



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

June 15, 2018

Mr. Jeff Sessions, Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Sessions,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the 5,000 congregations and 1.3 million members of the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA). As General Secretary, I serve as the national pastor of the denomination. ABCUSA has a long and distinguished record of service in welcoming immigrants and refugees to communities throughout the United States.

The American Baptist family would like to communicate our deep concern over the unjust immigration policies of the United States government, and in particular, the unconscionable separation of children from their parents on our southern border. As a fellowship of Christ-followers who recall the trials of the child Jesus and his parents, who fled from persecution in their homeland to another country (Matthew 2:13-18), we adamantly oppose separating children from their relatives. A just society can fulfill its fidelity to its own laws and border security without resorting to such unwise and harmful practices; instead, we urge that compassion, fairness and family-affirming policies characterize our response to the plight of families on our borders. We note that destructive practices such as the separation of children from parents place a serious burden on our law enforcement agents and officials, who in carrying out such policies find their own consciences ethically compromised and troubled.

Furthermore, we strongly disagree with your erroneous appropriation of the New Testament (in particular, Romans 13) to justify inhumane and unjust governmental actions. No responsible Christian theologian would assert that Romans 13, or any other passage in the Bible, supports the horrific separation of children from parents that we are witnessing at the present time. In fact, both the Old and New Testaments call those who believe in God to welcome refugees and immigrants with open arms and friendship, with loving care and concern, and with the willingness to assist others in enjoying the prospects of a future based on hope and opportunity.

Accordingly, American Baptists wish to express our sincere hope that the separation of children and parents will immediately cease. We urge Congress and the President to approve and implement without delay more compassionate and just immigration policies and procedures. As the leading law enforcement official of our government, it is your privilege and responsibility to lead such an effort. Thank you for considering our position.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Lee B. Spitzer, General Secretary
American Baptist Churches USA