



NEW HAMPSHIRE CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



...the Bible is clear: let the refugees in, every last one. ...
The moral imagination of the scriptures was determined by a battered refugee people.
 – Dr. Giles Fraser (Priest-in-charge at St Mary's Newington in south London and the former
 Canon Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral), May 2017

A RESOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN WITNESS

**The New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ (NHCUCC)
 Stands in Solidarity with the Maranatha Indonesian UCC in Madbury and with
 its Members (and Other NH Immigrants Similarly Situated) Who Face the Threat
 of Deportation – and Calls Upon All Settings of the NHCUCC to Provide
 Welcome, Support and/or Sanctuary for New and Long-Term Immigrants
 and Asylum Seekers in Our Communities**

Submitted by following NHCUCC Mission Groups: Immigration, Economic Justice, Racial Justice, and Peace With Justice Advocates. For more information, contact:

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- Nancy Pape, Chair, NHCUCC Immigration Working Group, nancy-pape@comcast.net or 603-969-7892.

1 **SUMMARY**

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 3 This resolution calls for the NHCUCC in all its settings (Local Churches, individual church
 4 members, Associations, and Conference) to offer spiritual or physical support, advocacy and/or
 5 sanctuary that will aid immigrants and asylum seekers within NH communities in feeling genuinely
 6 safe and welcome and, when needed, in disentangling from detention or deportation orders. This
 7 resolution also calls for individuals and settings of the NHCUCC to stand in solidarity with and
 8 provide support for the Maranatha Indonesian UCC in Madbury and for its members who face
 9 unconscionable threats to their safety, security, and family unity due to actions of the U.S. office of
 10 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

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 12 **BACKGROUND – and STATEMENT OF NEED**

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 14 Our denomination, the United Church of Christ, has a proud history of offering an extravagant
 15 welcome to all of God’s children regardless of their national origin, faith practice, or citizenship

16 status. In both past and present, the UCC (see http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration) has clearly
17 articulated that, as Christians, we are called to love our neighbors and welcome the immigrant (the
18 Bible often uses the word “alien”). Most recently, to underscore that no human is illegal and that
19 love of neighbor is foundational to our faith, in a Resolution of Witness “On Becoming an
20 Immigrant Welcoming Church,” delegates to the 2017 General Synod emphatically affirmed the
21 UCC as a denomination that welcomes immigrants and called upon the churches of the UCC “to
22 become active Immigrant Welcoming Congregations” (see <http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/>).
23

24 Despite the tenets of our faith, our country and state are now experiencing a tragic and frightening
25 resurgence of hateful rhetoric and policy proposals aimed at the most vulnerable in our communities
26 who have immigrated to or sought refuge in this country simply to find respite from violence and
27 oppression, to protect their families, to work hard, and to seek a better life. Thankfully, we are also
28 witnessing a parallel faith-led resurgence of a “New Sanctuary Movement” that aims to provide
29 support and protection for immigrants and refugees facing violence, discrimination, or deportation.
30 This movement aims to organize people of faith and moral courage to stand with and accompany
31 those who are in the crosshairs of anti-immigrant rhetoric or policy proposals or deportation actions.

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33 **RATIONALE**

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35 **WHEREAS**, all individuals are God’s children, no matter what their race, creed, country of origin,
36 or immigration status may be;

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38 And **WHEREAS**, in New Hampshire a number of our UCC Indonesian brothers and sisters from
39 the Maranatha Indonesian United Church of Christ in Madbury -- as well Indonesians from other
40 NH faith communities and immigrants and asylum seekers from other ethnicities, religions, and NH
41 communities – have been imprisoned or continue to face unconscionable and morally indefensible
42 deportation orders after having lived as productive residents of New Hampshire for many years;*

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44 And **WHEREAS**, we in the NHCUCC are profoundly disturbed by the rise of overt xenophobia
45 and racism in our midst and by ever harsher anti-immigrant legislation and by policies that enable
46 private corporations to profit from the incarceration of immigrants and refugees;

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48 And **WHEREAS**, we in the NHCUCC likewise are profoundly disturbed by the rejection of Syrian
49 and other refugees from Muslim majority countries as well as the rejection of unaccompanied
50 children crossing the U.S. southern border to seek safety and security;

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52 And **WHEREAS**, the Bible, in both Old and New Testament, has much to say about immigrants
53 and immigration as exemplified by Leviticus 19:33-34 where it is proclaimed

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55 “When the alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien
56 who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as
57 yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

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and by Hebrews 13:1 where it is proclaimed

* Note: On August 1, when many of our Indonesian brothers and sisters reported for their regular check-ins with ICE, one of our brothers was immediately placed in immigrant detention and six others, who together with family members number 19 people, were told to buy plane tickets and appear at their next check-in with tickets to Indonesia in hand. On this same date, others reporting to ICE from varied countries were also detained or received the same deportation order.

