

As the Bishop of the Iowa Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and as a person of faith, I believe we are called as a community to speak about the immigration raid that took place Monday at Agriprocessors, Inc. in Postville, Iowa. I feel called to speak out in concern for the families and individuals involved. I invite others to join me as we speak from our faith, which calls us to stand in solidarity with those being most disenfranchised by today's events—the workers.

Throughout both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian scriptures, there is a calling to connection and community with the strangers in our midst—to treat them “as the citizens among you” and love them as we do ourselves (Leviticus 19:33-34). In the Christian scripture, Jesus continually manifests compassion for the vulnerable and the poor. Jesus' life on earth initiated the Kingdom reality of a social order based on love, grace, justice, inclusion, mercy, and egalitarianism (excerpt from “Welcoming the Migrant in the United States” Resolution, which passed overwhelmingly during the 2008 General Conference of the UMC).

I believe that people of faith and all persons of good will should join together to embody the new social order of God's transforming love, power, and justice, which breaks the chains of fear, injustice, racism, xenophobia, and violence.

We are called to stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers whose lives were disrupted today at the Agriprocessors, Inc. plant and who are facing unknown challenges and likely separation from their families, friends, and loved ones. As Iowa United Methodists we want to stand in partnership and community with the workers in Postville who are experiencing hardships of unknown proportion. It is our belief that we are all deeply connected to one another through Christ without regard to one's nationality or legal status. I believe today's raids create fear and chaos that is detrimental and harmful to communities here in Iowa and around this nation. We cannot allow the pattern of history to repeat itself where the newest migrants to our nation become criminalized and become the target of our animosity, fear, racism, and anger.

As United Methodist Church, we urge the Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and all other law-enforcement agencies to cease these raids, release those who have been detained today, and work with our elected officials to create a just and comprehensive immigration policy, one that will fully incorporate the undocumented among us into the life of this nation in ways that validate their humanity and affirm the many ways in which they contribute and enrich our culture here in Iowa, and our nation as a whole. Our prayers are with all affected by today's raid.

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer
Iowa Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church