

**CHRIST FELLOWSHIP'S VIEW
MINISTRY TO IMMIGRANTS
Edited September 2022**

We believe that our primary allegiance belongs to God. As a result, how should Christ Fellowship minister to all the people of North Texas while respecting the laws of the land?

OUR PRIMARY ALLEGIANCE

1. We are committed to serving God's kingdom above all others.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place" (John 18:36).

2. We are to live by faith both in God and in "the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14b) and the "kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Hebrews 12:28a). Although we are also admonished to obey the laws of the country we live in, we are never to sacrifice our duty to God's kingdom as a result.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had the opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them (Hebrews 11:13-16).

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect (Hebrews 12:22-23).

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe (Hebrews 12:28).

For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come (Hebrews 13:14).

3. Although we are citizens of earthly political entities, Paul reminded us that our first obligation is to the heavenly kingdom. Peter said that we are a royal priesthood and a holy nation, a people belonging to God with higher responsibilities than those that connect us to our earthly government.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20).

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household (Ephesians 2:19).

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us (1 Peter 2:9-12).

THE VIRTUE OF HOSPITALITY

1. Hospitality to strangers is a virtue in the Old Testament. Job cited his care for travelers as testimony to his integrity (Job 31:32). In Isaiah, hospitality was given as proof of true faith in God (Isaiah 58:6-7).
2. The Old Testament recognized the precarious situation of sojourners (or foreigners) who had come to live among the Jews. Without relatives or land, they would be dependent on the Israelites for work and protection. They would often be day laborers and might have been conscripted for work on the temple (1 Chronicles 22:2; 2 Chronicles 2:17-18). Sojourners qualified along with widows and orphans for the law regulating the gleaning of fields in order to provide food for them (Leviticus 19:10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19-22). The Bible teaches us not to take advantage of our hired workers, no matter who they are (Deuteronomy 24:14).

They also received a portion of the special tithe collected every three years for the Levites, foreigners, fatherless and widows "so they may eat in your towns

and be satisfied” (Deuteronomy 26:12; see also Deuteronomy 14:28-29). They were to be paid in a timely manner for their work (Deuteronomy 24:15) and be allowed to rest on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10; 23:12; Deuteronomy 5:14). They were to receive fair treatment in legal disputes and not be taken advantage of because of their status in society (Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 27:19). See chapter 3 in *Christians at the Border*.¹

3. Although we recognize that the Old Testament situation is not identical to today’s situation, we believe that our strong inclination toward individualism and isolationism in the United States has deteriorated our ties to the biblical virtue of hospitality and kind treatment of foreigners.

ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

1. The Church is God’s mechanism for penetrating the world with his love via the Good News of the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20).
2. Believers are neither to be conformed to the world nor are they to be isolated from it. They are to be counter-cultural in the sense that they are empowered by the Holy Spirit toward accomplishing kingdom ends rather than earthly ones (Acts 1:8).
3. Our goal is to cultivate a Christ-centered, Bible-based, Spirit-empowered community that dynamically draws people to love God, to love one another and to love their neighbors. The most profound way to impact our culture is to carry out our mission (Matthew 28:19-20; John 17:20-23; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:8-11). (See Christ Fellowship’s View on Social and Political Involvement.)
4. Working to create a Christian nation is not part of the mission of the Church. Our mission is: People helping people find and follow Christ.

¹ M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT (Romans 13 and Mark 12)

1. We recognize the important role that God has given to government in restraining evil. However, government is still subordinate under God's sovereignty. As Douglas Moo wrote:

"We must not read Rom. 13:1-7 out of its broad NT context and put government in a position relative to the Christian that only God can hold. Christians should give thanks for government as an institution of God; we should pray regularly for our leaders (cf. b1 Tim. 2:1-2); and we should be prepared to follow the orders of our government. But we should also refuse to give government any absolute rights and should evaluate all its demands in the light of the gospel."²
2. Jesus' teaching to "give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" in Mark 12:17 is a reminder to keep government in perspective. Our obligation to God comes before any other obligation.
3. United States laws regulating immigration have changed dramatically over the years in response to cultural and political pressures. We recognize that they will continue to change in the future. It is proper that our members be informed and engaged in shaping the ongoing political process and praying for a just political result. However, nothing in the current laws forbid us as a church from ministering to the needs of the people in North Texas and throughout the world or from sharing with them the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
4. Christ Fellowship will not give special protection or sanctuary to anyone who is accused of violating the laws of Texas or the United States government.

