



**Disciples Home Missions and Refugee & Immigration Ministries**  
**Letter in Support of Refugee Protection & Resettlement**  
**on the Occasion of World Refugee Day 2017**



Dear Distinguished Members of Congress,

June 23, 2017

As a faith movement born on the American frontier and founded on the principles that all are welcome at the Table of Christ, Disciples remain committed to fulfilling our biblical call to show hospitality to the stranger and treat “the foreigner who resides with you...as the native born among you” (Leviticus 19:34). In the decades since World War II, our churches have sponsored tens of thousands of refugees, and we have deeply appreciated what our partnerships with refugees have offered to the spiritual life of our church communities, and to the economic health and cultural vitality of our neighborhoods. We respect the characteristics of independence, initiative, courage and determination that have historically been a part of our American spirit, and we see such values reflected in the courage of immigrant and refugee individuals and families who are our neighbors and fellow church members.

We write this letter amidst fresh memories of celebrations in our congregations around the country last weekend of [“Refugee & Immigrant Welcome Sunday,”](#) where churches listened to, prayed for, and further strengthened relationships they have with refugees and immigrants in their communities. Our churches likewise have honored World Refugee Day this week through celebrations, and have read the [“Ecumenical Declaration: Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope”](#) which Disciples signed in March with dozens of other faith communions to renew our commitment to support the world’s most vulnerable populations.

From the first family of refugees resettled by our churches until now, we are ready to stand with refugees to offer protection from the conditions of brutal persecution and violence that have pushed families to flee their home countries. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office [reported](#) just this week, there is currently an unprecedented number of 65.6 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, over 22.5 million of whom are refugees. Fifty-five percent of refugees worldwide are from the three nations of Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan, and the top five hosting nations are Turkey (with 2.9 million refugees), Pakistan (with 1.4 million), and Lebanon, Iran, and Uganda (each with about 1 million refugees). With such high levels of refugees, UNHCR reports a resettlement need in 2017 of 1.19 million persons; as resettlement plays a growing role in the group of solutions essential to meet global refugee needs.

In this context, we urge Congress to ensure the United States continues to play our own significant roles in generously offering welcome and compassion through the public-private partnership of refugee resettlement. Specifically, we request your support for a Presidential Determination of at least 75,000 refugees in 2018. Our churches are ready to help welcome these refugees through such resettlements. We likewise urge robust funding for the Office of Refugee Resettlement, so it may keep aiding refugees to gain self-sufficiency quickly upon arrival, and help them continue to become employed at rates of 85% within their first 180 days of entrance. At the same time, we call upon your leadership to maintain strong international assistance for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons—recognizing that less than 1% of the world’s refugees are ever resettled to a third country. Finally, we compel you to resist support for any legislation that threatens to dismantle support for the U.S. refugee resettlement process.

Amidst global violence, we are grateful for a U.S. refugee vetting process that is strong, careful, and unmatched around the world. Because of it, we are thankful that refugees can be considered the most heavily vetted of any individuals who enter our nation. As we know they likewise are among the most vulnerable in the world, we thank you for your ongoing leadership that can continue to demonstrate how America can be both safe and compassionate without discrimination. For, as our sacred scriptures remind us, we must “not forget to show hospitality to strangers; for by doing so, some have entertained angels unawares.” (Hebrews 13:2).

With prayers for your leadership,

Rev. Dr. Ronald Degges, President,  
Disciples Home Missions

Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Director  
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries