



The Free Methodist Position on Immigration

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At the heart of the arguments surrounding immigration matters is a fundamental tension between our desire to care for all persons and our respect for the rights of the state to establish laws, including economic policy. Both are legitimate impulses but their position, vis-à-vis each other, is subject to God's principles extracted from the Scriptural narrative. If, as we will suggest below, the desire to care for persons is a different and higher category than the state's right to restrict immigration, then we monitor laws of the state that create friction with the mandate to care for persons (see "A," "B," & "E" from 2011 *Book of Discipline* ¶ 3221) and we advocate to change the behaviors and laws in question ("C" and "D" from the same paragraph).

Immigration laws are based on citizenship (only non-citizens are subject to a particular state's immigration laws), which is a concept of the state based, in turn, on birth realities. The two opposing birth realities for granting citizenship are "*Jus Soli*" (right of the soil or birthright citizenship) and "*Jus Sanguinis*" (right of blood). In the former, citizenship is based on place-of-birth and in the latter it's based on parent's citizenship. *Jus Sanguinis* was Roman law but has gradually lost favor to *Jus Soli*, especially in the New World.

Both of these rationales, one's place of birth and parent's citizenship, are a matter of providence, not of any innate quality in the individual. Each country has its particular purposes in recognizing citizenship and the accompanying policies regarding immigration. These purposes of the state may or may not line-up with the purposes of the people of God. That is one source of the tension.

Another source is the foundational Judeo-Christian radical acceptance of all people as created in the "*imago Dei*." This is radical because it conflicts with one of the most universal sociological constructs: "in-group/out-group" or "us/them," by which people feel they belong to a particular group from which the rest are excluded. When immigration is exclusionary it rests upon an acceptance of the in-group/out-group concept. It has laws written by the in-group to benefit the in-group and restrict out-group access. Yet these laws will create tension if *all* peoples really belong to the "in-group," those in the image of God. The state will tend to side with protecting the in-group's economic interest. The church will tend to side with protecting the economic interests of *all* people: Hence the tension.

The broader tradition of the Church affirms that the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. The Gospel has to be our starting and ending point for discussing the issues surrounding immigration... not nationalistic concerns, economic projections, or fear.

This light of the Gospel illumines us as we search out the important principles that can be brought to bear on the fundamental tensions underlying the immigration discussion. We suggest that the most important of these Scriptural principles concerns are: 1) the treatment of foreigners, 2) the leveling aspect of the Gospel, 3) the instructions to be hospitable, 4) the admonition to work, 5) the principle of consequences, and 6) the admonition to submit to the state.

1. The Treatment of Foreigners

God has consistently and persistently commanded His people to treat the sojourners and foreigners with justice and compassion. From the earliest Mosaic commandments through the New Testament, God pushes His people toward a particular care for those who do not “belong,” and who are therefore vulnerable.

The Hebrews were often reminded that they had once been strangers, immigrants, without a home; therefore they were to empathize with others in that condition. The Hebraic history includes two extended periods during which they were immigrants: the 430 years in Egypt as well as the years in exile in Babylon and Assyria. Out of that collective memory God gives them instructions to treat the foreigners among them with justice and to provide for their needs.

It will suffice here to include several reminders of this biblical theme:

Exodus 12:49

The same law applies both to the native-born and to the **foreigner** residing among you.”

Exodus 22:21

“Do not mistreat or oppress a **foreigner**, for you were **foreigners** in Egypt.

Exodus 23:9

“Do not oppress a **foreigner**; you yourselves know how it feels to be **foreigners**, because you were **foreigners** in Egypt.

Leviticus 19:10

Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the **foreigner**. I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19:33

When a **foreigner** resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them.

Leviticus 19:34

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 23:22

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the **foreigner** residing among you. I am the Lord your God.”

Leviticus 24:22

You are to have the same law for the **foreigner** and the native-born. I am the Lord your God.”

Leviticus 25:35

If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a **foreigner** and stranger, so they can continue to live among you.

Numbers 15:15 and 16

The community is to have the same rules for you and for the **foreigner** residing among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the **foreigner** shall be the same before the Lord: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the **foreigner** residing among you.”

Deuteronomy 10:18 and 19

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the **foreigner** residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are **foreigners**, for you yourselves were **foreigners** in Egypt.

Deuteronomy 24:14

Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a **foreigner** residing in one of your towns.

Deuteronomy 24:17

Do not deprive the **foreigner** or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.

