

RESOLUTION ON IMMIGRATION

Background

As we consider the multifaceted and complex issue of Immigration, we wish to discern and follow the guidance of Scripture and the Holy Spirit. As the Body of Christ, we are called to offer a particular witness to the world, including the government. It is for the sake of the Body, its witness, and the unity for which it must strive, that we offer this resolution. The purpose of this resolution is not to convince, to draw dividing lines, nor to solidify political affiliations. This resolution is meant as an invitation to this part of the Church—Ohio Mennonite Conference—to work at finding a Third Way, rooted in the good news of Jesus Christ, on an issue that divides the culture around us. This is an opportunity to ask ourselves how we will be distinct from the hatred and polarization that surrounds us. This is an opportunity to ask how Christ holds us together and calls us to extend his Kingdom.

We believe that any discussion of immigration should include, at minimum, these truths: human beings as created in God's image, the biblical call to compassionate and just treatment of "foreigners" (Lev. 19:33-34), the specific teachings of Jesus (Matt. 25:35-40), and the worldwide nature of the Body of Christ (Eph. 2:19). Our Confession of Faith states that "the church knows no geographical boundaries and needs no violence for its protection." While Scripture commands us to respect and pray for those in authority, it also calls us to give our ultimate allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord, above "any human authority." (*Confession of Faith*, Article 23)

See also these Scriptures: Acts 11:1-18; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:26-28; Mark 3:33-35; Deut. 10:19; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19; Rom. 13:1-7; 2 Cor. 5:20; Jer. 29:7; Rev. 11:15; Deut. 27:19; Exod. 22:21, 23:9; Ezk. 22:7

Resolution

Individual component:

As delegates to Ohio Mennonite Conference, we commit ourselves to become better informed on the issues surrounding immigration, with a willingness to consider a variety of perspectives. Regardless of our own national origin, we will seek to reach out and build relationships with our neighbors, rooted in Christ's love and compassion.

Congregational component:

As members of Ohio Mennonite Conference congregations, we will encourage our churches: a) to become better informed on immigration issues, b) to promote healthy dialogue in group settings, and c) to pray for the Spirit's leading in seeking to minister to the needs of immigrants within our congregations and our communities. We call on our churches to take the risks involved in obeying Christ's call to "welcome the stranger." We recognize the benefits of doing so, such as the richness of multi-cultural diversity, the revitalization of our congregations, and opportunities for missional outreach. We will seek to understand the underlying causes of

immigration and consider how we might help improve economic and humanitarian conditions in countries of origins in order to reduce the pressure to emigrate. In addition, we will encourage our churches and individual members to contact their elected officials at local, state, and national levels to express our views on immigration. (see Attachment: sample letters)

(Attachment - for congregations)

Dear _____

*We, the members of _____ (congregation) _____, wish to make known the following:
We claim obedience to the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ to love our neighbors as ourselves, and the biblical teaching to welcome foreigners among us. Because of this, we will reach out in compassion and love to immigrants in our state, treat them with respect, learn from them, and seek to provide for their needs.*

We call on you, our elected representatives, to work on bipartisan legislation for immigration reform. We recognize that there are many complex issues to consider, but we believe that united efforts can result in solutions that a) treat immigrants with respect, b) avoid separation of families, and c) simplify the process for asylum requests. We recognize the legitimate role that you play as our leaders to ensure the safety and well-being of our country's citizens. At the same time, we ask that your deliberations and decisions not be based on fear or demonization of entire cultures. In addition, we ask you to recognize how the economic and foreign policy decisions of our country affect the ability of others to live safely and sustainably in their countries of origin, and thus directly impact the decisions of many whether or not to emigrate.

*We pledge our prayer support to you and your colleagues, as we seek to work with you to further our country's legacy as a place that welcomes the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free."
(Emma Lazarus - plaque on Statue of Liberty)*

Sincerely,

(Attachment - for individuals)

Dear _____

*I, _____ (name) _____, resident of _____ (address) _____ wish to make known the following:
I claim obedience to the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ to love my neighbors as myself, and the biblical teaching to welcome foreigners among us. Because of this, I will reach out in compassion and love to immigrants in my state, treat them with respect, learn from them, and seek to provide for their needs.*

I call on you, my elected representatives, to work on bipartisan legislation for immigration reform. I recognize that there are many complex issues to consider, but I believe that united efforts can result in solutions that a) treat immigrants with respect, b) avoid separation of families, and c) simplify the process for asylum requests. I recognize the legitimate role that you play as our leaders to ensure the safety and well-being of our country's residents. At the same time, I ask that your deliberations and decisions not be based on fear or demonization of entire cultures. In addition, I ask you to recognize how the economic and foreign policy decisions of our country affect the ability of others to live safely and sustainably in their countries of origin, and thus directly impact the decisions of many whether or not to emigrate.

*I pledge my prayer support to you and your colleagues, as I seek to work with you to further our country's legacy as a place that welcomes the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free."
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