

**Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-Colorado**

**Seven Things Lutheran Christians Can Do to Respond to the Separation of Families**

In early May, the United States federal government announced a new policy whereby families crossing the Mexico-U.S. border would be separated and criminally prosecuted. This policy has torn apart hundreds of families since it was enacted, and has separated over 1,300 children from their parents. Instead of addressing the root causes of why people migrate, this policy attacks those seeking refuge in the United States, causing further trauma and despair.

We echo [the statement released by ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton](http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7935), along with nearly two dozen of her colleagues in denominational and faith community executive leadership, which reads (in part):

“The security of the family provides critical mental, physical and emotional support to the development and wellbeing of children. Leaving their communities is often the only option [migrant families] 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.”

We also stand with the [National Council of Churches](http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/end-cruel-separation-of-families/) in specifically rejecting “the misuse of Romans 13 by Attorney General Sessions…to justify reprehensible actions. Many more scripture passages insist on helping the immigrant, the sojourner, the poor, and those in need of aid.”

Many in our congregations are now wondering what they can do to help respond to this cruel, inhumane, and unjust policy. Here are some practical steps we encourage people to take:

1. **Make your voice heard**. Write a letter to your local newspaper or TV station. Communicate your thoughts about this policy to your elected officials in Washington, asking them to exercise oversight and to speak out as well. Publicize Bishop Eaton’s statement in your congregation’s newsletter, e-mail list, or web page. And speak out on social media to engage your network of family and friends.
2. **Take advocacy action**. The ELCA Washington Office released an [Action Alert on June 12](https://secure2.convio.net/elca/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=1047), urging people to take action on a proposed budget that will influence the U.S. government’s treatment of immigrants and of the root causes of migration. Senators will vote on proposed funding for the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State, which includes funding for more detention beds and training of security forces in Central America known to have committed human rights violations. Add your voice to the Action Alert today.
3. **Preach and teach the Holy Scriptures**. Our Gospel witness contains repeated injunctions to care for the sick, the orphan, the widow, and the stranger. Hold a series of Bible studies on these texts in your ministry setting. Study the history of Romans 13, the text that was woefully misconstrued by Attorney General Sessions to justify this cruelty. Preach and teach from our common witness to human dignity and integrity.
4. **Show up**. A number of groups have hosted events around the country to protest family separation, including [Families Belong Together](https://familiesbelong.org/). Keep apprised of opportunities in your area, or organize an event yourself! Volunteer your time to help immigrant aid organizations in your community.
5. **Donate to churches and organizations on the front lines**. Many groups that are working on fighting back against this policy need your financial support. These include the lawyers of the [Texas Civil Rights Project](https://texascivilrightsproject.org/) and the advocates at [Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)](https://supportkind.org/). In our Rocky Mountain Synod, we have several congregations near the border that have stepped up to house asylum seekers who have acquired legal status, and your direct support can aid their efforts.
6. **Vote**. It never goes without saying: voting is your opportunity to choose the leaders of our democratic system at all levels. Ask candidates what they think about this policy. Hold officials accountable for their actions. Vote in primaries, vote in municipal elections, and vote in November.
7. **Pray without ceasing**. Pray for children and families caught in the middle of this policy. Pray for advocates and volunteers who work with them. And pray for government officials, that they might see the injustice of this policy and repent.
* *Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-Colorado, June 18, 2018*