

Christian Leaders to Gather at Border to Pray 'For His Children'

In order to do everything possible to help the unaccompanied children arriving at the U.S./Mexico border, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference/Conela, along with Convoy of Hope, Buckner and Somebody Cares International, are launching a new effort "For His Children" to help meet both physical and spiritual needs of the minors and their families.

For His Children is a messaging and mobilization campaign to save, deliver and heal unaccompanied children entering the country. Leaders from NHCLC/Conela have been meeting with White House officials and members of Congress to discuss the border crisis and encourage swift action. This campaign is just one of their efforts to provide answers to the physical and moral dilemma surrounding the immigration issue.

A large group of local and regional pastors, along with representatives from each of the aforementioned organizations, will hold a prayer service to kick off For His Children in McAllen, Texas, on Saturday at 1 p.m. CDT.

"This is about His children," said Dr. Gus Reyes, director of the Christian Life Commission and a member of the NHCLC executive board. "We pray because we believe in a God of miracles. We believe the crisis requires a solution that only God can provide."

The leaders of "For His Children" have asked that those not able to attend to commit time to prayer from 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. CDT Saturday, which is 2 to 5 p.m. in the Eastern time zone.

"Children, created in God's image, should never be unaccompanied nor should they be exploited, trafficked or

sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. I believe it is wrong for parents to send children to the U.S. border when the primary protective firewall for these children lies in a loving Christ-filled home where faith, family and education stand prevalent," said Samuel Rodriguez, president of NHCLC/Conela. "Correspondingly, as a nation and as people of faith, we must serve, heal and minister to those that have arrived in our nation because theirs, according to Jesus, is the kingdom of heaven."

For His Children will meet at Anzalduas Park in McAllen, Texas, where a large number of immigrants cross the Rio Grande, at 1 p.m. on Saturday. At 2 p.m. they will divide into three groups and go to the Border Patrol Station, BP Center for Unaccompanied Minors and Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Then at 3 p.m they will meet back at Archer Park for a closing prayer time.

"One need only to peer into the eyes of the frightened children and teenagers and hear the adult immigrants' stories of sheer determination for a better life to know that God has called us to be a channel of His love and compassion," said Robert Cepeda, director of Missions at Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association. "Even as the partisan political debate continues, may our prayer be that God will allow us to see with His eyes, hear with His ears, and feel with His heart."

The group will be concentrating its prayer on five important fronts: unaccompanied children, their parents, Latin American government leaders, U.S. government leaders, and the overwhelmed law-enforcement officers who are in the middle of this crisis and doing their best to enforce current policies.

"While the crisis rages and politicians talk, children having basic needs and emotional feelings should be addressed. A day of prayer and reflection where we make ourselves and others aware of what's happening will be a start," said Ruben Mendez, pastor and local chapter director at the NHCLC.

For His Children follows an informative and educational campaign begun by NHCLC/Conela across Latin America to urge congregants not to send their children to cross the border. Organization leaders met with thousands of pastors in Latin America over the last few weeks as well as White House officials.

Over the next month, NHCLC/Conela will launch a PSA campaign across Latin America through television and radio advertisements as well as leaflets, print ads and other materials with the goal of reducing the number of unaccompanied children at the border to zero by the end of the year.

"The current humanitarian crisis at our southern border provides us the opportunity to live out the narrative of Matthew 19:14 and display Christian compassion interwoven with our historic American hospitality," said the Rev. Tony Suarez, vice president of chapters for NHCLC/Conela. "For His Children exemplifies the NHCLC's desire to do both vertical and horizontal ministry. We have received calls from all around the country from pastors, leaders and churches ready to answer the call to service at the border. Our conviction is the same ... 'For such is the kingdom of God.'"