

# Celebrate International Migrants Day On Sunday, December 18, 2011

Welcoming the Immigrant and Refugee During Advent

United Methodist Task Force on Immigration

As Christians around the world focus attention on Advent and the coming of the Prince of Peace, we also have the opportunity to celebrate International Migrants Day on Sunday December 18. In doing so, we remember that Jesus and his family fled Nazareth to live as refugees in Egypt. We recall the biblical mandate to welcome strangers in our midst and to love *all* of our neighbors as we love ourselves.

In this time of Advent, the United Methodist Task Force on Immigration invites United Methodists to **lift up the global and local realities of migrants** on Sunday December 18 in worship and prayer. We encourage you to **set up tables where worshipers can send postcards to the Obama Administration** calling for U.S. ratification of the Migrant Rights Convention and to consider other local action to support the rights of migrants in your community in this holy time of preparation.

## **On and before Sunday December 18 you can:**

**PREPARE:** By reading United Methodist policy and Advent reflections. For details, see "United Methodist Action for International Migrant Rights Day."

**WORSHIP:** Incorporate prayers, litanies and sermons on global migration into your worship on Sunday December 18, 2011. See attached resource, "United Methodist Action for International Migrant Rights Day," for worship ideas. During children's sermons, share stories of migrants in the Bible.

**ACT:** Call for U.S. ratification of the Migrant Rights Convention. Invite children and youth to write letters about the impact of family separation due to detention and deportation to share with elected officials. Sign an online petition for change in detention and deportation policy. Reach out to migrants in your community. For details, see "United Methodist Action for International Migrant Rights Day."

## **BACKGROUND**

December 18 is celebrated as International Migrants Day to recognize the efforts, contributions and rights of migrants worldwide. It commemorates the day the United Nations Migrant Rights Convention was passed in 1990. The year 2010 marked the

20th anniversary of this United Nations treaty. The convention establishes human rights for migrants regardless of their status (<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cmw.htm>).

Some 200 million people live and/or work in a foreign country, often without legal protections. The Migrant Rights Convention aims at guaranteeing equality of treatment and the same working conditions for migrants and nationals. It calls on governments to **set migration policies based on respect for human rights and the rule of law**. It sets out provisions to combat abuse and exploitation of migrant workers and members of their families throughout the migration process.

To date, only 44 nations have ratified the Migrant Rights Convention. Ratification means a nation agrees to abide by the convention's framework and to make their national laws and policies compatible with the convention. **The United States has not signed or ratified the convention.** (Treaties are voted on by the United States Senate.) This failure to ratify the treaty reflects a failure on the part of the United States to adopt domestic migration policy that adheres to international human rights standards. It is evidence of the lack of full recognition of the causes of global migration as well as the rights of and justice for all migrants.

As we lift up the rights of migrants around the globe on Migrant Rights Day, we are keenly aware of how **these rights are being violated in the United States**. The failure to fully recognize and protect migrants' rights has led the United States to a serious breach of migrants' rights. We cannot ignore the pressing challenges faced at many levels by immigrant communities, foremost of which are the **increasing detentions and deportations** by the Obama Administration. This has crippled immigrant communities and continues to criminalize immigrants regardless of status and create fear and mistrust of law enforcement.

There is a growing global trend to "criminalize" irregular migration, resulting in detention of men, women and children. This trend is also fueling a growth in prison construction around the world, with global **private companies** like the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and the GEO Group **profiting from incarceration of migrant workers** and families.

# United Methodist Action for International Migrant Rights Day December 18, 2011

## Guide for Reflection and Action

### PREPARE

- Read United Methodist Church Resolution 6028, “Global Migration and the Quest for Justice, from *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*, 2008, [http://desertsouthwestconference.org/fileadmin/Website\\_PDF/immigration/Global\\_Migration\\_and\\_the\\_Quest\\_for\\_Justice.pdf](http://desertsouthwestconference.org/fileadmin/Website_PDF/immigration/Global_Migration_and_the_Quest_for_Justice.pdf).
- View the video *Gospel Without Borders*. Order for \$10 from [www.EthicsDaily.com](http://www.EthicsDaily.com).
- Plan and share Advent programs and devotions, including:
  - “Strangers Among Us, An Advent Devotional 2010” by Larry Jent, produced by the Virginia Conference Immigration Work Group. See [www.vaumc.org/ncfilepository/Immigration/Devotional2010.pdf](http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilepository/Immigration/Devotional2010.pdf).
  - “Upside Down Christmas” from the United Methodist Women Program Book 2011-2012, *Walk With Wholeness*, pp. 37-46. Available from the Mission Resource Center, [www.missionresourcecenter.org/estore](http://www.missionresourcecenter.org/estore). Participants will gain a new understanding of Christmas as they learn what Jesus’ birth in an alien world accomplished for us, explore the challenges experienced by immigrants and commit to walk in step with their neighbors.
- Advent reflections: [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org).
- Online Advent reflections on immigration, including reflections by the Rev. Taka Ishii, New York Conference and members of the United Methodist Task Force on Immigration. See: <http://immigration.umwonline.net>. (Click on the “Advent Meditations” tab.)

### WORSHIP

Consider these resources for worship on Sunday, December 18, 2011:

- *For You Were Once a Stranger: Immigration in the U.S. Through the Lens of Faith* (Chicago: Interfaith Worker Justice, 2007). Includes prayer, litanies and worship resources. Visit [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org).
- Sermon “Immigration and the Scriptures” by the Rev. Will Burhans of Charlotte Congregational Church in Charlotte, Vermont. Used with permission. <http://immigration.umwonline.net/detention-mass-incarceration--private->

[prisons/will-burhans-immigration-and-the-scriptures](#). See also Vermont Migrant Farmworker Solidarity Project: [www.vtmfsp.org](http://www.vtmfsp.org).

