

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Upper New York Annual Conference

Bishop Mark J. Webb
7481 Henry Clay Boulevard
Liverpool, NY 13088
315-898-2000
www.unyumc.org

New York Annual Conference

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton
20 Soundview Avenue
White Plains, NY 10606
888-696-6922
www.nyac.com

Honorable Legislative Assemblypersons and Senators:

Greetings from the New York Annual Conference and Upper New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. We are writing as Bishops and faith leaders for our denomination in NYS to express our support for continued funding of the **New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)** for Fiscal Year 2021.

This legislation is essential to defend immigrants from the undue harm inflicted by detention and to ensure clarity and fairness in immigration proceedings.

We know anecdotally when immigrants are detained, they lose hope and are more likely to become complicit in their own deportation. By ensuring access to counsel for those who cannot afford an attorney, NYIFUP:

- Offers dignity to immigrants facing the permanent separation from their families, communities and possible to return to dangerous or deadly conditions in their home countries.
- Improves the chances detainees will be released on bond or parole;
- Allows immigrants to acquire essential understanding of their legal options; and
- Enables immigrants to make informed choices while navigating our complex legal system.

Our strong support and testimony is reflected in *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2016*, which clearly affirms the “preservation of due process and access to courts and to adequate legal representation for all migrants regardless of legal status.” In addition, the *Social Principles of the United Methodist Church* (our effort to provide a witness to the world of our beliefs) calls upon all United Methodists to actively “advocate for justice for all.” John Wesley, founder of our particular faith tradition, admonished us in his own General Rules to “[d]o no harm.”

The Hebrew Bible also compels Christians to speak out on behalf of immigrants. Leviticus 19:33-34 tell us: “When immigrants live in your land with you, you must not cheat them. Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.”

When Jesus was a child, he and his family fled to Egypt to escape persecution by King Herod. As an immigrant himself, Jesus reminds us in Matthew 25 that “when we welcome the stranger, we welcome him.” The Apostle Paul additionally admonishes us in Hebrews 13:2, that we “not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

In addition to these biblical mandates, our commitment to the people of God we serve throughout New York State drives our call for continued funding of the NYIFUP for Fiscal Year 2021.

The immigrants and families impacted by NYIFUP are part of our congregations. Indeed, in the Upper New York Conference, some of the fastest growing new faith communities are comprised of recent immigrants and refugees. As the most diverse conference within the United Methodist denomination, members of New York Annual Conference churches can trace our ancestry to continents across the globe—North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. NYAC also has significant ethnic constituencies from South America, Africa, Central America, the Caribbean, Korea and China. Immigrants are our family, our neighbors, our colleagues and members of the communities who work alongside us daily.

We respectfully ask that you please join us in our defense of immigrant New Yorkers by ensuring ongoing, full funding for NYIFUP in Fiscal Year 2021.

Thank you for your consideration,

Bishop Mark J. Webb
Resident Bishop, Upper New York Annual Conference of the UMC

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop, New York Annual Conference of the UMC