Deuteronomy 24:19-21

When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the **foreigner**, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the **foreigner**, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the **foreigner**, the fatherless and the widow.

Deuteronomy 26:12

When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the **foreigner**, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.

Deuteronomy 27:19

Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the **foreigner**, the fatherless or the widow.

Psalms 146:9

The Lord watches over the **foreigner** and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

Jeremiah 7:6

if you do not oppress the **foreigner**, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm,

Jeremiah 22:3

This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the **foreigner**, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

Ezekiel 22:29

The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the **foreigner**, denying them justice.

Zechariah 7:10

Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the **foreigner** or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.

Malachi 3:5

So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the **foreigners** among you of justice, but do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty.

The light of the Gospel takes us beyond the economic and political causes of contemporary migration movements to see God's plan for all peoples and how the people of God should respond to these movements in compassionate service. It is an invitation to pursue a theological reflection that in the suffering and hopes of immigrants and refugees we discover the unity of the human family, the dignity of every person, and the presence of the Lord, who made Himself one with the immigrants when He said, *"I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matthew 25:35)."*

Therefore the followers of this "stranger," named Jesus, are distinguished by their disproportionate care for other strangers among them, as well as the vulnerable classes (widows, fatherless, etc.). When there is no "father" able to defend them, the church stands in their defense. Local Free Methodist churches are to be proactive; actively looking for those who are different, who are not like "us," and then being responsive to their needs. To accomplish this,

- we assist with language acquisition, such as offering ESL classes.
- we provide food; watching for, and responding to cases of hunger.
- we help with basic needs such as furniture and appliances. As food stamps and other government food programs often may be used for food alone, immigrants may have other basic needs like toilet paper, toothpaste, soap, etc.
- we give guidance in navigating governmental realities, such as obtaining drivers licenses, getting health care, translating of documents, and completing residency and citizenship classes.
- we come alongside with our presence; for instance, we accompany immigrants to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) hearings, especially when deportation may be at hand.
- we promote cultural awareness by teaching and learning about cultural differences, and by helping the immigrants understand how and why things work in this new world (approach to time, responses to authority, safety for children, etc.).
- we focus on soul care, ensuring that they are able to worship and hear the story of Jesus in ways they can understand.

2. The Leveling Aspect of the Gospel

Especially when confronted with the leveling aspects of the Gospel (*"There is **neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**" Galatians 3:28*), one must recognize that the *presumption of difference*, upon which immigration is based, is suspect. Of course this Galatians' passage is not arguing for political equality, but for spiritual equality through faith. Nevertheless, the conclusion is true across the spectrum; in Christ we are the same.

When Jesus formulated His final charge to the church that we call the great commission, He sent His followers to make disciples, "*Panta Ta Ethne*," of all the ethnicities. Although routinely misunderstood as only a "missionary" verse, these are instructions to the church. The church is sent to all ethnicities, to all people groups.

So at the very foundation of the church's task is the mandate to make disciples across the boundaries of us/them. This is a core identity issue for the church. There is no legitimate church which is not breaking the boundaries of ethnicity, because that is how our Lord defined us and where our Lord sent us.

Ultimately it doesn't matter whether citizenship is extracted *Jus Soli* or *Jus Sanguinis*, because Christians are sent on a supra-mission which functions above the temporal boundaries of state and economies. The supra-mission overrides smaller concerns, like migratory status. The supra-mission elevates the principle of care for persons (making disciples) over submission to the state.

Therefore,

- we willingly serve all persons we encounter, regardless of migratory status, because such differences do not diminish the spiritual value of all people.
- we provide venues to interact with both documented and undocumented immigrants to understand their stories and where they come from: their needs, hopes, and dreams.
- we celebrate when a local church reaches people "not like themselves" with the good news of Jesus because they are following well the Great Commission.

3. The Instructions to Be Hospitable

The people of God are a hospitable people. Even though there are numerous New Testament admonitions toward hospitality, few Christians are pleading with the Father to be more hospitable. Yet the practice of hospitality characterizes, in practical ways, what it means to "*love*

your neighbor as yourself." The apostles Peter, Paul, and John all urge us to be hospitable (Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 5:10; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; 3 John 1:8) both to the household of faith as well as to strangers.

Jesus' distillation of the law into the two commandments, cosmic in scope, need to be applied on a daily basis. That's what hospitality helps us do. A full-orbed life of hospitality looks and procures the best for others, hospitality is how we "*love our neighbor*."

