A Curriculum on Immigrants and Immigration for the United Methodist Faith Community

Excerpts from The National Farm Worker Ministry packet
Blessing the Hands: A Curriculum on Farm Workers for Faith Communities

Leader’s Booklet
Produced by the National Farm Worker Ministry
Modified by the Micah Corps
with assistance from Nebraska Appleseed
for the Nebraska United Methodist Faith Community
“Throughout the history of this great nation we have been able to welcome immigrants with hospitality. Immigrants in turn have joined us in building a strong and prosperous nation. Now is not the time to turn away from the value of hospitality. It is time to turn away from racist rhetoric and actions that serve only to undermine the higher values that I believe Americans aspire to live by. Immigrants are not the problem. They are part of the solution to our national struggles.”


INTRODUCTION

Why talk about immigration as United Methodists?
Our faith journeys are comprised of both personal spiritual commitments as well as commitments to our communities. As in years past, new immigration to Nebraska is bringing exciting opportunities and new neighbors to our hometowns and it is both our responsibility as well as in our best interest to welcome our sisters and brothers. We have a shared interest in breaking down barriers and building up opportunity. Nebraska’s faith communities have an important role in building a sense of belonging based on shared values of human dignity, compassion, and Welcoming the Stranger (Matthew 25).

Curriculum Note
This curriculum has been extracted from the National Farm Worker Ministry packet Blessing the Hands to be used by the Micah Corps and for use by the Nebraska United Methodist faith community. The contents of this smaller packet focus specifically on immigrant and immigration issues. For access to the complete Curriculum on Farm Workers (10 full sessions) please contact Susan Alan at nfwm@nfwm.org.

Intended Use
The curriculum is intended for use with adult and high school worship groups, Sunday schools or Bible studies. There are six class sessions, each approximately 45-60 minutes long. We hope that your group will use all of them; however the curriculum is designed so that a group can use Session 1 and as many others as desired.

Curriculum Organization
Each session has a Leader’s Instructions, a Participant’s Handout, and a Learning Activity page.

Leader’s Instructions
The Leader’s Instructions page is a guide for conducting the session. The leader will need to review these in advance of each scheduled session, as there may be some preparation to be done prior to class time. Suggested time allowances are given.

Session Organization
Each session contains: a Theme, Opening and Closing Prayers, Reflection, Immigrant Realities, Learning Activity, Serve/Advocate/Act (suggested follow-up actions), and a Learn More section.

Inclusion of Serve/Advocate/Act actions is based on the concept that in ministry, in addition to prayer and reflection, we must walk on two feet: the foot of mercy and the foot of justice. We urge you to take time during each session to do this with the group.

We invite you and your group to support the work of Nebraska Appleseed (www.NeAppleseed.org), the “Nebraska Is Home” community effort (www.NebraskalsHome.org), and the National Farm Worker Ministry by contacting one of our offices and getting involved in the struggle for justice for immigrants. Immigrants are empowered by the churches lending their voices to the struggle, while those of us in the church find ourselves energized and empowered by acting on our faith.
SESSION ONE ~ GOD HAS NO BORDERS
LEADER’S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer
Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: Human law, not God’s law, creates borders and boundaries. As people of faith, we look for ways to overcome these human barriers and divisions between peoples by showing hospitality and mercy towards strangers. Seeing God in them, we are “entertaining angels.”

Step 2: Reflection (15 min.)
“For centuries people have moved across borders in search of work. In our global world this is still a relevant and increasing form of immigration. Improved wages, better working conditions, and jobs available are reasons for immigration due to work opportunities. Workers from other countries are an important resource to fill the society’s need for workers. But foreign workers too often meet exploitation, absence of protecting laws, and unreasonable wages and working conditions.” – Social Principles of United Methodist Church, 2009-2012.

Step 3: Immigrants’ Reality (10 min.)
Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn’t know about immigrants.

How have barriers contributed to the growing problems associated with immigration? How would Jesus view these barriers and divisions, and their causes, within our society?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)
Materials: Copy Learning Activity page for each participant.

Process: Ask for volunteers to review the flow chart of immigration.

Let the group know that this is the reality of immigrating legally. Afterwards, discuss the questions that follow.

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)
Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group. Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer
We pray that we may learn to show mercy, justice, and love towards all those who we, as a country, neither welcome nor accept into our borders. And we pray for your help in tearing down the borders and fences we have built around our own hearts, that we may learn to love and welcome each of your children as members of one body.

National Farm Worker Ministry
Blessing the Hands October 2008 Revision
Modified by the Micah Corps for use by the Nebraska United Methodist faith community (with assistance from Nebraska Appleseed www.neappleseed.org). See also www.NebraskalsHome.org
SESSION ONE ~ GOD HAS NO BORDERS
PARTICIPANT’S HANDOUT

Theme: Human law, not God’s law, creates borders and boundaries. As people of faith, we look for ways to overcome these human barriers and divisions between peoples by showing hospitality and mercy towards strangers. Seeing God in them, we are “entertaining angels.”

