

National May 1 Movement

For Worker and Immigrant Rights

Background

The May 1 movement was founded by a coalition of immigrant and workers' rights groups to support immigrant rights and help our nation understand that immigrant labor is vital to our economy. At Atlanta 2003, Menonite Church USA delegates passed an immigration statement and Iglesia Menonita Hispana passed another on August 3, 2006. Just immigration policy matters because God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves—and because most of 'us' Menonites are immigrants, some more recently than others. Some Menonite Church USA offices have chosen to shut down on May 1 to give staff specific time to show support for immigrants and just immigration laws. Following is some information; you'll find links to interactive website and more information at www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace.

What we call each other is significant. One slogan is: WE ARE ALL HUMANS! NO ONE IS ILLEGAL! Immigrants are documented or undocumented. 'Alien' was a fine term until it came to mean green creatures from Mars.

Biblical basis for response

The Bible offers us some valuable insights about welcoming strangers, and in our context immigrants are viewed as strangers. "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do [the stranger] wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love [the stranger] as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt..." (Leviticus 19:33, 34). We affirm that God has called us to welcome immigrants, because all of us are sojourners (Exodus 23:9, Deuteronomy 24:17, 18). We believe that when we welcome strangers, we welcome Jesus (Matthew 25:35). (Adopted by Menonite Church USA Delegate Assembly, Atlanta, Georgia, July 2003)

Goals of the National Immigrant Solidarity Network include:

- 1) No to anti-immigrant legislation and the criminalization of immigrant communities.
- 2) No to militarization of the border.
- 3) No to immigrant detention and deportation.
- 4) No to the guest worker program.
- 5) No to employer sanction and "no match" letters.
- 6) Yes to a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.
- 7) Yes to speedy family reunification.
- 8) Yes to civil rights and humane immigration law.
- 9) Yes to labor rights and living wages for all workers.
- 10) Yes to education.

Further information about May 1:

www.MayDay2007.org

<http://www.maydaymovement.blogspot.com/>

Wear this button to:

- raise awareness of immigration issues,
- take a public stand and
- be a welcoming presence in our communities.

Available on MennoSource.



Worship resource

A litany: Bridges that Welcome

Worship visual: Place a pile of stones before the group or distribute a stone to each participant.

Leader: What do these stones mean?

All: These stones remind us that God led the Israelites from their native land, that Jesus had no place to lay his head, and that apostles and prophets throughout history have wandered far from their homes. These stones remind some of us of our own immigrant stories.

Leader: We welcome the newcomers among us, even as our government alienates immigrants in the name of fighting terrorism. Even as migrants risk their lives to cross the desert and refugees flee their homes to seek asylum, we recognize that their homes might be safer were it not for our own nation's policies. We confess that our stones have too often built walls.

All: Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

Leader: We recognize the gifts of the immigrants among us: As executives, artists, and scientists whose work enriches our nation. As farm workers and day laborers whose hands harvest our food, often for unjust wages. As pastors and teachers whose spirits enliven the church. We offer our stones for the building of bridges.

All: In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

Leader: What do these stones mean?

All: These stones remind us that we can choose to build walls that divide or bridges that welcome. These stones remind us that today we have chosen to build bridges, to welcome the immigrants among us, and to become a lively dwelling for the Spirit of God.

**from Ephesians 2:19-22, NIV*

Responses:

From the IMH statement:

Given our understanding of the Holy Scriptures, we the Iglesia Menonita Hispana de los Estados Unidos declare and commit ourselves to:

- A. Pray for our government authorities so that God may give them wisdom to write and pass laws which do not harm people, block our desire to help the foreigner and do not impede immigrants from worshipping God in our churches.
- B. Show love and pray for our undocumented brothers and sisters.
- C. Give spiritual, emotional and physical nourishment to the immigrants of our communities when they ask, without exceptions.
- D. Write a letter to the President of the United States of America and Congress in support of just and favorable laws for the immigrants.
- E. Support and promote laws that favor the legalization of those without their legal documents.
- F. Create a mutual aid fund to help those persons in need of legal advice.
- G. Help economically the programs that are already offering legal advice to the undocumented, e.g. the programs in New York, California, Miami, Florida, etc.
- H. Reject any law that harms immigrants or prevents them from receiving humanitarian aid.
- I. Encourage our churches to discern the Scriptures and to teach what is the will of God in relation to how we should treat and minister to immigrants.

Take part in your community

Many communities will have activities. Contact your local immigration services for information.

Longer term ideas:

- Learn to know your neighbors; if this involves learning a few new words, learn a few words of Spanish or Swahili or Arabic.
- Intentionally move outside your comfort zone on a regular basis: shop at a Mexican grocery store, eat at an Indian restaurant, or attend church at an Indonesian congregation.
- Connect with existing social service providers and nonprofit agencies to learn about volunteer opportunities and unmet needs in your community. Bring that information back to your church and social networks. Encourage congregants, friends and family members to get involved where needs are greatest.

- Organize church members who speak a second language to provide translation services for recent immigrants.
- Make sure services already provided by your church are accessible to non-English speakers.
- Organize an “adopt a family” where church people are able to help and connect with individual immigrant families.
- Participate in a learning tour along the U.S./Mexico border and learn about immigration realities in that context first-hand.
- Hold a letter writing party with friends, Sunday school classes or small groups to inform legislators about political and faith beliefs as a group.
- Write letters to the editor of your local newspapers to engage the broader community on the issue.
- Engage in group public witness: vigils, protests, symbolic acts of solidarity.
- Have local pastors and several church families visit their local schools to talk with administrators on how they can support immigrant families who are in need. Examples of

support include: start a support group, write a monthly column for immigrant families on immigration reform, pair up with immigrant families and visit them in their homes, start a transportation route for families who don't have drivers' licenses, pay for counseling services.

Advocacy

Invite local legislators to special meetings to discuss legislative bills that may adversely affect immigrants. Ask legislators to explain legislative process to immigrants. Invite MCC Washington office personnel to visit your community to update your office or congregation on issues related to immigration and refugees.

Write letters! Congressional offices receive anti-immigrant hate mail produced by a relatively small number of people. Many staffers have specifically requested to hear from constituents who think rationally and compassionately on the issue. (for “Principles for Just Immigration Reform” and information on effective letter-writing, see www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace)



Credits:
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