Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Immigration

After many email exchanges, unity was reached that SAYMA's response to the issue of undocumented workers and our spiritual response to the effort by some to persecute these neighbors of our, was best expressed through a minute of the larger issue of our broken immigration issue than by protesting against one of the implementing tools at the federal level - the I-9 form. We therefore recommended to Personnel Committee that they bring SAYMA into compliance with the I-9 form and its rules. We chose to draft a Minute on Immigration to present to Yearly Meeting. This Minute has been adopted with slight modifications by Berea Meeting and is under consideration by a number of other Monthly Meetings. We present the Minute for SAYMA's consideration.

Dennis Gregg, Clerk
Ad-Hoc Committee on Immigration

The Minute is attached to this report.

Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association
Proposed Minute on Immigration

As a faith community committed to welcoming the stranger, we are dismayed and saddened by the failure to find a way forward to craft an immigration system that respects the fundamental rights and dignity of all. We recognize that inaction at the national level has created a vacuum into which states have stepped to create their own immigration laws.

As Friends, we believe that there is that of God in everyone, regardless of citizenship or legal status. Our testimony of community challenges us to live with all of our neighbors in a way that encourages trust, love, and security. Our testimony of equality leads us to value each person as an individual and to respect the human rights and dignity of all persons. Our testimony of peace guides us to take nonviolent action to resolve conflicts in a way that brings us together and promotes justice.

Since Arizona Senate Bill 1070 was passed in 2010, many of the states in our region have introduced and/or passed similar bills that divide our communities and criminalize immigrants. These kinds of unjust laws create a climate of fear for those whose area of residence, line of work, complexion, spoken language or accent is deemed suspicious, even if they are citizens or legal foreign residents or visitors. When state legislation is passed that compels people to hide their identity from authorities, they must live in fear that they will be separated from their families, that they will become victims of crime, that they and their children will not receive an education, be exploited at their workplaces, and that they will lose their livelihoods and their homes.

We bear witness to our friends and neighbors in our community who suffer division in their families, exploitation in the workplace, and the daily fear of deportation. We bear witness to the thousands of deaths on the border and the destruction of border communities and the environment. The estimated twelve million persons living and working in the United States without papers are essential parts of our communities and economy, yet the system for regularizing their status is woefully insufficient. Criminalizing immigrants and those who care for them, as in the Arizona bill and those in our region, does not address the real challenges our country faces with immigration reform and resolution of the humanitarian crisis that results from the broken system.

We, as people of faith, are called not only to resist unjust laws and to work to change them, but to take the initiative to act in accordance with higher laws. We call upon Friends everywhere to urge our elected representatives at the Federal level to respond to President Obama's recent call for comprehensive immigration reform and urge our U.S. members of Congress to the take immediate action on humane immigration reform.

We call upon ourselves to act with integrity in response to these challenges and we rededicate ourselves to loving our neighbors, to doing justice, and to walking humbly in the spirit of love.

Note: This minute is based upon and borrows from a minute approved by IMYM on Sixth Month 2010