

Immigration Statement

November 20, 2014

Conference of Bishops

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

As people of faith and leaders of the church, we support public policy that protects children, reunites families, and cares for the most vulnerable, regardless of their place of birth.

The treatment of immigrants is a core religious value. To welcome the stranger is to welcome a child of God. In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger, for "just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

Each day in our congregations and in our service to the community, we see the consequences of this broken immigration system: separated families, children returning home to find their parents have been deported, and the exploitation of undocumented workers.

By removing the threat of deportation for many people, we are showing compassion for people who have been here for years, working hard to provide for their families, obeying the law, and contributing to the fabric of our community.

While today's action addresses a pressing need, it does not provide a path to citizenship, establish policies that prioritize family unity, or create more efficient channels for entry of new migrant workers. Our hope is that congress will address these and related issues, including the practice of family detention, which undermines our values as a people of faith and a nation of welcome.

The Scriptures consistently show a significant concern for immigrants:

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

The positive role of immigrants in our history, economy and our community is unmistakable. We support this compassionate first step toward reforming an immigration system that is flawed and requires many of our neighbors to live in the shadows in fear.

The ELCA Conference of Bishops