MESSAGE OF GRACE AND MERCY

1. "The Gospel of Jesus is the Good News of welcome, forgiveness, grace, and liberation from law and legalism. It is a colossal Yes to life and human aspirations, and an emphatic Not only to what contradicts our true destiny as human beings made in the image of God."³
2. We should always err on the side of mercy rather than judgment, "because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13).

² Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 809-810.

³ *An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment* (Washington, D.C.: Evangelical Manifesto Steering Committee, 2008), 8.

GOD VALUES ALL PEOPLE

1. We believe that all human beings have innate and equal value. Because we are created by God in his image (Genesis 1:26-27), our desire is to respect and minister to all who enter our community and our doors.
2. The body of Christ is composed of people from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9b).

PARTICIPATION OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS AT CHRIST FELLOWSHIP

1. We currently have appropriate standards for participating in our various ministries and they will be maintained.
2. If a background check is required or an immigration status report is normally part of the application process for a position, they will continue to be required.

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

1. We have created this document with the awareness that there are legitimate concerns surrounding the presence of millions of undocumented immigrants in our country. Some are concerned about the potential economic and cultural problems; others worry about the possibility of terrorists coming into the country via our porous borders. These are legitimate concerns that are best addressed by our representatives in government.
2. We believe that these decisions are not the responsibility of the Church. As our government’s policies change over time, we will seek to remain within the boundaries of the law while praying for a just solution.

As an evangelical church we believe that:

“Evangelicalism must be defined theologically and not politically; confessionally and not culturally. Above all else, it is a commitment and devotion to the person and work of Jesus Christ, his teaching and way of life, and an enduring dedication to his lordship above all other earthly powers, allegiances, and loyalties. As such, it should not be limited to tribal

or national boundaries, or be confused with, or reduced to political categories such as 'conservative' and 'liberal.'"⁴

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Acknowledging that our first duty is to God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Christ Fellowship seeks to minister to everyone in our geographic area as well as throughout the world. We will love our neighbors by sharing the Gospel with them and inviting them into our community of faith. They may participate at all levels of our fellowship if they meet our current standards for involvement. We will be diligent not to violate United States immigration laws.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Isn't Christ Fellowship violating the spirit of the law by ministering to undocumented immigrants? Aren't they here illegally?

A: Although we will not break the laws of the United States, we have a higher obligation to God's kingdom rule. We have been given a great opportunity to increase God's kingdom by reaching out to our neighbors from other countries. While they are here, we will minister to them with the Gospel.

Q: Don't we have an obligation to notify the authorities when we become aware of an undocumented person in our fellowship?

A: Current law does not require anyone to notify government authorities regarding a person's immigration status. Only when someone is considered for employment does the government require proof of legal residency.

Q: Would Christ Fellowship allow an undocumented person to be a member of the church? Would we allow them to serve in the church? What about holding a leadership position?

A: Since membership at Christ Fellowship is informal, anyone can consider themselves a member by simply attending. There is no reason to restrict an undocumented immigrant from attending the church. We would follow all current standards and procedures for those who currently serve in any role at Christ Fellowship. Immigration status is not an issue unless one applies for a paid staff position.

⁴ *Evangelical Manifesto*, 8.

Q: Would Christ Fellowship hire an undocumented immigrant?

A: Since the government restricts hiring someone without proper immigration standing, Christ Fellowship would not hire an undocumented immigrant.

Q: Should we apply church discipline to an undocumented immigrant in our fellowship? Is it equivalent to living in sin?

A: Church discipline is not invoked for every instance of transgressing a government established regulation. The government is responsible for handling illegal situations.

Q: Would we help an undocumented immigrant to find a job?

A: No, we would not play a role in finding employment for an undocumented immigrant.

*Christ Fellowship's views on this subject are guided by the authoritative Word of God.
Not all biblical references in the Word of God relating to each principle are listed.
Biblical references quoted are from the New International Version (NIV) 2011 unless otherwise noted.*