

Southside Presbyterian Church's Statement on SB1070

For over 100 years, people from diverse backgrounds have gathered at Southside Presbyterian Church to do our best to follow Jesus Christ. This has led us down many paths that we might not have walked had we not felt commanded by scriptures to do so. Once again we find ourselves walking a road that may seem controversial to some, but to us, is simply a matter of fidelity to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As people of faith, we trace our spiritual roots to the sojourning Abraham, who God called into a foreign land. We also trace our spiritual roots to the Hebrew slaves who suffered as immigrants in Egypt. Today, we continue to be a sojourning people, always moving towards the Kingdom of Heaven, which is marked by the establishment of God's reign of peace and justice here on earth. And as we journey, we are reminded by scripture, "When an immigrant resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the immigrant. The immigrant who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the immigrant as yourself for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

As disciples of Christ, we also acknowledge that in Christ "there is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female" (Galatians 3: 28), and there is no longer legal or illegal but all are one in Jesus Christ. We give thanks that through Jesus Christ the dividing walls between us have been broken. We respond to this grace by following the command to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Luke 10:27).

We affirm that to be disciples of Christ we *must* feed the hungry, offer water to the thirsty, provide clothes to the naked, and welcome the stranger (Matthew 25:35). This commandment from our Lord Jesus Christ is not limited to a certain class of people, but is for all of God's children. At Southside Presbyterian Church, we follow these commandments by feeding the hungry, providing clothes and showers, and offering fellowship to our homeless brothers and sisters. We provide a place for day laborers to wait for work. We are a healing presence in the desert, offering water and first aid to travelers in distress. And we welcome all to worship with us on Sunday morning. We do all of this with disregard to immigration status, knowing that we are called by Christ himself to serve all.

It is for this reason that, after much prayer, we believe that Arizona Senate Bill 1070 attempts to prohibit the practice of our faith, which calls us to serve all God's people. As such, we must challenge this immoral law that limits our religious freedom. We must stand with our brothers and sisters who will live in fear, constant threat, and intimidation under SB1070.

As a community of faith 60 miles from the U.S./ Mexico border, we are increasingly aware that our current immigration policy, which does not take into account the root causes of migration, has led to a human rights crisis in the deaths of mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and children in our desert.

Overly aggressive enforcement tactics and legislation such as SB1070 stand in stark contrast to our understanding of the gospel. And so we continue working to build communities that are not plagued with fear and mistrust, but rather are rich with diversity and joy.

Our faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ may lead us on difficult and controversial paths. But as Christians, we are called above all else to be faithful to Jesus Christ. We do so with great joy knowing that in showing hospitality to strangers, we have often unknowingly entertained angels. (Hebrews 13:2)