

**[OVT-008] Regarding the Treatment of Refugees**

**Source:** Presbytery

**Committee:** Unassigned

**IOB Link:** <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000518>

**Event:** 224th General Assembly (2020)

**Sponsor:** Mission Presbytery

**Type:** General Assembly Full Consideration

[OVT-008]

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## Recommendation

The Presbytery of Mission, a border presbytery, respectfully overtures the 224th General Assembly (2020) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to

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, 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 the 225th General Assembly (2022) on progress toward achieving the goals of this overture.

2. Encourage the Stated Clerk, Office of Public Witness, and Office of Immigration Issues to work with others, including ecumenical, interfaith, and civil society agencies, to develop resources for advocacy and welcoming for refugees.

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. Establish a \$250,000 grant to be used to implement the provisions of this overture.

## Rationale

Our faith requires us to welcome strangers and foreigners, Hebrews 13:2.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) should renew its commitment to compassion and justice for those who have fled their homelands due to fear of political prosecution and for fear of the continuing cycle of violence.

Many times in the past, General Assemblies have given endorsement to welcoming of refugees.

For at least three decades, the United States government has engaged in tactics and strategies in dealing with immigration that violate the United States Constitution, Public Law, and International Law.

Central Americans and others seeking asylum in the United States, are not admitted to the United States and are made to wait in Mexico for periods of weeks, encouraging attempts at illegal entry.

Refugee status is denied to those fleeing domestic abuse in nations unable or unwilling to protect them.

For decades, border enforcement has occasionally resulted in the arrest of adults attempting illegal entry into the United States, but in April 2018, the United States government initiated a “zero tolerance” policy that resulted in massive and unnecessary family separations.

The United States government is incarcerating minors under the supervision of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and in private detention facilities, which are below the standards of human dignity.

The United States government has allowed the following conditions to remain: Asylum applications take many years, sometimes including detention during the wait; longtime residents of the USA are in uncertain status because of the revocation of Delayed Action for Childhood Arrivals; immigration quotas have been lowered to unreasonable levels; and dishonest claims are made about migration activity, encouraging hatred and fear.

White supremacists, white nationalists, and racists are spreading false stories about the dangers posed by asylum seekers and other migrating people.

At the time of this overture, there are more refugees and displaced persons in the world than at any time since World War II.

We strongly believe God is still calling the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) to be a prophetic voice in support of strangers in our land. This overture will demonstrate our denomination’s commitment to serve those who have been forced to leave their own country and cannot return.

Statements from the Stated Clerk on Immigration and Family Separation:

- a. From June 16, 2018: [Strong policy statement on immigration policy.](#)
- b. From October 3, 2015: [Stated Clerk challenges Donald Trump's policies and his claim of being a Presbyterian.](#)
- c. From September 6, 2018: [Stated Clerk urges steadfastness on the anniversary of DACA repeal.](#)

d. From August 26, 2018: [Stated Clerk condemn family separation policy.](#)

Actions by General Assembly from Website Page (<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/>):

a. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) joined with other organizations to oppose H.R. 4731, the “Refugee Program Identity Restoration Act of 2016.” Read [http://oga.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/hr\\_4731\\_sign\\_on\\_letter\\_-\\_3\\_15\\_16.pdf](http://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/hr_4731_sign_on_letter_-_3_15_16.pdf)—March 15, 2016 (PDF).

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) joined with 272 organizations in a letter asking the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to designate El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras for Temporary Protected status. This status would acknowledge the danger present for many families in those countries and allow for a temporary immigration status for those families who come here seeking protection but do not meet the narrow legal requirements for asylum.

b. [http://oga.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/mid\\_council\\_ministries/2016\\_01\\_24\\_ngo\\_tps\\_national\\_sign-on\\_letter.pdf](http://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/mid_council_ministries/2016_01_24_ngo_tps_national_sign-on_letter.pdf)

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) joins other organizations to voice opposition to Immigration and Customs Enforcement's plan to begin immigration raids of Central American families in 2016.

c. [http://oga.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/mid\\_council\\_ministries/2016\\_01\\_24\\_ngo\\_tps\\_national\\_sign-on\\_letter.pdf](http://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/mid_council_ministries/2016_01_24_ngo_tps_national_sign-on_letter.pdf)—December 31, 2015 (PDF)

The above initiatives of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) were taking in concert with the other mainline Protestant churches, i.e. The Episcopal Church, The United Methodist Church, Lutheran Refugee Services, and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) moral leadership was in cooperation with all major churches in this country.