



Churchwide Statement on Immigration

2025 Revision of 2014 & 2003 Statement

June, 2025

Vision: Healing and Hope

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world. (Mennonite Church USA Vision Statement)

1 MC USA's Journey Forward process grew out of the Future Church Summit in Orlando 2017 and continued the
2 conversation of where God is calling us to broader participation across the church. Our renewed commitments for MC
3 USA asked us to Follow Jesus, Witness to God's peace and to experience transformation.

4 Millions of people are painfully caught in the web of the structures that comprise the United States' broken
5 immigration system. Long wait lists keep families separated for years and tempt people to circumvent the system;
6 workplace raids create a culture of fear and harm entire communities; and lax oversight of guest worker programs leaves
7 a system ripe for exploitation and worker abuse.¹ Societal discord on the issue has risen and also polarized people within
8 the Church.

9 As Mennonite Christians, we are moved by the healing and hope that God offers through Jesus Christ to join with
10 sisters and brothers from other faith traditions in offering our faith-filled responses to this suffering and injustice. We
11 claim our identity as citizens of God's kingdom, and therefore, as "aliens" and "exiles" in the country in which we
12 reside. We renounce the indifference to and mistreatment of asylum seekers, undocumented and documented
13 immigrants that has occurred and continues to occur in our congregations, our communities and this country. We are
14 committed to joining God's reconciling mission (Isa. 58:6-9, 2 Cor. 5:16-19) and to live and act as sisters and brothers in
15 Christ regardless of our legal status.

16 As such, we advocate for just and humane immigration policies for immigrants and refugees and asylum seekers who
17 flee their home country due to danger, persecution, fear of serious harm and in need of protection. We empower
18 congregations, area conferences and denominational staff to serve as advocates for these vulnerable groups of people.

19 We commend all levels of the Church in efforts to welcome immigrants: providing mutual aid and social service
20 resources, building intercultural relationships and diverse worshipping communities, and treating immigrants and asylum
21 seekers with dignity and respect.

¹ These descriptive statements come from "Immigration Policy Principles," a document compiled by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. and updated in April 2009. Additionally, some immigrants without documents are considered to be "undocumentable" because for them to reside in the U.S. legally, they would first have to return to their home countries for three or 10 years (depending on how long they had been in the U.S.) before they would be eligible to apply for legal re-entry.

We commit to grow in understanding our context—to comprehend the root causes of immigration and examine how the U.S. immigration system operates—so that we can better understand each other’s stories. We also commit to grow in cross-cultural competency to advance our goal of being an intentional community for Christ.

We seek to join in God’s healing work regarding immigration, trusting that God goes before us and desires wholeness and well-being for all people.

Appendix A: Actions

The following action steps are grouped into two sections:

- The first section (A) has specific action steps; educational and ministry actions. The Executive Board calls congregations and area conferences to engage at whatever level possible in *at least one educational action* and *one ministry action*.
- The second section (B) offers suggestions for additional educational and ministry actions, which congregations and area conferences are encouraged to engage in as they are able.

Depending on the action, congregations, area conferences and/or the denomination will be in a position to take the lead, facilitate and/or provide resources. Some actions may best be served by ecumenical partnerships in local and/or regional areas.

Appendix C contains a list of resources that support the actions.

A. Actions

Educational

1. Learn skills to help facilitate intercultural competency and/or undoing racism processes in congregations through conflict transformation and restorative justice trainings as well as anti-racism trainings.
2. Plan an annual Sunday to deepen our understanding of the challenges and realities of immigrants and asylum seekers.
3. Plan sermons, worship services and Bible studies, www.mennoniteusa.org/resource/radical-hospitality, on themes of hospitality to immigrants and asylum seekers.

Ministry

3. Learn about ways to assist immigrants and asylum seekers and advocate for just and humane immigration policies through Mennonite Central Committee’s resource guide. (See [Migrant ally resources | Mennonite Central Committee](#))
4. Offer church facilities and volunteers for documentation services, language classes, mental health support, cultural celebrations, after-school homework help and other ministries. This should be done in collaboration with other local organizations.
5. Engage in mutual aid to offer food, shelter, clothing, housing, transportation and other resources to immigrants and asylum seekers regardless of their status.

