



**WISCONSIN
CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

New Ministry Opportunity: Immigration Working Group

What is our “still speaking” God calling us to today? How can we live out the good news of our faith to love and serve our neighbors? How can we respond to the needs of displaced people in our local, or global, community?

Over the past year, a group of lay leaders, clergy, and conference staff from across the state of Wisconsin have come together to respond to issues facing immigrants and refugees right here in our state and across the globe. Today the Immigration Working Group is extending an invitation to anyone inspired to join the struggle for more fair and humane treatment of people who have been pushed out of their native countries due to turmoil or persecution, or who have voluntarily left home seeking a better life for themselves and their children.

In just fifteen years, the immigrant population right here in Wisconsin has nearly doubled to approximately 275,000 people. These newcomers are our neighbors, and they serve the economy and community in countless ways. For immigrant workers, issues like nonpayment of wages and unsafe working conditions are all too common. Recent policies like the Secure Communities Program threaten their rights and dignity by forcing local law enforcement officials to share undocumented immigrants’ information with federal immigration officials, heightening the threat of deportation.

In the summer of 2014, many of us have had our hearts broken as we witnessed the thousands of Central American refugee children crossing the southern border of the United States. These children fled life threatening circumstances in Central America—rising levels of violence, gang activity, and drug cartels. Many of them are still living in detention, in prison-like conditions, as they await resolution of their asylum claims. Should they be deported they will be returning to the very circumstances that caused them to flee.

Today there are over 60 million people displaced worldwide. This is the highest recorded number in history of people forced to leave their homes. The current conflict in Syria alone—the civil war, collapsed infrastructure, and a lack of safety for children—has forced over 10 million people to be internally displaced, or to flee to neighboring countries. This number represents *more than 40%* of the country’s pre-war population.

The Immigration Working Group has heeded God's call to respond to our neighbors. Is God calling you, or your congregation, to get involved in this ministry? We want to hear your stories! How have you or your congregation responded to the needs of immigrants and refugees in our local or global community? How are you being led to respond? How can the Conference support your ministry?

To get involved, or for more information, please do not hesitate to contact Lisa Hart, Associate Conference Minister for Youth Faith Formation and Executive Assistant to the Conference Minister at: lhart@wcucc.org or 608-846-7880.