

This list of frequently asked questions is intended to be a resource for Wesleyan pastors and their boards who are grappling with concerns and questions in local ministry related to immigrants and immigration. Our hope is that this becomes a first step in answering basic questions. As always our framework beyond scripture for this conversation is the Wesleyan Position Statement on Immigration, which can be found online here:

<http://www.wesleyan.org/237/a-wesleyan-view-of-immigration>. If you have further questions or would like to sign up for our Wesleyan Immigrant Ministries newsletter please email immigration@wesleyan.org.

What are the main reasons someone becomes undocumented?

While we often think of all undocumented people as having sneaked into the country, 40% have merely stayed past the expiration of their visa. Many others were brought into the country without proper documentation by their parents. The rest found no other way to enter the country through our current system, and so did so illegally.

What percentage of immigrants are Hispanic?

30% of all immigrants to the United States in recent years have been from Mexico, which influences our view of this being a Hispanic issue mostly. Another 7% of our immigrants are from Central America, but around half of all American immigrants are not of Latin American or Caribbean descent, so we should not leave them out of the conversation.

As I build relationships with immigrants, if I learn that someone is undocumented, do I have a duty to report them to law enforcement?

A: Short answer: No.

The longer answer is that there is no law that currently exists that requires citizens to report a known undocumented immigrant to any authority. Nor is there any law that exists that says citizens cannot welcome undocumented immigrants into their lives, drive them to doctor's appointments, teach them English, watch their children and help them with their schoolwork, and advocate on their behalf. A believer can stand in full compliance to governmental authorities while still welcoming and building relationships with undocumented individuals and families. It is also important to recognize that there is no conflict between the submission to authority mandated in Romans 13 and serving undocumented immigrants: we can minister to immigrants' physical needs, help to teach them English, share the good news of the gospel, and advocate for just policies that would better their situation, all without violating the law. Since we live in a democracy, we can advocate for immigration policies that are both welcoming of immigrants and maintain the importance of the rule of law. We can also seek justice as God commands (Micah 6:8) by addressing the structures of poverty that create the situations from which immigrants feel they must flee.

What would be crossing a line ethically, morally, or legally when it comes to our interactions with undocumented immigrants?

It is important to note on that while there is no duty to report you cannot lawfully hire a known undocumented individual. Furthermore, although there is no duty to report, it is against the law to "actively conceal, harbor or shield from detection or attempt to do so of someone without lawful presence." You do not have to report them, but you cannot help them stay undetected. A helpful clarification on this point is that while a church cannot hire someone



who is undocumented, they can be reimbursed for any expenses incurred while volunteering (i.e. travel costs, purchasing of materials, etc.).

Why don't people just get in the immigration line like other immigrants I know?

According to the August 2013 governmental reports (Visa Bulletin) our immigration services are right now processing visa applications for those from Mexico who filed an application in September 1993. So, for those from that country, right now the line is approximately 20 years long. Not all can apply for a visa, either. The above situation is possible in regards to somebody that was petitioned by a family member or so. One can be entered into the country legally for certain employment, an advanced degree or extraordinary abilities. There is a diversity visa lottery but that is only possible for "under-represented" countries. Refugee status can be sought for those fleeing persecution due to race, religion, tribe, political opinion, etc. And finally one can apply for family-based reasons. One Wesleyan pastor recently stated, "I have someone in my church who has literally been waiting 19 years for a very legitimate family-based visa; she is a daughter of a legal resident about to become a citizen and still is waiting."

Why is the United States in a difficult immigration situation? Who is to blame?

Before 1882 there were no major immigration restrictions in the United States; in this century there are very few. The last major reform came over 30 years ago.

Aren't immigrants bad for the economy in the United States?

In a Wall Street Journal Study, 44 of 46 economists said they are in fact beneficial for the economy.

Do undocumented immigrants pay taxes? Don't they become an undue burden on us without paying into the system?

In fact, 3 out of 4 undocumented workers do pay taxes and the government has taken in as much as \$12 billion annually as a result.

What is a short summary of what the Bible says about how we should treat immigrants?

Matthew 25:35 is our most compelling passage, where Jesus says that by welcoming a stranger (in the original language, an *alien* to our land, an *immigrant*), we may be welcoming him. Many of our churches have taken up a challenge to invite believers to read a short passage of Scripture each day for forty consecutive days that speaks to God's heart for immigrants and to pray for the immigrants in their community. A bookmark with the following scriptures can be downloaded or ordered to encourage us to explore these issues in our churches.