The Church has historically emphasized the role of hospitality with the saying, "*Hospes venit, Christus venit*," "When a guest comes, Christ comes." We should welcome every guest to our door, our church, our country with the same hospitality with which we would welcome Christ. And this hospitality is much more than setting cloth napkins on the table and preparing a 5-course dinner for friends. In fact, that may be something less, perhaps even something self-serving.

Hospitality is an offering to those unable to reciprocate. As Jesus says in Luke 14:14, "*You will be blessed because they can't repay you*." Hospitality has overtones of the hospital, of care for the weak, broken, and diseased. As Jesus says in Matthew 25:36, "*I was sick and you took care of me*." Hospitality is not self-serving, it's other-serving. It will involve sacrifice, risk, and even identification with the strangers.

The word we translate "hospitality" in the Greek manuscripts is *Filoxenia* (*philoxenia*) and literally means, "Love of Strangers." That the biblical and Christian concept of true hospitality is about how we treat needy strangers is presented by Christine D. Pohl in her "**Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition**" and might shame us to realize that our hospitality is something much less than the sacrificial "love of strangers."

As thoughtful Christians engage with the immigration issue, the default position that we should be hospitable to all pushes us to embrace and care for the immigrants around us.

Therefore,

- we invite immigrants into our homes (as uncomfortable as that might be, for the inviter as well as the invited!) and spend time in their homes.
- we actively seek out children that have been distanced from family by the deportation of undocumented parents and provide focused care for them.
- we ensure that the Free Methodist Church ordination requirement of “cross-cultural education” contains training in working with the immigrant population.

4. The Admonition to Work

From the original instructions to Adam and Eve to work and care for the garden (Gen. 2:19), we have been charged with having productive lives. Eden’s curse, “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life”(Gen. 3:17) roils across the millennia; the work of women and men producing thorns and thistles, often fruitless and pointless.

Nevertheless, we are to work. The apostle Paul states it bluntly, “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). This principle is rarely a part of the immigration dialogue but should be since one legitimate role of government is to allow and encourage work; work is in keeping with God’s purposes for humankind. As thoughtful Christians engage with the immigration issue, the default position is that impediments to work are contrary to God’s desire that we work. That is, if jobs are available in one country and not in another, we desire immigration policy that allows the workers access to those jobs.

The argument, though, may be turned on its head. Since it is a noble goal of government to provide a climate where rewarding work for a fair wage may be had, one might argue that the state is entitled to *protect* jobs for its citizens, those of the in-group, however that group is defined. The argument breaks down at this point,

however, as the clear intent of exclusionary immigration law, is *not* to provide work, but rather to protect work only for its citizens, which becomes essentially a selfish act.

The opportunity to open work to foreigners is a part of the American experience. We are reminded of this by the poem “**The New Colossus**” by Emma Lazarus, written in 1883 and, in 1903, engraved on a bronze plaque at the Statue of Liberty, comparing the Colossus of Rhodes to this new welcoming statue.

*“Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”*

That America proudly welcomed those yearning to breathe free, yearning for a chance to work, yearning to provide for their families, has been largely lost in the current immigration discussion. This is not the first time in US history that the pendulum has swung against immigrants: from the first US “exclusionary” immigration laws in 1875, to the Secure Fence act of 2006, the country has reacted to restrict the immigration of particular sets of foreigners.

The current unfortunate reality in the United States also includes a large class of immigrants who are undocumented (probably some 11 million), primarily because of the quota system that limits menial-worker visas by country-of-origin. Undoubtedly some are criminals and scoundrels among the undocumented workers, but the vast majority have braved untold dangers and risked their meager savings to come to the

U.S. to work for us. They know they are breaking the law yet intuitively recognize the inconsistencies between U.S. law, which criminalizes them, and the U.S. economy that depends on them as a significant labor source and continues to hire them. They are largely forced into the underground economy and the invisible world which is afraid to access health care, police protection, schools, retirement programs, the welfare system, and churches. This invisible world also, incidentally, is the context in which human trafficking thrives.

Legislation has several times been proposed in the U.S. during the past decade (2006, 2007, and 2012) to provide a guest-worker program, so there could be a legal pathway for temporary workers (like the Bracero program that operated in the US from 1942 To 1964) but the proposals have not become law. This means that many of our least-desirable jobs (produce harvesting, protein processing, hotel/restaurant back-of-house, and construction) continue to be filled by undocumented workers. These are jobs which birthright Americans often will not take at any wage.