Opening Prayer
God of us all, who brought Jesus into the world a refugee, we pray for your blessing on those who are strangers in a strange land, forced to leave the homes they love because of poverty and injustice. We pray that you protect and keep them on their journeys. We pray for those who would persecute your pilgrims. Open all our hearts so that we might see and welcome God in all, neighbors and strangers alike.

Reflection
“For centuries people have moved across borders in search of work. In our global world this is still a relevant and increasing form of immigration. Improved wages, better working conditions, and jobs available are reasons for immigration due to work opportunities. Workers from other countries are in many societies an important resource to fill the society’s need for workers. But foreign workers too often meet exploitation, absence of protecting laws, and unreasonable wages and working conditions.” - Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, 2009-2012.

Immigrants’ Reality
• For most undocumented, there simply is no way to apply for legal status or citizenship in the U.S. because our laws don’t allow it. Under current immigration law, if a person does not have family in the U.S and is a low- or medium-skilled worker, there essentially is no way to apply to work in the U.S., except for seasonal agricultural work (picking fruits and vegetables). This does not address labor needs in a broad range of industries from landscaping, food processing, and construction to hospitality and healthcare.

• According to the U.S. Department of State visa bulletin, an unmarried son or daughter of a U.S. Citizen: from the Philippines waits 15 years for a visa, from Mexico 16 years, from China six years, and from India six years. Spouses and children of legal permanent residents wait 5-7 years. Brothers and sisters of adult children wait 11-22 years.

• Coupled with increased restrictions on immigration has been increased enforcement. Despite a tripling of the number of agents on the border, quintupling of the budget, tougher enforcement strategies, and heavily fortified urban entry points the number of undocumented immigrants grew. Also, over 267 people died at the border in 2005 while underground systems to exploit the system—such as criminal smugglers—expanded.1

Learning Activity (see handout)
Serve, Advocate, Act
• Invite immigrant groups to speak to your congregation about local issues.
• Attend multi-cultural events in your neighborhood to break down barriers that may exist between different ethnicities in your community or church.
• Learn about the work of Border Angels at www.borderangels.org or another group that serves the needs of immigrants crossing the border into the United States.
• Write your representatives in the U.S. Congress in support of immigration reform that does not only enforce a broken system but instead creates workable solutions that uphold our values and provide a pathway to citizenship for immigrants contributing to our country.

Learn More (See full citation on Resource page)
• Watch Dying to Live, a documentary about the immigrant experience crossing the border. Visit http://dyingtolive.nd.edu/ or contact NFWM.

SESSION ONE ~ GOD HAS NO BORDERS
LEARNING ACTIVITY

(Additional page provided is the Flow Chart which serves as the Learning Activity)

Discussion Questions:
How does seeing this flow chart make you feel about the immigration system?

Specifically, how hard does it appear to immigrate legally?

How many fences or borders have we put up to prevent legal immigration?

What did you know or not know before seeing this chart?

What surprised you?

Have you or has someone you know gone through the process of immigrating or becoming a citizen? What was his or her experience?
SESSION TWO ~ IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S.
LEADERS’ INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer
Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: Immigration plays a large role in our country’s history. The U.S. is a mosaic of cultures, faiths and ideologies and we define ourselves by our diversity. We need to respect and appreciate immigrants for the role they play in our communities and society.

Step 2: Reflection (15 min.)
“We recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God. We affirm the right of all persons to equal opportunities for employment, access to housing, health care, education, and freedom from social discrimination” (Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, 2009-2012).

Also, read Leviticus 19:33-34

Step 3: Immigrants’ Reality (10 min.)
Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn’t know about immigrants.

What might society truly look like if we affirmed all persons? As United Methodists, how does doing so adhere to our faith?

How does the statement in our Declaration of Independence “All men are created equal” apply to the Leviticus verse? Does this seem to be true in the U.S.?

How could we subscribe more closely to this ideal of equality for all people?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)

Materials: Copy the Learning Activity page for each participant.

Process: Ask for a volunteer to read aloud “The Virtuous Illegal Alien” and use the questions following it to discuss the reading.

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)
Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group.

Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer
Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity we have had today to meditate upon your favor for the Samaritans among us. We pray that we may learn to show mercy, justice, and love towards all those who we, as a country, neither welcome nor accept into our borders. And we pray for your help in tearing down the borders and fences we have built around our own hearts, that we may learn to love and welcome each of your children as members of one body.
Theme: Immigration plays a large role in our country’s history. The U.S. is a mosaic of cultures, faiths and ideologies and we define ourselves by our diversity. We need to respect and appreciate immigrants for the role they play in our communities and society.

Opening Prayer
God, full of love and mercy, please care for my sister and brother immigrants. Have pity on them and protect them; they suffer mistreatment and humiliations on their way, looked on as dangerous by many, and marginalized for being foreigners. Help us to respect them and appreciate their dignity. Touch with goodness we who see them pass by. Take care of their families until they return home, not with broken hearts but with hopes fulfilled.

