

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

GA-1935

Sense-of-the-Assembly

CONCERNING STEEP REDUCTIONS IN OVERALL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT ARRIVALS TO THE UNITED STATES

WHEREAS, we are called by our sacred scriptures to love our neighbor, accompany the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner, remembering the words of Jesus that “inasmuch as you did unto one of the least of these..., you did it unto Me” (Matthew 25:40); and

WHEREAS, a refugee is defined as someone outside of his or her country who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group¹; and

WHEREAS, the number of refugees worldwide has hit an unprecedented high of 70.8 million people as of the January 2019 United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) report, an increase of nearly 2 million from the previous report²; and

WHEREAS, while the number of refugees allowed into the United States (U.S.) currently is at an unprecedented low of 30,000, down from an annual average of 95,000 through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program since its inception in 1980³; and

WHEREAS, low resettlement ceilings are dismantling the refugee resettlement infrastructure created by our historical ecumenical partners, including Church World Service⁴; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has engaged in refugee resettlement for over 75 years, resettling tens of thousands of refugees in the U.S. and Canada⁵; and

WHEREAS, a diversity of Christian communions across traditions support the ministry of resettlement; and

WHEREAS, refugee resettlement plays a critical role in U.S. diplomacy and foreign policy, and demonstrates commitment to U.S. global allies that already host the largest number of refugees; and

¹ <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

² UNHCR 2018 Report, January 2019 <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5d08d7ee7.pdf> UNHCR 2017 Report, January 2018 <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5b27be547.pdf>

³ <https://cwsglobal.org/cws-denounces-trump-administrations-unwillingness-to-meet-its-refugee-resettlement-goal/>

⁴ <https://cwsglobal.org/cws-responds-with-outrage-to-reports-that-administration-officials-have-proposed-ending-refugee-resettlement/> and page 20 of Refugee Council USA Report <http://www.rcusa.org/report>

⁵ Previous General Assembly Resolutions: GA7127; GA7574; GA7945; GA7951; GA8330; GA8549; GA8775; GA9138; GA9720

WHEREAS, officials within the current U.S. Administration will soon recommend a refugee resettlement ceiling for Fiscal Year 2020⁶; and

WHEREAS, as of July 2, 2019, 8,818 refugees have been approved for travel to the U.S. and an additional 29,362 have passed required Department of Homeland Security (DHS) interviews, and may face danger if they are not allowed to enter the U.S. for resettlement;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Des Moines, Iowa on July 20-24, 2019, calls on members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to urge their congregations to engage in refugee resettlement among those who are arriving to their area; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2019 General Assembly calls on members and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to share their faith values of hospitality for refugees, in both private and public statements, through all forms of media, to deepen awareness of vastly reduced refugee resettlement numbers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that organizations such as Refugee & Immigration Ministries of Disciples Home Missions, Week of Compassion, and other ministries, provide communications and information to congregations to encourage their support for heightened U.S. refugee resettlement numbers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) make a formal public statement denouncing cuts to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and work with ecumenical partners to support a return to at least the historic U.S. average of 95,000 refugees resettled annually; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are encouraged to contact the Office of the U.S. President and their legislators to reaffirm the long commitment of Disciples to refugee resettlement and urge the administration to protect the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement Program and restore the resettlement ceiling to at least the U.S. historic average.⁷

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Rev. Jackie Twedell, Senior Minister, Bethany Christian Church, Richmond, VA
Rev. Virzola Law, Senior Minister, Northway Christian Church, Dallas, TX
Rev. Jake Caldwell, Senior Minister, FCC Hagerstown, MD
Rev. Rebekah Krevens, Foothills Christian Church, Glendale, Az
Rev. Jason Grow, Senior Minister, Bondurant Christian Church, Bondurant, IA
Kandice Williams, First Christian Church, Danville KY
Rev. Jeff Gill, Senior Minister, Central Christian Church, Newark OH
Rev. Megan Huston, Senior Minister, First Christian Church Bowling Green, KY
Rev. Evan M. Dolive, First Christian Church (DOC), Longview, TX
Rev. Caleb Lines, University Christian Church, Senior Minister, San Diego, CA
Rev. Steve Sherman, Senior Minister, First Christian Church Oak Ridge, TN
Milca Rivera, Co-Pastor, Iglesia Cristiana de Deltona, Deltona, FL

⁶ <https://www.archivesfoundation.org/documents/refugee-act-1980/>

⁷ https://greateras1.org/time-is-now-save-the-life-saving-refugee-resettlement-program/?utm_source=cwsglobal&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=alert190718