<http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/iwasastranger/>

#IWAsAStranger Challenge Scriptures:

Genesis 1:27-28	Deuteronomy 24:19	Matthew 25:35
Exodus 12:49	Deuteronomy 26:12	Mark 2:27
Exodus 22:21	Deuteronomy 27:19	Luke 10:36-37
Exodus 23:9	Job 29:16	Acts 16:37
Exodus 23:12	Psalms 94:6-7	Acts 17:26-27
Leviticus 19:9-10	Psalms 146:9	Romans 12:13
Leviticus 19:33-34	Jeremiah 7:5-7	Romans 13:1-2
Leviticus 23:22	Jeremiah 22:3	Ephesians 2:14-18



Leviticus 24:22 Numbers 15:15-16 Deuteronomy 1:16 Deuteronomy 10:18-19 Deuteronomy 24:14 Deuteronomy 24:17-18	Ezekiel 22:6-7 Ezekiel 22:29 Zechariah 7:10 Malachi 3:5 Matthew 2:13-14	Philippians 3:20 Hebrews 13:2 1 Peter 2:11-12 1 Peter 2:13-14 Revelation 7:9-10
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I do hear people talk about “Welcoming the Stranger” but what does that really mean related to immigrants? What do the ideas of hospitality and the immigrant have to do with each other? Aren’t these separate issues?

In the original language, the word hospitality literally means loving the stranger or the immigrant. We often think of hospitality as only having friends over for dinner or letting extended family stay at your house for the weekend, but it really means welcoming the stranger into your life. This theme of hospitality runs throughout Scripture and is tied directly to the practice of love of the stranger/immigrant.

Aren’t there other groups we should be showing our compassion to who are in greater need than immigrants?

Repeatedly in Scripture, God shows his heart specifically for the “triad of the vulnerable” including the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow. Through Zechariah he said: “Do not oppress the widow of the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor.” Through the Psalmist he said: “God watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow.” Through Malachi God puts those “who oppress the widows and fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice” with adulterers and sorcerers, saying each will face God’s judgment. God commanded his people not to mistreat or oppress an immigrant precisely because “they know what it’s like to be an immigrant, because they were immigrants in the land of Egypt.” God’s people are called to “Treat them [the immigrant] as if they were native-born.”

As I’m getting more interested in this, I’m wondering, what are the top five needs that immigrants in most every community have?

It is hard to boil down to a short list, but the top five that seem most expressed are:

1. Salvation - To experience a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. The immigrant populations in all countries, including the US, are the most receptive groups to the Gospel message (and statistically are on par with young children in their receptivity).
2. Helping their children (school paperwork, tutoring programs for children, childcare).
3. Teaching English - we often speak of them “learning our language” and almost every immigrant does deeply want to, so we can be a great help by getting training to teach others English.
4. Basic need help (food, clothing, transportation, referring them to reputable help in your community).
5. Legal need help (the government already has a pathway to become accredited to help those who are undocumented with their legal paperwork and many Wesleyans are already receiving this training to help immigrants in their community in a legal and state-approved way, since helping someone with their documents without such certification is not lawful).

What are two or three ways for me to reach out to immigrants around me?

Developing a relationship. Just the fact that you are interested enough to learn their name and try to pronounce it, is enough to signal the beginning of a relationship. By being a good neighbor, sharing a meal together, offering



rides, helping their children, learning a bit of their language... these are all great ways to reach out. You build relationships with immigrants just like others you would do so with--you just need to be aware and more intentional with barriers of language and culture.

What are some of the most basic ways for my church to welcome and minister collectively to immigrants in my community?

