

# RESOLUTION TO ENCOURAGE ALL CONGREGATIONS OF THE SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE TO BECOME WELCOMING IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

## SUMMARY

This resolution calls on the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ and its congregations to become immigrant welcoming and advocates for immigrant and asylum seeking individuals and families as it recognizes the ongoing struggles of refugees and migrants who come to the United States seeking safety, security, liberation and opportunities but instead experience suffering as they fear raids, deportation, and witness their families being torn apart. This resolution further encourages the congregations of the Southwest Conference to help facilitate the development of policies that will reform our broken immigration system.

## BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

Our Jewish and Christian traditions honor the text from Leviticus 19:33-34 (adapted from 23 NRSV): "When an immigrant resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the immigrant. The immigrant who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the immigrant as yourself, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt." In Matthew 25 Jesus speaks of those who will receive the kingdom: "When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger you welcomed me..." Jesus also says (Mark 12:31, NRSV) "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

This resolution is in keeping with the commitment of the United Church of Christ to provide extravagant welcome to all God's Children. As negative stereotyping of immigrants increase, becoming an "immigrant welcoming" church provides a critical alternative witness rooted in Biblical and theological principles the United Church of Christ deeply values.

## TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS the International Association for Refugees has stated, "The world is in the midst of a long-term refugee crisis;" and

WHEREAS thousands of refugees and migrants come from throughout the world to the United States seeking safety, security, freedom, and opportunity, and currently we are receiving ~~nearly zero immigrants~~immigrants at an historically low level; and

WHEREAS asylum seekers are unlawfully being turned away from our borders; and

WHEREAS children continued to be separated, being taken into custody, held in hotel rooms, bypassing federally contracted facilities that are run by the state and sent back to their countries of origin; and

WHEREAS our immigrant brothers and sisters continue to suffer as they fear raids, deportation, and seeing their families torn apart; and

WHEREAS migrants bring us as offerings their stories and experiences, dreams and hopes, energy and skills; and

WHEREAS our new neighbors experience difficulties adjusting to life in a new country; difficulties such as language barriers, culture shock, a sense of loss and isolation; and

WHEREAS the welcome and support immigrants receive helps in the building of safe communities and future prosperity; and

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ (UCC) declares "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcomed here;" and

WHEREAS the twenty-ninth General Synod passed a compassionate immigration resolution that included encouraging "congregations to further engage in education work on immigration from a faith perspective, participating in border delegations and working toward making your congregation an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation;" and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ encourages all of its member churches in all of their settings to become active Immigrant Welcoming Congregations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ encourages all of its members churches in all their settings to educate their members, friends and community and advocate for change at the local, state, federal and executive levels of government;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ encourages the development of U.S. policy dedicated to facilitating the respectful welcome and inclusion of all immigrants.