

JUSTICE FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

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Dallas Clinics:

- March 9, 2010
- April 13, 2010
- May 11, 2010

FTW Clinics:

- March 5, 2010
- April 2, 2010
- May 7, 2010

For volunteer opportunities, contact us at:

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MARCH FOR AMERICA: CHANGE TAKES COURAGE AND FAITH

On Sunday, March 21st, 2010, people from across faith communities will gather on the National Mall in Washington DC in support of just, humane immigration reform.

March for America will take place in conjunction with Ecumenical Advocacy Days, whose theme this year is A Place to Call Home: Immigrants, Refugees, and Displaced Peoples.

Bill Mefford of the General Board of Church and Society has been instrumental in organizing the event. He states, "As United Methodists, and most importantly as followers of Jesus, we are called to welcome the sojourner among us. I know churches throughout Texas are engaging in the ministry of hospitality to those who are so often neglected or exploited by the current broken immigration system. The *March for America* will present an opportunity for Texans to powerfully demonstrate to Congress that the status quo is



Supporters of just, humane immigration reform will march on Washington on March 21

not acceptable. Our faith compels us to speak out on behalf of those who are vulnerable, and the suffering of our immigrant brothers and sisters calls us to do all that we can to ensure Congress enacts just and humane reform."

Hundreds of North Texans will be joining the rally on March 21st, including representatives from both the North Texas and Central Texas Conferences, Justice For Our Neighbors, Christ's Foundry UMC, North Texas UMW, and other faith communities. A bus will be

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PRAYER VIGILS SET FOR MARCH 7TH

"I sought the LORD, and he answered me"—Psalm 34:4

Believers from across the Central and North Texas Conferences will be gathering on Sunday, March 7th to pray for comprehensive immigration reform. Acton UMC in Granbury and Christ's Foundry UMC in Dal-

las will each be hosting prayer vigils that night. The prayer services are being held as part of a nationwide movement of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition and the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church.

Acton UMC, located at 3433 Fall Creek Hwy in Granbury, TX, will hold an ecumenical bi-lingual service at 5:00 PM in White's Chapel. Join Acton UMC, the Welcoming Immigrants Network (WIN), and other advocates as they seek

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ADVOCATES GATHER IN AUSTIN

AUSTIN, Texas—



On Saturday, February 20th, more than 700 people from across the state of Texas gathered in Austin to discuss the urgency for immigration reform. The Texas Convention for Immigrant Integration: A

Call for Reform was organized by RITA (Reform Immigration For Texas Alliance), in collaboration with WIN (Welcoming Immigrants Network), Catholic Charities, and a number of other immigrant advocacy groups. More than 220 people from the Dallas-Fort Worth area made the trip to Austin to participate in the forum.

Discussion revolved around several key topics, including family reunification, civil rights, human rights, American

values, an earned pathway to citizenship, worker rights, immigrant integration, and a call to immigration reform. Ali Noorani, Director of National Immigration Forum, Reform Immigration for America campaign, delivered the keynote speech. Participants in the forum also had the opportunity to hear first-hand testimonies from immigrant families.

The convention was an important step in unifying Texan voices on the need for immigration reform.

MARCH FOR AMERICA (CONT)

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leaving Dallas on Saturday, March 20th, arriving on Sunday, March 21st for the rally, and returning to Dallas on Tuesday, March 23rd. Participants will also have the opportunity to meet with Congressional representatives on Monday morning to discuss the importance of comprehensive immigration legislation.

Prayerfully consider how you and your congregation will respond with love to our immigrant brothers and sisters.

1. Pray.

Pray for those who will be gathering on March 21st, for safe travels, for financial provi-

sion, for hearts to be touched, and for Congress to be moved to action.

2. Participate.

Join others on the bus to *March for America*—roundtrip cost to ride is \$50, or register for Ecumenical Advocacy Days. For more information on both events, visit:

- March For America—www.changetakesfaith.org
- Ecumenical Advocacy Days—www.advocacydays.org

3. Provide.

Can't be there in person? Help others get there through your financial donations. Checks can be made payable to North

Texas Conference with "926" in the memo. Send contributions to:

NTC
Attn: Sally Vonner
PO Box 866128
Plano, TX 75086

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

For more information, contact Amy Spaur at amyspaur@hotmail.com or 214.381.0901.

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute"

—Proverbs 31:8

PRAYER VIGILS (CONT)

the Lord on behalf of our immigrant neighbors. For more information on this wonderful gathering, contact Janice Whitecotton at jlw812@yahoo.com or Acton UMC at 817.326.4242.

La Fundicion de Cristo (Christ's Foundry) will also be hosting a revival and prayer

service on Sunday, March 7th. The Spanish language service will take place at 6 PM in Asbury Hall at Lovers Lane UMC, located at 9200 Inwood Rd, Dallas, TX. The March 7th service will be capping off a three-day revival involving Christ's Foundry UMC, Kirkwood UMC, Oak Cliff UMC,

and Casa Linda UMC, and will be focusing on the call for national revival and comprehensive immigration reform. For more information on what promises to be an amazing night, contact Rev. Owen K. Ross at owenkross@gmail.com or 214.497.9552.