The Free Methodist Church will work to educate our people regarding the care for foreigners. To do this,

- we establish two-way communication between persons engaged in multi-ethnic ministries, particularly among immigrant populations.
- we resource one another with contact information of immigration lawyers, social workers, and other supportive agencies already in use across the denomination.
- we inform about the economic realities in the United States of using migrant workers in an unregulated labor system.

5. The Principle of Consequences

We recognize that every country reaps the consequences of its actions. If a country has followed poor economic policy, exhausted and polluted its farmland, exiled the creative and wise, allowed great corruption to impoverish its people, or chosen state religions that are

contrary to God's ways, the citizens of those countries may be eager to abandon their poverty and emigrate to a better system for which they did not labor, sacrifice, or save. Some would argue that the consequences of leaders and national policy must be endured by the people of that country. This argument is in favor of exclusionary immigration laws and their enforcement.

Therefore, the argument goes, reasonable immigration policy helps create nations where good decisions and sacrificial behaviors are rewarded over the long term. That is, Country X, which has been wise and hard-working, should be entitled to enjoy the fruits of their efforts.

But the question is whether that entitlement extends in perpetuity? The Jewish Year of Jubilee was God's answer to the question of how long the entitlement should be enjoyed. Every 49 years they were to push to "reset" button and a fresh start was to be enjoyed.

Obviously, there is no year of jubilee in today's world. But immigration is one way for the reset button to be pushed in small ways. People born under the curse of poor government and damaged lands should be able to have a chance to work hard and provide a future for their children.

So in spite of recognizing that a state's actions have consequences, we believe that the role of the Christian is not as enforcer of the principle of consequences, for enough suffering occurs quite naturally. Rather, Christians are called to be purveyors of new opportunities and hopes for those who have been betrayed by their governments.

Therefore,

- we respect the right of governments to restrict immigration but also are eager for fresh start opportunities to be extended to those who come from countries that have had poor governance.
- we advocate for creating conditions in native lands which would make immigration unnecessary.

6. The Admonition to Submit to the State

As we mentioned in the introduction, law-abiding citizens are often made uneasy when confronted with undocumented workers or even when encouraged to challenge current immigration policy. We note that the Mosaic instructions concerning foreigners didn't contemplate foreigners who were "illegally" living among them. The Hebrews had no immigration restrictions so there were no "illegals." Some are therefore unsure how to apply the scriptural admonitions about care for the foreigners when such care seems to conflict with public policy.

We're also reminded that the Apostle Peter calls for submission to the state, "*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.*" (1 Peter 2:13-14). The Apostle Paul similarly calls us to respect the state's authorities, "*Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*" (Romans 13:1-2) Yet we quickly note that both Peter and Paul disobeyed the state. Paul was often arrested and punished by civic authorities, and probably was executed by the state as a lawbreaker. That is, these very apostles who advocated for respect for the state and its law readily disobeyed the law of the state when those laws conflicted with the higher principles of God. Underlying their assertions about submission to the state is an understanding that we always *submit* to the state, but we *obey* the state only when the state's policies do not conflict with higher principles; when they don't require sub-Christian behavior from us.

As already stated, immigration laws, by their very nature, distinguish between in-group/out-group. Further, immigration laws have both embracing and excluding mechanisms for the out-group. Embracing mechanisms are those concerning asylum, refugee resettlement programs, and preferential status for highly trained and gifted émigrés. Excluding mechanisms are those

that limit émigrés, usually for the purported economic benefit of the in-group. Economists do not universally agree upon whether these mechanisms are, indeed, beneficial for the in-group, but that is the rationale behind them.

For Christians, though, all laws are subjected to a higher law, understood through the Scriptural narrative. World history is replete with examples of unjust laws designed for economic exploitation, so the Christian does not accept law uncritically. Our view of right and wrong corresponds to a higher set of values and may, in fact, set us in opposition to laws of the state.

Christians differentiate between policies we support and policies against which we militate. The Christian church has a long history of differentiating between good laws and bad (slavery, limited suffrage, racial discrimination, public executions, etc.) and of advocating for change when bad laws are discovered. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus responded that we must love God with all that we are, and also love our neighbor as we love ourselves. "*All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands,*" He said (Matthew 22:40). When any immigration policy and laws are designed to protect certain rights at the expense of loving our neighbor equal to loving ourselves, the Christian is in fundamental disagreement with them.

