



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

J. HERBERT NELSON, II  
*STATED CLERK*

*September 28, 2017*

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As the top elected ecclesial officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a denomination of 1.5 million members, I am deeply disappointed by your choice to lower the number of refugee admissions for 2018. At a time when the world is facing a refugee crisis, it is inconceivable that the United States would turn its back on the world's most vulnerable.

As you may know, Presbyterians have been on the frontlines of welcoming and resettling refugees in the United States since well before the Refugee Resettlement Program was established in 1980. In fact, John Calvin, the founding father of the Presbyterian Reformation, was a refugee, as he fled persecution of Protestants in 16th century France. As he guided the Presbyterian Reformation from Geneva, he knew that the church must reach out to and provide protection to the most vulnerable, refugees and immigrants. Presbyterians in the United States share a deep history of receiving and settling countless refugee families. We are strong supporters of refugee resettlement agencies, and we sustain refugee work internationally. This ministry is essential to who we are.

I ask that you reconsider the refugee admissions numbers to reflect the values of this country. I ask that you increase the numbers to reflect how the United States can and should respond to those in crisis.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) -- through partnerships with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and international church partners -- has the awesome privilege of working alongside refugees, those resettled in the United States and those still awaiting placement. These groups of people are the most vulnerable -- without home, without access to employment, without access to proper education, without access to adequate healthcare and fully dependent on others. They seek a life of dignity and safety to fully realize who they are as human beings. They want to care amply for their families. They want to be full participants in civil society. They want to live freely. In turn, we are enriched by the gifts they bring -- language, culture, different ways of looking at the world, and a deep desire to live independently. Our communities, our churches, our schools, and our businesses are transformed by their gifts. Refugees come seeking refuge, but what they bring to this country is hope. It is the United States' innate ability to

provide a platform for individuals to make it on their own that makes refugee resettlement so successful. We can offer and provide the initial support for these families, and then they take the wheel making this journey one that injects new energy and resources into the American landscape. Let us show the world why the United States is the land of the free and what that can mean for people who desperately need help.

We come from a people who were strangers in a strange land. Therefore, we are called to “execute justice for the orphan and the widow, and love the strangers, providing them food and clothing” (Deuteronomy 10:18-19). God weeps for the most marginalized, excluded, and exploited, and therefore, our faith propels us to minister to those communities. It gives us life and reason. It allows us to witness God’s majestic mercy and prophetic love. It is this same faith that thrusts us to seek justice. Let us be voices of justice in this world.

In the faith we share,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Herbert Nelson, II". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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