CHURCH NETWORK URGES IMMIGRATION REFORM

ARLINGTON, Texas—United Methodist Bishop Mike Lowry entered ordained ministry in the early 1980s, when El Salvadoran refugees



Bishop Mike Lowry speaks at EOC photo by Bill Fentum

were streaming into the U.S. to escape a devastating civil war. Serving a church in a South Texas border town, he witnessed their plight firsthand.

One day “Bill,” a border-patrol agent in his congregation, was told to deport a refugee over state lines into Mexico. “The man had no shoes,” Bishop Lowry recalls, “so I found a pair in our church clothes pantry, and Bill and I did what we could to help a fellow human being in need.

“That’s the heart of America, and the heart of the Christian gospel,” he said at a Dec. 3 rally in support of U.S. immigration reform.

The event at Aldersgate UMC in Arlington was sponsored by the Welcoming Immigrants Network (WIN), a grassroots, faith-based effort to raise awareness across Texas and lobby U.S. congressional leaders from the state.

The Obama administration has pledged to push immigra-

tion reform legislation early in 2010. Last spring the United Methodist Council of Bishops released a statement calling for “a pathway to citizenship for immigrants” and a plan to reunite families separated after immigration raids.

“In this time of worldwide terror, appropriate steps must be taken to assure safety and security,” said Bishop Lowry, who leads the denomination’s Central Texas Conference. “But we must not do so at the cost of our own best values and aspirations.”

Joanna Cardoza, a member of Aldersgate UMC in Arlington, told rally attendees about how her father crossed the U.S.-Mexico border illegally as a teenager. Deported in his 40s, he now only sees his daughter and grandchildren once a year when they can afford the trip. “It’s very sad to not be able to spend his birthdays, Christmas or Thanksgiving with him,” said Ms. Cardoza. “The deportations take an emotional toll on families.”

She worries that her husband, too, could be sent back. He used a false Social Security number to find work before receiving a green card in 2000; authorities overlooked the violation then, but in 2010 his residency must be renewed. “We’ve been together 10 years and have four children,” Ms. Cardoza said. “We’re waiting to hear how things go this time, and praying it will be OK.”

The Rev. Dean Reed, a United Methodist elder, co-founded WIN last spring to advocate for reform. Since

then he has met twice with representatives of U.S. Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), asking for the senator’s support. “I’ve been told he isn’t ready to commit to reform at this time,” Mr. Reed said in an interview. “But I do believe they’re listening, that they consider our concerns valid.” WIN began as a Hispanic ministries outreach at First UMC in Stephenville, Texas, where Mr. Reed is senior pastor and the congregation wants to do more for immigrants than host ESL classes. But he also has a personal reason for getting involved. Mr. Reed’s own family emigrated to the U.S. in the 1700s, to escape famine in their native Ireland. “They were allowed to come, and that’s why I’m here today,”



Immigrants share their stories at Evening of Compassion in Arlington

he said. “Read history and you’ll see a lot of people at that time hated Irish immigrants, but now they’re seen as part of the backbone of our country.

“So the very people others call a scourge on our society may be a blessing that proves itself in the future.”

Written by Bill Fentum-UMR

“...Bill and I did what we could to help a fellow human being in need. That’s the heart of America, and the heart of the Christian gospel.”

—Bishop Mike Lowry



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Justice For Our Neighbors (JFON) is a faith-driven ministry, welcoming immigrants into our churches and communities by providing free, high-quality immigration legal services, education, and advocacy.

Justice For Our Neighbors is housed at Polytechnic United Methodist Church in Fort Worth and at Pleasant Mound United Methodist Church in Dallas. JFON also partners with Refugee Services of Texas in both Dallas and Fort Worth.

For more information on how you or your church can become involved with Justice For Our Neighbors or to schedule a speaking engagement at your local church or community organization, please contact Amy Spaur, Volunteer/Outreach Coordinator, at 817-534-3293 (FTW), 214-381-0901 (Dallas), or by e-mail at amyspaur@hotmail.com.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 1. Friday, March 5th:**
JFON Fort Worth Clinic, First Street Methodist Mission, 801 W 1st St, Fort Worth, TX
- 2. Sunday, March 7th:**
5 PM: Bi-lingual prayer vigil at Acton UMC, 3433 Fall Creek Hwy, Granbury, TX

6 PM: Spanish revival/prayer service at Lovers Lane UMC, 9200 Inwood Road, Dallas, TX
- 3. Tuesday, March 9th:**
JFON Dallas Clinic, Pleasant Mound/Urban Park UMC, 8301 Bruton Road, Dallas, TX
- 4. Friday, March 19th—Monday, March 22nd:**
Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Washington DC
- 5. Sunday, March 21st:**
March for America, Washington DC