

## Public statements made by the Illinois Conference of Churches

**8/8/2012**

The Leadership Team is releasing the following statement to the press today and wanted to share it with you for your possible use in your own denomination, especially the Day of Prayer.

The Illinois Conference of Churches joins four other state councils of churches: Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon and Wisconsin, in calling for a Day of Prayer for the Sikh Community this Sunday, Aug. 12, in the wake of the tragic shootings at the Sikh temple in Oak Creek, WI and other recent acts of violence.

Our hope, said the ICC, is that next Sunday will provide an opportunity for Christians to pray for the victims, their families, and for the Sikh community, which has experienced much tragedy and hardship in this country since the Sept. 11 attacks (Sikhs are at times mistaken for Muslims). We also hope everyone will take the opportunity to learn more about the Sikh religion ([www.sikhs.org](http://www.sikhs.org)). In the coming days Christians can stand in solidarity with the Sikh community.

We join with Rev Betsy Miller, President Provincial Elders' Conference at Moravian Church Northern Province, who issued the following statement Sunday evening:

*On behalf of the wider Moravian Church, we pray for the victims of violence against worshippers at a Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. We pray for peace and calm in the midst of heated tensions, for the family members of those who were killed, including the perpetrator. Lord, in your mercy, bring healing to the religions of your world. We pray for a spirit of respect, that we may honor all people as beloved children of the living God.*

**7/15/2013**

The Illinois Conference of Churches, representing 14 Christian denominations, adopted the following policy on gun control.

“The Illinois Conference of Churches supports legislation which moves in the direction of a ban on assault weapons, high capacity magazines and armor piercing ammunition; and requires universal background checks and tracking of sales of guns; while increasing access to community-based mental health services; and increased enforcement, prosecution and penalties for gun trafficking and violations. The ICC also encourages promoting dialogue in our communities on these issues and improving the safety of our schools, while stopping short of arming school staff, and public places while honoring second amendment language.”

February 2014

“The Illinois Conference of Churches supports an increase in the minimum wage in Illinois so that working people can better support themselves and their families and not

live near the poverty line, while also encouraging the state of Illinois to continue to work on job creation as a major focus.”

*“The Illinois Conference of Churches (ICC) denounces the senseless killing of the pastor and eight members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, Charleston, S.C., on, June 17 during a Bible study. The Leadership Team, Public Policy Team and Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER) (anti-racism) Teams of the ICC ask their member judicatories and their member churches to join them in prayer for all involved.*

*June 2015*

*“The Illinois Conference of Churches (ICC) denounces the senseless killing of the pastor and eight members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, Charleston, S.C., on, June 17 during a Bible study. The Leadership Team, Public Policy Team and Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER) (anti-racism) Teams of the ICC ask their member judicatories and their member churches to join them in prayer for all involved.*

*The ICC joins the leadership of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Bishop Julius H. McAllister, President, A.M.E. Council of Bishops and Bishop John R. Bryant, Senior A.M.E. Bishop and our co-chair, Rev. Gary McCants, Presiding Elder, South District, Illinois Conference of the A.M.E. Church), in condemning this senseless act of violence.*

*The ICC calls on all Christians to hold prayer vigils and to offer individual prayers for the family of Reverend Clementa Pinckney, the 41-year-old pastor and member of the South Carolina Senate and for each of the congregants killed at the historic "Mother Emanuel" AME Church, which has been at the forefront of community and civil rights activities in Charleston for more than a decade as well as all the church members.*

*The ICC rededicates itself to its major policy of ending racism and senseless violence.”*

*Nov. 24 2015*

“The Leadership Team of the Illinois Conference of Churches, in light of recent acts of terrorism, issues the following policy statement and invites our members, which includes 13 Christian denominations, to join us in affirming our responsibility to welcome refugees who seek asylum in our country. We trust the screening process for refugees, already in practice, to do what it is intended to do. We call on Governor Bruce Rauner to follow federal law relating to refugees. We are particularly offended by the suggestion that any group of people would be singled out for exclusion and particularly by the suggestion any group would be asked to wear labels or have separate registration. By giving in to fear we are creating further division in our communities. We strongly denounce all acts of terrorism and offer condolences and sympathy to all victims and their families. In making this statement we are keenly aware of the scriptures on which

our faith is based and how our savior was once a refugee seeking shelter in a foreign land while fleeing oppression.”