B. Additional suggested actions

Educational

1. Learn about the political and economic situations that push and pull people's migration to the U.S. and how U.S. consumer culture and policies, such as tariffs and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), have helped to create these dynamics.
2. Plan local and/or regional learning tours in your communities. Learn about the different organizations in your community working with immigrants and asylum seekers.
3. Learn about the immigration process and laws around deportation within your community/state that impact immigrants and asylum seekers.
4. Join study tours to the U.S./Mexico border, refugee camps or detention centers to learn more about U.S. immigration and refugee policies. Share your learnings.
5. Engage in a listening process to learn about the work of existing and emerging migrant ministries within MC USA, as well as ongoing needs of those communities.
6. Learn about the detention centers across the U.S. that hold undocumented immigrants and locate the ones nearest our congregations.
7. Study and learn about the U.S. prison industry and how private prison corporations profit from their role in the current immigration system.

Ministry

8. Support immigrants in navigating the legal system to become U.S. citizens. Offer information about the available alternative oath for those who are not willing to bear arms. Help connect immigrants with attorneys and/or with financial assistance for legal support.
9. Advocate for a fair and living wage for all low-wage workers and immigrants in our workplaces and communities.
10. Build relationships among newcomers and long-term residents in our communities. Facilitate the mutual sharing of stories in our congregations and neighborhoods.
11. Partner with immigrant congregations to plan church services or community events.
12. Plan and join public ecumenical or interfaith witness events for immigrant justice.
13. Pray for just and humane immigration reform and policies for all immigrants and refugees; for immigrants in our communities and across the globe; and for all parts of MC USA as we seek to discern and follow the Spirit's leading.

Appendix B: Background

1. What does the Bible say?

We hold in the Light of God's Word the complex realities of today's undocumented migration. With our hearts, minds and might, we desire to walk in the wisdom, witness and humility of Jesus Christ.

• God creates humankind "in our image, according to our likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

Despite the restrictions, permissions and requirements that the U.S. immigration laws have assigned to newcomers at different times throughout history, we hold to the biblical understanding that *all* persons are sacred. According to the Genesis 1 creation story, each woman and each man is a gift of our Creator. The Bible calls us

to view and to treat one another as persons created in the image of the Holy One, regardless of our status under immigration laws.

- **God covenants with people “on the move.”**

The Hebrew Scriptures are full of stories of migration! The stories of Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, Moses, the Israelites escaping Egypt, Naomi and Ruth, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and others are faith stories of immigrants. We claim our immigrant biblical ancestors as spiritual guides who teach us about struggle, failure, vulnerability, perseverance and God’s faithfulness in their risky journeys with God and with their communities.

- **God’s Law compassionately provides for immigrants.**

In the ancient world of the Old Testament, foreigners were extremely vulnerable due to their lack of extended family and lack of access to land, which was passed on through inheritance. More laws regarding treatment of immigrants appear in the Hebrew Torah than in any other law code known in the ancient world.² God repeatedly urges God’s people to remember their own salvation history: “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Exod. 22:21). God loves the stranger and commands God’s people also to love and give consideration to the stranger (Deut. 10:17-19).

- **God sent Jesus, who embraced outsiders.**

Jesus, whose parents fled with him as political refugees to Egypt after his birth (Matt. 2), was consistent, attentive to and compassionate with people who were ostracized from society. Jesus taught his disciples to welcome strangers, to minister to prisoners and to provide for anyone who was hungry, thirsty or in need of clothing, because through these actions his disciples would minister directly to him (Matt. 25:31-46). He described his mission as bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, giving sight to the blind and freeing the oppressed (Lk. 4:18-21). He consistently violated social norms, sharing God’s love by spending time with and eating with those on the margins of society, such as “sinners,” tax collectors, Gentiles and Samaritans (Matt. 8:5-14; Mk. 7:24-30; Lk. 5:29-32, 7:1-10, 10:25-37, 17:11-19; Jn. 4). The Apostle Paul taught the first churches how Christ’s life and sacrifice were a sign of God’s powerful love that for all because of love, and then being raised up through the power of God’s love, broke down dividing walls and created peace between hostile peoples (Eph. 2:11-22).

