

**As Christians, let us love those who have recently immigrated from Haiti.  
Jesus expects no less of us.**

A topic that has appeared in the news recently has concerned the Haitian community in Springfield, Ohio. Since the presidential debate in early September, the community has been threatened by over thirty bomb attacks. These have affected schools, government institutions, and universities. It was stated in the presidential debate that the Haitians were eating the dogs and the cats of the community. Governor DeWine and Springfield officials affirmed that this is not true.

The Haitians in Springfield make up about a third of the population of the city. The city, which was stagnant with a declining population, has seen new life with the new residents. They are here under a federal program that gives them Temporary Protected Status. Some of them have been invited to the community while others have come to take jobs, especially in manufacturing.

A Joint Statement on the Current Crisis in Haiti was issued by the Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ on September 26, 2024. It begins, "Our hearts are heavy with concern for our brothers and sisters in Haiti. A land known for its resilient spirit is now gripped by an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, characterized by rampant gang violence and deep-seated political instability. As followers of Christ, we cannot remain indifferent to the sufferings of our Haitian neighbors; instead we are called to respond with compassion, solidarity, and action."

Ongoing gang attacks targeting vital infrastructure, including police stations, prisons, schools, hospitals, and religious sites, have instilled fear and chaos across the nation. According to the most recent human rights report from the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, at least 1379 people have been killed or injured and another 428 kidnapped between April to June 2024. Many of the weapons smuggled into Haiti have come from the United States from states with lax firearm laws such as Florida, Texas and Georgia.

The Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio are cruelly targeted again with anti-immigrant racist language and threats. A pastoral letter from Rev. David Long-Higgins sent on September 19 regarding the situation in Springfield calls us to "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths but only what is good for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:29)

As Christians, let us love those who have recently immigrated from Haiti into Springfield, Findlay, Lima and perhaps the community in which we live. Jesus expects no less of us.

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