

Overture to General Assembly of PC(USA) from Mission Presbytery

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Adopted by Mission Presbytery at October 2019 meeting

Please request your Presbytery to consider concurrence this Overture at its next meeting. If concurred ask your Stated Clerk to communicate this concurrence through PCBiz.

Resolved that Mission Presbytery, a border presbytery, respectfully overture the 224th General Assembly (2020) of the Presbyterian Church (USA), working through appropriate ministry units of the General Assembly Council, to do the following as soon as possible:

1. Provide the whole church with information about conditions that precipitate migration, obstacles to care of refugees, and about detention and deportation practices;
2. Challenge violations of the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution, Refugee Act, Immigration and Nationality Act, and International Law;
3. Act on the beliefs expressed in *Declaration of Barman* (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;
4. Advocate to United States Congress for legislative compassion in Immigration Reform.
5. Advocate to United States Administration for humane implementation of Immigration Law and Refugee Policy;
6. 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;
7. 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;
8. 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;
9. Provide a toolkit for local congregation action for reasonable and compassionate treatment of refugees;
10. Establish a \$250,000 grant to be used to implement the provisions of this Overture;
11. Provide a report to the 225th General Assembly on progress toward achieving the goals of this Overture.

Rationale Section:

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

Presbyterian Church in the United States of America 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 USA 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 USA, 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 USA, but in April 2018, the USA government initiated a “zero tolerance” policy that resulted in massive and unnecessary family separations;

USA 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;

USA 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.