

**Remarks at Faith and Immigration Event  
St. Peter's Catholic Church in Charlotte, N.C  
Sept. 4, 2012  
Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño  
California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church**

I believe that we are at a perilous moment in this country when it comes to the immigration situation. No, things will not be alright for any of us, immigrant or native born alike, unless people of faith and all people committed to justice continue to work together in compassionate and politically astute ways.

Allow me to express a word of deep gratitude for those who prepared this excellent documentary resource as we work together to address the concern of our broken immigration policies in the U.S. I have just completed 8 years of service as a United Methodist bishop in Arizona and Southern Nevada and we need good resources such as this one for our congregations and communities. Immigration has been the most critical social issue I have been called upon to address as a bishop of the church. I am thankful that there has been an active and proactive ecumenical and interfaith commitment to addressing the immigration concern in Arizona and Nevada. As we have dealt with the racist, and unjust, not to mention the embarrassing actions, of sheriffs, state legislators and a sitting governor in the state of Arizona, we have received much support from ecumenical and interfaith communities from across the country. For this support I am grateful in behalf of many.

The immigration situation is not one that any denomination or community of faith can assume to address alone. We will need to continue working and standing together, and I am pleased to say that working and standing together on the immigration concern has happened and is happening in ways that I believe have had the good residual effect of strengthening ecumenism and interfaith commitments for the work before us into the future ahead.

It is my privilege on this afternoon to share with you the official stand of The United Methodist Church on the U.S. immigration situation. The United Methodist Church has a very clear stand on immigration. We believe our stand to be consistent with scripture and the historic tradition of Christianity and of many other living faiths as well.

Immigrants are to be welcomed and never mistreated. Immigrants are to be treated as if they were native born with all the respect and care given to citizens. In fact, immigrants are to receive an extra measure of care because many of them find themselves on the margins of society, in the shadows of life, among the most vulnerable and in need of mercy and justice.

As Christians we stand on the side of providing compassionate and merciful care to the immigrant among us. Our churches are called to welcome immigrants as brothers and sisters regardless of their immigration status. We are the church, and the church wel-

comes the downtrodden and the outcast, the suffering, and the lost. Some of us can give witness to the fact that through our work with immigrants, time and time again, we have hosted angels unaware. It is the experience of our United Methodist congregation in Iowa featured in the documentary we have just seen. We believe that our salvation is inextricably tied to our loving our immigrant brothers and sisters.

However, beyond compassionate care, we are cognizant, with all of you I am sure, that the immigration crisis in this country will not be effectively dealt with by simple charity. We are in need of comprehensive immigration reform. While the immigration policies of this country are complex and multi-layered, we believe there are some fundamental values that should guide any U.S. immigration reform.

- We must uphold family unity as a priority of immigration policy.
- A process for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status must be core to any immigration reform that can claim to be just.
- Immigrant workers, documented and undocumented, must have their rights protected or we run the risk of undermining all workers' rights.
- The U.S. is dependent on the labor of immigrants so efficient channels of entry for new migrant workers must be provided.
- The enforcement of immigration laws must be aligned with humanitarian values.
- Due process protections must be restored and detention policies reformed.
- The integration of immigrants into our communities and congregations should also be a priority of immigration reform.

As United Methodists we are working in every good way we can on compassionate care for the immigrant and advocacy for comprehensive immigration reform in the U.S

- In the last three years, United Methodists have led over 600 public witness actions including prayer vigils, meetings with members of Congress, and educational events – 200 actions a year or 1 action every 42 hours.
- Last fall in collaboration with over 25 other faith organizations that include Evangelicals, Catholics, mainline Protestants, Jews and Muslims, we conducted over 500 DREAM Sabbath services to educate congregations about the DREAM Act. Of the 500 DREAM Sabbath services, United Methodists were responsible for half of them.
- Before President Obama issued deferred status for young undocumented immigrants this past June, United Methodists had already worked very hard to rescue from detention 4 immigrant young people, 2 of whom are active DREAMers.
- This year our Board of Pensions, one of the largest clergy pension programs in the country as well as our United Methodist Foundation, each took the bold step of divesting from CCA and the GEO Group, two major for-profit prison corporations that have been driving so much of the state anti-immigrant efforts.

I am aware of the fact that others including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, the United Church of Christ and others have

been equally engaged in the immigration matter if not more so. I share all of this hard work with you not to brag, but to make the point that even our cumulative efforts across denominational and interfaith lines have not been enough. We have had no positive immigration reform in this country now for decades, and no hope for such reform is in sight.

I strongly believe that while our churches, mosques, and synagogues will continue to welcome the immigrant and lift up the moral voice for immigration reform, it is time for us to speak truth to our public leaders in ways that perhaps we have not thus far.

The Old Testament of Judeo/Christian Scripture is replete with moments like our present time when the prophets of faith were called upon by God and faith to hold up an ethical and moral mirror for those in power. I believe this is such a time.

Republican and Democrats alike have failed our immigrant brothers and sisters, and thus failed all of us. We live under repressive immigration policies enacted in 1996 under a Democratic President. We struggle with a Republican Party that day by day is becoming more and more hard-hearted in its spirit and attitude toward immigrants to the point that its own professed values of the importance of the family, a commitment to reward for hard work, and a person's right to seek a better life, are being jeopardized.

And though I recognize that the President of the country must have the collaboration of Congress to move immigration reform forward, using executive authority for something as basic as no longer punishing children for the supposed sins of their parents through the granting of deferred status for some immigrant young people, is not enough. What is needed in this country is justice.

- It is time for the U.S. to face the fact that it needs the labor of immigrants and cannot continue pretending that it does not in order to leave undisturbed the economic machine in this country that is fed by the slave labor of immigrant men and women;
- It is time for this country to face the truth that its regional and global economic policies, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, have undermined the livelihood of millions of families in places like Mexico, leaving hunger and death in its wake, and provoking a wave of necessary immigration for men and women valiantly struggling to keep their families alive;
- The moment has come for the political leaders of this country from local to federal government, from the President of the U.S. to the council members of the smallest town in this country, to face the grim and sad reality that thousands of children are dying physical, emotional and even spiritual deaths all across America caused by the treatment they receive in this country because they are immigrants;
- It is the critical moment to recognize that our citizen children, your children and mine, who are seeing the deaths of immigrant children are developing calloused hearts by what we teach them through our lack of care for the immigrant – it is a callousness that will come to haunt us unless we can regain our commitment to justice

Finally, you and I must continue to preach and live a gospel without borders until the day of God's justice comes. Our souls depend on it.