June 28, 2016

Dear Governor Bruce Rauner, Honorable Christine Radogno, Speaker Michael Madigan, Honorable Jim Durkin and Honorable John Cullerton:

The Illinois Conference of Churches, the largest state ecumenical organization, which has been in existence since 1930, asks the state Legislature to pass and sign into law, stopgap funding through the end of the calendar year and to continue to work on a Fiscal year 2017 budget.

Of particular concern to the thirteen Christian denominations who make up our membership, listed below, are funding all social service agencies and elementary and secondary education in our public schools. Among other things, these social service agencies provide support and services to the homeless, veterans, senior citizens, the disabled, children living under the poverty line and others who are the “least of these among us.”

We write to you with deep, sincere concern for the entire social services safety net that desperately needs this stopgap funding to survive while a full budget is crafted. Many social services agencies are drastically cutting back or closing their doors. And we fear they will not be restored.

We respectfully ask that you quickly resolve the apparent difficulties in legislative language and sign the stopgap measure into law. We also respectfully ask that you continue your negotiations with the legislature for a full budget so that social service providers, the public education system and other vital agencies may continue their work of service for the common good and that funds that have been collected are dispersed.

One of our strongest tenets is to help those in poverty in the state of Illinois.

Sincerely,

Gary McCants and Walter Carlson,  
Co-chairmen, Illinois Conference of Churches

Governor Bruce Rauner

July, 2016

Office of the Governor  
207 State House  
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear \_\_\_\_\_;

The Illinois Conference of Churches, the largest state ecumenical organization, which has been in existence since 1930, asks the state Legislature to pass and sign into law, stopgap funding through the end of the calendar year and to continue to work on a Fiscal year 2017 budget.

Of particular concern to the thirteen Christian denominations who make up our membership, listed below, are funding all social service agencies and elementary and secondary education in our public schools. Among other things, these social service agencies provide support and services to the homeless, veterans, senior citizens, the disabled, children living under the poverty line and others who are the “least of these among us.”

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Nov. 2016

The Illinois Conference of Churches, the ecumenical body of the state of Illinois, representing 13 Christian denominations, calls on the people of Illinois and all citizens of the United States to pray for our nation and its leaders to remember we are a nation of laws and not of people. We further call for humility, healing, reconciliation, peace and calmness in the wake of divisiveness. All voices of our nation deserve to be heard as we recognize human rights and freedoms. Most of all we call on everyone to follow the Golden Rule and to treat others as they would want others to treat them. People of all faiths are all children of God.

Dec. 14, 2016

Honorable Christine Radogno  
309G Capitol Building  
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable Christine Radogno:

The Illinois Conference of Churches, the largest state ecumenical organization and which has been in existence since 1930, asks the state Legislature to pass and for you to sign a state budget for the remainder of the current Fiscal Year 2017 and to also work on a full Fiscal Year 2018 budget.

Of particular concern to the thirteen Christian denominations who make up our membership listed below is funding for all elementary and secondary education in our public schools and for social service agencies. Among other things, these social service agencies provide support and services to the homeless, veterans, senior citizens, the disabled, children living under the poverty line and others who are the "least of these among us."

We write to you with deep, sincere concern for the entire social services safety net that desperately needs this funding for the rest of FY 2017 to survive. Many social services agencies are drastically cutting back or closing their doors. And we fear they will not be restored.

One of our strongest tenets is to help those in poverty in the state of Illinois. We respectfully ask that you continue your negotiations with the legislature for a state budget for the remainder of FY 2017 so that social service providers, the public education system and other vital agencies may continue their work of service for the common good.

Sincerely,

Gary McCants and Walter Carlson,  
Co-chairmen, Illinois Conference of Churches

## **Policy statement on immigration, refugees 2-10-17**

### **The Illinois Conference of Churches reaffirms their statement from 11-24-15**

The Leadership Team of the Illinois Conference of Churches, in light of recent acts of terrorism, issues the following policy statement and invites our members, which includes 13 Christian denominations, to join us in affirming our responsibility to welcome refugees who seek asylum in our country. We trust the screening process for refugees, already in practice, to do what it is intended to do. We are particularly offended by the suggestion that any group of people would be singled out for exclusion and particularly by the suggestion any group would be asked to wear labels or have separate registration. By giving in to fear we are creating further division in our communities. We strongly denounce all acts of terrorism and offer condolences and sympathy to all victims and their families. In making this statement we are keenly aware of the scriptures on which our faith is based and how our savior was once a refugee seeking shelter in a foreign land while fleeing oppression.

