



To our Free Methodist family,

We find ourselves at a time when we must speak prophetically, as some of our brothers and sisters and neighbors are facing great anxiety because they may be targeted as a result of recent executive orders. God has imparted His image to all humanity, which we all share. Therefore, this letter is for and about real, beloved people – our Free Methodist brothers and sisters, their families, and our neighbors who fear being removed from their homes, workplaces, and even our churches. As Free Methodists, we are deeply concerned about the very real pain some in our community are experiencing, as well as persecuted Christians around the world. At this moment we can stand in solidarity and provide refuge or care for those affected by the recent executive orders. We want you to be fully informed about our position and approach, both biblically and socially.

From the initiation of God’s covenant with His people, He has commanded that we care for those who come into our midst, fleeing famine, war, or persecution and moving toward peace and a means to provide for themselves and their families.

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 19:33-34).

Not only did the Lord call on Israel to treat the foreigner as they would any native-born neighbor, but He also called on them to share the first fruits of the Lord’s provision. “Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household” (Deuteronomy 26:11). These scriptures reveal the character and heart of our generous and merciful God, who “defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing” (Deuteronomy 10:18). These were commands connected to covenant obedience and blessing and were intended to show those following other gods the glory of Yahweh.

In our new covenant through Jesus Christ, we serve the same God and pursue a holiness of heart that displays mercy and grace in countercultural ways. This is epitomized in the Sermon on the Mount and throughout the teachings and ministry of Jesus. He continues to command those following Him to care for the poor and marginalized, specifically equating care for strangers with caring for Christ personally in Matthew 25:34-46. Like many parables, the story of the Good Samaritan—a stranger passing through—was equally shocking. It redefined who we consider our neighbor and illustrated the kind of sacrificial neighbor love that contradicts self-interest. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, when the apostles and disciples faced persecution and scattering, they found themselves fleeing into foreign lands, where, once again, God’s people were refugees and

immigrants. The church practiced hospitality to these strangers and others, often at great personal risk or expense.

We continue to stand with the historical witness of the church in its call to care for refugees and strangers. We affirm that all people are created in God's image and that there is no partiality with Him. Therefore, we love and care for everyone, especially those suffering or vulnerable. In our own Free Methodist churches today, many of our brothers and sisters face a new level of vulnerability and fear. We have many established, new, or growing churches in the United States made up of immigrants who have come to our country facing incredible obstacles, bringing a commitment to serve the Lord and build His kingdom. At the same time, they work hard for their families, love their neighbors, and pay their taxes. We mourn that they carry the burden of sweeping harmful generalizations about immigrants that devalue them and unjustly bias others against them. Worries about raids and deportations, even from their places of worship, cast a shadow over the good gospel work they are doing.

When we consider those seeking asylum, we look at how our nation has been a refuge from oppression and persecution since its inception. While we have historically welcomed all kinds of ethnic and religious minorities, the church in the US has been a voice for foreign Christians fleeing religious persecution.

Open Doors and World Relief estimates “the number of Christians who face high levels of persecution or discrimination on account of their faith has also risen to 365 million, or 1 in 7,”¹ Christians worldwide. The opportunities for Christian refugees to receive asylum in the US have fluctuated in recent years. A “dramatic increase in the resettlement of Christian refugees from the 50 countries where Christians face the most severe persecution and discrimination, from 5,390 in fiscal year 2020 to 29,493 in fiscal year 2024... represents a 447 percent increase and the highest number of Christian refugees resettled from these 50 countries since 2016.”² Just months ago, we could celebrate this increased care for persecuted Christian brothers and sisters. This week, all entry for asylum seekers has been halted by executive orders. We urge all Free Methodists to advocate for justice that encompasses border security³, the dignity of every person, the protection of families and children, and compassion for the persecuted.

As Free Methodists, we belong to a rich tradition of caring for the poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners. We have long been able to balance personal holiness with social justice. This is a day

¹ <https://worldrelief.org/pr-world-relief-amp-open-doors-us-release-new-report-on-the-rise-of-persecuted-christians-amp-global-displacement-around-the-world/>

² Ibid.

³ Regarding border security, World Vision reminds us that we should fully affirm the significant role of the U.S. government in vetting and screening those considered for resettlement in our country. However, the U.S. refugee resettlement program's screening process is already exceptionally thorough—more rigorous, in fact, than the vetting required of any other category of visitor or immigrant to our nation—and it boasts a robust record. While we are always open to enhancements to our government's screening process, we believe our nation can continue to be compassionate and secure (<https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/media-center/letter-president-trump-executive-order-refugees>).

when we lean into our love for our brothers and sisters in need, rooted in our love for God. “For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (1 John 4:20, NIV).

Blessings as you prayerfully navigate the days to come.

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The Board of Bishops – Free Methodist Church USA

Practical Resources:

For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility

<https://www.nae.org/nae-releases-updated-for-the-health-of-the-nation/>

The Free Methodist Study Commission on Doctrine position paper on immigration:

https://fmcusa.org/wp-content/uploads/FMCUSA_Immigration-Position-Paper.pdf

World Relief

<https://worldrelief.org/>

Know Your Rights Toolkit (Available in English and Spanish)

<https://www.ilrc.org/resources/community/know-your-rights-toolkit>

Immigrant Rights

https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/kyr_two_pager_v2.pdf