Reflection
“We recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God. We affirm the right of all persons to equal opportunities for employment, access to housing, health care, education, and freedom from social discrimination” (Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, 2009-2012). Also, read Leviticus 19:33-34

Immigrants’ Reality
- **Immigrants—including undocumented—pay taxes.** This includes sales tax, property taxes (directly or through rent), and for most, income and social security taxes withheld from their paychecks.
- **Immigrants create jobs for native born workers.** A 2006 Pew Research Center study found no evidence of job loss for native born workers during an increase in immigration from 1990-2005. In fact immigrants create jobs for U.S. born through their purchases on housing, food, entertainment, & services.
- The National Bureau of Economic Research (2006) also found that immigrants increased the average wage of 91% of the population.
- **Immigrants—including undocumented—pay more in taxes than they receive in services.** As Former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan testified before Congress, “There are great misperceptions that immigrants are a drain on our economy, but many studies have confirmed the opposite is true. Even undocumented workers—commonly referred to as ‘illegal’—contribute more than their fair share to our great country.”
- **Undocumented immigrants are also noted for helping make up 15% of the Social Security shortfall because of the taxes they pay into a system they can’t utilize.**

Learning Activity (see handout)
Serve, Advocate, Act
- Pray for those immigrants who risk their lives to come into the United States every day, and pray for those who have prejudices against immigrants that they learn to see the love of God in all people.
- Support legislative efforts for meaningful immigration reform which is just and humane and against legislation that marginalizes or discriminates against immigrants. Visit [www.neappleseed.org](http://www.neappleseed.org), [www.interfaithimmigration.org](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org), or [www.reformimmigrationforamerica.org](http://www.reformimmigrationforamerica.org) for more information.
- Join a community-building effort. Host a dinner party or other conversation to learn about immigration. Host positive messages posters, or billboards in your hometown. Visit [www.NebraskaIsHome.org](http://www.NebraskaIsHome.org) for ideas or to join an existing group.
- Volunteer to tutor at a local community organization that helps to teach English to recent immigrants.
- Write your senators and representative in Congress in support of just and humane immigration reform that upholds our values.
- Write a letter to the editor supporting community unity, recognizing immigrant contributions, and calling for rational and humane immigration reform.

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A Virtuous Illegal Alien

(Dedicated to Pete Wilson and supporters of California Proposition 187.)

Rosalvo Welsch, Yale University.

Note: For purposes of gender equality, language has been made gender-neutral, replacing “he” with “they”

What makes an illegal alien virtuous?

A virtuous illegal alien must cross the border only when you need them. When your factories are low and your goods need assembling, they may cross. When your fields need hands to gather your harvests, they may cross. And when your children need nannies to walk them to school, they may cross. But a virtuous illegal alien must not carry across that which you cannot use; namely their language, their children, and their ways. Only their hands and their back must cross that line.

A virtuous illegal alien must make your economy swell. They must labor hard, buy your goods, and pay taxes into your system, but they must not request any services in return. They must remain sick rather than seek hospital care. They must keep their children ignorant rather than to educate them. And they must leave their assaults unreported, rather than seek police protection. A virtuous illegal alien must be silent. They must never complain when they cannot afford to feed their family on the wages you give them. They must never gripe when they cannot bear to work in unsanitary conditions you have placed them in. They must never protest when you blame them for all the ills of society that you yourself have sown.

A virtuous illegal alien must disappear when you tell them to. When your factories are full, they must fade. When their work is done, they must withdraw. When you are scared of their numbers, they must shrink. And as they are leaving, a virtuous illegal alien must never stop — not even to point out that it was your forefathers who were once the aliens on this land you now call your own.

Discussion Questions:
What does it do to the humanity of a person when they are looked at simply as a means of cheap and necessary labor? By seeing a person as a machine, how does that change what we see as acceptable treatment of that person?

How loyal to a group would you be if you felt as if you were being taken advantage of? How might those feelings, your attitude and your commitment change if you felt as though you were appreciated and valued?

What are some of the terms we use and hear, especially in the media, for immigrants? How do these language choices influence the current debate about immigration?
SESSION THREE ~ COMMUNITY AND CULTURE
LEADER’S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer
Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: Immigrants offer us the richness of their culture and traditions as they seek to form communities in the United States and integrate themselves and their families into our communities. We can embrace these new traditions with open arms as well as invite them into our culture.

Step 2: Reflection (15 min.)
“We urge the Church and society to recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate justice for all.” –Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, 2009-2012.

Step 3: Immigrants’ Reality (10 min.)
Read the facts aloud from the handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn’t know about immigrants.

What can the Church do to recognize the unique customs and cultures of immigrants?

What are some ways that immigrants are acculturating U.S. customs?

How might the U.S. benefit from the influx of culture (language is just one example) that we sometimes are hesitant to accept?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)
Materials:
Copy the Learning Activity page for each participant.