#### **They also agree with this statement from the Minnesota Council of Churches**

As Christian leaders, we are called by our Scripture and God to love our neighbor, accompany the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner. Thirty-two years ago the Minnesota Council of Churches responded to that call. Today we stand against executive action curtailing refugee resettlement.

Our nation has an urgent moral responsibility to receive refugees and asylum seekers who are in dire need of safety. Today, more than five million Syrian refugees flee violence and the hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties in their home country. We call upon the Trump Administration and all members of the U.S. Congress to demonstrate moral leadership and affirm their support for the resettlement of refugees from all over the world to the United States.

The United States already has the most rigorous refugee screening process in the world, involving the Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the National Counterterrorism Center. The process includes biometric checks, medical screenings, forensic testing of documents, DNA testing for family reunification cases, and in-person interviews with highly trained homeland security officials.

The U.S. Refugee Resettlement program has been and should continue to be open to those who face persecution, as enumerated under U.S. law, regardless of nationality or religion. Any proposal that would disqualify refugees from protection based on their nationality or religion insults our nation's founding principles, contradicts our country's legacy of leadership, and dishonors our shared humanity.

In a time when hard actions and sharp words have been directed at our Muslim neighbors, we pledge to walk with them and support their freedom to practice their religion. That is the American way. That is the way Christ would have us go. This country is built upon religious freedom. The Islamic community in our country is vibrant and diverse, contributing much— as citizens, teachers, police officers, medical workers, tradespersons, community leaders, mothers and fathers.

As Christians, we are called to welcome the stranger, love *all* our neighbors, and stand with the vulnerable, regardless of their religion. We pray that in public policy

discernment and all we do, compassion for the plight of refugees will touch your hearts. We urge all Minnesotans and particularly people of faith to be bold in supporting moral, just policies that provide refuge for vulnerable individuals seeking protection.

**...and they agree with the following from Churches Uniting in Christ.**

While we are all Christian denominations, we hold fast to the principles of justice for all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or creed. To single out immigrants as a body in a discriminatory way is contrary to the events that created our nation, which is a nation of "immigrants". With exception of the Native Americans, all of us in America are descendants of immigrants who came to this land seeking a better life or to voluntarily or involuntarily contribute to the building of this country.

Equally important are the unacceptable and exclusive limitations being placed on those of the Muslim faith who desire to come to America. Religious freedom and the ability to practice one's chosen faith without discrimination is the core of American history. This sudden departure from such a foundational belief sets this country on a course that ultimately benefits no one and harms everyone. To use "fear" as a tactic to justify such actions is exploitative and manipulative. Further, to be inhospitable and rejecting of refugees is contrary to all that we believe about serving the "least of these" and as Americans it is abhorrent that the leadership of the richest nation in the world would present our country in such a selfish and self-serving manner.

We speak out today about these things because the words and warning of this statement and poem written by Pastor Martin Niemöller of Germany from a detention center (concentration camp) around 1937 still ring true:

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Socialist.*

*Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Trade Unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Jew.*

*Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me*

The point is clear. . .we are our brothers and sisters keepers! We must speak out, not just for those like us, but also for those not like us!

**The ICC released the following public statements on June 19 and June 23, 2018**

**The ICC Leadership Team signed onto this statement**

**Faith Leaders Statement on Family Separation**

Recently, the Administration announced that it will begin separating families and criminally prosecuting all people who enter the U.S. without previous authorization. As religious leaders representing diverse faith perspectives, united in our concern for the wellbeing of vulnerable migrants who cross our borders fleeing from danger and threats to their lives, we are deeply disappointed and pained to hear this news.

We affirm the family as a foundational societal structure to support human community and understand the household as an estate blessed by God. The security of the family provides critical mental, physical and emotional support to the development and wellbeing of children. Our congregations and agencies serve many migrant families that

have recently arrived in the United States. Leaving their communities is often the only option they have to provide safety for their children and protect them from harm. Tearing children away from parents who have made a dangerous journey to provide a safe and sufficient life for them is unnecessarily cruel and detrimental to the well-being of parents and children.

