

A Statement on DACA by Clergy of the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." ~ Matthew 19:14

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 19:34

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. ~ Proverbs 31:8-9

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race God has set before us. ~ Hebrews 12:1

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me. ~Matthew 25:40

In 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was instituted as a way to begin to acknowledge that a large number of our citizens are people brought here as children without documentation or access to resources. Children do not have a say when they are asked to do something by their parents. Children are dependent upon their parents to provide, and be the rational voice in their lives. Thus, when parents illegally crossed the border, or sent their children across to enter into the United States, the children simply did what they were asked; they went where they were told. In many, perhaps most cases, the lives of these children were saved by the illegal action of their parents. While these children grew, went to school, obtained jobs, became teachers and doctors and joined the military - we as a country failed to acknowledge their presence. They were numbers in the growing population of undocumented citizens - and they are contributing members of this society.

In an act of clarity, truth and compassion, the previous White House Administration created this program, DACA, a covenant between the US government and those undocumented people. The covenant said: "If you give me your identity and pay taxes, like US citizens, then you will be authorized to work in America and attend its educational institutions. You will be able to build a better life for your family." Those who consented to the DACA program entrusted our government to honor its word.

On September 5th, 2017 that covenant was broken: The current Administration announced it would be rescinding DACA, with a six-month delay. Eight-hundred thousand people who trusted our government were let down. Eight-hundred thousand people who were trying to better their lives were told they might soon face deportation. Eight-hundred thousand people were told they might be forced to live in a country they have never seen. There is no easy solution in determining the best path for undocumented immigrants, but it starts with kindness. This action that will negatively impact well over a million people - as families are torn apart, children left without parents, partners separated, businesses and schools deprived of workers and students - this is not kind. Naming people as "illegal aliens" is not kind. Announcing such a decision without care or advance notice - and in the face of huge public protest and outcry - is not kind.

As people of faith, as followers of the resurrected Christ, we the undersigned clergy, members of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, stand united with the DACA recipients, advocating for immigration reform and an end to the intolerable situation faced by their families and community. The time to act is now! The DACA program will be terminated on March 5th unless we resist and call on Congress to reinstate DACA and commit to write and pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill this year.

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