



Bishop of the  
United Methodist Church,  
Kansas Area



Bishop of the  
Central States Synod,  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Bishop of the  
Diocese of Kansas,  
The Episcopal Church

February 2008

## **Immigration, Kansas and the Churches**

As the Bishops representing the Kansas congregations of the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United Methodist Church, and as Bishops called to serve Jesus Christ in this state and throughout the world, we feel compelled to speak out in support of all Kansans. The New Testament calls us to love our neighbor, to minister to the sick, to visit the poor, and yes, to minister to all neighbors, including immigrants and undocumented workers and families.

Our three churches have called upon the President and the Congress to give serious attention to the issues related to undocumented workers. Action has not been forthcoming. As we travel Kansas and are in and out of local parishes, the continuing message is that regardless of the lack of activity at the Washington level, we have undocumented workers and their families in our communities, and we need to give attention to their needs.

The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church reminded its members that the call of the Baptismal Covenant is to “seek and serve Christ in all persons” in ministering to illegal immigrants. The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, wrote, “We have promised at baptism to seek and serve Christ in all persons. Therefore we share the pain of those workers being rounded up by our government for lack of legal status. Their families are experiencing the pain of separation and uncertainty, and untold hardship is being inflicted upon those struggling to support themselves and their families in a land which often wants their labor but denies them basic human dignity. As their brothers and sisters, we are diminished by their suffering.”

The United Methodists, in their *Book of Resolutions, 2004*, state, “The Holy Scriptures call us as the community of God to give shelter, protection and help to sojourners living amongst us, reminding us that we, too, were foreigners in other times....The Bible is full of stories of sojourners, strangers without homes, whom God has called to protect....Jesus embodied the love of God to the world and modeled how we are to act with love and compassion for the sojourner. In fact, Jesus’ most pointed description of how human beings should behave once they are aware of God’s love is in the story of the Good Samaritan....This is the radical love of God as expressed by Jesus Christ. It transcends race, nationality, and religion and is a love that cries for justice and peace; it is a love that is sorely needed today.”

The *Book of Resolutions, 2004* goes on to say, “In a time when our nation and world is desperate for peace, security, and community, people of faith and good will are needed to encourage leadership at home and abroad and, especially in our churches; and to have the courage to speak up for the newly vulnerable people put at risk in the rush to provide our own safety. We must remember that God’s household is bigger than our own.”

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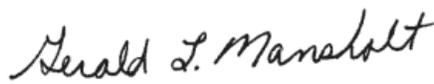
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has called for communities to stand together in unity. "It is time to turn back the tide of fear and bring strength, unity, and hope back to our communities. For too long, politicians and commentators have preyed on the nation's insecurity and fomented prejudice and hatred against immigrants. The pre-dawn immigration raids on people's homes and the exorbitant fences and patrols on our borders are not the right answer. We must find a balanced solution that recognizes the contributions of immigrants and the interdependence and diversity in our communities."

In materials going to local ELCA churches across our land, congregation members are reminded of the biblical mandate that "when an alien who resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you" (Leviticus 19:33-34, *New Revised Standard Version*). The statement goes on to say, "We recognize and affirm the responsibility of the government to regulate immigration in a godly manner while considering the many factors that deserve careful attention. We as a community must be humane and just to newcomers while assuring the rule of law and orderly migration."

We are a country of laws, and respect for law is crucial to our way of life. Scripture commands us to respect and obey governmental authorities. We are a nation shaped by the rule of law. An economic and demographic situation that creates millions of persons who are not able to live with the full protection of the law is both unjust and detrimental to our future development.

Yet we are in a situation today where more than 11 million persons reside in the United States illegally. Most of them have come because they or their parents want to work. Our economy depends upon their labor in many different ways, and they are contributing to the economic well-being of our country. Employers in industries such as construction and agriculture cannot find employees without resorting to immigrants. The laws we have do not reflect the demographic and economic reality of our country.

We as Bishops, in ministry, call upon all our parishioners and all Kansans to reject demagoguery that is spreading its own kind of fear and terror. We insist on a more hopeful vision for our state and nation. We stand with our congregations in the reaffirmation of the community of believers as the instruments of the love of Christ manifested in the spreading of peace and justice throughout our state.



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Scott Jameson Jones, Resident Bishop  
The United Methodist Church,  
Kansas Area  
9440 E. Boston, Suite 160  
Wichita, KS 67207-3603  
316-686-0600  
Fax: 316-684-0044  
kansasbishop@kswestumc.org

Bishop Gerald Mansholt  
Central States Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America  
3210 Michigan Ave., 4th Floor  
Kansas City, MO 64109  
816-861-6584  
Fax: 816-861-4753  
gmansholt@css-elca.org

The Right Reverend Dean E. Wolfe  
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas  
835 SW Polk St.  
Topeka, KS 66612-1688  
785-235-9255  
Fax: 785-235-2449  
bishop@episcopal-ks.org