

June 30, 2026

A Pastoral Letter on Our Immigrant Neighbors

“So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.”

— *Ephesians 2:19*

To the People Called United Methodist,

In these unsettled days, the church is called once more to remember who we are and whose we are. Before we are citizens of any nation, we are children of God, each one bearing the divine image (Genesis 1:27). The prevenient grace of God has gone before us, already at work in every person of every nation, long before any of us sought God or could earn or even recognize it, awakening conscience and bestowing a worth no court can grant and no decree can revoke. In Christ that same grace gathers us into one family, so that we are no longer strangers and aliens but members together of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). This is the first and deepest truth about every migrant, every immigrant, every refugee, and every child among us.

From within that truth we receive the hard news of these days. The Supreme Court of the United States has issued decisions that fall heavily upon immigrant families in our pews and in our communities. The withdrawal of Temporary Protected Status from more than 350,000 of our Syrian and Haitian neighbors, and new limits placed upon those who seek asylum, leave people who have worked, worshiped, and raised their children among us facing return to grave danger. Nearly 1.3 million people from seventeen countries have depended upon these protections. We will not look away from their fear, nor speak of them as a problem to be managed, for they are our neighbors and our friends, beloved of God.

Today the Court has affirmed the long-held promise that those born on United States soil belong to it, and for this measure of justice we give thanks. Yet the gospel proclaims a citizenship deeper still, for our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), and from that secure belonging we are freed to contend for the dignity of every earthly neighbor. Our rejoicing is therefore tempered, incomplete while the rulings of these same days leave others afraid.

Scripture holds together what we often try to pull apart, binding the eternal and the temporal in one calling from God. The same Lord who tells us that our home is in heaven commands us, here and now, to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). To ancient Israel God gave the charge, ‘The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt’ (Leviticus 19:34). Our Lord himself knew the refugee road, carried as a child into Egypt to escape a ruler’s violence (Matthew 2), and he teaches us that when we welcome the stranger, we welcome him (Matthew 25:35). A faith that professes these truths and does nothing is no living faith at all, for faith without deeds is dead (James 2:26). This is the holiness our Wesleyan tradition has always taught: a faith made complete in love, hearts warmed by grace and hands at work in a world of

need, where the very mercy we extend to the stranger becomes the place we meet the grace of God in return.

I give thanks for the bishops, pastors, and congregations already walking closely with those most affected. Bishop Tom Berlin and the Florida Conference, home to many Haitian United Methodists, have offered a faithful pastoral witness in this hour, reminding us that our neighbors are not strangers but beloved members of our communities. I commend their leadership, and I call upon each annual conference to draw near to immigrant families in this same spirit of gospel solidarity.

Our general agencies have spoken, and they stand ready to help. I encourage you to read and share [the statement of our General Board of Global Ministries](#) and [the statement of our General Board of Church and Society](#), and to take up the works of mercy they commend: to pray for families who are afraid, to accompany neighbors in need, to advocate with our leaders for just and humane treatment, and to give generously through [the Global Migration Advance](#).

Let us not become weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9). In a season when many are tempted toward fear and suspicion, may The United Methodist Church be found, as ever, welcoming the stranger, loving the neighbor, and bearing the hope of Christ to all people.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

Walking with you in Christ's mission,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruben Saenz Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr.
President, Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church