

## GA225 Actions on Refugees, Asylum and Immigration Justice

### Resolution to Establish a Network of Immigration Lawyers

*From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee*

Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency, through its Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) program, to urge Presbyterian attorneys and paralegals—and translators and interpreters equipped in the necessary languages—to become trained in asylum law in order to expand the availability of legal representation; to work to broaden accessibility of training resources for this purpose; to encourage the work of existing pro-bono immigration support networks; and to establish a network of attorneys so that a list of resources exists throughout the United States to ensure the alleviation of the suffering of immigrants and people seeking asylum.

---

### On Declaring the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to Be a Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church

1. Recognize and celebrate the many ways that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has spoken out on behalf of immigrants, refugees, and their children, including the many statements and resolutions included in the document [“Presbyterian Policy Around Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the Dream Act, the Spirit of Which Includes DACA.”](#)
2. Recognize and celebrate the resolution [“Stop the Separation of Families”](#) approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018).
3. Recognize and celebrate the resolution [“Reaffirming the Ministry of Sanctuary by Congregations”](#) approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).
4. Recognize and celebrate the resolution [“On Affirming Principles of Sanctuary in Response to the Global Escalation in the Number of Displaced Person/Refugees”](#) approved by the 222nd General Assembly (2016).
5. Recognize and celebrate the history of many churches of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who declared themselves “Sanctuary Churches” in the 1980s, risking prosecution and imprisonment for the sake of those who were fleeing for their lives from the wars in Central America.
6. Recognize that sanctuary is one way that Presbyterians continue to live out the Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger and, thereby, some again risk prosecution and imprisonment by providing sanctuary to those in need.
7. Recognize that just as offering sanctuary to those in need is one way our churches are living out the Gospel of Christ, so too accompaniment of immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees is yet another way our churches are seeking to live out the Gospel by helping them as they struggle through the maze of immigration laws, detentions, and the fear of deportation.

8. We do hereby declare the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church” that supports and encourages its congregations, mid councils, and members to support immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their children, and to resist efforts by the government to separate families.

9. And be it further resolved that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through its Office of General Assembly stands ready to assist its councils in discerning their own calls to become “Sanctuary and Accompaniment” mid councils and congregations, to inform them of the legal risks associated with doing so, and to equip them to serve as places of welcome, refuge, accompaniment, and healing for those targeted due to their immigration status or other differences, while taking into consideration local contexts, capacity, and the results of congregational discernment.

10. Advise congregations that to become sanctuary churches they may need extra, external financial assistance, especially if providing sanctuary embroils them unavoidably in legal difficulties. Although the PC(USA) at the national and mid council levels cannot guarantee unlimited funding to cover such costs, and the self-designation above (Recommendation 8) should not be taken to so imply, the assembly encourages appropriate offices to provide information on potential sources of funds, legal assistance, and other forms of aid for their witness.

---

## Regarding the Treatment of Refugees

1. Direct the Presbyterian Mission Agency, working through appropriate ministry units, to do the following as soon as possible:
  - a. Provide the whole church with information about conditions that precipitate migration, about obstacles to care of refugees, and about detention and deportation practices.
  - b. Challenge violations of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, Refugee Act, Immigration and Nationality Act, and International Law.
  - c. Act on the beliefs expressed in The Theological Declaration of Barmen (1934), Confession of Belhar (1986), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that the church and its members may continue to be a prophetic witness against cruelty, hate, and racism.
  - d. Advocate to the United States Congress for legislative compassion in Immigration Reform.
  - e. Advocate to the United States Administration for humane implementation of Immigration Law and Refugee Policy.
  - f. Advocate for the United Nations to develop resources to support refugees in Mexico and in other countries bearing the burden and privilege of refugee support.
  - g. Provide a toolkit for local congregation action for reasonable and compassionate treatment of refugees.
  - h. Provide a report to future General Assemblies on progress toward achieving the goals of this overture.

2. Encourage the Stated Clerk, Office of Public Witness, and Office of Immigration Issues
    - a. to work with others, including ecumenical, interfaith, and civil society agencies, to develop resources for advocacy and welcoming for refugees.
    - b. to advocate for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to release, for the duration of the COVID-19 epidemic and any similar health or environmental dangers in the future, all detainees who are not indicted for violent felonies; to end and/or prevent the separation of children from their parents; to reunite promptly those who have been separated; and to end permanently the use of privately owned (for-profit) detention facilities as well as prisons.
  3. Encourage congregations, presbyteries, and synods to engage with the refugee community by participation in welcoming activities, advocacy for the development of helping public resources, and resistance to unlawful or unhelpful government activity.
  4. Increase budget by \$250,000 to include funding for a position, tool kits, and other resources needed for full implementation of this initiative.
- 

### A Resolution Supporting Immigration/Refugee Justice Work in the PC(USA)—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee

1. Direct the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC) and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP), in direct and sustained collaboration with relevant ministry areas from the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), to create a comprehensive policy report with recommendations addressing the continued justice concerns faced by those seeking to enter the United States via the southern border, and report back to the 226th General Assembly (2024).
2. Encourage continued collaboration between the PMA and the OGA to maintain and strengthen both the work of the PC(USA) as well as our partnerships with ecumenical and interfaith partners working on the border; this includes partners who are working in countries of origin and transit.
3. Encourage more regular connection and communication between the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee and PMA and OGA employees working on seeking to create a just system of welcome with dignity at the southern border of the United States.
4. Urge continued support and resourcing of all denominational positions working on immigration, asylum, and refuge-seeking.