



**The Episcopal Diocese
of West Texas**
The Bishop Jones Center

Office of The Bishop
The Rt. Rev. David M. Reed

June 20, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We, like many of you, have watched and read with increasing dismay and frustration the federal government's use of family separation as a blunt instrument of immigration policy along our border with Mexico. We have been embarrassed and angered to see our political leaders point fingers at each other while children and their mothers (it's almost always mothers) are taken away from each other. We can imagine little that could be more heart-breaking or traumatizing—for children or parents—than to be forcibly separated with no awareness of when, or if, we would see one another again.

The situation remains fluid and complex, and by the time you read this it could have changed several times. Still, we feel strongly that we should speak to you about these events unfolding within our diocese.

We believe that this policy, with its stated aim of deterring people from crossing into the United States illegally, is contrary to the Gospel and grieves the heart of Jesus.

We are not advocating for “open borders,” or uncontrolled immigration. A nation has a right and a duty to protect its borders. Also, we understand that our country's immigration laws are political dynamite and have been problematic for decades. Further, the Border Patrol did not create this crisis. The women and men serving along our border are professionals who treat those they apprehend with dignity and respect; they are aware of the hardships and trauma so many have endured to reach our country; and they save many lives. They are now trying to enact a policy that came without a plan.

We have communicated with almost all of our clergy in the Valley and elsewhere along our border. We have also communicated with our Presiding Bishop's staff, with other bishops and with leaders of other churches. A summary of what we have learned includes this:

+The complexity of the situation, and the political demagoguery, make it very difficult to understand what is actually going on. We must be circumspect in our consumption of news and social media, with careful attention to how politicians, activists and reporters use words and images.

+ Supplies are NOT needed at this time. **Please don't send things** to the border or to our churches. We will let you know if that changes.

+A number of charitable organizations and legal advocacy groups are looking for volunteers, primarily those with legal and/or language skills. Two of our Valley churches provide office space for

ministries that serve refugees seeking asylum and those seeking legal immigrant status. A link to several such organizations is here: www.texastribune.org/2018/06/18/heres-list-organizations-are-mobilizing-help-separated-immigrant-child/

+Some of our clergy are seeking approval to provide pastoral care in detention centers. If approved, the Diocese will support them in that ministry and share, as appropriate, their reports.

+Our law enforcement people on the ground are affected by all this. They are not sitting at a safe distance, but are in the middle of it. Be mindful of them in your prayers.

+Consider writing or calling your state and national elected officials. It is one of the great privileges of living in our country. Pray for our leaders.

+Most of the people being apprehended are Central Americans hoping for asylum. Our diocese and several parishes are actively involved in mission work in Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua. Helping rebuild communities that are stable and safe reduces the urgency of fleeing to the U. S. Pray for and support mission work in Central America.

As with most social and political debates in our land, the people in our churches hold a wide spectrum of views on immigration laws, policies and enforcement. Dialogue and debate stand at the heart of democracy and are essential to our freedom. Anglicans historically have received a special charism for providing holy ground upon which we can gather and seek the Spirit's wisdom. And yet, as Christians, we are all commanded by our Lord to love one another as he loves us, and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves—whether that neighbor is a church member whose politics you can't stand, or a politician you distrust, or a poor woman and her child from a distant land. Jesus says they are **all** our neighbors.

We have written this to you not to throw more fuel on an already roaring fire, but in the fervent hope that the light of the Gospel will shine ever more brightly on this heart-breaking situation; that God's people will "walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us;" and that we will pray and act together for the sake of the children who are wondering where their mothers are, and the mothers who are wondering where their children are. We write in humility, praying that God will renew in us all a longing for his kingdom, and will strengthen us by his Spirit to "seek first his kingdom, and its righteousness."

Thank you, and God bless you.

Faithfully yours in Christ,



Jennifer Brooke-Davidson
Bishop Suffragan



David Reed
Bishop