Process: Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the cultural questions on the Learning Activity page, then use the discussion questions following it.

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)
Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group. Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer
O God our Creator, open our eyes to the beauty of cultures and traditions different from our own. Help us to understand that the crafts we create, the songs we sing, the stories we weave are your creations. Guide us on the path toward a day when each person is able to discover her/his talents and be valued for those gifts. Be with us as we discover the joy of the diversity of your people.
SESSION THREE ~ COMMUNITY AND CULTURE
PARTICIPANT’S HANDOUT

Theme: Immigrants offer us the richness of their culture and traditions as they seek to form communities in the United States and integrate themselves and their families into our communities. We can embrace these new traditions with open arms as well as invite them into our culture.

Opening Prayer
O God of many cultures and many nations, we thank you for the varied gifts and talents you have given us. Help us to recognize the value of ways other than our own, and give us guidance in accepting other traditions into our hearts. We know that in you, we are all one people.

Reflection
“We urge the Church and society to recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate justice for all.” – Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, 2009-2012.

Immigrants’ Reality

• Past and present immigration: we are not at an historical high point in immigration. Immigrants were a larger percentage of our population at the turn of the last century (14.7% in 1900 compared to 12.6% in 2007, and they are 17% and 24% of Canada’s and Australia’s populations, respectively). Immigrants were 24% of the U.S. workforce in 1900 versus 15.7% in 2007.
• Foreign born in Nebraska in 2007 represented 5.6 percent of the population, almost 100,000 people, of which 12.8 percent are minors.
• Of the total foreign-born population in Nebraska in 2007, 5.6 percent were from Africa, 24.4 percent from Asia, 10.8 percent from Europe, 56.5 percent from Latin America (South America, Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean), 1.4 percent from Northern America (Canada, Bermuda, Greenland, and St. Pierre and Miquelon), and 1.3 percent from Oceania.
• The top three countries of origin of foreign born in Nebraska were Mexico, Vietnam, and El Salvador. Of the total immigrant population in Nebraska in 2007, 42.4 percent were born in Mexico, 4.8 percent in Vietnam, and 4.4 percent in El Salvador. 3
• Immigrants “acculturate,” adopting many US customs. In turn, local communities “transculturate,” adopting new traditions.
• According to the 2000 Census, of the people who report speaking Spanish at home, 72% report also speaking English “well” or “very well”. As in previous chapters of our history, second generation Latino immigrants are largely bi-lingual and third generation generally speak English only.

Learning Activity (see handout)
Serve, Advocate, Act

• Attend a mass or other worship service in a different language to learn about a different culture.
• Write letters to the editor of your local paper denouncing discrimination against immigrants.
• Support bilingual education and other ways that preserve diverse cultural traditions and language skills.
• Encourage your local library to purchase bilingual language books, or collect books and Bibles of different languages and donate them to a local organization.
• Patronize shops, markets, and other businesses owned by immigrant community members.
• Distribute multiple-language “Welcome” signs to local businesses of all kinds. Go to the Nebraska Is Home site for downloadable signs www.NebraskalsHome.

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SESSION THREE ~ COMMUNITY AND CULTURE
LEARNING ACTIVITY

Repollo Questions & Answers: (See Process on the Leader’s Instruction page.)
Q. What is the name of the traditional Mexican celebration for girls on their fifteenth birthday?
A. Quinceañera
Q. With what religion do most Vietnamese affiliate themselves?
A. Buddhism
Q. How many minority ethnic groups are in Vietnam?
A. 54
Q. How many indigenous languages are still spoken in Mexico?
A. 60
Q. What was the official philosophy of China for most of its history?
A. Confucianism
Q. What is the most widely spoken language in China?
A. Mandarin
Q. What does ¡Sí se puede! mean?
A. “Yes, it can be done!,” or “Yes, we can!”
Q. What is the capital of El Salvador?
A. San Salvador
Q. What is the fastest growing religion in Latin America?
A. Evangelical Christianity
Q. What are the two major Christian denominations in El Salvador?
A. Catholicism, Protestantism
Q. What is the main religion of Sudan?
A. Islam
Q. Sudan has two official languages, what are they?
A. Arabic and English
Q. What sect of Islam are most Sudanese?
A. Sunni
Q. Name one of the main indigenous peoples of Mexico.
A. Nahuatl, Mayan, Mixtec, Zapotec
Q. What is Sudan’s primary export?
A. Bananas

Discussion Questions:
What cultural questions were you able to answer correctly?
Did any of the answers surprise you?
What other things do you know about these cultures?
What do you know about religious practices outside the United Methodist faith?
What are some common values we share across cultures?
What do we gain by learning about different cultures?
What are some examples of how people from different cultures can live and work together to strengthen a community?
SESSION FOUR ~ CHILDREN AND FAMILY
LEADER’S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer
Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: We take special care to acknowledge and value all children in our local and national community, some of whom are immigrants themselves and are separated for long periods—possibly years—from one or both parents.

