

The Call to Offer Sanctuary

Rationale: Our current immigration system is causing unmeasurable harm. Children and adults live in fear. The trauma this is causing is a national health crisis. Teachers and counselors report that many students from immigrant families are tearful or disengaged, worried whether their parents will be home when they return from school or whether they themselves will be forced to leave the country they consider home.

WHEREAS, all of us are created in the image of God, the concern for foreigners and strangers is lifted up in the Bible numerous times, urging us to treat the sojourner as one of our own (Leviticus 19:33-34; Ezekiel 47:22), and we are called to love one another “not with words and speech but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18);

WHEREAS, the United Methodist Book of Resolutions includes a “call upon all United Methodist Churches to ... support those churches that prayerfully choose to offer sanctuary to undocumented migrants facing deportation” (2016 Book of Resolutions, #3281);

WHEREAS, the United Methodist Book of Resolutions calls on United Methodists to “strengthen their resolve to be faithful to respond to the needs of others, particularly as we face laws, whose primary intent is to discourage Christians from fulfilling their mission to love and help the neighbor. We remember when the apostles were faced by similar circumstances after authorities wanted to impede the fulfillment of their mission, they firmly declared in Acts 5:29: ‘We must obey God rather humans!’ hence the Christian mandate to engage in civil disobedience when laws and policies deem to be unjust.” (2016 Book of Resolutions #3284).

WHEREAS, some of our unauthorized brothers and sisters are told that they have no legal basis to remain in this country and are given final orders of removal even though

- they know that deportation will be a death sentence, or

- their country of origin is a place of poverty, violence, or tyranny and not compatible with life, or
- they have not been to their country of origin for many years, have no familiarity with it, and know no one there, or
- the United States is their home and their national loyalty is to the United States, or
- their families will remain here and they cannot accept separation from their loved ones, or
- legal errors, improper judgements, or new evidence justify relief from their deportation order.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Great Plains Conference of The United Methodist Church urges congregations to show radical hospitality to all of God's children, especially the persecuted ones, and encourages congregations to explore offering sanctuary to those crying out for help who are suffering under our unjust and broken immigration system;

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church commits to providing spiritual and material support to its congregations that choose to offer sanctuary for the sojourner among us.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church endorses the Council of Bishops Immigration Task Force Report and Recommendations and assures churches that as they take risks and act to offer sanctuary, they will have Conference support and that pastors need not fear for their appointments.

Implemented by: Great Plains Conference Congregations; Great Plains Mercy & Justice Team; Great Plains Immigration Rapid Response Team

*Resolution: The Call to Offer Sanctuary
Financial Implications: Yes*

Page 3 of 3

Date: March 30, 2018

Signatures: 115 signatures from laity and clergy across Kansas and Nebraska

Submitted by:

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This resolution was adopted at the Great Plains Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church (representing 212,313 United Methodists) on June 16, 2018 in Wichita, Kansas.