



Greater New Jersey Annual Conference THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I write you today on a subject of critical importance for United Methodists in Greater New Jersey, both spiritually and temporally. This is the subject of immigration law, specifically the federal requirement that local churches verify employment eligibility for all persons hired after November 6, 1986.

I applaud the efforts of our local churches and mission agencies to be in ministry with immigrants, remembering the biblical call to justice for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. I commend United Methodists who have stood up for the rights of immigrants in our communities and encouraged reform of unjust laws. Know that I, along with the Cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry, am deeply committed to a policy of non-discrimination as we work together to make disciples for the transformation of the world. I pray that we will continue to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit for this vital work.

At the same time, pastors and staff-parish committees need to be aware that the U.S. Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement has been increasingly active in auditing denominational bodies and local churches looking for evidence of violations. In response to this trend, I have encouraged our Council on Finance and Administration to draft a document to help pastors, treasurers, and Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) chairs gain a basic understanding of local churches' responsibilities in the area of verifying employment eligibility. Also included is information about the policy passed at 2009 annual conference regarding the sponsorship of visas by local churches.

It is crucial to the ministry of United Methodism in Greater New Jersey that local churches comply with existing regulations, even as we seek to make immigration law more just. The fines and penalties resulting from non-compliance represent a significant financial and legal risk to our ministry. For this reason, I implore pastors, treasurers, and SPRC chairs to carefully study the enclosed materials, review the I-9s for each of their employees, and immediately begin whatever remedial actions are necessary to bring your local church into compliance. Please address any questions to your District Superintendent.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Continue to live as faithful witnesses for justice, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

Rev. Steven Bechtold, Chair BOOM

Mr. John Bishop, Chair CF&A