



A Pastoral Letter from Your Bishops to the People of The United Methodist Church in Texas

July 17, 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Today a humanitarian crisis is unfolding on our southern border with the arrival of tens of thousands of unaccompanied children. Many of you have communicated with us about your heartfelt desire to provide compassionate care for the unaccompanied children who are suffering in our midst. As bishops we have been conferencing with each other about how the people of The United Methodist Church might respond in a manner that is most faithful to the gospel.

We have also been in conversation with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), community leaders, and government officials. Our colleague, Bishop Jim Dorff, and other leaders in the Rio Texas Conference have just returned from three days on the border assessing the situation and representing the gospel and the church and encouraging people in a Christ-like response.

Let us be guided by the Biblical witness of faith:

- Jesus said, “Let the little children to come to me for to such belong the kingdom of heaven.” (*Luke 18:15-16*)
- Jesus instructed us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe those in need, visit the sick and those imprisoned. Then he said, “When you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.” (*Matthew 25:40*)
- We are to extend hospitality to strangers. (*Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:12*)

We do not understand all that these children have experienced in their home countries or in their arduous journey to our borders. We do know that their plight breaks the heart of God. Children are some of the most vulnerable members of the global community. Many come seeking to survive. They all need our compassion and care. At a time of concern about a struggling economy and national security, it is easy to give in to fear and to let that fear, rather than God’s heart, shape our hearts and our response. “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.” (*II Tim. 1:7*). As followers of Christ, we have the power and wisdom of God to care for these unaccompanied children.

As the Bishops of the United Methodist Conferences of Texas, we call on the people of The United Methodist Church to:

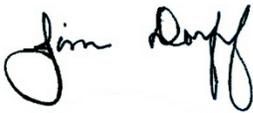
- Pray regularly for the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being and healing of these children and families, wisdom for our government officials, and peace for the countries from which these children have come;
- Work with faith and community leadership to provide housing, life necessities, pastoral/spiritual care, and as stable an environment as possible for these children and families while their long-term status is being resolved;
- Be attentive to seeing Christ in the faces of these children;
- Be alert for specific opportunities to offer ministries of compassion and care, which we will share as needs emerge.

In the words of John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, “Do all the good you can by all the means you can in all the ways you can in all the places you can at all the times you can to all the people you can as long as ever you can.”

In the name and spirit of Christ, we join with you in Christian love for these children. God bless you.



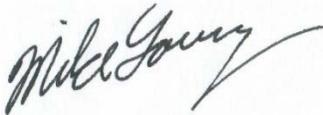
Earl Bledsoe
Bishop of the New Mexico and Northwest Texas Conferences



Jim Dorff
Bishop of the Rio Grande and Southwest Texas Conferences



Janice Huie
Bishop of the Texas Conference



Mike Lowry
Bishop of the Central Texas Conference



Mike McKee
Bishop of the North Texas Conference