

Resolution 2017—2

Resolution for an Increased Advocacy for Immigrants and Refugees

Rationale:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its predecessors have a long history of helping immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers settle in the United States through the support of fair and generous immigration policies. In 1998 the ELCA adopted a message on immigration that supported previous commitments to welcome people into the United States. In 2009 the ELCA Church Council adopted a Social Policy Resolution (CA09.11.71), Toward Compassionate, Just, and Wise Immigration Reform.

Early in 2017 we have witnessed changes to immigration policy within the United States. These changes include a pause on the current acceptance of refugees, the deportation of undocumented immigrants (some who have spent nearly their entire lives in the United States), and the movement to further divide our country from Mexico with a border wall. These movements go against long-standing practices within the Lutheran church in welcoming all people with hospitality and dignity and calling for a just government.

Jesus himself identifies with the stranger, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35), and in Leviticus we read, “The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself” (Leviticus 19:34). We are called to treat all of humanity with dignity as we are created “in God’s image” (Genesis 1:27). It is within this framework that a just government shall work for the common good of all people, not just in the United States, but also globally.

At this time, it is important that voices within the ELCA continue to speak up in their call to welcome immigrants and refugees.

Resolved, that the Southeast Michigan Synod calls upon the Synod Council to request the Administration and Congress of the United States take the following actions related to laws, regulations and policies regarding immigration and refugees:

1. Continue the resettlement of refugees from all around the world, without regard to their country of origin or their religion/religious background, continuing the strict vetting procedures that were in place as of January 1, 2017;
2. Work with current immigrant families helping them enter a pathway to citizenship;
3. Work to navigate undocumented immigrant families and children through the process of documentation without deportation; and,
4. Work towards immigrant family unification and for them to gain legal residency and/or citizenship in the United States.

Resolved, that Southeast Michigan Synod congregations are encouraged to be supportive of the Synod Immigration Team and those trained in the Board of Immigration Appeals process in order to assist immigrants in gaining legal status in the United States by accompanying them in legal proceedings as well as providing access to “Know Your Rights” seminars.

Resolved, that the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly requests that the Bishop of this Synod:

1. transmit a copy of this resolution to Southeast Michigan Synod congregation pastors and council presidents, and request that these congregations and their members convey the items listed in the first Resolve to their respective Congressional delegation; and,

2. encourage congregations of this Synod to be safe places for immigrants, and if feasible and necessary, discern locations for places of sanctuary.

Submitted by

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The Resolutions Committee recommends the adoption of this resolution.