Step 2: Reflection (15 min.)
“As people of faith, we cannot stand and will not stand while families are separated, while individual freedoms are ignored and the immigrant community in the United States is mistreated unjustly and inhumanely” - United Methodist Bishop Minerva G. Carcano, the first Hispanic woman to be elected to the episcopacy of the United Methodist Church

Step 3: Immigrants’ Reality (10 min)
Read the facts aloud from the handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn’t know about immigrants.

What challenges might young immigrants face that adults do not?

In what ways does our current legal system put road blocks in the way of immigrant workers meeting their responsibilities as parents? In what ways does it benefit?

Many immigrants are separated from their families for long periods. What do you think are some of the consequences of that separation?

Step 4: Learning Activity (15 min.)
Materials: Copy learning activity page for everyone.
Process: Read the narrative and then read the social principles excerpts. Then, have the group sit in silence for several minutes and reflect on the readings and on what they have learned today about immigrant children and families. Next, go over the discussion questions.

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)
Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group. Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Closing Prayer
O God of the harvest, despite the prosperity of this good country, there are children who work to help their families, children who cannot go to school regularly, children who excel in school but cannot pursue their dreams of higher education, children whose parents cannot support them from the wages they earn and children who are separated for long periods of time from their parents. Bring a harvest of love into our hearts so that we may work for justice in our world and justice for these children.
SESSION FOUR ~ CHILDREN AND FAMILY
PARTICIPANT’S HANDOUT

Theme: We take special care to acknowledge and value all children in our local and national community, some of whom are immigrants themselves and are separated for long periods—possibly years—from one or both parents.

Opening Prayer
O God, bless your children who are separated from their parents and struggle to get by, and bless those children who sit in comfort with parents to provide for them. Give bread to those children who hunger and are lonely and a hunger for justice to those of us who have bread to share with loved ones.

Reflection
“As people of faith, we cannot stand and will not stand while families are separated, while individual freedoms are ignored and the immigrant community in the United States is mistreated unjustly and inhumanely”- United Methodist Bishop Minerva G. Carcano, the first Hispanic woman to be elected to the episcopacy of the United Methodist Church

Immigrants’ Reality
• Some immigrants live here without proper documentation because they do not want to be separated from family members for extended or indefinite periods of time. While legal permanent residents and citizens can petition for visas for close relatives, **backlogs in the visa process separate families for years, and sometimes decades.**
• A legal permanent resident must wait at least four years to sponsor a spouse or child and almost ten years to sponsor unmarried adult children.
• Meanwhile, in an increasingly common occurrence, youth aged 14 to 17 are immigrating alone to the U.S. to perform farm work to support their family members back home. The Department of Labor reported in 2000 that 80 percent of migrant teens did not live with any other family member.
• Undocumented immigrants are ineligible for all major public benefits including Medicaid and most are unable to apply for health insurance. Immigrant children receive 71% less care in doctors’ offices and 72% less prescription medications. Health care expenditures for uninsured immigrant children are 86% lower than those for uninsured U.S.-born children.
• **Every year thousands of children lose their parents to deportation.** As is often the case after federal raids, many times deportation or detention is unexpected, leaving little to no time to make guardianship arrangements or even to say ‘goodbye.’
• 12.8 percent of foreign born in Nebraska are minors, while children of immigrants accounted for 18.5 percent of all children in low-income families (i.e., below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold) in 2007, 11.2 percent in 2000, and 3.6 percent in 1990 in Nebraska. In 2007, there were 154,284 children under age 18 who resided in families with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold in Nebraska. Of them, 18.5 percent were children with immigrant parent(s)\(^4\)

Learning Activity
Serve, Advocate, Act
• Volunteer at a school that offers English as a Second Language.
• Start a collection in your congregation of school supplies for students of low-income families.
• Support national legislation like the **DREAM Act**, by calling or writing to your local congressperson.
• Invite friends to your home to watch and discuss the movie **Under the Same Moon** (activate subtitles).

Learn More
• Visit the Immigrant Child Advocacy Center website at www.immigrantchildadvocacy.org.

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\(^4\) Statistics from Migration Policy Institute and Nebraska Appleseed’s Immigrant Integration and Civic Participation program.
SESSION FOUR ~ CHILDREN AND FAMILY
LEARNING ACTIVITY

Story of a Child Left Behind by Deportation:
In April of 2005, when her mother dropped by federal immigration headquarters in Manhattan to complete some paperwork, 8-year-old Virginia Feliz became part of a growing tribe of American children who have lost a parent to deportation. Her mother, Berly, 47, had migrated to the United States a decade ago when she could no longer afford to buy food, clothes, and school supplies for her child. Mrs. Feliz went to the immigration office on a routine visit to renew her work authorization which she had been granted several previous years. But, because an old deportation order had resurfaced, she was quickly clapped into handcuffs, and within hours placed on a plane to her native Honduras, unable to say goodbye to her husband and little girl. "I'm not happy; I'm sad," said Virginia, who lives in a small Bronx apartment. "Because it's not fair that everybody else has their mom except me." "I don't have peace because I'm not with my little girl," Virginia’s mother said in Spanish, breaking down. "I don't eat. I don't sleep. I can't be without her - I have no life." The hardest part, she said, is that in telephone calls her daughter sometimes tells her, "You didn't take me with you; you're a bad person." "I can't handle that," she said.5

