

Statement from PC(USA) Stated Clerk, dated June 16, 2018:

As Presbyterians gather for the meeting of our 223rd General Assembly, we are mindful of the many issues of justice, peace and compassion we face, both as citizens of the United States and members of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While we face issues of peace on the Korean peninsula, tragic injustice in the Middle East, and the specter of climate change in our nation and our world, there is nothing of more urgency than the tragedy that is unfolding at our borders, where children are ripped from their parents and placed in holding cells, while their frantic parents scream in agony at the separation.

What has this nation become? How have we wandered so far from Jesus' kind admonition, "Let the little children come to me ... for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs"? How can this be happening in a nation in which so many claim the traditions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam and the critical importance of families to the fabric of our lives together?

Perhaps the most egregious aspect of this policy is the willingness of the highest legal official of our nation to suggest that if a mother has fled violence in her own country to save herself and her children but has not had a chance to make a proper petition for safety in the U.S., she should be taught a lesson by having her children taken from her. It is almost incomprehensible that these acts should be used as a warning to others who would come.

What makes matters worse is the audacity of quoting the Apostle Paul's admonition to believers in Romans 13:1 to obey the law (presumably whatever the law says), while ignoring the higher scriptural demand that "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10).

The crisis of tens of thousands of desperate people coming to the United States for relief seems almost overwhelming. But as the officials of our government attempt to address the crisis, we cannot afford to tarnish the highest values of our nation. We must not punish desperate parents by tearing their children away from them, leaving the parents without access to the children or assurance of their welfare.

In the name of God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Stop!

In the faith we share,

Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Commissioners' Resolution passed by the 223rd General Assembly of PC(USA) this week:

Commissioners' Resolution. On Stopping the Separation of Immigrant Families at the Border and Upholding the Integrity of the U.S. Asylum System.

That the 223rd General Assembly of the PC(USA):

1. Call upon the Department of Justice (DOJ) to immediately end the newly implemented zero-tolerance policy that is tearing apart families.
2. Call upon the DOJ to reunite parents and children that have been separated as soon as possible, under the care of the community, not in family detention.
3. Call upon the DOJ to make certain that every parent in custody knows the location of their children and facilitate regular communication between parents and their children until they are reunited.
4. Call upon the DOJ to not use possible reunification with children to force immigrant parents into a concession to plead guilty to a crime in exchange for reuniting with their children.
5. Call upon churches and individuals to advocate for the passage of the Keep Families Together Act in Congress, which would take away the power of the DOJ to continue separating families.
6. Call upon synods, presbyteries, and individual churches to understand, condemn, and work against the ideology of white supremacy undergirding these racist immigration policies.
7. Remind our denomination of the Gospel call to work for just and humane policies for all immigrant communities, grounded in the principles of family unity, human dignity, and rights.
8. Direct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to communicate the contents of this overture to the President of the United States, our representatives in Congress, as well as to Jeff Sessions, U.S. Attorney General, and Kirstjen Nielson, U.S. Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.
9. Strongly encourage congregations to learn about the impact of these immigration policies on the lives of church members as well as members of our local communities, making use of resources listed below:
 - *The Genesis of Exodus* film and Story Map resources: www.genesisofexodusfilm.com;
 - Family Detention: www.pcusa.org/familydetention;
 - *Sanctuary, A Discernment Guide for Congregations*: [https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc\(usa\)_opw_sanctuary_final_6.21_edit.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/pc(usa)_opw_sanctuary_final_6.21_edit.pdf);
 - Resources on Refugees and Asylees <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/refugees/>.

National Organizations & Organizations Along the Border:

Al Otro Lado - www.alotrolado.org - serves indigent deportees, migrants, and refugees in Tijuana & Los Angeles

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) - www.aclu.org - fighting attacks through the legal system

American Gateways (formerly Political Asylum Project of Austin)

www.americangateways.org - provides legal services and representation to separated parents. It's currently seeking volunteers to represent detained parents who've been separated from their children

Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project - <https://asylumadvocacy.org> - providing asylum seekers with legal aid and community support across the country

The Austin Bar Association Civil Rights and Immigration Section www.austinbar.org - is coordinating training for pro bono attorneys to handle credible fear interviews for asylum seekers

The **CARA Project** www.caraprobono.org - is currently recruiting attorneys, law students and paralegals with experience in asylum work. The group asks volunteers to be fluent in Spanish or willing to work with or bring an interpreter.

Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley www.catholiccharitiesrgv.org - shelters immigrants who've recently been released from U.S. Border Patrol custody.

