

CONTINUING TESTAMENT
EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME
CHANGING LIVES

July 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,



The Council of Conference Ministers of the United Church of Christ and the Collegium of Officers offer this open letter to the church in response to the flood of child refugees coming to the United States from Central America. We write it in solidarity with our sister churches in the Southern California/Nevada Conference, the Southwest Conference, and the South Central Conference whose boundaries are coterminous with our neighbors to the South.

We have all been watching over the last weeks child refugees by the tens of thousands risk life and limb to flee violence and poverty in their homeland, hoping to find safety in America. The story of this land being rich with possibility can be heard even by children in far away lands. It is the same story that we heard with pride when we were children. It stirs their hearts, as it did ours, and compels them to leave everything behind except for the hope that it might be true.

It is fast becoming apparent, however, that the collective will to care for these children is far below whatever expectations they might have had. For them, the story that fostered such hope is met with profound disappointment as once in the US they are being detained, disgraced, and deported – treated more like criminals, terrorists, and threats than children, refugees, and victims of unspeakable horror.

As leaders in this denomination, we stand in solidarity with the children who seek refuge here. Our churches are fast becoming part of a network built to respond to these overwhelming needs. We cannot meet these needs alone. We are seeking to forge partnerships with those who are just as moved by the courage and suffering of these children, and who wish to extend to them love, comfort, and justice.

Deeply aware not just of our own immigrant stories and roots, but also of the clear biblical imperative to care for the stranger in our midst, we invite all settings and all leaders of the United Church of Christ to respond in any of the following ways:

- Pray for the children who seek refuge across our southern border, and see in them the face of Christ;
- Support with your donations organizations that house, clothe, feed, educate, and provide medical care to the refugee children: <http://www.ucc.org/protectchildren>;
- Write to your elected Representatives and share with them your concern for these children, asking them not to see them as a threat to us or as criminals;
- Stay alert to emerging opportunities to respond to the needs of the refugee children. One good source can be found here on the UCC website: <http://www.ucc.org/justice/immigration/unaccompanied-children.html>

- Prayerfully consider sermons, newsletter articles, adult and youth classes that articulate a narrative of care for the stranger and alien among us.

The United Church of Christ has a long and proud history of demonstrating courage in the struggle for justice and peace. Now, as ever, our resolve is being tested. It is with a good deal of hope and courage that we face this injustice. Let the actions forged by our compassion silence the voices of hatred and fear that ring right now in the ears of these precious children of God. Let them know we are Christians by our love.

We are one with you in Christ.

Sincerely,

The Collegium of Officers and the Council of Conference Ministers