What the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church say:

161. A) The Family- We believe the family to be the basic human community through which persons are nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect, and fidelity. We affirm the importance of loving parents for all children. We also understand as encompassing a wider range of options than that of the two generational unit of parents and children. We affirm shared responsibility for parenting where there are two parents and encourage social, economic, and religious efforts to maintain and strengthen relationships within families in order that every member may be assisted toward complete personhood. (Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, 2009-2012)

162. C) Rights of Children- Thus, we support the development of school systems and innovative methods of education designed to assist every child toward complete fulfillment as an individual person of worth. All children have the right to quality education…Moreover, children have the right to food, shelter, clothing, health care, and emotional well being as do adults…In particular, children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

DREAM ACT: The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (The "DREAM Act") is a piece of proposed federal legislation that was re-introduced in the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives on March 26, 2009. This bill would provide undocumented immigrant students who graduate from U.S. high schools, are of good moral character, arrived in the U.S. as children, and have been in the country continuously for at least five years prior to the bill's enactment, the opportunity to earn conditional permanent residency. The students will obtain temporary residency for six years. Within the six year period, a qualified student must attend college and earn a two-year degree, or serve in the military for two years in order to earn citizenship after the six-year period. If the student does not comply with either his/her college requirement or military service requirement, temporary residency will be taken away and student will be subject to deportation.

Discussion Questions:
How did hearing Virginia’s story of her mother’s deportation make you feel?
How does immigrants’ reality conflict with United Methodist beliefs?
Why is legislation such as the DREAM Act so important?
How do communities benefit when immigrants are provided a pathway to citizenship?

SESSION FIVE ~ RACISM & IMMIGRANTS
LEADER’S INSTRUCTION

Step 1: Theme and Prayer
Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

**Theme:** Racism keeps us from seeing others for who they truly are and prevents us from developing relationships with people we see as unlike ourselves. Racism limits the progress of society and unjustly suppresses the ability of groups of people to be truly free.

Step 2: Reflection (10 min.)
“When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself.” - Leviticus 19: 33-34

What about this Bible verse relates to racism?

How does hearing this piece of scripture make you feel?

Step 3: Immigrants’ Reality (10 min)
Read the facts aloud from the Handout and briefly discuss with the group what was surprising about these facts and what the group already knew or didn’t know about immigrants.

Learning Activity (20 min)

**Process:** Clear enough space and have everyone line up next to one another in about the middle of the room. Tell participants that the front wall is their goal and to keep their eyes on it. Read aloud the statements and have people step forward or backward, as appropriate. After the last statement, ask everyone to freeze in place, without looking around, and to notice briefly where they are, who is in front of them and who they can and cannot see. Then tell participants that they are in a race to the front wall for some well paying, good jobs. They should imagine that they need one of those jobs to support themselves and their families. When told to, they are to run to the wall as fast as they can. The first few to the front wall will get those jobs. Quickly say, “Ready, set, go,” to start the race and get out of the way! Have the group discuss the following:

How did it make you feel to have to step backward? Forward?

Did you sometimes have to step a certain way because your life experience to which the statement referred was not under your control?

How does that make you feel? Were you so focused on your own answers and the front wall - your goal - that you failed to see the people behind you. How might that apply to real life?

Step 5: Serve, Advocate, Act (5 min.)
Read aloud the suggested follow-up actions from the Handout and ask which of the suggestions are most feasible for participants to do during the following week. Encourage participants to commit to at least one action as an individual and consider engaging in some actions as a group. Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

**Closing Prayer**
We too often do not pay attention and we do not stop to think that, even in this day and age, injustice and racism still threaten our communities. God, shake us awake and open our eyes and help us to work to put things right.
SESSION FIVE ~ RACISM & IMMIGRANTS
PARTICIPANT’S HANDOUT

Theme: Racism keeps us from seeing others for who they truly are and prevents us from developing relationships with people we see as unlike ourselves. Racism limits the progress of society and unjustly suppresses the ability of groups of people to be truly free.

Opening Prayer
We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

Reflection
“When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself.” - Leviticus 19: 33-34

Immigrants’ Reality
• 2006 & 2007 saw the birth of at least 144 “nativist extremist” groups, active across 39 states. These are organizations that do not merely target immigration policies they don’t agree with, but instead confront or harass individual immigrants. These groups increasingly popularize bigoted theories and dubious statistics.
• Since mid-2006, record numbers of anti-immigrant laws and ordinances have been introduced at the city and state level in over 20 states (however most states have not passed them), including measures to penalize persons who employ or provide assistance and services to undocumented immigrants and require police to enforce immigration laws. However, a 2006 Colorado law requiring additional immigration and citizenship checks on applicants for state benefits costs the state an additional $2 million per year and has identified no immigrants wrongfully applying for benefits.6
• Racism is in our history, from the trail of tears to slavery to the internment of Japanese. However, some of our greatest moments in history have come when previous injustices or racism codified in law were changed. Everything from the abolition of slavery, the establishment of voting rights for women, and the civil rights movement has removed racism or sexism that was once law.

