

ELCA presiding bishop responds to Supreme Court decision on DACA program

June 18, 2020

This church urges "flexible and humane ways for undocumented persons who have been in this country for a specified amount of time to be able to adjust their legal status."

— ELCA social message, "Immigration" (1998)

Today I rejoice in the renewal of dreams and the transformation of heartbreak into hope that today's Supreme Court decision brings to our nation's more than 700,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, their families and their communities. Today's decision recognizes the American identity of these young adults and values the long and deep contributions that these DACA recipients are making and will make to our nation.

Since 2012, DACA has provided protection from deportation to young people who have grown up as members of our churches and as neighbors enriching our common life. It has allowed them to remain in the only home they have ever known, pursue their educations, and work to strengthen our communities. For these reasons the ELCA has been on record in support of such a program since 2011 (CA11.04.26; <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Faith-and-Society#Socialresolutions>).

These protections can now continue, easing individual anxiety for the future and ensuring that families can stay together.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that our health and future cannot be separated from the well-being of our neighbor. Even as we celebrate, there is more to do to provide permanent protection for DACA recipients. Today's important decision must be reinforced by legislation that ensures our immigrant neighbors can continue to pursue educations, develop careers, raise families and worship alongside us without constant threats of deportation.

We look ahead and urge passage of H.R.6, the American Dream and Promise Act, which passed the House of Representatives in June 2019. It would provide legal status and a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients while promoting just treatment for other undocumented communities.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with nearly 3.5 million members in more than 9,100 worshiping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of "God's work. Our hands.," the ELCA emphasizes the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA's roots are in the writings of the German church reformer Martin Luther.