



Dear Pastors and Leaders in the Free Methodist Church,

It will soon be one year since we wrote regarding the understanding and approach of the Free Methodist Church on issues surrounding immigration in the United States. At that time, we wrote pastorally to the church and attached our 2013 position paper, which reflected that our convictions have not changed based on the political winds. Meanwhile, one year later we are aware of daily news stories presenting various viewpoints on immigrants and the activities of immigration enforcement by government agents. More personally, we know there are stories from the daily experiences of our Free Methodist members, pastors and congregations who are being impacted by policies, enforcement and fears from all sides. We are grieved by the rhetoric that dehumanizes any person, incites others to violence, or approves of treating any people group, whether it be a race or ethnicity or law enforcement, as an enemy to be overcome.

It is crucial that pastors and leaders in the Free Methodist Church continue to teach and lead from our biblical mandate to love our neighbors as ourselves and honor the *Imago Dei* in every person. In December, our sister denomination, the Wesleyan Church, released a position paper on the topic of immigration asserting a biblical call that we affirm as true for all kingdom-minded Christians based on God-given revelation in the Scriptures:

We believe that Scripture is clear: God's people are called to
love immigrants with tangible action.

The primary question for Wesleyans is not "Why are immigrants in our communities?" or "What is their status?" but "**How do we love immigrants well?**" and "**How do we create spaces of welcome, belonging, and justice for our immigrant neighbors?**"

We urge you and your churches to be in prayer for how you can serve the immigrants in your community and pursue peace and reconciliation. To our churches comprised largely of immigrants: we understand that the impact of uncertainty, loss and harmful characterizations about who you are and your contribution to our communities and country is hard to bear. You are beloved brothers and sisters, seen and valued as a part of our denominational family and we urge all our people to bear the burden with you in prayer and support. In step with the National Association of Evangelicals, "We invite all people of goodwill to join us in prayer, advocacy and practical care for those in need." (<https://www.nae.org/standing-immigrant-neighbors-crisis-nae-evangelicals/>)

As your Bishops we refuse to be forced into the binary categories of loving our country and establishing security **or** loving immigrants and standing against racism in all its forms. As holiness people we must live in the tension of both values, which increasingly requires intentionality and courage to be disciples formed in thought and action by the Word and the Spirit over and above political allegiances. A disciple following the way of Christ chooses to reject fear, greed, and selfishness for a life of generosity and sacrifice for the sake of others. This is why the church has been a light for righteousness and justice since Pentecost.



We draw your attention to a closing thought from the Wesleyan paper, which is linked below if you would like to read it in its entirety:

Let us not be distracted or swayed by partisan fear or cultural suspicion.
But let us also not be lulled into neutrality or silence. Indifference is not a faithful option. Let us instead be found **faithful**, walking in *mishpat* (restorative justice), *philoxenos* (hospitality), and *kollaō* (deep connection), so that we, as the community who call ourselves Wesleyans, are known as the people who welcome immigrants. (Matthew 25:35).
(See <https://www.wesleyan.org/wesleyan-church-position-statement-on-immigration>)

We stand in agreement with our sister denomination and many others seeking to be found faithful to Christ, our King, and His kingdom. Church, let us not be conformed to the patterns of this world, that draw us toward anxiety, greed, selfishness, hate and violence, but be renewed by the transforming of our minds that leads us toward sacrificial love and grace in a way that glorifies God.