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Statement from Bishop Scott Jones on Immigration Legislation
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“Two crucial principles, both basic to the Bible and American values, are at stake in the current immigration debate,” said Bishop Scott J. Jones on April 5. “We must find a way to be true to both principles while always emphasizing compassion and hospitality.” Jones’ complete statement was publicized through United Methodist communication channels in Kansas and in letters to members of the Kansas legislature and the congresspersons and senators representing Kansas in Washington.

“Many different proposals are being considered in state legislatures and the Congress, and Christians should make their voices heard on the issues.”

Jones is the bishop of the Kansas Area of the United Methodist Church and leads 700 congregations and 170,000 members in the state.

Text of Full Statement

Two crucial principles, both basic to the Bible and American values, are at stake in the current immigration debate. Our political leaders must consider both hospitality and legality in the current debate. Nevertheless, we must always emphasize compassion and care for persons both because they deserve it and as commitment to a better future for all.

First, how do we best welcome newcomers to our land? America is a land of immigrants. Most of us are either newcomers or descendents of persons who came here from somewhere else. The beauty of our country is the mix of persons from all of the other continents. Many passages in the Bible command Christians to practice hospitality to newcomers, but none is so forceful as Matthew 25:35 where Jesus said, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me. . . . Just as you did it to the least of these you did it to me.”

Second, how do we respect our laws? We are a country of laws and respect for law is crucial to our way of life. Scripture also commands us to respect authority and obey them. 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 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 like 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.