



April 29, 2010

Dear Members of Congress,

We write to express our conviction that you must enact comprehensive immigration reform this year. As people of faith and the leaders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we are keenly aware of the devastating effects our broken immigration system has on the lives of individuals, immigrant and non-immigrant families, and our communities. The bigotry, trauma, and fear that will result from the recent new law enacted in Arizona, SB 1070, which criminalizes those who are found "with" undocumented persons and requires law enforcement officers to identify and detain such persons, serves to underscore the necessity of action at the federal level.

Churches are on the front lines of caring for families being ripped apart by our broken immigration system. Traumatized citizen children left behind when parents are deported are but one example of the ways the current system destroys the fabric of community life, the integrity of healthy families, and the safety of individual persons. Church workers are also at the forefront of offering relief and services to immigrants, regardless of documentation status. Arizona's new law will put at risk those workers and others who are called simply to offer the most basic of humanitarian assistance. As Christians, we cannot stand by idly while our brothers and sisters die on our borders from exposure and thirst or languish in poorly equipped detention facilities, nor should we be required to do so by any law.

The new Arizona law also puts in jeopardy the public safety of immigrant communities, already wary of law enforcement for fear of deportation. Instead of new laws that induce fear and distrust, immigrants should be encouraged to participate with law enforcement, reporting crimes when they are victims and offering testimony when they are witnesses. Such trust and participation is impossible if local law enforcement is tasked with enforcement of federal immigration laws. SB 1070 will only foster more fear among immigrant communities, regardless of documentation status. Comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level is essential to override and counteract the damage done in Arizona by this new law.

In the Scriptures of Christians and Jews, we are commanded, "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" (Lev. 19:33-34). The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) therefore supports congressional action in 2010 on comprehensive immigration reform that creates a process for undocumented immigrants in the U.S. to earn their legal status; reduces waiting periods and upholds family unity; protects workers from exploitation; and provides efficient channels of entry for new migrant workers.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Gradye Parsons in cursive.

The Reverend Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

Handwritten signature of Bruce Reyes-Chow in cursive.

The Reverend Bruce Reyes-Chow
Moderator of the 218th General Assembly

Handwritten signature of Linda Valentine in cursive.

Linda Valentine
Executive Director, General Assembly Mission Council
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

cc: President Barack Obama
Governor Janice K. Brewer