



**Report of the Council of Bishops Immigration Task Force
Of The United Methodist Church**

May 2, 2025

The COB Immigration Task Force met on April 27, 2025. We invited the United Methodist Immigration Task Force to join us. The UMITF is a collaborative and coordinating table of general agencies working on matters related to migration, including the GBGM, UMCOR, GBCS, GCORR, Women United in Faith, GCFA, UMCOM, and racial-ethnic plans and caucuses, and the Immigration Legal and Justice Network. We were also joined by Bishop Lysette Gabriel Montalvo, the bishop of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico. It was a well-attended meeting with a vigorous conversation. We share with you the highlights of this meeting and a summary of our ongoing work.

- 1) We heard the great need for the Council of Bishops to deepen its presence and voice in the midst of the global migration situation for the long-run. Addressing the injustices that affect the millions who have been forced to migrate, become refugees and asylum seekers will take time and intentional witness and action. The consensus of the connectional leaders at the table on this past Sunday morning was that the prophetic and teaching voice of the Bishops, individually and collectively, is critical at this time.

Gratitude was expressed for the witness of bishops including COB President Tracy Malone, who have joined zoom connectional prayer services, Know Your Rights trainings, and a webinar to encourage and support a United Methodist response to immigrant justice across the connection called, [“Solidarity with the Sojourner: Understanding U.S. Immigration and Our Call to Respond”](#). This webinar was held in February of this year with over 3,000 registrants. United Methodists are committed to supporting and being strong advocates on behalf of migrants. These connectional zoom gatherings have been organized through a rich collaboration among general agencies and racial ethnic plans and the Immigration Legal and Justice Network.

On a pastoral level we were reminded that many pastors are diligently serving migrants around the world. As bishops we need to be mindful of the fact that these pastors need pastoral care as well. Racial-ethnic pastors serving migrant congregations and communities in the US are also often victims of broken immigration laws and policies and are in need of an extra measure of the pastoral care of bishops and district superintendents.

2) We lament that by Executive Order, President Trump has stopped the funding for organizations that serve migrants, among others. But we celebrate the bold action of the GBGM that made the decision to dip into its reserves to financially assist the Immigration Law and Justice Network (former JFON) in its legal work with migrants, and projects that are caring for the needs of migrant children.

3) UMCOR reminded us that [Mustard Seed grants](#) are available to US local churches who are responding to the needs of migrants in their communities. Their goal is to provide 100 Mustard Seed grants this year. There are about 50 left to be given.

UMCOR also encouraged us to help our local churches deepen our United Methodist commitment to working ecumenically on the migration front by signing up to the Church World Service Immigration Ecumenical Declaration. You can do so on the [CWS website](#). The deadline for signing up has been extended.

4) In response to the changing Religious Worker Visas in the US, the GCFA partnered with the COB Immigration Task Force in gathering lawyers who are assisting Bishops, Cabinets, and especially pastors who depend on Religious Worker Visas for a session on clarifying the status of religious worker visas and best Practices in this area of migration law. The report can be viewed here: [Religious Workers Visa Doc for Bishops April 2025 .docx](#)

5) We learned that due to wars and the broken immigration laws and policies of some countries like the US, United Methodist connectional leaders are facing an ever-increasing difficulty in obtaining visas to attend connectional meetings. It is anticipated that unless we address this matter now, attendance at the 2026 leadership gathering and even the 2028 General Conference will be compromised. We were informed that the Commission on the General Conference has this matter on its agenda, but we believe the COB needs to assist the Commission along with the Connectional Table in addressing this potential visa difficulty in relationship to connectional gatherings.

6) We learned that the General Board of Church and Society will be featuring a new Immigration Bible Study: [“Called to Journey, Called To Welcome: A Biblical Perspective on Immigration”](#) that will be premier around May 21st, 2025.

7) We were called to join our hearts in prayer for the GCORR, and the New York, Western North Carolina and the North Georgia Conferences in their joining other Christian and Jewish religious denominations and associations in a lawsuit in response to the Trump Administrations removal of churches designation as sensitive locations which has affect

the right of religious bodies to exercise their faith including being in ministry to migrants. They are represented by the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection of Georgetown Law. This lawsuit faces many challenges, but we trust in God whose is the ultimate judge and source of true justice. Let us continue to pray for these committed United Methodists who represent us all and for the legal team representing them. We must stand firm in the right to exercise our religious freedom.

- 8) On April 22-24, 2025, GCORR convened a Train-the-Trainer Immigration Summit: ***Faith Witness and Action*** in partnership with the Immigration Law and Justice Network and the support of other general agencies. Representatives from 44 US annual conferences and The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico gathered in Omaha, Nebraska for this training.
- 9) Immigration Law and Justice Network has updated its toolkit that captures all of the changes that have happened in the [first 100 days](#) of President Trump's second term. Please share this resource with your conference leadership.
- 10) We celebrate the migration work being done in Central Conferences and would request an opportunity at a future COB meeting to share the profound witness and sacrificial commitment of our Central Conferences to migrants on the run. The COB and the United Methodist Immigration Task Forces are the stewards of a \$100,000 grant for migration work in the Central Conferences. This is a grant given through the Connectional Table from the World Service Contingency Fund. We are in dialogue with Central Conference bishops as we establish procedures for the distribution of these funds.
- 11) [The Upper Room has developed an immersive experience](#) of prayer and prophetic witness focused on the plight of migrants. Consider adapting this resource for your conference's use.
- 12) Your COB Immigration Task Force continues to be committed to working collaboratively with general agencies and racial-ethnic plans and caucuses to help the Council best fulfill its prophetic, teaching and pastoral role in the area of global migration.
- 13) We will be examining the Migration Protocol of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico as a model not only for our covenantal partnership with the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico but also for our migration work as United Methodists.
- 14) We believe that forced migration within nations states, regions, continents and across continents can provide us context and missional direction for our United Methodist work

on regionalization and our commitment to decolonization and will be sharing our insights with the COB and the entire UMC.

15) To assist bishops and conferences in your work on the migration front we would commend the migration resources found at the following website:

[Immigration and Global Migration | ResourceUMC](#)

CONCLUSION

We thank you for the privilege of assisting the COB in its work with and on behalf of persons forced to migrate around the world. God have mercy upon these vulnerable brothers, sisters, siblings who give us witness of their glorious sightings of God on their migrant journey. God is with them. God is with us as we welcome them.

COB Immigration Task Force

Bishop Minerva Carcaño, Chair

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

Bishop Gabriel Unda

Bishop Daniel Lunge

Bishop Israel Painsit

Bishop Joel Martinez

Bishop Elias Galvan

Bishop Leo Soriano

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