

RESOLUTION

CONCERNING SANCTUARY FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES

Whereas, people of Biblical faith were called to a ministry with refugees, for "the alien who sojourns with you shall be as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself" (Lev. 19:34); and Jesus reminds us that "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mathew 25:35); and

Whereas, Central Americans are fleeing life-threatening situations in their homelands and are arriving in the United States as refugees, and

Whereas, the United States Refugee Act of 1980 and the United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which the United States is a signatory, define a refugee as one who has a "well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion," and

Whereas, these refugees are most often met by the United States government with hostility rather than hospitality, frequently being deported back to the countries from which they fled, and

Whereas, the needs of these refugees and the dangers they face when deported have become a major concern of churches in the United States, and

Whereas, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada has expressed its concern for these refugees through General Assembly Resolution No. 8159, calling upon the United States government to stop immediately its deportation of Salvadoran refugees, and also General Assembly Resolution No. 8330, calling on congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to extend hospitality to persons seeking safe haven in the United States, and

Whereas, the activity of churches in ministering to Central America refugees and providing for their legal defense, social care, and advocacy of legal and moral rights has not stopped their deportation by the United States government, and

Whereas, as a consequence of the United States government's policies contrary to its own laws, local churches and individuals across the United States have responded to the plight of refugees by extending sanctuary in a public witness to the situation of these Central Americans, and

Whereas, the 1949 Geneva Conventions state that individual citizens have a duty to protect refugees when governments fail to do so, and



Whereas, citizens of the United States, motivated by human compassion and conscientiously acting out their religious moral convictions, have been indicted and arrested by their government for providing sanctuary for these refugees;

Therefore, Be It Resolved that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, on August 2-7, 1985;1) Oppose the present policy of the United States government that results in the continuing detention and deportation of Central American refugees who have fled their civil-war homelands to escape persecution, torture and murder;2) Call on all officials of the United States government to equitably and justly administer all the provisions of its laws and international law in response to the plight of these refugees with special reference to the United States Refugee Act of 1980, the United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which it is a signatory, and the refugee provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949;3) Deplore the indictment and arrest of workers in the sanctuary movement who seek conscientiously to live their religious and moral convictions in meeting the human needs of refugees fleeing persecution and death;4) Affirm the religious and moral rights of churches and synagogues to provide sanctuary and protection for those fleeing persecution as an age-old expression of the biblical tradition of our faiths; and 5) Urge the United States government to grant "extended voluntary departure" status without further delay to all Central Americans fleeing asylum, remembering the scriptural injunction not to "mistreat foreigners who live in your land" (Leviticus 19:33)and

Be It Further Resolved that the General Minister and President shall communicate and advocate the provisions of this resolution to the President, Members of Congress, Attorney General, and Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the United States, and

Be it Further Resolved that the congregations and members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada be encouraged to study this issue and to give their aid in protecting the human rights of Central American refugees and sanctuary workers.

Be It Finally Resolved that congregations and other manifestations of the church be encouraged to declare their properties sanctuaries for Central American refugees.