

Thirty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ

ON BECOMING AN IMMIGRANT WELCOMING CHURCH
Resolution of Witness

SUMMARY

This resolution calls on the United Church of Christ and its congregations to become Immigrant Welcoming as it recognizes the ongoing struggles of refugees and migrants who come to the United States seeking safety, security, freedom and opportunity but instead experience suffering as they fear raids, deportation, and witness their families being torn apart. It further encourages the development of policies to facilitate this.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

Our Jewish and Christian traditions honor the text from Leviticus 19:33-34 (adapted from 23 NRSV): "When an immigrant resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the immigrant. The immigrant who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the immigrant as yourself, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt." In Matthew 25 Jesus speaks of those who will receive the kingdom: "When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger you welcomed me..." Jesus also says (Mark 12:31, NRSV) "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

This resolution is in keeping with the commitment of the United Church of Christ to provide extravagant welcome to all God's Children. As negative stereotyping of immigrants increases, becoming an "immigrant welcoming" church provides a critical alternative witness rooted in Biblical and theological principles the United Church of Christ deeply values.

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS the International Association for Refugees has stated, "The world is in the midst of a long-term refugee crisis;" and

WHEREAS thousands of refugees and migrants come from throughout the world to the United States seeking safety, security, freedom, and opportunity; and

WHEREAS our immigrant brothers and sisters continue to suffer as they fear raids, deportation, and seeing their families torn apart; and

Whereas migrants bring us as offerings their stories and experiences, dreams and hopes, energy and skills; and

Whereas our new neighbors experience difficulties adjusting to life in a new country; difficulties such as language barriers, culture shock, a sense of loss and isolation; and

Whereas the welcome and support immigrants receive helps in the building of safe communities and future prosperity; and

Whereas the United Church of Christ (UCC) declares “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcomed here;”

Whereas the twenty-ninth General Synod passed a compassionate immigration resolution that included encouraging “congregations to further engage in education work on immigration from a faith perspective, participating in border delegations and working toward making your congregation an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation;”

Therefore be it resolved that the Thirty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ in Baltimore, Maryland in 2017 declares itself an Immigrant Welcoming Denomination.

Be it further resolved that the Thirty First General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages the development of U.S. policy dedicated to facilitating the respectful welcome and inclusion of all immigrants;

Be it further resolved that Thirty First General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages the National Setting, Conferences and Associations to call on their members to become active Immigrant Welcoming Congregations;

Be it finally resolved that the Thirty First General Synod of the United Church of Christ asks the National setting to provide resources such as, "Becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation -The Journey is Made by Walking," to assist congregations in this process.