RESPONDING TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ATTACK ON IMMIGRANTS, MIGRANTS, AND REFUGEES

A Resolution of Witness

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS on January 29, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order to expand immigration detention in Guantanamo Bay Prison Camp. Detainees were not given a trial before being transferred to the Prison Camp. Administration officials have not offered evidence to support their claim that those moved to Guantanamo are gang members, and most of the immigrants whose identities have become public did not have criminal records;[1] and

WHEREAS on January 29, 2025, President Trump signed into law the Laken Riley Act, which applies mandatory immigration detention solely on the basis of an arrest or charge for a theft-related offense, without any opportunity to even request release on bond, risking the detention of people innocent of the charges brought against them. Prolonged detention without access to an individualized bail or bond hearing denies the accused their day in court – a constitutional right;[2] and

WHEREAS on March 15, 2025, the current administration invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, a wartime law that was used to authorize the forcible internment of people of Japanese descent during World War II, to authorize the deportation of Venezuelan immigrants to mega prisons abroad. This law gives the President authority to remove nationals of a country that the U.S. is at war with, and the U.S. is not at war with Venezuela. These nationals were not given access to a trial, a right to appeal, or time to notify their families, in violation of the constitutional right to due process;[3] and

WHEREAS there have been multiple reports of green card visa holders with no criminal records being detained or deported by ICE,[4] and in some cases, ICE has detained and sought to deport valid visa holders who participated in public protests;[5] and

WHEREAS the Trump Administration has deported U.S. citizen children of undocumented immigrants, and detained indigenous people with U.S. citizenship;[6] and

WHEREAS the Trump Administration is contracting with private prisons to house detained immigrants. Government inspections for years have found evidence of negligence at private detention facilities, from a lack of access to medical care to unsanitary conditions, including problems that may have led to deaths of detainees. Lawsuits against the companies allege that programs paying detainees as little as $1 a day to work is tantamount to illegal forced labor;[7] and

WHEREAS since January 20, 2025, the current administration has passed additional policies that violate the basic rights of immigrants, including:

1. Suspending all border entries, including asylum-seekers, effectively ending asylum at the US-Mexico border, as well as revoking the legal status of immigrants previously protected by humanitarian parole programs, such as Ukrainians, Afghans, and the Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan (CHNV) program;[8]

2. Suspending the US Refugee Resettlement Program and freezing funding related to the Program;[9]

3. Reinstating the "Remain in Mexico" policy, which forces asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their cases are processed;[10]

4. Attempting to deny birthright citizenship to certain immigrant children;[11]

5. Restarting the detention of migrant families;[12]

6. Rescinding the Sensitive Locations Guidance, allowing ICE to conduct raids in schools, hospitals, and places of worship;[13] and

WHEREAS some elected officials in the United States have chosen to portray immigrants as criminals, yet immigrants are statistically less likely to commit crimes than people born in the U.S., immigrants have had lower incarceration rates than native-born Americans for at least 150 years, and undocumented immigrants have lower felony arrest rates than legal immigrants or native-born Americans;[14] and

WHEREAS the current actions of the government against refugees, visa-holders, asylum seekers, and undocumented people leads many of these communities to remove themselves from public life, including attending church and being involved in their church community;[15] and

WHEREAS our Christian tradition affirms the belief that all people are made in God's image, including immigrants, migrants, and refugees, in accordance with the biblical teachings of Leviticus 19:33-34, Matthew 25:35, and Mark 12:31;[16] and

WHEREAS The United Church of Christ General Synod has passed over 15 resolutions affirming basic human rights for immigrants, migrants, and refugees, over the last four decades;[17] and

WHEREAS the Thirty-First General Synod passed the resolution "On Becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Church," which declared the United Church of Christ to be an Immigrant Welcoming Denomination, encouraged the development of U.S. policy dedicated to facilitating the respectful welcome and inclusion of all immigrants, and encouraged the National Setting, Conferences, and Associations to call on their members to become active Immigrant Welcoming congregations and proclaim themselves to be so;[18]

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms that all people are made in God's image and should be afforded basic human rights, including the constitutional right to due process.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ denounces all attempts by the federal government to violate the basic human rights of immigrants, migrants, and refugees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms that the federal government's actions towards immigrants, migrants, and refugees stand in violation of the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, the U.S. Constitution, and the 1951 Refugee Convention.[19]

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ denounces all violations and weaponization of the constitution, federal law, and international human rights law committed by the current administration, including its abuse and misuse of the Alien Enemies Act, its denial of the constitutional right to due process for immigrants summarily deported or indefinitely detained, its denial of First Amendment rights, its ending of the asylum seeker and refugee resettlement programs, and denounces domestic terrorism carried out by ICE agents working without uniforms, wearing masks or refusing to identify themselves.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the National Setting, Conferences, Associations, local congregations, CHHSM and all settings of the UCC to reaffirm their commitment to protect, advocate for, and serve our immigrant, migrant, and refugee neighbors during a time of heightened racist, anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, anti-transgender, anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia as immigration laws are weaponized primarily against marginalized communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon United Church Funds and the UCC Pension Boards to prioritize their commitment to exclude investments in for-profit private detention businesses, including but not limited to CoreCivic, GEO Group, and MTC; and to produce a report on divestment recommendations before the Thirty-Sixth General Synod. We further call for all settings of the UCC to review their investment portfolios and divest from such businesses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages the National Setting, Conferences, Associations, and local congregations to pray and speak prophetically in the public square regarding our call to love our neighbor and welcome the immigrant, whether that be through the context of public witness, public statements, legislative advocacy, legal action, ecumenical partnerships, or direct service; and to strengthen these efforts through coalition building and in accompaniment with immigrant-led organizations and grassroots advocacy networks.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms the religious and constitutional rights of Immigrant Welcoming and sanctuary congregations, and all congregations and clergy engaged in this work, to continue to welcome, pray with and serve immigrants, migrants and refugees, as well as speak prophetically, even as they face extreme threat by the federal government, as well as certain state and local

governments, putting at risk the safety of their place of worship, their financial stability, and their very existence.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages the National Setting, Conferences, and Associations to increase capacity and resources to support and advocate for Immigrant Welcoming and sanctuary congregations and all congregations and clergy engaged in this work during a time when their work is particularly important, relevant, and threatened.

FUNDING: The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION: The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

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