

A Call to Action to The United Methodist Churches in the U.S.

September 4, 2017

We have learned that President Trump is considering rescinding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which presently provides undocumented immigrant young people employment authorization. Under DACA young people are able to obtain social security cards, work and go to school.

Since DACA's inception in June 2012, almost 800,000 young people have received its benefits. Many other young people who qualified for DACA did not come forth for a number of reasons. Some did not trust that they would be safe if they came forward to request DACA, fearing deportation. Others did not have the funds to pay for the fees or the legal help they needed to apply. Some simply did not have the support systems to help them take the steps to apply for DACA.

DACA recipients have been able to work and support themselves and their families. Economic studies have clearly shown that they have significantly contributed to the economy of the country. They have been able to go to school and prepare for their future, futures that have the potential of strengthening the well-being of the many communities where they live. As DACA young people will share, they received hope and the opportunity to be useful and productive.

In the last few months, however, these same young people have gone from hope to hopelessness. The uncertainty they have faced over the majority of their lives has caused them profound physical and emotional trauma. We are consistently moved by the fact that so many of these young people do not lose their confidence in God and continue to find strength in their faith.

In walking with undocumented young people from all over the world and their families, we have learned that the US has immigration policies that are broken and antiquated affecting not only immigrants, but the needs of the country's economy. Refugee and asylum policies fail to take into consideration that the world has changed becoming even more violent, and causing greater migration. The inability of the US Congress to address these realities as they affect the country and its lack of global leadership in these matters that affect the US and the world, causes us much concern.

While we continue to encourage President Trump and the US Congress to do the right thing, we know that our strong voices demanding justice for immigrant young people and their families are needed. As the Church, we must stand with and for immigrant families in this hour, and especially with and for undocumented young people, sons and daughters of our Creator God, our brothers and sisters.

DACA young people and other undocumented young people need the support of the Church. We ask that all United Methodist churches take action to stand with them. Here are some ways we would recommend:

- Engage in conversations with immigrants in your community as you go about your day. Offer them a listening ear, a word of comfort and pray with them;
- Create safe space in your church for immigrant young people and their families to gather and share what they are experiencing. Seek to learn from them about their circumstances. Offer them hospitality through food and other expressions of care;

- Connect with campus ministries in your community and partner with them to reach out to DACA students and other immigrant young people with love and support;
- Reach out to your congressional leaders and let them know that as people of Christian faith we support DACA and humane immigration policies;
- Gather church members to study what the Bible teaches us about how the church is to respond to the immigrant. Our United Methodist Social Principles and *Book of Resolutions* offer important resources, as do the web pages of our General Boards of Church and Society, Global Ministries, and Discipleship Ministries, United Methodist Women and the General Commission on Religion and Race;
- Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you and your local church in responding to the needs of immigrant young people and their families.

We believe that the next 6 months will be critical for the well-being of immigrant young people and their families. We enter a season when we are called to be the Church in clear, compassionate, courageous and prophetic ways. May God be our help.

The United Methodist Immigration Task Force,

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