Therefore,

- we submit to the state, including its right to punish us when we believe and act on principles of a higher order that bring us into non-violent conflict with state policy.
- we advocate for public policy that increases the embracing mechanisms of immigration law, to the degree that they don't drain other countries of highly skilled persons needed to lift those countries to a higher state of well-being.
- we oppose public policy that encourages (even unintentionally) the creation of a class of undocumented workers by restricting immigration of those workers that sections of our economy rely upon.

- we communicate with our legislators and in the public forum (letters to the editor, etc.) advocating for immigration reform.
- we understand that ecclesial functions are granted by God, not the state, so we do not cede ecclesial functions to the state. This means that we offer the sacraments, conduct marriages, perform funerals, and ordain ministers without consideration of their immigration status.

Conclusion

The Christian is squarely in the Hebraic tradition which welcomes and cares for the immigrants among us. Although conscious of His specific purpose among His Hebrew family, our Lord consistently elevated the worth of persons of all nationalities (Syrians and Sidonians in Luke 4, the Italian centurion, the Syrophenician woman, the Samaritan woman, etc.) and His final instructions to the church focused on other ethnicities (Mt 28:19-20). The apostolic record in the book of the Acts is of the good news crossing the boundaries of economic class, geography, language, gender, and ethnicity. Our central commandment is to love God and our neighbor; when pressed, Jesus told the convicting story of a good neighbor who turned out to be an unwanted foreigner from a nearby, despised country. This Good Samaritan was an undesirable who, had the Hebrews had the mechanisms of a powerful in-group, would have surely been restricted by immigration policy from being on that road from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Although we haven't explored it here, the history of the Methodist movement and the Free Methodist movement are closely intertwined with a theology of equality that would also argue for our care for immigrants and our advocacy for immigrants.

American Free Methodists recognize the tensions between current national immigration policy and the church's theology and practice. We recognize that exemplary Christian citizens will often feel the friction between the two systems and will call their governments to closer approximations to God's principles. In the meantime, we minister to all persons, especially and intentionally to the foreigners among us.

Summary of Action Steps

With regards to serving "the other",

- we assist with language acquisition, such as offering ESL classes.
- we provide food; watching for, and responding to cases of hunger.
- we help with basic needs such as furniture and appliances. As food stamps and other government food programs often may be used for food alone, immigrants may have other basic needs like toilet paper, toothpaste, soap, etc.
- we give guidance in navigating governmental realities, such as obtaining drivers licenses, getting health care, translating of documents, and completing residency and citizenship classes.
- we promote cultural awareness by teaching and learning about cultural differences, and by helping the immigrants understand how and why things work in this new world (approach to time, responses to authority, safety for children, etc.).
- we focus on soul care, ensuring that they are able to worship and hear the story of Jesus in ways they can understand.
- we willingly serve all persons we encounter, regardless of migratory status, because such differences do not affect the spiritual equality of all people.
- we provide venues to interact with both documented and undocumented immigrants to understand their stories and where they come from: their needs, hopes, and dreams.
- we celebrate when a local church reaches people "not like themselves" with the good news of Jesus because they are following well the Great Commission.
- we invite immigrants into our homes (as uncomfortable as that might be, for the inviter as well as the invited!) and spend time in their homes.

- we actively seek out children that have been distanced from family by the deportation of undocumented parents and provide focused care for them.
- we ensure that the Free Methodist Church ordination requirement of “cross-cultural education” contains training in working with the immigrant population.

With regards to work,

- we establish two-way communication between persons engaged in multi-ethnic ministries, particularly among immigrant populations.
- we resource one another with contact information of immigration lawyers, social workers, and other supportive agencies already in use across the denomination.
- we inform about the economic realities in the United States of using migrant workers in an unregulated labor system.

With regards to the state,

- we respect the right of governments to restrict immigration but also are eager for fresh start opportunities to be extended to those who come from countries that have had poor governance.
- we advocate for creating conditions in native lands which would make immigration unnecessary.
- we submit to the state, including its right to punish us when we believe and act on principles of a higher order that bring us into non-violent conflict with state policy.
- we advocate for public policy that increases the embracing mechanisms of immigration law, to the degree that they don’t drain other countries of highly skilled persons needed to lift those countries to a higher state of well-being.

- we oppose public policy that encourages (even unintentionally) the creation of a class of undocumented workers by restricting immigration of those workers that sections of our economy rely upon.
- we communicate with our legislators and in the public forum (letters to the editor, etc.) advocating for immigration reform.
- we understand that ecclesial functions are granted by God, not the state, so we do not cede ecclesial functions to the state. This means that we offer the sacraments, conduct marriages, perform funerals, and ordain ministers without consideration of their immigration status.