59 “Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing
60 that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”
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62 and by the birth story of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus and his family were
63 forced to migrate to Egypt to seek safety from oppression and escape from he threatened
64 murder of the baby Jesus;
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66 **And WHEREAS**, according to World Relief/Immigration Alliance “the Hebrew word
67 *ger*, the closest word to our concept of an immigrant, appears 92 times in the Old
68 Testament alone” and God is a God of justice who calls upon us to love the stranger and
69 the immigrant, including providing them food, clothing and shelter
70 ([http://welcomingthe stranger.com/wp_welcoming/learn-and-discern/scripture-and-](http://welcomingthe stranger.com/wp_welcoming/learn-and-discern/scripture-and-immigration)
71 [immigration](http://welcomingthe stranger.com/wp_welcoming/learn-and-discern/scripture-and-immigration)) – and in Jesus’ own words in the New Testament, we find parables about
72 the divine imperative to welcome and embrace the other, the stranger, and the one with a
73 different ethnicity (for example, the Samaritan);
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75 **And WHEREAS**, the United Church of Christ has spoken boldly and eloquently in the past and
76 present about the theological imperative that we stand united with our immigrant and refugee
77 brothers and sisters, as exemplified in the following General Synod Pronouncement and
78 Resolutions:

- 79 • General Synod 13/1981: *A Pronouncement: Justice in Immigration*
- 80 • General Synod 20/1995: *Affirming the Dignity and Self-Worth of Immigrants*
- 81 • General Synod 22/1999: *Border Justice Issues: A Challenge for the 21st Century Church*
- 82 • General Synod 23/2001: *Emergency Resolution to End the Death of Migrants on the United*
83 *States-Mexico Border by Offering Water in Christ’s Name*
- 84 • General Synod 26/2007: *A Call for a More Humane U.S. Immigration Policy: End Migrant*
85 *Deaths, Support Immigrant Communities*
- 86 • General Synod 29/2013: *Resolution Supporting Compassionate Comprehensive Immigration*
87 *Reform and the Protection of the Human Rights of Immigrants*
- 88 • General Synod 31/2017: *On Becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Church*;
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90 **And WHEREAS**, on October 23, 2010, the NH Conference, United Church of Christ adopted a
91 “*Resolution of Solidarity with Immigrants and the Southwest Conference/UCC*” decrying the
92 treatment of immigrants by the State of Arizona and also embracing the UCC’s 36-year-old
93 articulation of how all settings of the UCC should bring about “justice in immigration” by doing the
94 following:
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- 96 a. Advocate for the rights of immigrants.
- 97 b. Aid undocumented immigrants in attaining legal status.
- 98 c. Aid immigrants in reunification with their families and in placement in areas of the country most
99 favorable for their productive participation in society.
- 100 d. Assist in meeting the social welfare needs of immigrants; and
- 101 e. Be inclusive of immigrants in existing and new churches.
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103 **And WHEREAS**, aiding undocumented immigrants and those seeking refugee status in attaining
104 legal status, achieving family reunification, and addressing their social welfare needs (as our
105 denomination called upon us to do over 36 years ago) includes varied actions such as prayer,
106 advocacy, protest, our physical presence in a show of solidarity, financial support and/or even
107 provision of physical sanctuary;

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109 And **WHEREAS**, our faith is tested not when our actions are easy but rather when they are
110 challenging;

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112 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**
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114 Now (2017 and 2018 and beyond) is the time for the people and settings of the United Church of
115 Christ in New Hampshire to lift up our prophetic and moral witness against the unjust systems of
116 power and privilege that keep our immigrant, refugee and asylum-seeking neighbors from living
117 with the safety and dignity they deserve as human beings and as children of God;