2. Who are “we”?

We are MC USA, and we come from many places. Some of us are recent immigrants to this country. Some of us have ancestors who migrated here generations ago. Some of us are living especially vulnerably in the United States, without documentation.

Through the Holy Spirit’s transforming presence and power, we are on a journey of healing and hope to become a Church in which “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27-28; Eph. 2:11-22).

Together, on this journey, we affirm that:

- we are beloved children of God. This is our fundamental identity. Therefore, each one of us is a sacred image of God, created in God’s likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). Yet we are all sinners, all falling short of the glory of God, receiving the grace of Jesus Christ as a gift (Rom. 3:21-26).

² In the Law, God provided for the needs of the foreigner, addressing fair labor practices (Exod. 20:10, 23:12; Deut. 5:14, 24:14-15), justice (Deut. 1:16-17, 24:17-18, 27:19), food sharing (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 14:28-29, 24:19-22), inclusion in worship (Exod. 12:45-49; Lev. 16:29) and love for neighbor, including the foreigner (Lev. 19:18 with 19:33-34). The content of this teaching about God’s law and the Scripture references are taken from “Immigration: Today’s Civil Dilemma and Theological Challenge—What Does the Bible Say?,” a keynote presentation to the Mennonite Church USA 2013 Delegate Assembly in Phoenix by M. Daniel Carroll R., Ph.D., Denver (Colo.) Seminary, on July 2, 2013.

- we are “aliens” and “exiles” in the United States, an identity freely chosen in our baptisms, given to us by the Spirit who forms us as God’s own people. Our first loyalty is to God and to live as citizens in God’s Kingdom (1 Pet. 2:9-11).
- we are residents of the United States whose roots are *all* connected to migration in one of three ways:³
 1. those of us whose ancestors were original inhabitants of this land, and who have suffered a continuing legacy of displacement.
 2. those of us whose ancestors were *forced* to come here by economic and political forces such as slavery, war or colonization, and those who continue to come because of push factors such as economic hardship and/or fear of danger in our countries of origin.
 3. those of us whose ancestors *chose* to migrate here to seek religious freedom and economic opportunity—in many cases, without documentation. We acknowledge that we come from diverse cultural backgrounds and hold a variety of perspectives as we prayerfully discern how God is calling us to respond to the complex issues of immigration before us. Our biblical and theological understandings, as well as our own stories, unify us as we respond with our prayers, words and actions to the United States’ broken immigration system and to the injustices that undocumented immigrants are suffering.

We lament the reality that injustice in how we treat each other happens not only outside the Church but also in our congregations. It is urgent that those among us with privileges gained through U.S. citizenship, education, lighter skin color, gender and/or socioeconomic status find the courage and will to recognize and renounce the individual and systemic racism in ourselves, in our church and in this society. May those of us who have benefited from the unfair treatment of immigrants—historically or currently—be able to see and confess our complicity, allowing God to transform us and use us as agents of reconciliation.

3. What issues are we facing?

Among the factors that displace people in vulnerable communities across the globe and lead to migration are natural disasters, floods and droughts caused by climate change, economic instability, violence and war. People from places all over the world—from Asia, Africa, Latin America and elsewhere—come to the U.S. hoping to start a new life, some as refugees.

Facing poverty, millions of people have chosen to migrate from their homes, hoping and praying to be able to provide for their families and earn a living wage.

However, a broken U.S. immigration system often makes it difficult to migrate to the U.S. for work or to reunite with family.⁴ Families are kept separated by an unjust and outdated quota system that discriminates against citizens

³ These categories are attributed to Ched Myers, *Our God is Undocumented* (Orbis Books, 2012), pp. 63–64.

