

MIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION ISSUES

Resolved, that the 157th Convention of the Diocese of California ask the bishop to create a Task Force on Migration and Immigration Issues to do the following:

- 1) Implement, and support others who are implementing, General Convention Resolution A017 in the Diocese of California.
- 2) Provide opportunities and resources for education and engagement regarding immigration and migration issues;
- 3) Report to Diocesan Council on task force actions, activities, and recommendations that support the resolution.
- 4) Include the Diocesan Officer for Faith Formation, the Executive Officer, and the Bishop as *ex officio* members of the Task Force on Migration and Immigration Issues; and be it further

Resolved, that the Diocese of California advocate for the well being and protection of immigrants and urge its members to resist legislation and actions which violate our fundamental beliefs as Christians, including the criminalization of persons providing humanitarian assistance to migrants and new criminal or civil penalties for undocumented immigrants living in the U.S.; and be it further

Resolved, that Episcopalians in the Diocese of California, as a matter of Christian responsibility, welcome strangers and offer them humanitarian aid when needed, regardless of immigration status.

Explanation:

The purpose of this RESOLUTION ON MIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION ISSUES is to implement Resolution A017, "Fundamental Immigration Principles," passed by the 75th General Convention in June, 2006, which sets forth principles and makes them the official policy of the Episcopal Church. (Please see Resolution A017 inserted in the last page in this explanation.) This diocesan resolution creates a task force to initiate, inform and oversee the General Resolution's implementation in the Diocese of California. Resolution A017 recognizes that immigrants, here legally or undocumented, are among the most vulnerable people in society. Therefore, all members of the Diocese are called to do the following:

Regardless of immigration status:

Welcome strangers and, when needed, offer them humanitarian assistance.

Advocate for their well being and protection.

Treat others as we want to be treated and resist legislation that would try to dictate otherwise.

The additional clause at the end of the third resolve says that we will also resist the criminalization of an undocumented person's presence in the country. To promote public safety, law enforcement in the counties of the Bay Area have gone through great efforts to inform undocumented immigrants that they can report crimes, come forward as witnesses, and seek assistance without concern about deportation. Criminalization would undo work that has taken years to develop.

Refugees. Since 9/11, concerns over terrorism have resulted in reduction of admission of refugees to the U.S. by about 50%. Moreover, proposed immigration laws further hinder people seeking asylum. According to "The Alien Among You," published in the 2006 General Convention "blue book": Those who arrive as refugees are generally victims rather than perpetrators of terror, and the lack of evidence associating refugees with terrorism supports maintaining an admissions policy of open and responsible resettlement.

Immigration. Regarding immigration, again according to "The Alien Among You": The overall U.S. immigration system is not working well, and there is a growing consensus about the need for change. Immigration law that was intended to reunite families has resulted in the delay of several years before some spouses and other relatives can receive visas to immigrate to the United States. The presence of millions of undocumented aliens—especially agricultural workers and others who perform unskilled or

low skilled jobs that are critical to the American economy—encourages an “underground” world, creates an environment of constant anxiety for the aliens and the communities in which they work, engenders inhospitable and cruel separation of families, and makes it nearly impossible for the undocumented workers to achieve regular and permanent status in the United States.

An issue of faith and stewardship of our community. With others in an interfaith effort, the Episcopal Church sees the issue as one of faith and faithfulness to God's call.

"Comprehensive immigration reform" deals with the big picture, i.e. laws that can be humanely enforced, a compassionate approach which incorporates the undocumented immigrants who have established ties in the U.S., and laws and procedures which expedite the reunification of families, supply needed temporary workers, and offer appropriate judicial oversight. In other words, comprehensive immigration reform provides additional security for the U.S. while at the same time providing more access to legal entry at a level consistent with the ongoing needs of the U.S. and its people. Policymakers envision that a reasonable opportunity for legal entry will discourage people from risking their lives to enter the country without going through the proper procedures.

Holy Scriptures tells us:

Strangers are vulnerable in a foreign land. (The Book of Ruth; the Hebrews in Egypt)

God protects the alien and calls us all to do the same. The Hebrew people were once aliens in the land of Egypt. In the U.S., we live the parallel: We are a country of immigrants. Therefore:

You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien.(Exodus 22:21)

Treat the alien as a "citizen," and love the alien as yourself. (Lev. 19:33-34)

God "loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing." (Deut. 10:17-19)

Christ calls us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, tend to the sick, and visit the imprisoned, for "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Mt 25:31-46)

We promise in our Baptismal Covenant to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves;" and to "strive for justice and peace among all people; and ... respect the dignity of every human being" with God's help.

Undocumented immigrants living in this country are workers, volunteers, parents, children, and entrepreneurs. They have become part of the fabric of our communities, schools, and churches. Their forced exit would be cruel to them, and it would leave a vacuum in our society. Their departure would cause significant disruption to the economy. Millions of jobs would be left unfilled. The country would lose their income taxes, social security taxes, sales taxes, property taxes (paid either to the government or through rents), and investments. The loss of their buying activity would affect jobs and the status of living of everyone living in the U.S. All of us would miss their drive, their entrepreneurial spirit, and our exposure to their cultures and world views.

"The Fundamental Immigration Principles", enacted by the 2006 General Convention of the Episcopal Church and implemented in the Diocese of California, provides a reasonable, humane, and responsible approach. While recognizing the legitimate need of countries to manage their borders, they propose the means for just and orderly immigration flows.

We Episcopalians in the Diocese of California have experienced the gifts that diversity brings. Of every race and ethnicity, the Episcopal Church has welcomed immigrants, not because they have a valid visa or have become U.S. citizens, but because they are our sisters and brothers.

FISCAL IMPACT: Anticipated expenses are primarily related to the preparation and publishing of materials for distribution and are estimated at \$2,000, to be spent on education materials, translation to multiple languages, and advocacy. Hosting organizations will be asked to cover their costs.

Resolution A017

Title: Fundamental Immigration Principles.

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church receive “The Alien Among You” in the Blue Book Report of the Standing Commission on Anglican and International Peace with Justice Concerns; and, while recognizing the duty and right of a sovereign nation to protect and defend its borders, adopt the following fundamental principles included in “The Alien Among You” as the policy of the Episcopal Church.

Undocumented aliens should have a reasonable opportunity to pursue permanent residency.

Legal workers should be allowed to enter the United States to respond to recognized labor force needs.

Close family members should be allowed to reunite without undue delay with individuals lawfully present in the United States.

Fundamental U.S. principles of legal due process should be granted all persons.

Enforcement of national borders and immigration policies should be proportional and humane; and be it further

Resolved, that the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church deplores any action by the Government of the United States which unduly emphasizes enforcement, including militarization of the border between the United States and Mexico, as the primary response to immigrants entering the United States to work; and be it further

Resolved, that the Episcopal Church undertake a campaign to educate Episcopalians as to the plight of refugees, immigrants, and migrants, which will include information about the root causes of migration; and be it further

Resolved, that this campaign calls the church to commit to welcoming strangers as a matter of Christian responsibility, to advocate for their wellbeing and protection and to urge its members to resist legislation and actions which violate our fundamental beliefs as Christians, including the criminalization of persons providing humanitarian assistance to migrants.

Submitted by:

The Rev. Anna B. Lange-Soto

Supported by:

Afro-Anglican Commission

Asian Commission

Latino Commission

Anti-Racism Commission

Peace, Justice, and Hunger Commission