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119 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**
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121 NHCUCC Local Churches, individual church members, Associations, and Conference Ministries
122 and Mission Groups are encouraged to enter into a time of discernment and action to determine how
123 we are individually and/or collectively called to bear this moral witness, whether it be

- 124 • holding individuals facing denigration or deportation in prayer on an ongoing basis;
- 125 • becoming better educated about what our faith and our denomination say about immigrants
126 and immigration by turning to the wealth of UCC and other resources as found or listed at
127 http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration and as provided by the new Sanctuary Movement
128 (see <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>) and its interfaith *Sanctuary Toolkit*
129 (http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/uploads/7/6/9/1/76912017/interfaith_sanctuary_to_olkit.pdf), as well as the ACLU FAQ for churches considering offering sanctuary to
130 immigrants or refugees (<http://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/ACLU-Sanctuary-FAQ-4-13-2017.pdf>);
- 131 • being a faith witness at ICE check-ins or other settings where our public prayer and presence
132 are powerful statements of our support for our immigrant brothers and sisters;
- 133 • being an advocate for changing federal policies and attitudes toward immigrants, including
134 immigrant children who know only the U.S. as their homeland;
- 135 • supporting and working with relevant immigrant advocacy organizations and the
136 NHCUCC's own Immigration Working Group on a range of immigrant support and
137 advocacy efforts;
- 138 • providing financial support to the Maranatha Indonesian UCC and making financial
139 contributions for the benefit of immigrants in crisis and under deportation orders or threat
140 (such as contributions toward the cost of legal services or bail support, the cost of plane
141 tickets for NH immigrant or asylum seekers who are complying with deportation orders, and
142 other needed individual or family legal or social welfare support as identified by NHCUCC
143 entities or partnering immigrant advocacy organizations);
- 144 • as a congregation, becoming part of the recently formed *New Hampshire Immigrant*
145 *Solidary Network*, through which each faith community within the network determines for
146 itself what role it will play in terms of providing sanctuary, support, accompaniment and/or
147 advocacy;
- 148 • deciding, as a congregation, to make your house of worship a place of physical sanctuary for
149 immigrants and refugees living in New Hampshire who desire to stay in NH while they
150 challenge a deportation order; OR
- 151 • undertaking other activities or actions as our faith calls us in order to live out the biblical
152 imperatives of welcoming the strangers and aliens among us and loving our neighbors.
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156 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**

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158 The NHCUCC urges its Board of Directors to expeditiously consider signing on the NHCUCC as a
159 named part of the *New Hampshire Immigrant Solidarity Network* (devoted to Sanctuary, Support,
160 Accompaniment and Advocacy), understanding that NHCUCC Local Churches, individual church
161 members, Associations, and Conference Ministries and Mission Groups will determine for
162 themselves the role they will play in terms of standing in solidarity with our immigrant and refugee
163 brothers and sisters.

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165 **PLAN OF ACTION**

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167 **IMPLEMENTING BODIES:**

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169 Four Mission Groups of the NHCUCC Justice and Witness Ministry – Immigration, Economic
170 Justice, Racial Justice, and Peace With Justice Advocates – will be leaders in increasing awareness
171 of and promoting or carrying out aspects of this resolution in accordance with their specific action
172 priorities and budgets.

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174 Relevant NHCUCC entities will receive guidance regarding direct action and immigrant support
175 from the Rev. Sandra Pontoh, Pastor of the Maranatha Indonesian United Church of Christ, from
176 immigrants and asylum seekers in our midst, or from the immigrant advocacy groups and initiatives
177 with which we are collaborating.

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179 The NHCUCC Immigration Working Group will take the lead in developing a sound and
180 accountable process for directing NHCUCC congregation and member financial contributions so
181 that such contributions can most efficiently and effectively support the legal and social welfare
182 needs of our NH immigrant and refugee brothers and sisters.

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184 The NHCUCC *Weekly News* will be used as a key tool for educating our congregations about this
185 resolution and these egregious injustices in our midst.

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187 **ANTICIPATED COSTS:**

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189 No additional NHCUCC budgetary allocation, beyond the existing Justice and Witness Ministry
190 budget, will be needed to publicize or carry out this resolution. Any external contributions made to
191 further the objectives of this Resolution will not impact the NHCUCC budgetary expense line.