⁴ Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Immigration Policy Principles (initially published in 2009) suggest what just and humane immigration policy could look like. These include (1) ensuring a legal pathway to citizenship for immigrants currently living in the U.S., without requiring unworkable fines or “touchback” provisions; (2) maintaining the current family-based immigration system and increasing the number of available family visas, so that families can reunite and immigrate together in a legal and timely way; (3) creating just and fair guest worker programs, along with appropriate oversight mechanisms, to protect labor rights such as fair wages, employer choice and due process protections; and providing the opportunity for immigrant workers to apply for permanent status and, eventually, citizenship; (4) ensuring access to basic benefits and services for those lawfully present, while avoiding policies that seek to deter access to public health and safety services and lead to a culture of fear and isolation in immigrant communities; (5) choosing border security strategies that protect community rights, human dignity and the natural environment while opposing policies that contribute to deaths and increased fear in immigrant communities; (6) addressing political instability and economic disparity in migrants’ home

from some countries, and by long delays in document processing.⁵ Family separation causes emotional pain and stress as well as economic hardship and motivates spouses and children to face extremely dangerous conditions to cross the borders in the hope of reuniting in the U.S., which has not been happening.

Although the U.S. depends economically and culturally on the contributions of immigrant laborers,⁸ entrepreneurs, professionals and artists, many immigrants experience hardship, discrimination and abuse. Many undocumented immigrants work difficult and often dangerous jobs for very low pay. They are vulnerable to being cheated out of wages and denied compensation for work-related injuries. Undocumented immigrants in poverty cannot receive most welfare and healthcare benefits. Millions of children of undocumented immigrants live in poverty in the U.S.⁹

Many U.S. citizens view immigrants as a threat to safety and economic security. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, whose stated vision is “to ensure a homeland that is safe, secure and resilient against terrorism and other hazards,” also handles immigration enforcement and services.⁶ Racial profiling, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids on workplaces, and increased collaboration between local police and ICE agents cause high stress and fear in immigrant communities. Also, the increasing militarization of the border between the U.S. and Mexico has led to hundreds of deaths in the Arizona Sonoran Desert each year⁷ and to reports of abuse by border patrol agents.

While thousands of immigrants of many nationalities await deportation in detention centers across the nation, the private corporations that own and operate the prisons earn large yearly profits paid from taxes. This is a rapidly growing part of the lucrative U.S. prison industry that incarcerates people with Brown and Black skin at rates far exceeding those of people with lighter skin.

Many teenagers and young adults who were brought to the U.S. as young children by their parents have grown up experiencing the stress and fear of living without documentation. Known as “DREAMers,”⁸ some have organized

countries caused, in part, by U.S. foreign policies and trade agreements; and creating incentives for sustainable development; (7) ending indiscriminate raids and detention for non-dangerous immigrants, while targeting enforcement efforts on drug, weapon and people smugglers.

⁵ To legally immigrate to the U.S. with a work visa, a person needs to have an adult family member in the U.S. or an employer who is willing to sponsor him or her. Immigrants who enter the U.S. without documents or inspection or who overstay their visas are subject to “three- and ten-year bars” that require them to return to their home country for three or ten years before they can legally apply for a visa to enter the U.S.

⁶ The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines its six core missions as follows: to counter terrorism and homeland security threats, secure U.S. borders and approaches, secure cyberspace and critical infrastructure, preserve prosperity and economic security, strengthen preparedness and resilience, champion the DHS workforce. See www.dhs.gov/our-mission.

⁷ According to the Missing Migrants Project, over the past two decades, the border crossing between Mexico and the US has become the site of a grave human rights crisis, where thousands of people have gone missing and lost their lives during migration. From crossing the Sonoran Desert in the Southwestern U.S. and North-western Mexico, with its scorching heat and few water sources, to attempts to cross the deep Rio Grande / Río Bravo (demarcating the border between Mexico and Texas) and its often-strong currents, there are numerous physical and environmental factors which pose risks to people’s lives. Since it started recording in 2014, Missing Migrants Project has recorded the deaths of over 2,980 who have died trying to cross the border from Mexico in the United States with an additional 2,405 people missing.

⁸ DREAMers take their name from the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, proposed legislation that has historically had bipartisan support, through which qualifying undocumented youth would be eligible for a conditional path to citizenship. In 2010, the DREAM Act was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives but fell five votes short in the Senate. According to the National Immigration Form, as of 2024, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals is again reviewing DACA’s (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) legality. The case will likely be appealed to the Supreme Court, potentially pushing a decision to spring 2026. This litigation requires swift action from Congress to provide a permanent solution for Dreamers, as court rulings could eliminate DACA protections altogether.

themselves politically, asking for a path to legal status so that they can work and attend college without the fear of deportation. Many DREAMer organizations are asking for protection for their families as well. Currently, with the combination of halted new DACA applications, ongoing legal battles, and stringent immigration policies, an ongoing atmosphere of uncertainty remains for Dreamers.