Learning Activity
Serve, Advocate, Act
• Pray both for those who are targets of racism and nativist extremists and for those who act in a racist way toward others.
• Work to eliminate racist jokes, innuendos and language from your conversations.
• Fight the passage of local and state anti-immigrant laws and ordinances.
• Write letters to Congress asking for their support for immigrants’ legal residency and meaningful immigration reform that is just and humane and against legislation that marginalizes or discriminates against immigrants.

Learn More
Read about the We Can Stop the Hate campaign at www.wecanstopthehate.org. Read Three Faces of Intolerance at the Southern Poverty Law Center website www.splcenter.org/intel/nativist_lobby.jsp.

National Farm Worker Ministry
Blessing the Hands October 2008 Revision
Modified by the Micah Corps for use by the Nebraska United Methodist faith community (with assistance from Nebraska Appleseed www.neappleseed.org). See also www.NebraskalsHome.org

SESSION FIVE ~ RACISM & IMMIGRANTS

LEARNING ACTIVITY

1. If you or your ancestors were forced to come to this country, either temporarily or permanently, to try to make a living, take one step backward.
2. If you identify yourself primarily as an "American," take one step forward.
3. If you grew up with people of color or working class people who were servants, maids, gardeners or babysitters in your house, take one step forward.
4. If you ever worked instead of attending school when growing up, take one step backward.
5. If you have immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, or other professionals, take one step forward.
6. If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school, take one step forward.
7. If you started school speaking a language other than English, take one step backward.
8. If in school or work, you have always been in the racial or ethnic majority, take one step forward.
9. If you ever skipped a meal or went away from a meal hungry because there wasn't enough money to buy food for your family, take one step backward.
10. If you or a family member has never had to go to the emergency room because you had no health insurance, take one step forward.
11. If one of your parents was ever laid off, unemployed or underemployed not by choice, take one step backward.
12. If you or anyone in your family ever lived in a home without a lock, take one step backward.
13. If you, as an adult, have always lived where you can have visitors anytime you want, take one step forward.
14. If you have ever felt embarrassed or afraid in public because people were staring at you because you look different than they do, take one step backward.
15. If you come home from work at the end of the day and need to take a shower right away to wash off dirt, oil, or pesticides, take one step backward.
16. If you know who to contact with grievances about your job, and you trust that your grievances will be addressed, take one step forward.
17. If, prior to your 18th birthday, you took a vacation outside of your home state, take one step forward.
18. If you moved around as a child because one or more of your parents could not find steady work, take one step backward.
19. If your parents owned their own house, take one step forward.
20. If you have been paid less than minimum wage doing piece rate work or had your wages withheld for reasons you didn’t understand, take one step backward.
21. If you were trained in a trade or profession in another country, but cannot now work using those skills, take one step backward.
22. If you have ever inherited money or property, take one step forward.
23. If you have easy access to a vehicle, take one step forward.
24. If you do not have access to a telephone, take one step backward.
25. If you generally think of the police as people that you can call on for help in times of emergency, take one step forward.
26. If your parents did not grow up in the United States, take one step backward.

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SESSION SIX~ FAITH IN ACTION

LEADER’S INSTRUCTION

Note: This session is intended to be done only after the group has completed previous sessions.

Step 1: Theme and Prayer
Read the theme aloud and then ask a volunteer to read the opening prayer on the Handout.

Theme: We can begin to act according to the view that life is a round table, where everyone brings gifts to the meal, and leave behind the view that life is a ladder, where some inevitably perch on the higher rungs.

Step 2: Reflection (15 min.)
Read Matthew 25:31-46 and discuss the following:

In our society, how can we “welcome the stranger”?

Bill Mefford, Immigration policy expert at the General Board of Church and Society said, “Jesus taught us that in welcoming the stranger, we welcome him.” What would it mean for us and society if we saw Jesus in every stranger?

Step 3: Course Review (15 min.)
Guide discussion around the following questions:
• What has been the most meaningful part of this course for you?
• How has this experience affected your understanding of and relationship to immigrants?
• What strikes you as common threads in the lives of immigrants?
• How does what you have learned in this curriculum affect your feelings about our country’s immigration system?
• What do you think are the most effective ways to empower immigrants?
• In what specific ways are you willing to make part of your life some consistent practice on behalf of immigrants?

Step 4: Planning Ahead: Commitments to the Immigrant Struggle (15 min.)
Note: There is no separate Learning Activity page. However, a Welcoming Pledge is attached.

