

2015 Action of Immediate Witness:

TITLE: End Immigrant Child and Family Detention Now

Preliminary Text

BECAUSE our Unitarian Universalist values call on us to honor the inherent worth and dignity of every person;

BECAUSE the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) of Congregations affirmed in their 2013 Statement of Conscience on Immigration as a Moral Issue that a moral immigration policy would provide alternatives to detention for those not considered a threat to society and humane treatment for those being detained; and

BECAUSE the recently-enacted practice of family detention is inconsistent with our Unitarian Universalist values;

WHEREAS thousands of children and their mothers have been coming to the United States during the past two years to escape violence in their Central American home countries;

WHEREAS these women and children are treated without dignity, without access to sanitary conditions, clean water, healthy food, and are forced to wear prison clothes;

WHEREAS immigrants imprisoned in detention centers, (including, but not limited to, former prisons and for-profit-detention-centers operating under deplorable conditions), often experience permanent psychological damage, physical violence, and emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse during their incarceration;

WHEREAS these women and children are generally not considered to be a threat, nor do they meet the Department of Homeland Security priority categories; and

WHEREAS there are many other ways, with documented success, that the government can ensure that immigrants show up at their hearings, such as non-profit shelters and family or community placements, that can connect them with needed services and US relatives (when applicable).

THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED that the UUA urge the US government to treat all immigrants humanely, and in particular to use alternatives to incarceration to ensure that immigrants show up at their hearings;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UUA call on President Obama, Congress, and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to close the family detention centers and immediately release those detained who do not meet priority criteria;

AND FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED that the 2015 General Assembly encourage member congregations to take actions, such as:

1. Educating ourselves and others about the family detention centers (“UU World”, May 8, 2015);

2. Signing the UUSC petition calling on Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the White House to end family detention;
3. Reaching out to and partnering with community organizations in their area working to end family detention, including connecting with groups organizing visits to detention centers;
4. Contacting elected officials and encouraging them to stand on the side of love and end family detention by closing family detention centers; and
5. Connecting with and supporting Unitarian Universalist Refugee and Immigrant Services and Education (UURISE) in their work connecting and supporting UUs, member congregations, and state advocacy networks in their work for immigrant justice.