As we continue to serve and love our neighbor, we pray for the children and families that will suffer due to this policy and urge the Administration to stop their policy of separating families. (signed by many faith leaders)

**Later, the Public Policy Team wrote and the Leadership Team released this statement:**

The Leadership Team of the Illinois Conference of Churches urges their congressmen and senators to lead the charge in taking further action and allocating funds to reunite 100 percent of separated immigrant families as quickly as possible. The Team invites other faith communities and all citizens of the United States to join them in this effort in pressuring the Federal government to take this action swiftly. Child abuse should not be used as a negotiating tool or tolerated under any circumstances and anything less is unacceptable

The Illinois Conference of Churches, a state Christian ecumenical organization representing 13 denomination, affirms the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago's statement in response to the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA on Oct. 27, 2018.

A statement by The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago  
**Response to the Synagogue Massacre in Pittsburgh, PA**

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago is horrified by the vicious anti-Semitic murders at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. We remember with bitter sorrow the Shabbat morning worshipers killed and injured in this attack, and we honor the police officers who were wounded while coming to their aid. We pray for comfort and hope for the families and friends of those affected by this act of hate.

But we are also outraged.

- We are outraged by the increasing normalcy of racist violence in a sacred space. The victims at Tree of Life join the victims at the Sikh gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin and at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina.
- We are outraged by the frequency of such violence. Tree of Life is the 294th mass shooting in the United States this year. Almost 12,000 people -- including 441 in Chicago -- have died from gun violence in 2018.
- And we are outraged by the regularity of our reactions. All of us -- news networks, first responders, political leaders, and yes, faith leaders -- know just what to do following a mass shooting. We follow a script, we mourn the dead, and we move on.

But we are past the time for mourning without meaningful response.

Placing armed guards in America's more than 300,000 religious congregations is not the answer. Churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues already have taken steps to "harden" their security, and the injuries to police officers in Pittsburgh show that even



trained responders are at risk. This strategy mistakes the effects of gun violence for its means and sources.

We need a different path.

(1) We call on the President of the United States and leaders at every level of our society to remember that their words matter. Pittsburgh reminds us that the rhetoric of violence begets violence. Everyone has the moral responsibility for what they say.

(2) For our part, we will convene meetings in congregations across this region on ways to reduce the potential, frequency, and lethality of gun violence. We welcome people from across the political spectrum. Our only condition is that participants share a commitment to strategies and outcomes that reduce gun-related deaths and injuries.

In every religious tradition, human life is sacred. Our democracy is diverse, boisterous, and very contentious, but we cannot express our differences through violence if we expect to long endure. Let us honor the dead by having the courage to live with our differences and to realize the vision of America's founders, *e pluribus unum*, "out of many, one."

(Oct. 29, 2018)

March 2019

ICC opposes private detention centers for immigrants in Illinois

The Illinois Conference of Churches released the following public statement on the proposed immigration

detention center in Dwight, IL. Our Leadership Team co-chairman, Wally Carlson, attended the Village Board

meeting and read our statement and spoke briefly. The center proposals were approved 5-2. Several organizations

are continuing efforts to prevent the center from being built.

"The Illinois Conference of Churches (ICC), representing 13 Christian denominations, opposes the creation

of a private immigration detention facility in Dwight, IL. The ICC has a long history of concern

for the humane treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers in this country. People who are seeking

refuge from persecution and violence do not belong in detention. Children deserve to have their fathers

with them while awaiting an immigration judge's decision. The ICC encourages Dwight area residents

to speak out against the center and urges the Village Board to vote no on the related proposals."

**July 21, 2019**

**The Illinois Conference of Churches signs on to the following statement of the National Council of Churches.**

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.”

Zechariah 7:9-10 NRSV

The National Council of Churches urges the Trump administration not to go forward with the widely publicized raids that are intended to round up and deport thousands of families and individuals. Indeed, these raids may very well take place while millions of Christians are attending Sunday services. The raids have struck fear and dread into the hearts of countless people who are living peaceful and productive lives in our nation.

These unnecessary acts of “enforcement” terrorize children, women, and men who live in our communities. It is unconscionable and immoral. We see these threatened deportations as part of a program of extreme intimidation and harm, and we urge the U.S. government not to move ahead with these raids.

This is a moment in which God is calling the Church to do all it can to stand with those who have sought refuge within our borders and to resist these measures and show compassion toward persons threatened with deportation. Many of the congregations associated with the NCC are praying for those impacted and are prepared to act in ways that protect threatened persons.

