



As Policies Hurt Immigrants and Refugees, Faith Communities Pray and Protest

Noel Andersen

Grassroots Coordinator for Immigrants' Rights

Our sacred texts remind us to welcome the sojourner in our midst and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Yet our government is enacting horrific policies designed to separate families and terrorize those fleeing persecution, violence and poverty. I was recently part of a United Church of Christ lead ecumenical group who held communion at the U.S.-Mexico border fence and who gathered at the Border Patrol Station in Nogales. We were there to protest the horror of family separation and family detention, to proclaim that we should build bridges not walls. We were there to pray for healing, unity and love in midst of the crisis.

Less than six months ago, Congress approved more than \$4 billion to jail an average of 40,500 immigrants daily in its final fiscal year 2018 budget bill. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) currently exceeds that capacity, holding nearly 45,000 immigrants in detention. This summer, congressional appropriators approved a transfer of more than \$200 million from other Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies to cover the over-spending by ICE. Of that \$200 million, reports have shown that \$10 million was transferred from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) just as hurricane season was approaching. Money that could provide hurricane relief is causing tremendous harm in the hands of an agency responsible for migrant deaths and widespread sexual assault in detention, violent raids and the separation of thousands of families.

At the same time that DHS is sending more money to ICE, they are slowing down the security process for refugee resettlement, resulting in only 20,000 refugees resettled in the 2018 fiscal year out of an admissions goal of 45,000 – the lowest resettlement goal on record. At a time when there are more refugees globally since World War II, Secretary Pompeo has announced an even lower number admissions goal of 30,000 for the Fiscal 2019 fiscal year.

We have a moral responsibility to speak out against these injustices by calling our members of Congress and letting them know that we don't want any more funds for Customs & Border Protection (CBP)'s Border Patrol and

Immigration & Customs Enforcement. We should be calling our government to support a robust refugee program of at least 75,000 refugees per year. This administration and Congress want to use our tax dollars to finance their anti-immigrant agenda while important resources are being cut from critical programs that low income and middle class families depend on, such as health care, food assistance and even hurricane relief. After talking with migrants first hand at the border, and seeing the way they have been treated in detention centers, we must pray and protest to end the excessive flow of money to ICE and CBP that fuels this administration's hateful, anti-immigrant agenda.

See action alerts to cut funding to CBP and ICE and to protect our refugee program.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Noel Andersen is UCC & CWS Grassroots Coordinator for Immigrants' Rights.

LEARN ucc.org/justice

DONATE ucc.org/donate

ARCHIVE
WFJ bit.ly/witness4justice

The United Church of Christ has more than 5,000 churches throughout the United States. Rooted in the Christian traditions of congregational governance and covenantal relationships, each UCC setting speaks only for itself and not on behalf of every UCC congregation. UCC members and churches are free to differ on important social issues, even as the UCC remains principally committed to unity in the midst of our diversity.