



Crossing Borders - Encontrando a Dios

April 15 - 17, 2010
Phoenix, Arizona

April 20, 2010

An Open Letter to President Barack Obama, Secretary Janet Napolitano, Governor Jan Brewer, and all elected officials

On April 15th, a group of Christians from both sides of the U.S./ Mexico border gathered in Phoenix, Arizona to celebrate our unity in faith, to confront the figurative and literal borders that divide us, and to proclaim that Jesus is our peace who breaks down the dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14). We gathered together as brothers and sisters of faith in a time in which the current United States immigration and border enforcement policies are broken and create division, fear, and insecurity in our communities and between our nations.

We support the effort of law enforcement to apprehend those individuals involved in human and drug trafficking. However, we are outraged by some of the tactics implemented in these efforts. We are particularly alarmed by the deployment of large numbers of armed ICE agents, the use of ski masks and the association of immigration enforcement with the police.

Instead of restoring order and a sense of safety, these raids create a climate of fear and instability and erode the trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement. We are profoundly disturbed by the passage of one of the harshest anti-immigrant legislation in the country by the Arizona Legislature. We know that Arizona is not alone in these efforts that do not take in to account the complex reasons for migration and instead attempt to criminalize a class of people. It is legislation such as this that codifies racial profiling and creates an atmosphere of suspicion, hatred, and scapegoating of immigrants and U.S citizens.

We celebrate the diversity of our nation and the contribution of immigrants and call for the end of the criminalization of individuals and the destabilization of our communities.

We call for Comprehensive Immigration Reform that will provide a path for legalization for people who are contributing to our society, an adequate system for future legal economic immigration and family reunification, and policies that prevent deaths in the desert. We find it morally reprehensible that 5500 men, women and children have lost their lives in the last 16 years trying to provide a life of dignity for their families. Current immigration policy diminishes the ability of law enforcement to apprehend violent criminals and protect our communities. We believe that, by allowing for the orderly flow of law abiding persons through ports of entry, law enforcement agencies will be able to focus their efforts on apprehending those engaged in the trafficking of drugs, guns and human beings.

As people of faith and conscience rooted in the teaching of Jesus Christ we find ourselves compelled to speak out and act in accordance with our faith which affirms the call "to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of people long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom and peace" (Brief Statement of Faith, Presbyterian Church (USA) for all of God's children.