebrations have been tempered by the detention of some of our best leaders. Sergio Martinez Cota graduated from our Leadership Academy last spring. Sergio has been in detention for seven months.

Also in detention is Amador Ramirez Hernandez. You all may remember him from Labor Day Sunday as he spoke to us all in worship about the Worker Center. He spoke at our recent fundraising dinner.

We ask that you would continue to keep the Center in your prayers as we continue to grow, and especially keep Sergio, Amador, and their families in your prayers.

