



# Missional Justice

*A Newsletter of the Social Justice & Mission Ministry*

## IMMIGRATION

Volume 2, Issue 5

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### WHAT THE CHURCH SAYS ABOUT IMMIGRATION

*The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church, 2008*

#### ¶ 162. III. THE SOCIAL COMMUNITY

The rights and privileges a society bestows upon or withholds from those who comprise it indicate the relative esteem in which that society holds particular persons and groups of persons. We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection. We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or economic status. Our respect for the inherent dignity of all persons leads us to call for the recognition, protection, and implementation of the principles of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights so that communities and individuals may claim and enjoy their universal, indivisible, and inalienable rights.

*\*see page 4 for additional documentation\**



#### WEIGHING THE ISSUE *the question of immigration reform* rev. mike blevins J.D., M.Div., LL.M.

**Why don't they just do it the legal way, like my ancestors did?** That's the question we hear probably more than any other as we continue to work with Iowa United Methodist and interfaith partners in providing care for struggling immigrants here in (post-raid) Postville—Northeast Iowa and beyond, while expanding our response to include advocating for humane, realistic, and just reform of our Federal administrative immigration laws and procedures.

In a nutshell, the answer to this familiar question lies in the realization that the gates for newcomers were wide open during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for mainly European immigrants as they were **pushed** away from their beloved homelands by war, disaster, persecution, and financial insecurity, and **pulled** by the freedoms, safeguards, and opportunities promised by The American Dream. And of course none of these groups were authorized by Native American peoples.

The Statue of Liberty, which my mother and I saw from the Staten Island Ferry this Thanksgiving during our trip to Manhattan to visit family, contains the beautiful words which people of faith recognize as



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Immigration Coalition](#)

[YouTube Campaign for  
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[American Friends  
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[Iowa Immigration  
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[Reform Immigration  
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[National Immigration  
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[“Uncover the Truth  
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Collaboration”  
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[Immigrant Justice  
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[National Lawyers’ Guild  
\(Spanish & English\)  
Deportation 101  
Know Your Rights \(pdf\)  
Secure Communities  
Resources](#)

[“Out of the Waters”  
Bible Study by Pastor  
David Vasquez  
\(Luther College\)](#)



## FROM THE FIELD *immigrants: who are they?* rosa mendoza executive director, iowa diversity center

The first wave of immigrants to the United States came from Europe; 250,000 people emigrated between the years 1776 and 1819. Migration to the U.S. has continued throughout the decades by people all over the world. There are many reasons why immigrants come here, but the most common one is due to their economic situation. This nation has been built by immigrants.

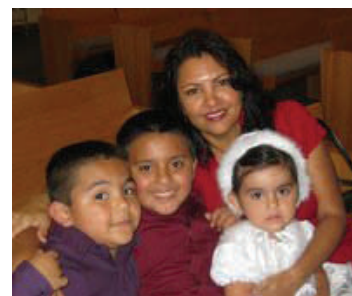
The state of Iowa opened its doors to refugees and immigrants with the largest group of Vietnamese – 8,000 people – arriving in 1975. Bosnians began arriving in 1993. Since the early 1990s the Latino and immigrant populations have continued to increase due to the mass hiring of workers. This population has taken the jobs no one else wants. They work in production, restaurants, landscaping, construction, and agriculture. They open bank accounts, purchase homes and cars, buy insurance, rent properties, open new businesses, hire people, and pay taxes, thus adding to the prosperity of our communities.

These families come here for many of the same economic reasons as our ancestors, and probably faced some of the same problems. Unfortunately, there is FEAR of the unknown and FEAR of change in our communities. We become blind by our differences. We forget to appreciate the culture these individuals have brought into our communities. We forget we are all children of God and it does not matter what language we speak or color of skin we have. Without realizing it, we have more things in common than differences.

Immigrants are here through different types of statuses. Statistic reports show in the U.S., 60% are legal permanent residents, 30% are undocumented (half are due to overstaying their visas), 3% have temporary visas, and 7% are refugees and asylees.

Without immigrants, documented or undocumented, we would no longer have social security nor the manpower needed to keep our companies in this state. As a community of faith we must not forget we are to love our neighbor. Currently, there are undocumented students who are not able to continue their education after graduation because of their status in the United States.

These students are the future of our communities and we must support them. Senator Reid has presented the DREAM Act (S. 3992). I ask you, your family, and friends to call our Congressional House and Senate members and stand for those who do not have a voice. Please call in and urge them to support the DREAM Act S. 3992 and immigration reform that will provide legalization.



Rosa Mendoza, pictured here  
with her grandchildren

I want to close with a quote from Cesar E. Chavez: “The end of all education should surely be service to others. We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about the progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspiration and needs of others for their sake and for our own.”

**January 10:** First day of legislative session

**March 26:** “Welcoming the Stranger: A Cultural Awareness & Action Seminar”

co-sponsored by Iowa United Methodist Women and the Charter for Racial Justice Committee of UMW  
9:00a.m. until 3:00 p.m. — Columbus Junction UMC (517 2nd Street, Columbus Junction)  
Registration due by March 11. To receive the registration form and event information, please contact Marsha Gerot (319.725.6722) or Judy Kading ([judykading@yahoo.com](mailto:judykading@yahoo.com)).

