

**2010: A Call for a More Humane US Immigration Policy; End Migrant Deaths;
Support Immigrant Communities
(Resolution of Witness)**

(As approved by SWC Annual Meeting, April 24, 2010)

Resolution:

WHEREAS, Jesus and the scriptures give us clear instruction on how we are to treat the foreigner and neighbors in need; and

WHEREAS, the Biblical heritage of the Judeo Christian tradition specifically identifies the “stranger” in our midst as deserving of our love and compassion; and

WHEREAS, we have been called by the one God to tear down all the borders we have built between us so that we may see each person as a child of God, so that we may learn to love and welcome all God’s children as members of one family and one world; and

WHEREAS, our consciences are affronted by federal, state, and local policies and actions that detain immigrants, that prosecute undocumented workers, that fracture families and prosecute those who would give them aid; and

WHEREAS, more than 3,000 men, women and children have died attempting to cross the US/Mexico border since the implementation of the blockade strategy of border enforcement and there is little evidence that this policy has been effective in slowing the tide of illegal immigration; and

WHEREAS, many of us are in local churches and communities where we are aware of migrant peoples, but largely unaware of their personal, communal, and national stories; and

WHEREAS, the United States is affected by the presence of new immigrants from all over the world, and

WHEREAS, although countries have the right to control their own borders, it is not an absolute right; the Church recognizes a basic God given right for shelter, food, clean water and other basic necessities; and

WHEREAS, the blockade strategy of border enforcement has created an underground market for the smuggling of human beings which exploits its vulnerable victims, and has encouraged an upsurge in vigilante activities, fosters an anti-immigrant atmosphere and represents the potential for violence; and

WHEREAS, current immigration policy forces upon migrant families potentially deadly choices which separate and dislocate them from one another, precluding free travel and mobility to return to their families; and

WHEREAS, migrant workers and their families enter the United States to live and work and the current immigration policy makes that passage dangerous, illegal, disorderly, and inhumane with very few of the basic rights afforded to all workers under international law; and

WHEREAS, approximately ten to twelve million undocumented workers and their families currently living in the United States are pressured to live covertly, without rights, and in vulnerable situations all over the United States; and

WHEREAS, the root causes of this migration lie in environmental, economic, and trade inequities between the United States, Mexico, and all of Latin America, policies which reduce tariffs and taxes that would support the poor in Mexico and Latin America; eliminate agricultural subsidies and low-interest loans for the poor in Mexico and Latin America while keeping those subsidies in the United States and in Canada; reduce social spending for health care, food stamps, and welfare reform in Mexico and Latin America; liberalize land

ownership policies, thus limiting the ability of the poor in Mexico and Latin America to own or share in the land; deregulate environmental and labor laws in Mexico and Latin America; and limit the rights of Mexican and Latin American workers to protest or seek remedies for wrongs done to them; and

WHEREAS, the fragile desert environment has sustained severe damage as a result of migrant and responding enforcement patrols moving through remote desert regions; and

WHEREAS, General Synod XIII of the United Church of Christ (1981) adopted a Pronouncement on Immigration calling upon all settings of the church to:

- a. advocate for the rights of immigrants;
- b. aid undocumented immigrants in attaining legal status;
- c. aid immigrants in reunification with their families and in placement in areas of the country most favorable for their productive participation in society
- d. assist in meeting the social welfare needs of immigrants; and
- e. be inclusive of immigrants in existing and new churches and

WHEREAS, General Synod XXIV of the United Church of Christ adopted a resolution supporting Humane Borders, a faith-based group that offers assistance to those in need by maintaining water stations on and near the border and recognizing that there is more that can be done within and by the United Church of Christ regarding border issues; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ proudly declares an extravagant welcome to all who seek to be in relationship with Jesus Christ;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED that the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ declares that the Militarized Border Enforcement Strategy of the United States government has been ineffective and inhumane.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwest conference Minister be urged to participate in delegations and immersion programs and that Southwest Conference congregations seek out opportunities for face to face dialogue with immigrant communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the congregations and pastors of the Southwest Conference study the immigration issue through discussion and reflection of films such as “El Norte” and “Babel” and books such as The Devil’s Highway by Luis Alberto Urrea.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that congregations and pastors form grass roots organizations working in conjunction with but not limited to established groups such as:

- Border Links
- Samaritan Patrols
- The New Sanctuary Movement
- Center for Education and Social Transformation
- No More Deaths
- Humane Borders

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we reaffirm the action of General Synod XIII on the resolution JUSTICE IN IMMIGRATION and General Synod XXIV resolution supporting HUMANE BORDERS.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conference calls upon leaders of the Conference and congregations to extend an extravagant welcome and radical hospitality to and continue to minister and care for all who come to our doors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in keeping with the aforementioned we give voice to our conference minister of the Southwest Conference to speak for justice regarding issues of immigration reform on behalf of the Southwest Conference.

FUNDING

Funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Conference Minister and Members of the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ are requested to be the primary implementers of this resolution.

Sponsor's Name	Church
Susan Martin	Casas Adobes Congregational UCC, Tucson
Clint Reynolds	Church of the Palms, UCC, Sun City
James B. Nelson	Southside Presbyterian
Kenneth Heintzelman	Shadow Rock UCC, Phoenix
Carl Schroer	First Congregational UCC, Tucson
Liana Rowe	Shadow Rock UCC, Phoenix
Sandra Britton	First Congregational UCC, Phoenix
Barbara Doerrer-Peacock	South Mountain Community Church, Phoenix
Kevin Brown	
Emery Boepple	United Churches Fellowship-UCC, Nogales
Lee Milligan	Church of the Painted Hills, UCC, Tucson
Elaine Jordan	Faith United, UCC, Dewey
Fletch Wideman	Shadow Rock UCC, Phoenix
Jane Cheek	First Congregational UCC, Prescott
Robert Koth	First Congregational UCC, Phoenix
Karen Ballou	First Congregational UCC, Albuquerque
Rev. Pamela Gilchrist	United Church of Santa Fe, Santa Fe
Leona Stucky-Abbot	St. Paul's UCC, Rio Rancho
Randy Mayer	Good Shepherd UCC, Sahuarita
Stacy Richards	Yuma UCC, Yuma
David Buss	Church of the Painted Hills, UCC, Tucson
John Herman	Desert Palm UCC, Tempe

Amendment I

The Southwest conference authorizes our Conference Minister to meet with Governor Brewer and other public officials to personally present this resolution on behalf of our Conference.

Amendment II

Our Southwest Conference approves the letter dated April 24, 2010, offered by our Justice Witness Team and directs that this letter accompany our Immigration Resolution.