

North Valley Friends Church
Minute on Immigration, January 2010

The community of faith known as North Valley Friends Church in Newberg, Oregon seeks to value and reach out to persons of all races, cultures and social classes. We have a special concern for people marginalized by the dominant culture in the United States. This concern includes the large number of Hispanic/Latino persons in the Northwest, both documented and undocumented. We note the contributions these people are making to the economy and culture of our area, as well as the hardships and discrimination they often face. We recognize that, historically, immigrant status is a shared experience of many people within the United States.

Our concern has a biblical/theological foundation in the creation of human beings in the image of God (Genesis 1) and the dignity that confers on every person. The Bible itself is a book of immigrant stories, including the Old Testament account of the people of God. The Law of Israel makes provision for the care of "strangers in the land," with reminders that the people themselves were once foreigners in Egypt (Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:33-34), that immigrants are especially vulnerable and in need of care, and that God loves the foreigner (Deut. 10:18-19). The New Testament adds the concept of the church as a community of sojourners on this earth (Phil. 3:20; 1 Pt. 2:11). Christians are admonished to offer compassion and hospitality to outsiders (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2).

Because of these concerns and our relationships with Hispanic/Latino brothers and sisters in our community and throughout Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends (Oregon, Washington and Idaho), we at North Valley Friends Church believe there is a need for reform of the current immigration system. We recognize the complexity of the issues surrounding immigration, the importance of national security, and the need for humane treatment of the persons caught in the dilemmas of lack of legal documentation. We see these as moral, as well as spiritual, issues.

We affirm the need for the following:

- That safeguarding and monitoring of the national borders be carried out in a humane fashion and with respect for human dignity;
- That our government establish more functional legal mechanisms for the annual entry of a reasonable number of immigrant workers and families;
- That our government recognize the central importance of the family in society by reconsidering the number and categories of visas available for family reunification, and therefore dedicate more resources to reducing the backlog of cases in process, as well as reevaluating the impact of deportation on families;
- That our government support a refugee and asylum policy that offers meaningful assistance for all of those displaced by conflict, oppression, environmental change, natural disaster, and economic destitution;
- That our government establish a sound, equitable process toward earning legal status for undocumented immigrants already in-country, who desire to embrace the responsibilities and privileges that accompany citizenship.

We call upon leaders in all levels of government to take seriously the need for the reform of the immigration system so that it can begin to reflect the values of freedom, human dignity and opportunity our country was founded upon.