A church can do many things that might fit with their community, but the following are the first things to mention:

1. Offering English as a Second Language program classes
2. Starting citizenship classes for those on a path to becoming citizens
3. Starting mentoring programs in public schools
4. Reaching out to immigrants with your existing children, youth, and sports programs
5. Preach a sermon on immigrants or a whole series on what the Bible says about hospitality and welcoming the stranger.
6. Find what resources exist or don't exist in your community and be a conduit to those that do exist and fill the gaps for those that don't.
7. Hold a small group study of the "Welcoming the Stranger" book by Jenny Yang and Matthew Soerens. There are many free downloadable resources found here: <http://welcomingthe stranger.com/learn-and-discern/resources/>.
8. Pray for the immigrants in their communities, for common sense immigration reform guided by biblical principles, and for our legislators making hard decisions.
9. Hold an informational session about legal matters related to immigration with an expert to field questions.
10. Take an offering to help immigrants offset the major expenses of filing their documentation.
11. Consider opening up a Wesleyan Immigrant Ministries Legal Services Clinic.

When will the Wesleyan Immigrant Ministries become more public?

In these early stages this ministry has been more word of mouth and about networking together those in need of specialized advice to those with that expertise. In the fall of 2013 we will begin communicating more broadly via Wesleyan.org and social media, and by 2014 we will be fully operational and public.

Can an undocumented person become authorized to help others with their legal immigration paperwork?

We do not advise this at the moment, and encourage undocumented Wesleyans to find other ways to support this work. Government does not state in their regulations that a person needs to have legal status. Officials have also told us that immigration status is irrelevant when applying for recognition and accreditation. However, we believe it is not wise for them to become accredited, and instead to volunteer in Wesleyan Immigrant Ministries Legal Services Clinics in different capacities.

As a pastor, if someone in my church has immigration issues or legal questions they need advice on, how should I respond?

It is not wise to try to resolve these issues on your own. The Wesleyan Church has an immigrant hotline number to call for this purpose. This is through a partnership we have with World Relief. Through this service, immigration attorneys provide consultations on immigration issues by phone via 443-451-1978 or by e-mail via religiousworker@wr.org. These consultations can include general questions about issues related to immigration law and policy or specific questions about an individual's unique set of circumstances. If the legal issue can be resolved, World Relief may accept the case for an additional fee to be covered by the local church, Wesleyan district, or



individual. If the legal issue can be resolved and World Relief does not take the case, World Relief staff will facilitate a connection between the individual and a local, competent legal service provider.

Should our churches preach on this subject?

We advise our pastors to speak to issues relevant to the world today and which the scriptures compel us to live in a way that is Spirit-led and counter-cultural, so the answer is yes. However, It can be a difficult one to engage in this subject without appearing “too political” in today’s climate. So some caution is suggested. In a recent series at Kentwood Community Church (a Wesleyan congregation in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area) Pastor Kyle Ray addressed the concept from scripture of welcoming the stranger. Kentwood found this to be one of many examples of when our Christian beliefs “collide” with the culture around us. The sermon is a practical, wise, and balanced view of the issues and, more importantly, reminds us of a key refrain of the Wesleyan Immigrant Ministries: “Immigration is an issue, but immigrants are people.” He also concludes with a great gospel overview, which should motivate us to higher aims related to the immigrants around us. You can view his sermon [by clicking here](#).

What are the most reputable evangelical websites to visit for more information on this subject?

These three are the ones we have found to be the most trusted and helpful to the most people:

welcomingthestranger.com

evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/iwasastranger

pray4reform.org

What is happening with immigrant ministry in The Wesleyan Church? I hear of some activity, but I’m unclear on next steps.

The Wesleyan Church is in the networking and learning stages of birthing a new Wesleyan Immigrant Ministries. This ministry will seek to explore, equip, and engage the church in immigrant ministry in a more holistic way. The EXPLORE focus will help pastors, church leaders, and districts find out more information about the culture, context, and challenges of the immigrants living in their communities. The EQUIP focus helps pastors, church leaders, and districts to find the right training, education, or resources to match their growing passion to help care for the challenges of immigrants living in their community. In this focus some districts are helping to sponsor people for training, and the denomination is in certain cases matching that effort with funds. The ENGAGE focus helps pastors, church leaders, and districts to launch ministries that match the passion they have and the training they have received so that immigrants in their community can be cared for and empowered. These ministries are in their very early stages so if you would like to volunteer for the Wesleyan Immigrant Ministries contact David Drury via druryd@wesleyan.org

How can I stay updated on the development of the Wesleyan Immigrant Ministries over the long term?

Email immigration@wesleyan.org and we’ll sign you up for our periodic email updates and point you to pertinent information and resources as they develop, as well as ways to stay networked with the hundreds of thriving Wesleyan immigrant ministries around the country which we are discovering.

