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Asheville Artist Kim Christman To Participate in Desert Walk In Support of Just Immigration Policies

Kim Christman first visited the desert Southwest region of the U.S. as a seminary student, participating in a prayer vigil at the nuclear test site in Nevada. Now, 20 years later, she's returning, this time to bear witness against unjust U.S. immigration policies.

From 25 May to 5 June Christman will join a Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) delegation on a 75-mile, six-day walk from Sasabe, Mexico, to Tucson, Arizona, calling attention to the desperate plight of men, women and children risking their lives to secure the most meager of jobs in the U.S.

As U.S. border policies tighten, the poorest of citizens from throughout Latin America are being channeled into the most dangerous areas of the desert to find entry. In 2005 alone over 250 job-seeking migrants died in the harsh landscape connecting northern Mexico's state of Sonora and the U.S. state of Arizona.

Economic justice, peacemaking and fair treatment of workers have been consistent themes in Christman's life. An artist-in-residence for public schools, Christman has used her creative talents, theological training and bilingual ability to build relationships between Christians in the U.S. and Cuba. She has made the journey to Cuba several times in the last fifteen years, and is now part of the mission partnership linking Circle of Mercy Congregation in Asheville, N.C., with Iglesia Getsemani in Camagüey, Cuba.

Christman notes that care for "strangers"—migrants and "aliens"—is a pivotal provision in God's covenant with ancient Israel. Exodus 22:21—"You shall not oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt"—is but one of many such references in the Bible.

"I felt called to participate on the walk to expose the suffering that many people go through in the desert. Their suffering is clouded over by political debate that often neglects to look at the human faces most affected. I also have felt called to join the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams," Christman said. CPT's identifying phrase is: "What would happen if Christians devoted the same discipline and self-sacrifice to nonviolent peacemaking that armies devote to war?"

For this action CPT is part of a larger coalition of human rights and immigration advocacy groups. For more information on CPT, visit their website: www.cpt.org. For information on the Migrant Trail Walk see www.migrantrail.net.