



# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Dakotas-Minnesota Area

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President Barack Obama recently announced, through executive action, that undocumented immigrants who have lived in the United States for more than five years and who have children who are United States citizens or legal residents will be able to stay in the United States for the next three years. They will also be able to work legally. Specifically, the executive actions expand the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the creation of the Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) programs. These deferred action immigration programs have the potential of helping 4.5 million undocumented immigrants and their families nationwide and between 25,000 and 40,000 in Minnesota.

While The United Methodist Church does not engage in partisan politics, we stand with immigrant families and the sojourners in our midst. This is a biblical mandate and a reflection of God's hospitality and love for all of us.

We must be alert to the significant difficulties that immigrants coming out of the shadows may now encounter. The cost of the deferred action processes must be reasonable and not prohibitive. The implementation of the deferred action policies must be fair, uniform, and not punitive. Strong consideration needs to be given to the contribution an immigrant family or individual is making to the welfare of his or her community and our great country.

Our United Methodist congregations can help. We can assist immigrant families with the cost of these processes. We can support and accompany immigrants through the legal process so they are treated fairly. We can educate our congregations and continue to welcome immigrants to our communities and churches.

Already, unscrupulous individuals and agencies are defrauding immigrant families. They are harassing and coercing immigrants to pay large sums of money to "assist" them with the application process, even though there is not yet anything to apply for nor any application process in place.

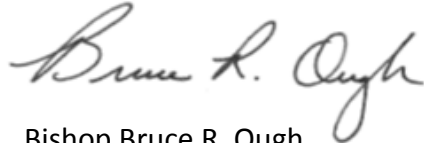
Resources to inform and assist our congregations, and to assist immigrant families, are available through the [Park Avenue United Methodist Church Walk-in Legal Clinic](#) and The Simpson Center for Servant Ministries. A [special page on the Simpson website](#) has been created (in English and Spanish) with helpful information and resources, including *tips for church and community involvement*.

I commend it to you as you seek to support the immigrant families in your community who may be coming out of the shadows and seeking deferred action on their immigration status.

As we seek to support those who will benefit from the deferred action orders, let us not forget the other 6.5 million undocumented immigrants in the United States for whom no justice or resolution has yet come. Let us continue to work for comprehensive immigration reform, an action only Congress can take. Let us continue to pray for God to show us the way and to protect all sojourners in the land.

Let us remember we're a nation of immigrants. I am only the second generation of my family born in this country. I am the first in my family to graduate from college. My grandfather immigrated from England. He and my grandmother received and settled some of the last land in northwest North Dakota available under President Lincoln's Land Grant Act. I am the grandson of pioneers, of hard-scrabble farmers. I am the son of the "greatest generation" of Americans. I have been blessed. I cannot deny others these blessings and this legacy. God's hand has been with every wave of immigrants to this country. And, God will be with us all as we seek mercy and justice in our immigration policies today.

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