## ACT

Take action locally. Support migrant families facing detention and deportation. Advocate for just immigration policies. You can help in the following ways:

**Visit immigrants in detention.** To find a detention center in your area, see: <http://detentionwatchnetwork.org/dwnmap>. To find current interfaith detention visitation programs or how to initiate one, see <http://detentionwatchnetwork.org/visitation>.

**Bake and deliver Christmas cookies for migrants in detention.** Contact your local detention center to explore whether you are allowed to deliver Christmas cookies to migrants in detention. You may want to see if you could participate in a worship service as well. To find out if there is a detention center near you, see <http://detentionwatchnetwork.org/dwnmap>.

**Contact your conference Rapid Response Team/Immigration Task Force** or a local community group to learn if United Methodist members or other families have a loved one in detention. Explore what material, logistical and emotional support they may need both during the holidays and into the New Year. This might include:

- Connecting the family with Justice for Our Neighbors or other legal assistance.
- Accompanying the family to immigration hearings.
- Posting bond for the family member in detention.
- Advocating for alternatives to detention for family member.
- Providing material support for the family.
- Providing child care so that a spouse can visit their partner in detention.
- Visiting the family member in detention.
- Helping with transportation to detention facility, work, school, etc.
- Praying with and accompanying the family spiritually.
- Providing Christmas gifts or funds to the family.

Let your Conference Rapid Response Team/Immigration Task Force know what you are doing, and consider becoming a Welcoming Congregation that extends hospitality to migrants in your community.

**Call on the Obama Administration to push for Senate ratification of the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.** See box below for sample text of a postcard or letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. You may want to print up cards or bring paper and envelopes to have available in church on Sunday December 18, 2011.

**Invite children and youth in your church to join *Wish for the Holidays: A campaign to keep families together*.** This is a children's letter-writing campaign to Congress and the Obama Administration sharing their concerns about the impact of family separation due to detention and deportation. Letters should be mailed to "We Belong Together" by November 30, 2011. Letters will be collected and delivered on December 8 to commemorate the United Nations Human Rights Day. The website includes background information on the issues, sample letters, a video of children explaining why they are writing letters, activity guides for different age groups that will help you discuss these issues with children, and instructions on how to collect and send in letters. If you participate as United Methodists, please add that on the letter or envelope. See [www.webelongtogether.org/wish](http://www.webelongtogether.org/wish).

**Write to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urging President Obama to sign the migrant rights treaty and to make ratification a priority.**

Address: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, PA/PL, room 2206, U.S. Department of State, 2201 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20520.

Dear Secretary Clinton:

Like you, I am a United Methodist. Migrant human rights are central to our biblical concern for the well-being of all people, regardless of national status. As we recognize International Migrants Day on December 18, I urge the Obama Administration to show support for migrants' rights by signing and urging the Senate to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (the Migrant Rights Convention). Please keep me informed of the steps you are taking for U.S. action on this convention. Thank you.

**Sign the online Call to Action for International Migrants Day hosted by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.** It includes a call for U.S. ratification of the migrant rights convention and implementation of human rights in U.S. immigration policy, including detention and deportation policies, Secure Communities and racial profiling. See [www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org).

**Join Detention Watch Network's campaign for an end to mandatory detention,** which does not give judges discretion based on family needs. See their new two and a half minute video clip at <http://detentionwatchnetwork.org> and join the campaign: [http://detentionwatchnetwork.org/DND\\_endorse](http://detentionwatchnetwork.org/DND_endorse). They can provide additional information on contacting congressional representatives about mandatory detention.

**Join United Methodists in a campaign to challenge corporations' profit from private prisons and detention centers** and to urge all United Methodist institutions to divest from these corporations. See: [www.change.org/petitions/united-methodists-against-unjust-investments](http://www.change.org/petitions/united-methodists-against-unjust-investments).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- December 18 (for short videos on migrant rights): [www.december18.net/article/ratification-un-migrants-rights-convention-must](http://www.december18.net/article/ratification-un-migrants-rights-convention-must).
- General Board of Church and Society *Faith in Action/Immigration*: [www.umc-gbcs.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=frLJK2PKLqF&b=3631781&ct=3957095](http://www.umc-gbcs.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=frLJK2PKLqF&b=3631781&ct=3957095).
- General Board of Global Ministries Global Migration ministry and advocacy: [www.gb-gm-umc.org](http://www.gb-gm-umc.org); Ministry with the Poor: <http://www.ministrywith.org>
- General Commission on Religion and Race “Drop the I Word” Campaign, “Because no child of God is illegal”: [www.gcorr.org/site/c.mwKWJ9NTJtF/b.6428381/k.9D44/Drop\\_the\\_IWord.htm](http://www.gcorr.org/site/c.mwKWJ9NTJtF/b.6428381/k.9D44/Drop_the_IWord.htm).
- Global Campaign for Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Migrants (includes posters and fliers): [www.migrantsrights.org](http://www.migrantsrights.org).
- National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights: [www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org).
- United Methodist Communications videos and resources on immigration: <http://www.umcom.org/immigration>; The Church and Immigration: <http://www.umc.org/immigration>.
- United Methodist Women Immigrant/Civil Rights Initiative: [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org) and [www.facebook.com/groups/UMWimmigration](https://www.facebook.com/groups/UMWimmigration).
- United Nations Migrant Workers Convention Summary: Highlights of the Migrant Rights Convention, from *A World On The Move: A Resource Guide on International Migrant Rights*, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, 2002, used by permission. <http://immigration.umwonline.net/globalmigration>