## PUTTING FAITH INTO ACTION IN YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

**Get involved** in the national [Interfaith Immigration Coalition's New Year's Resolution Campaign](#) for Just and Humane Immigration Reform:

- As a part of the campaign, invite an immigrant family from your community to dinner at your house for at least three different occasions.
- Hold five conversations with friends and fellow church members who may have reservations or concerns about immigration; share with them about just and humane immigration reform.
- Call your U.S. Senators and Representative once a week and share, "As a United Methodist, I urge you to enact humane immigration reform that reunifies families and provides a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants."
- Volunteer at least five times with Justice For Our Neighbors legal clinics in your area of the state, or with an English as a Second or Other Language ministry at a local church or school.
- Host a movie showing in your congregation; encourage discussions around faithful responses to the issue as a Christian community and as United Methodists.
- Commit to prayer daily for the protection of immigrants and their families, for the boldness of the faith community to advocate for just and humane immigration reform, and for moral courage for elected leaders to enact legislation that provides a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants and that reunifies families.

**Hold a Bible study/discussion** utilizing statements and scriptures from the Social Principles and the *Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church* that address welcoming the migrant and the story of the journey of Jesus and the people of God throughout the Hebrew Bible and New Testament.

**Commit to praying together**, as a congregation or small group within your church, for just and humane immigration reform and the bridge-building between congregations and people within your community as you meaningfully reach out to newcomers and migrants living in your town.

**Organize a church group to write letters** to your local, state, and federal elected officials, outlining the importance of just and humane immigration reform, and ask for their support around the DREAM Act and other legislation that upholds the humanity and worth of immigrants in this nation. Visit the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition website](#) for sample emails, letters, and a toolkit with ideas.

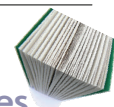
**Attend and support United Methodist Advocacy Day 2011**, the Iowa Conference's annual advocacy event, with a small group from your congregation. Set for **January 31—February 1, 2011** (Monday afternoon through Tuesday afternoon), this year's theme is *immigration* and our faithful response to the issue as United Methodists and people of faith. There will be an outreach service project in the early evening on Monday, followed by a full day of worshipful work on Tuesday with a keynote address by Kristin

Kumpf, Associate Organizing Director for the national Interfaith Worker Justice organization, breakout training sessions on different areas of immigration, advocacy at the state capitol, and much more! Visit <http://www.iaumc.org/pages/detail/972> in the coming weeks for updates and additional information.

CALENDAR

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
January						1	2
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
February	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	31						
March		1	2	3	4	5	6
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
April	28	29	30	31			

### reading resources



*Strangers in the Land: A Six-Week Devotional Guide on Immigration, the Church, and the Bible.* Order from *Sojourners Magazine*: [www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net) or 800.714.7474.

*'They Take Our Jobs' and 20 Other Myths about Immigration*, by Aviva Chomsky. From the United Methodist Women's 2009 Reading Program. Beacon Press Publishing. ISBN 978-0-8070-4156-7

*Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother*, by Sonia Nazario. Random House Publishing. ISBN 978-0812971781



**DVDs**  
from Judy Kading, Social Action Coordinator for Iowa United Methodist Women

[Made in L.A.](#)  
(Recommended by UMW) Three Latina immigrants embark on an odyssey to win basic labor protections.

[The Least of These](#)  
Family Detention in the US

[One Border, One Body](#)  
Immigration and the Eucharist (30 min.)

[The Gatekeeper](#)  
Gov't reports and firsthand accounts of hopeful migrant struggles.

[The Invisible Chapel](#)  
Migrant chapel in a wealthy San Diego, CA neighborhood. (31 min.)

[The 800 Mile Wall](#)  
Construction of new US-Mexico border walls.

[Dying to Live](#)  
Human face of the migrant (33 min.)

[The Invisible Mexicans of Deer Canyon](#)  
Immigrants live outdoors in secluded canyons of San Diego, CA. (1 hr 13 min.)



umc  
resolutions

general  
conference

[Passages from  
The Book  
of Resolutions of  
The United Methodist  
Church, 2008:](#)

- ¶162. III. THE SOCIAL  
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(A), (H)
- ¶163. IV. THE ECONOMIC  
COMMUNITY,  
(F)
- ¶164. V. THE POLITICAL  
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- ¶165. VI. THE WORLD  
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[“Welcoming the Migrant”](#)  
2008 General Conference  
Statement

iowa annual  
conference

[IAUMC 2009 Book of  
Resolutions —  
Immigration Issues](#)

[Call to Action:  
Responding to Arizona,  
SB1070](#)

[Postville Raids Resolution](#)

## WEIGHING THE ISSUE continued from page 1

echoing the words and spirit of scripture, from Ezra Lazarus' historic poem *The New Colossus*:

*"...Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

New Iowans who have been pushed and pulled from their beloved homelands like our European ancestors, are now from other, less familiar — but equally important — parts of the world: Somalia, Guatemala, and Asia, for instance, but as stated by our Bishop and the General Conference, our immigration laws and the immigration debate have become draconian, xenophobic, unrealistic, expensive, damaging, unworkable, and unjust. It is time to face directly our discomfort with the truth that “white” people constitute a mere 8% of the population of this, God’s world, and that Iowa and the United States are going to change, even as they did when Norwegians, Germans, Swedes, and Italians came and *enriched us forever*. It is time to enact humane, just, and workable reform that protects families, cares for newcomers, promotes the human rights of all, and provides paths to citizenship!

**Why don't we as followers of Christ do it the Christian way, like the early church and early Methodists did?** That's the immigration question I want to hear more than any other. Since when do Christians, since when do Methodists, allow law or political party to frame our response to others? This Advent and

Christmas, let's welcome the stranger, because in Christ, who himself was an endangered migrant, we know there is no one more familiar than a stranger, no one more welcome than a newcomer, no one more authorized than someone who has been rejected. When we welcome the immigrant, we welcome Christ. “For to this you have been called, because Christ also [came and] suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow **in his steps**” (1 Peter 2:21).



photo by Rev. Mike Blevins



photo by Rev. Mike Blevins

