

March 4, 2015

Dear Central Plains Mennonite Conference Churches,

Yesterday we sent an email out to churches for you to be in prayer for the Villatoro family as Max was taken into custody by Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) officers. Here is a synopsis of what happened yesterday, March 3, 2015 along with an invitation for continued prayers and action you can take on Max's behalf.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers arrived unannounced at Max's home at 6:30 AM on Tuesday, March 3 and forced Max to leave with them. Max did not have an opportunity to say goodbye to his wife and children. Max was taken to the Linn County jail in Cedar Rapids, where he will be held until he is taken for deportation to Honduras. We expect that he will then be taken to Omaha and flown to Honduras sometime next week, unless there is miraculous intervention.

Family and community members surrounded Gloria, Anthony, Edna, Angela and Aileen and supported them as best we could on Tuesday. With David Boshart out of the country, Conference Minister Tim Detweiler has been walking with the Villatoro family. Bob Smith and Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, pastors at First Mennonite Church in Iowa City along with Tim Detweiler and pastor Alejandro Huesca from Iglesia Cristiana El Balsamo joined friends and family of the Villatoro family in a time of fervent prayer on Tuesday morning. Hispanic Coordinator Ramiro Hernandez and his wife Martha joined us for a time of fervent prayer and support in the afternoon. Tim Detweiler drove Gloria, Anthony, and Max's sister Norma to Cedar Rapids to see Max in the evening. We were given one half hour to visit with Max. Max was very glad to see us. While he is very concerned about his situation, he is also a person of strong faith. He asks us to be in fervent prayer for him and his family.

Max's lawyer, Dan Vondra, as well as leaders from the Center for Worker Justice in Iowa City have been working hard on Max's behalf, seeking a stay of removal for him. Gloria will be hand delivering paperwork to Omaha on Friday. Representative Loeb'sack's office has been contacted and they are doing all they can do to support Max's case.

We invite your prayers for our state legislators and immigration officials, that they may have compassion on Max and the Villatoro family. And we invite your action on their behalf.

Please take a few minutes to make some phone calls on behalf of Max. Max's A# is **094-338-085**. Suggested places to contact include: Hotline – [888-351-4024](tel:888-351-4024), option 2; U.S. Attorney Kevin Techau [319-363-6333](tel:319-363-6333) (option # 9); Omaha ICE center- Ms. Gasner, [402-536-4918](tel:402-536-4918); Cedar Rapids ICE center, [319-286-4671](tel:319-286-4671). Tell these officials to end deportation proceedings for Max Villatoro immediately. Max does not fit into ICE's deportation priority criteria, and should be allowed to stay and continue to provide for his family and community. You may be directed to call another number and make the case for Max to a different agent. Please call them too! The more people who hear about Max and our support of him, the better! Also know that your call does get recorded on Max's file. It does get noticed.

Iris de leon Hartshorn of MC USA suggests that callers offer the following information:

My name is\_\_\_\_\_ I am calling to request the release of Max Villatoro,  
#\_\_\_\_\_. He is a pastor of one our congregations in Mennonite Church USA. His wife and  
children are legally here in the U.S. He needs to be reunited with his family and congregation.

And please keep Gloria and the children in your prayers. They are devastated and hurting.

May the God who sets prisoners free act on behalf of our brother Max!

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