

Statement on Separation of Families at the Border

The U.S. Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, the Department of Homeland Security, along with administration officials at the White House, have recently acknowledged the implementation of a new “zero tolerance” policy for families arriving at the U.S./Mexico border. This policy is being used by the current administration to separate families.

We declare that this policy separating children from their mothers and fathers, and its enforcement, is an unjust policy and a moral evil. The psalmist writes, “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward” (Psalm 127:3, ESV). Children are not instruments to be used for political purposes and ends. As with each human life, children are gifts and blessings from God. The familial bonds of parent and child are holy bonds, given by God, and no government shall work to destroy or disrupt the bonds of the family. Further, any state-sanctioned policy or law that results in the dehumanization of any human being, citizen or non-citizen, violates the very basic human dignity that is granted each human being on account of God relating to them as their creator.

As those who share in the common confession of faith that Christ is Lord, we acknowledge that “Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death” (The Theological Declaration of Barmen). It is Christ alone who is enthroned in heaven, to whom every knee shall bow and tongue confess (Philippians 2:9-11). It is Christ alone who stands as Lord and judge over all the kings and princes of the earth (cf. Psalm 2; Revelation 6:12 ff.)

The witness of Holy Scripture is clear as to the mandate God’s people have to love, welcome, and serve the foreigner and resident alien in our midst. Leviticus 19:33-34 (CEB) states, “When immigrants live in your land with you, you must not cheat them. Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God” (cf. Deuteronomy 10:18-19). The double-love command given by Christ in the gospels, to love God and to love neighbor, upon which “all the law and the prophets hang”, is grounded within Israel’s story and its life with God as given witness in the Old Testament (cf. Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27).

Further, our very Lord, Jesus Christ, was himself an immigrant and refugee, taken by his parents into a foreign land, fleeing the threat of violence and evil (Matthew 2:13-23).

Holy Scripture calls us, in imitation of God, to show compassion and seek justice for the most vulnerable among us as if we are doing it for Jesus himself (Matthew 25:40).

Romans 13 does not sanction the observance of laws that contradict the justice of God but instead declares that there is “no authority except from God” and that governing authorities are “not a terror to good conduct but to bad.” It calls on God’s people to “do what is good” and to “[o]we no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are

summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:8-10, NRSV).

We commit ourselves and our churches, as the body of Christ, to love, welcome, and to seek justice for, all persons, regardless of country of origin or immigration status. As Holy Scripture teaches us: "[O]ur citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Our citizenship belongs to the Kingdom of God, "a great multitude...from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Revelation 7:9, NRSV). It is our Christian duty and obligation to fulfill God's law: "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29, NRSV).

We call upon our elected officials and representative government to reverse this inhumane and unjust policy immediately. While we acknowledge the right of nation-states to maintain borders to protect the security of its citizens, we call on our government to act with mercy and justice toward those fleeing persecution and violence in their home countries, risking their lives to seek asylum in the United States for the chance to create a better life for themselves and their children. To maintain the border does not justify the evil and unjust treatment of men, women, and children forced to leave their homeland due to community or state-sanctioned violence, the threat of gang recruitment and related violence, and/or poverty and unstable economic conditions often caused by the economic policies and actions of the U.S. itself.

Finally, we pray with the psalmist that you, O Lord, would: "Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer...[for the] Lord is king forever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land. O Lord, you hear the desire of the meek, you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more" (Psalm 10:15-18, NRSV).

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The Reformed Church in America

19 June 2018