Comfort Cases www.comfortcases.org - is raising money to provide backpacks to the separated immigrant children. Each case will contain items such as blankets, pajamas, toiletries, a stuffed animal, a book, a journal and art supplies

Detained Migrant Solidarity Committee www.fianzafund.org - organizes to oppose migrant detention and border militarization - *The Fronterizo Fianza Fund helps post immigration bonds and also supports still-detained people through small deposits to commissary and telephone accounts or miscellaneous expenses upon release. 100% of your donation directly benefits detained individuals and their families. The Fianza Fund is administered by the Detained Migrant Solidarity Committee, a grassroots collective based in El Paso, Texas (note: we do not yet have 501(c)(3) status-we remain a grassroots collective!).*

Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services www.elpasodiocese.org - is the largest provider of free and low cost immigration services in West Texas and is the only organization in El Paso serving unaccompanied children

Faith in Public Life www.faithinpubliclife.org - will be mobilizing faith leader delegations to the border to bear witness to this cruelty carried out by our government. We will share our experiences and elevate the stories of immigrant families who have been separated to raise awareness about what is happening.

The Florence Project - <https://firrp.org/> - providing legal & social services to detained immigrants in Arizona

Fuerza Del Valle - www.fuerzadelvalle.org - organizing workers & immigrant communities in the Rio Grande Valley

Human Rights First - www.humanrightsfirst.org - helping refugees obtain asylum in the U.S.

Innovation Law Lab - www.innovationlawlab.org - working in immigrant detention centers and hostile judicial districts; keeping the definitive list of kids being held

Justice for Our Neighbors www.njfon.org provides free and low-cost legal services to immigrant individuals and families in Texas.

Kids In Need of Defense (KIND) - <https://supportkind.org/> - protecting unaccompanied children who enter the US immigration system alone to ensure that no child appears in court without an attorney.

Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center www.las-americas.org - provides legal representation to low-income immigrants and families seeking reunification - *Las Americas is committed to helping families stay together in US and reuniting families across international borders.*

La Union del Pueblo Entero - <https://lupenet.org> - founded by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, a community union that works in the Rio Grande Valley from the grassroots up.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service www.elca.org - is raising money to provide immigrant children "immediate shelter and beds, medical services, counseling and therapy to help them deal with the trauma of family separation

Movimiento Cosecha www.lahuelga.com - is a nonviolent movement fighting for permanent protection, dignity, and respect for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States.

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights www.nnirr.org - works to defend and expand the rights of all immigrants and refugees, regardless of immigration status.

Neta - www.netargv.com - a Latinx-run progressive media platform telling the stories of what's happening on the border

Pueblo Sin Fronteras www.pueblosinfronteras.org - is an organization that provides humanitarian aid and shelter to migrants on their way to the U.S.

Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) www.raicestexas.org - the largest immigration nonprofit in Texas that provides free and low-cost legal services to underserved immigrants

South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project - phone 956-425-9231 is providing free legal services to asylum seekers detained in South Texas

Tahirih Justice Center www.tahirih.org - is providing free legal and social services to immigrant women and girls fleeing gender-based violence

Texas Civil Rights Project www.texascivilrightsproject.org - Is seeking “volunteers who speak Spanish, Mam, Q’eqchi’ or K’iche’ and have paralegal or legal assistant experience.

We Belong Together - www.webelongtogether.org - women for common sense immigration policies

Womens Refugee Commission - www.womensrefugeecommission.org - advocating for the rights and protection of women, children, and youth fleeing violence and persecution

Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights www.theyoungcenter.org - advocates for many of the separated and unaccompanied children.

Local Atlanta Organizations:

Catholic Charities - www.catholiccharitiesatlanta.org - Catholic Charities Atlanta shares the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops call to protect immigrant children and families seeking safety and shelter from violence by keeping these families together.

El Refugio - www.elrefugiostewart.org - El Refugio is a hospitality house located at 655 Main Street in Lumpkin, GA – right outside the gates of Stewart Detention Center. Our purpose is to serve the family and friends of men detained and separated from their loved ones.

GAIN (Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network) www.georgiaasylum.org - mission is to provide free immigration legal services to victims of crime and persecution

GALEO - www.galeo.org - GALEO promotes engagement of the Latino and immigrant community in issues that matter to them. Our efforts over the years have focused upon immigration reform and voting rights.

New Sanctuary Movement of Atlanta - www.sanctuarymovementatl.org - The Sanctuary Movement of Atlanta is an interfaith, multicultural immigrant rights organization.

Presbyterian Contacts:

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance - www.pda.pcusa.org

PC(USA) Office of Immigration Issues - www.oga.pcusa.org

Presbyterians for Just Immigration - www.oga.pcusa.org

PC(USA) Office of Public Witness - www.presbyterianmission.org