

## New UMW Campaign to End Family Detention

Greetings to you in this time of resurrection! We want to let you know about the United Methodist Women Campaign to End Family Detention, part of our Immigrant & Civil Rights Initiative. This new campaign provides continuity our ongoing efforts to end detention and deportation and stop dividing families. It also builds on United Methodist Women members' compassionate response last summer to Central American women and children refugees fleeing violence at home.

Since that time the Obama Administration has reconstituted large-scale family detention in three sites: Berks County, PA; Dilley, TX and Karnes, TX. United Methodist Women members in Austin had worked hard to successfully end family detention at Hutto detention center several years ago. Now it is back and growing. Both Dilley and Karnes are privately run sites, and Dilley is built to house over 2000 people. Those detained are mothers and children, including infants and toddlers through teens, who are being treated as criminals when they have come seeking asylum. Some have faced sexual abuse. Some children are refusing to eat and facing health problems.

Our long term effort to End Family Detention involves a collaboration with Grassroots Leadership, based in Austin, TX. We are inviting UMW members to screen the video "No Sanctuary: The Big Business of Family Detention" (30 min, which includes Deaconess Cindy Johnson), in circles, unit meetings, coffee hour after church, schools of mission, annual meetings, etc. My office will send a free video and study guide to the first 100 UMW groups that commit to hosting a screening. For details, see: <http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/what-we-do/service-and-advocacy/mission-focus-issues/global-migration/familydetention> This web page includes a hand-out and a letter or postcard to President Obama that members can download, invite people to sign, and mail to the White House. This campaign will also be lifted up in Mission U plenary, in connection to Latin America study. Please consider ways you can use the video and get our members involved.

Our short-term efforts are through a coalition of members of the Detention Watch Network. United Methodist Women national office is a member of DWN. This coalition has organized **ten days of action to #End Family Detention from May 1 – May 10, focused on Mother's Day**. Details about this effort can be found on a short-term website that United Methodist Women is co-sponsoring, [www.endfamilydetention.org](http://www.endfamilydetention.org). UMW will be sharing this through our social media. We invite you to share it through your communications networks. United Methodist Women members are invited to:

- Go to [www.endfamilydetention.org](http://www.endfamilydetention.org), and sign a petition to Immigration and Customs Enforcement director Sara Saldaña to end Family Detention. (There are efforts to arrange a meeting with her).
- Join the "Thunderclap" on Mother's Day – this allows all participants to send the same message at the same time through Facebook or Twitter to #End Family

Detention. Details will be on United Methodist Women social media and at [www.endfamilydetention.org](http://www.endfamilydetention.org)

■ Join UMW and other United Methodists at Rally in Dilley, TX on May 2, to close the Dilley Family Detention Center, May 2 – or see if there are vigils that day in your community, via the website [www.endfamilydetention.org](http://www.endfamilydetention.org). UMW members are going from Brownsville, Houston and Austin. We are collaborating with Good Neighbor National Mission Institution, Justice for Our Neighbors, the General Board of Church and Society, and Hispanic/Latino Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

In addition to this site, there are other ways United Methodist Women members can get involved in very tangible ways. These include:

■ Support backpacks through the Interfaith Welcome Coalition of San Antonio for families released from detention and left in the downtown bus station (details on ecumenical handout, attached)

■ Send Mother's Day cards to women in Dilley Family Detention center, via Church World Service (details on ecumenical handout)

Last week United Methodist Women General Secretary, Harriett Jane Olson signed a Faith Leaders' letter to President Obama urging him to end family detention. She shared this with UMW Conference presidents and our national Program Advisory Group, inviting them to sign and to share with others. We are happy to say that the call to faith leaders includes lay women in United Methodist Women! Please consider signing (electronically) and sharing with others. Deadline is May 1. Ecumenical partners are seeking a meeting with the White House office of faith initiatives to present this letter, and the number of signers will be visible on a sign at the Dilley, TX rally. Here is the link to sign:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Qt4idWyr-brcntdsKg5jdiK4rCStlZkN0QBc5ValDM8/viewform>

Thank you for all you do in ministry to women, youth and children. Thank you for sharing opportunities for social action in your conference. Please keep us informed of what you choose to do. We are so grateful for your witness!

Blessings!

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