

May 9, 2023

Dear Texas Legislators,

As faith leaders in Texas, we are deeply concerned when proposed legislation reflects an anti-biblical message. From cover to cover the Bible reminds us:

- Every person is created in the image of God and has an inalienable dignity and right to be treated with respect and care (Genesis 1:26-27)
- God cares for children fleeing persecution (Genesis 21:17)
- God commands us to care for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger among us (Deuteronomy 10:18; 16:11-14; 24: 17-21; 26: 12-13; 27:19)
- We were once refugees, so we should treat the alien, the widow, and the stranger among us with compassion and care (Exodus 22:21; 23:9)
- We are to treat the alien as we would a native born (Numbers 15:15)
- Whatever we do (or not do) for “the least of these” Jesus counts as care for Himself (Matthew 25: 40, 45)

The Bible is in no way ambiguous about God’s clear expectation that we act with care for those who are vulnerable, and especially for those who are fleeing their homeland. And yet, several bills, including HB7, HB20, HB65, HB82, HB1600 and others would do precisely the opposite of what God commands His people to do. We urge you to stand boldly against legislative efforts to criminalize those seeking refuge and discriminate against Texas citizens based on the color of their skin. We ask you to stand for God’s word and for Biblical morality. As Christians, we are called to approach one another with love, not fear. Love asks more of us than fear, and love would have us see the face of Christ where fear sees “other” in immigrants. So in love, we come to you asking you to stand up for the Christian value of hospitality.

We recognize there are real challenges at the U.S.-Mexico border, and overhauls to enforcement at the U.S. border are long overdue. At the same time we insist, those border challenges must be met with a response that respects the inherent dignity and worth of every human being.

We are concerned that these aforementioned bills will inflict great harm to those seeking refuge in the United States and designate them as criminals and trespassers. We are also concerned that the bills will lead to racial profiling and harassment of Texas citizens in border communities. We are concerned that these bills would establish powerful militias with no real oversight. Finally, we are concerned that these bills move us away from God’s plan for how we should build our society.

Our faith compels us to seek justice and love mercy, and so we urge you as leaders of our great state to lead boldly with love and compassion for all.

In His peace,

Sister Sharon Anam, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word

Sister Cecile Roeger, Dominican Sisters of Houston
Pastor Paul Randall, Ecclesia Houston
Rabbi Nancy Kasten, Faith Commons
Rev. Dr. Daniel Kanter, First Unitarian Church of Dallas
Rev. Meredith Barber, Horizon UU Church
Rev. Steven Bezner, Ph.D., Houston Northwest Church
Sr. Ricca Dimalibot, MD, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word
Sister Margaret Bulmer, CCVI, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Houston
Sr. Marian Sturm, Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament
Rev. Dr. Steve Wells, South Main Baptist Church, Houston
Jim Crosby, St. James' Episcopal Church, Austin
Rev. Dr. Javier Alanis, St. John Lutheran Church, San Juan, TX
Rev. Erin Walter, Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry
Rev. Dr. Edward Kern, Trinity Lutheran
Rev. Dr. Josh Ellis, Union Baptist Association
Rev. Kiya Heartwood, UU Church of the Brazos Valley
Rev. Brandon Webb, Westbury Baptist Church
Ms. Clarissa Webb, Westbury Baptist Church
Rev. Patrick Ryan, Westbury Baptist Church
Joan Ross, Community Minister, Westbury Baptist Church
Dylan Reese, Westbury Baptist Church
Rev. Sarah Caine