Appendix C: Resource list

Many of the resources listed come from MC USA and the Mennonite Central Committee National Program Office website and are reprinted with permission:

A. Pray

1. Prayers, faith reflections, sermon resources and worship resources:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches
2. Faith statements: [Faith Communities Across Traditions Tell the Trump Administration to Follow God's Directives to Welcome Immigrants - Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#)
3. [What to Do if ICE Comes to Your Church | Sojourners](#)
4. Guides for organizing vigils in your church or community:
<https://washingtonmemo.wordpress.com/immig/take-action/tips-tools/>

B. Learn

1. General information about information that includes MC USA & MCC webinars as well as other resources:
[Immigration Resources and Advocacy | Mennonite Church USA](#)
[Learn, Pray, Join: Immigration Justice, Radical Hospitality](#)
2. State immigration policies: washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-policy
3. Immigration Guides from Mennonite Central Committee. [Immigration A theological question.pdf](#) and [Immigration broken system final.pdf](#).
4. Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Listening Project
 - a. The Immigration Listening Project was launched by MCC U.S. in order to assess attitudes about immigration among Anabaptist churches across the U.S. MCC staff organized listening sessions with 36 groups from Anabaptist churches. The project intentionally included a diverse spectrum: people of color and white people; new and long-time immigrants. Download PDF: washingtonmemo.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/mcc-us-listening-projectpdf.pdf
5. Immigration Training, [Immigration Law Training | Mennonite Central Committee](#)

C. Advocate for justice

1. Guides to visiting officials; op-eds: washingtonmemo.org/immig/take-action
2. Larger interfaith campaigns:
www.interfaithimmigration.org
3. MCC Peace & Justice Journal, Resources for monitoring state policies:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-policy

D. Teach

1. Readers of this booklet will find M. Daniel Carroll R's writing insightful, yet easy to read — a beginning for sermons, Sunday school lessons, and small-group conversations. Immigration and the Bible, [Missio Dei 19.E.pdf](#)
2. Strangers in the Land, a six-week study guide based on *Christians at the Border*, from Sojourners
[Strangers in the Land: A Six-Week Devotional Guide on Immigration, the Church, and the Bible - Kindle edition by R., M. Daniel Carroll, Magazine, Sojourners. Religion & Spirituality Kindle eBooks @ Amazon.com.](#)

3. Materials for group presentations (Sunday School, workshops): washingtonmemo.org/immig/for-churches
4. Videos related to immigration: [MC USA Radical Hospitality curriculum](#) (English and Spanish)
5. Books related to immigration:- MennoMedia / Herald Press imprint: [Menno Media](#)
6. Speakers
 - Mennonite Central Committee U.S. <https://mcc.org/resources/invite-national-peace-justice-ministries-speakfacilitate>
 - Mennonite Mission Network <https://www.mennonitemission.net/your-church/request-a-guest-speaker-for-your-congregation/>
 - MC USA <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/request-a-speaker/>

E. Engage

1. Resources for finding partners:
washingtonmemo.org/immig/state-list
2. Opportunities for volunteering, [Immigration/take-action](#) and resources for teaching English as a second language: [Teaching Guide - The WAC Clearinghouse](#)
3. Freedom for Immigrants is the official national network of the U.S. immigration detention visitation movement.
[Freedom for Immigrants](#)
4. Congregational resources
 - MC USA Webinar: Following Jesus during Challenging Times: What does it mean to provide sanctuary to undocumented people? View it in **English** or **Spanish**
 - MCC Webinar: Invitation to hospitality and solidarity with immigrant communities. View it **here**.
5. [MCC Immigration Law Training](#)

If your congregation has found a particular resource Helpful, please let Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, Denominational Minister for Peace & Justice, MC USA, know: LorraineSA@MennoniteUSA.org