Since the earliest times in which Christians gathered together, churches have been places of sanctuary in which persons in danger of harm from an oppressive government can find safety and protection. We urge all churches to be places of sanctuary for those in danger today.

People of faith cannot turn a blind eye this weekend and we must rely upon the strength of God, revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to accept the freedom and power to resist evil, injustice, and oppression.

To learn more about the sanctuary movement, please begin here. For those facing raids this weekend, we are reminded of our scriptures which teach us:

O how abundant is your goodness  
that you have laid up for those who fear you,  
and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,  
in the sight of everyone!  
In the shelter of your presence you hide them  
from human plots;  
you hold them safe under your shelter

**July 31, 2019**

**The Leadership Team of the Illinois Conference of Churches has signed onto to the following statement from the National Council of Churches. The ICC is the ecumenical body of Illinois with 13 member Christian denominations.**

**National Council of Churches Opposes Federal Death Penalty**

The National Council of Churches opposes the Justice Department's decision to reinstate the federal death penalty and to schedule the execution of five persons. We affirm our longstanding view that the death penalty is both a violation of the dignity and worth of human beings and has also proven to be ineffective as a deterrent (see the 21st Century Social Creed and our statement of Sept. 13, 1968).

Additionally, the pervasiveness of systemic racism and classism intrinsic within the criminal legal process means the death penalty is neither fair nor just. In fact, we know that hundreds of people who have been sentenced to death — or actually executed by the state — have been determined to be innocent. In a time when states are ceasing this abominable practice, it is abhorrent that the federal government would seek to revive it. Our Christian faith is clear that life and the dignity of human personhood are sacred gifts of God and as such shall not be violated.

Institutionalized killing contributes to the brutalization of society. Such a final and heinous decision should not be left to the discretion of flawed humans and broken systems. Furthermore, society is served better by a system of restorative justice: as all are made in the image of God, we stand firm in our belief as Christians that all can be redeemed.

8/7/2019

The Leadership Team of the Illinois Conference of Churches, the ecumenical organization in Illinois, representing 13 Christian denominations, signs onto this public statement by the National Council of Churches on gun violence stating Gun Violence Must End Now.

**8-9-19**

**National Council of Churches public statement: Gun Violence Must End Now**

WASHINGTON: The news that two massacres took place this past weekend, one in El Paso, TX and the other in Dayton, OH, in which 29 people lost their lives within a span of 13 hours leave us numb, horrified, and in grief. These, the latest of 251 mass shootings this year, are clearly acts of domestic terrorism. Once again, the National Council of Churches lifts its voice in prayer for those who have been directly affected by

the shootings and, indeed, for the soul of our entire nation. Once again, we commit ourselves to supporting measures that will reduce and prevent gun violence.

How long O Lord, must we endure this violence?

We are deeply discouraged by the awareness of the near certainty that our elected officials will not respond in any meaningful way to this violence, for they are collectively and shamefully within the captivity of the gun lobby. Our elected leaders are guilty of negligence and cowardice.

Incendiary language from leaders also must be boldly and consistently condemned and countered. Racist, inflammatory rhetoric must be replaced by words and deeds that create beloved communities, ones that embrace ethnic, racial, and religious diversity. These are the values we wish to see in a vibrant, inclusive America.

The combination of readily available weapons of mass destruction and a toxic white racist nationalist ideology is a recipe for disaster. If we cannot confront these two evils, far greater violence and social disruption awaits our nation.

We beseech elected officials to renew the lapsed ban on assault weapons and to require licensing and background checks for gun ownership. We also demand that legislation which has recently passed the House, including HR8, be brought to a vote in the Senate and passed. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell must be held to account for blocking legislation that would have introduced common-sense measure years ago.

The National Council of Churches asks the 100,000 local churches that comprise our member communions to hold special prayer services not only for those affected by the mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton but everywhere around the world. We call upon our churches to hold conversations on racism and white supremacy so that these horrid ideologies will be eradicated. We call on our churches to contact elected officials and demand actions that will renew the assault weapons ban.

We raise our voice as a prayer to the one God of all. May our words be heard not only as lament but as a call to action.

See also: [NCC Reaffirms Its 2010 Resolution on Gun Violence](#)

[Read the statement online here.](#)