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Faith Leaders Pray for Central American Children on Both Sides of Border Fence



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On Friday, August 29th, American Baptist International Ministries (IM) missionaries, along with faith leaders from the Episcopal, United Methodist, United Church of Christ, Catholic and Jewish traditions, joined in a prayer service for Central American children fleeing violence. Faith leaders held a vigil on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border at Friendship Circle in Tijuana and San Diego.

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, and Jim E. Winkler, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, led the prayer vigil and called upon all faith communities to

show welcome to the children seeking refuge as they flee gang violence and life threatening circumstances in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

Also providing leadership for the event were several IM missionaries serving in Mexico: Ray and Adalia Schellinger-Gutierrez, Mercy Gonzalez-Barnes and Tim and Patti Long.

“Faith communities across this nation continue to urgently respond to the physical, spiritual and legal needs of thousands children and families who have sought protection in our midst,” said Winkler. “We’re a nation of more than 300 million. We can easily muster the moral courage and resources to protect children who are fleeing for their lives from violence, rape and exploitation. It’s simply a matter of justice.”

Leaders prayed for members of Congress to maintain and extend due process and humanitarian protections for unaccompanied children. Clergy also called on President Barack Obama to end the pain of deportations and provide administrative relief to as many undocumented people as possible. Community members and faith communities recommitted themselves to work together to alleviate the injustice of this crisis.

Medley said, “We have come together because the love of God is not held back by borders, and neither should our love and care for our neighbor. Every day, International Ministries works to serve these people on the other side of this fence; we must do our part once they come to the U.S. side to ensure they have humanitarian protection and assistance. Today we pray these protections stay in tact and are extended to not just Central American children, but also to Mexican children. We lift up our president up in prayer, that he might be on the right side of history in creating new administrative policies that keep families together, and stop deportations.”

Read a [letter](#) from the Schellingers, the Longs and Mercy Gonzalez-Barnes.

Watch a [live video feed](#) from the prayer vigil.

[High-resolution photos](#) are available for press usage.