Step 5: Closing Prayer
Close with the following prayer or with a prayer offered by one of the participants. God, we understand that our faith calls us to recognize the sacred humanity of all immigrants. For their sake and for ours, may we welcome our sisters and brothers with love and compassion. By welcoming the stranger among us may we be reminded that true hospitality is a spiritual practice.

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Blessing the Hands October 2008 Revision
Modified by the Micah Corps for use by the Nebraska United Methodist faith community (with assistance from Nebraska Appleseed www.neappleseed.org). See also www.NebraskalsHome.org
Theme: We can begin to act according to the view that life is a round table, where everyone brings gifts to the meal, and leave behind the view that life is a ladder, where some inevitably perch on the higher rungs.

Opening Prayer
God, we believe that your spirit is present wherever people strive to make it present. Be with us today as we seek to empower those whom we often cannot see and as we discover our own capabilities to reach out in new ways. This we ask in your name. Amen.

Biblical Reflection
Read Matthew 25:31-46

Ideas for Commitments to Create a Strong, Welcoming Community:
Serve, Advocate, Act
• Incorporate new neighbors into your worship in a regular way, e.g. introduce and welcome new visitors every Sunday.
• Hold additional Sunday School or study group sessions using this curriculum.
• Develop a New Neighbor Sunday when prayers, sermon, and materials are focused on community values and welcoming the stranger.
• Invite folks to sign the Welcoming Pledge
• Donate your congregation’s offering once or twice a year to an organization that serves immigrants in your community.
• If your congregation would like assistance in reaching out to immigrants in your community, contact Nebraska Appleseed, Nebraska Is Home, or another community resource.
• Hold a community-building activity such as a city clean-up day where immigrants and non-immigrants work together.
• Develop a welcoming committee within your congregation or denominational network to welcome new members of the community.
• In your congregation, worship group, or committee, study and support organizations serving immigrants and their campaigns.
• Write to your elected officials supporting meaningful immigration reform that is just and humane.

For resources or assistance to help with any of the above activities (and for legislative and immigrant/immigration campaign information):
visit www.neappleseed.org

Learn More
• See the Resources to Learn More page.
• Contact Darcy Tromanhauser at Nebraska Appleseed with questions or for access to additional resources regarding immigrants and immigration:
dtromanhauser@neappleseed.org 402-438-8853

CORE VALUES COMMON GROUND
EQUAL JUSTICE
Interfaith Welcoming Pledge

As Nebraskans of faith, we recognize the sacred humanity of all immigrants. Our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our sisters and brothers with love and compassion. For example, the simple Christian passage, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” [Matthew 25] reminds us that true hospitality is a spiritual practice. Similarly, Buddhist teaching proclaims we are a part of a greater unity and Hebrew scripture teaches to love the foreigner as oneself. The world’s belief systems have long established the link between religion and hospitality.

We affirm that public policies are moral statements. Our faith calls us to pursue policies that uphold the human dignity of each person and value the wholeness of each family unit.

Therefore:

I commit to stand for America’s finest ideals and core community values and publicly reject the politics of division and isolation that fan anger and hate against any person or community. I will work toward just, workable and humane immigration reform.

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“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can.”  
-John Wesley, founder of Methodism

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

Books
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations. 2006. In Our Own Words: Immigrants’ Experiences in the Northwest.

Games and Activities
Immigration Board Game: free download from www.nwfcro.org
3D Video Game: ICED – I Can End Deportation (a play on the acronym for Immigration and Customs Enforcement Department): free download from www.icedgame.com
Discussion Flash Cards: www.neappleseed.org/docs/discussion_flash_cards.doc
“How My Family Came to the U.S.” Story Cards www.neappleseed.org/docs/how_my_family_came_to_the_us.doc

Videos and PowerPoints
“This is Not Who We Are” (PowerPoint) www.neappleseed.org/docs/this_is_not_who_we_are_presentation_short.ppt


“In Our Own Words: Immigrants’ Experiences in the Northwest”
“Uprooted” - individual stories about personal migration (**NWFCO)

“The Visitor” - with discussion questions www.nightof1000conversations.org

Immigrants and Immigration: A Few Simple Facts (PowerPoint): www.neappleseed.org/docs/immigrants_and_immigration.ppt

New Bedford Raids http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-8ke8gd60g

Lesson Plans and Sermons

Fact Sheet:
Immigrants and Immigration: www.neappleseed.org/docs/Facts_About_Immigrants__Immigration__(2008).pdf

Visit the General Board of Church and Society website, and specifically search Immigration to learn more about what the United Methodist church is doing and how you can help!
What Part of Legal Immigration Don’t You Understand?

Opponents of illegal immigration are fond of telling foreigners to “get in line” before coming to work in America. But what does that line actually look like, and how many years (or decades) does it take to get through? Try it yourself!

Mike Flynn and Sibhka Dadmia
Illustrated by Terry Colon

(The chart was developed by Reason Foundation in collaboration with the National Foundation for American Policy.)