

July 9, 2018 - Press Release

For immediate release

FARMINGTON VALLEY CLERGY ISSUE STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION CRISIS

SIMSBURY, Conn., July 9, 2018. In response to the ongoing immigration crisis in America, clergy across the Farmington Valley and neighboring communities have issued a joint statement. They do so in alliance with the Farmington Valley League of Light, a new multi-faith group created to build bridges of understanding among neighbors of different backgrounds and beliefs.

The statement reads:

Farmington Valley area clergy and faith leaders join League of Light members in strongly condemning recent immigration policies implemented at the United States southern border that have disrupted migrant families and separated children of all ages, including babies, from parents. Even though an Executive Order of June 20, 2018 rolls back this cruel practice of family separation, deep concerns remain about the status of children who were already separated from parents and about ongoing issues related to migrant families.

We belong to varied faiths and follow different traditions, but the religious teachings and values that we all cherish support the need for strong families and vibrant, unified communities. We, therefore, urge that priority attention be given to the following issues:

Delays in reunification of children with their parents: As a direct result of the family separation policy enacted in April 2018, there are still many children (more than 2,000 as of June 30) scattered across the country in various types of shelters. Some children were placed very far from their families. Family reunification must be a top priority as the potential psychological and developmental harm to a young child in this situation is great, and separation is simply inhumane for the entire family.

Furthermore, during this recent period, there have been reports of makeshift and crowded conditions at shelters for children that were contrary to best practices in the field as well as a violation of human decency. This has to be corrected immediately.

Future immigration reform efforts: Weaknesses in our immigration laws must be fixed and take into account the unintended consequences of family disruption on children and families.

Harmful rhetoric from leaders about migrant families: Some administration officials appear to demonize immigrants by suggesting that so many are dangerous criminals. This does not line up with crime statistics. Officials also minimize the risks immigrants have taken to save their families from religious persecution, gang violence and other extreme hardships. Recent political rhetoric suggests that leaders could be using migrant children as bargaining chips in a type of political gamesmanship. These toxic messages harm communities by sowing seeds of hate and discord.

Our religious traditions teach that compassion must guide us, particularly as we embrace the stranger and aid the poor and the vulnerable. Humanitarian considerations have always been an important part of the American ethos. Any comprehensive effort to reform our current immigration system must take into account how our policies and our rhetoric affect the dignity and strengths of families and communities. We must do better at our nation's borders.

Khamis Abu-Hasaballah, Farmington Valley American Muslim Center

Rabbi Yitzchok Adler, Beth David Synagogue, West Hartford, CT

Rev. Michael P. Aparo MSW

Rabbi Jeffrey Bennett, Temple Sinai, Newington, CT

Rabbi Donna Berman, Charter Oak Cultural Center, Hartford, CT

Pastor Matt Blazer, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Simsbury, CT

Rabbi Debra Cantor, B'nai Tikvoh-Sholom, Bloomfield, CT
Rev. Chris Dion, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Simsbury, CT
Rabbi Andi Fliegel, Congregation Beth Israel, West Hartford, CT
Rev. Laura Galbraith Asbury, United Methodist Church, Forestville, CT
Rabbi Ilana Garber, Beth El Temple, West Hartford, CT
Rev. Susan Gibson, Pastor, First Church of Christ Congregational, 1652, Farmington, CT
Rabbi Rebekah Goldman, Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation, Simsbury CT
Rabbi Randall J. Konigsburg, Beth Sholom B'nai Israel, Manchester, CT
Rev. Dr. Virginia McDaniel, First Congregational Church of Granby
Deacon Art Miller
Rev Erica Nierendorf, Avon Congregational Church
Rev. Gene Ott, Simsbury United Methodist Church
Rabbi Michael Pincus, Congregation Beth Israel, West Hartford, CT
Rev. Julie Reuning-Scherer Lead -Pastor, St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Avon, CT Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Rabbi James Rosen, Beth El Temple, West Hartford, CT
Sister Mary Ann Strain, CP Our Lady of Calvary Retreat Center Farmington, CT
Rev. Kevin L. Weikel Associate Minister, Youth and Young Adults, First Church, Simsbury, CT

Action steps

People who wish to take action to support immigrant families can find a list of ways to help on the [Farmington Valley League of Light website](#).

Planned for October: how to have constructive dialogue in times of conflict

The League of Light will invite the public to a seminar on **“Embracing the Other” on October 28, with details coming soon.** It will talk about ways to bridge the differences between peoples of other cultures and to make strangers feel welcome.

Scheduled speakers will include Imam Omer Bajwa, Muslim Chaplain and Director of Muslim Life at Yale; Rabbi Debra Cantor of B'nai Tikvoh Sholom in Bloomfield; and Deacon Art Miller of Saint Mary's Church in Simsbury.

Following their presentation, the League of Light will provide training in “Contemplative Dialogue,” a technique designed to help people who disagree to deal with conflicts in a positive way. The training will enable families and young adults to gain new tools to address conflict without rancor.

About the Farmington Valley League of Light

The League of Light is an ever-growing multi-faith group, providing a focal point for people to share, understand and act to promote the common good and stand against violence and division.

For more information:

[Website](#)

[Facebook](#)

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