

**EMERGENCY RESOLUTION**  
**GA-1739**  
**(Sense-of-the-Assembly)**  
**CONCERNING EXECUTIVE ORDER 13780 AND RESULTING ADVERSE EFFECT ON**  
**REFUGEES SEEKING SAFETY IN THE US AND RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES**

**WHEREAS**, Executive Order 13780 (EO 13780) limits the number of refugees to be resettled in the United States in fiscal year 2017 (FY17) to 50,000 individuals, a reduction from the 110,000 individuals slated for resettlement in FY17; bars resettlement to the United States for refugees for 120 days; and bars indefinitely resettlement from six named countries;<sup>1</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, the ruling of the Supreme Court on June 26, 2017, partially lifted a lower court halt on the implementation of EO 13780, allowing the ban on travel or resettlement to go into effect for any foreign national who cannot prove a "bona fide relationship with any person or entity in the United States;"<sup>2</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Department of State's definition of a "bona fide relationship" excludes relatives such as grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews without consideration for cultural definitions of family or for the realities many refugees face, and also excludes the established relationship between refugees and the United States agencies contracted to resettle them; and

**WHEREAS**, while more than seventy-percent of refugees are estimated to have some kind of family tie with relatives in the US,<sup>3</sup> far fewer are able to meet the narrow definition of a "bona fide relationship," and the ability to obtain documentation of such relationships is made extraordinarily difficult since, by definition, refugees have fled persecution, war, and violence, and often experience the separation of families;<sup>4</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, relationships between refugees and U.S. resettlement agencies are established and well documented, including through the process of allocations and assurances, by which each agency affirms with signed documentation that they will resettle each refugee by name; and

**WHEREAS**, EO 13780 will function to dismantle the entire refugee resettlement program that has been built by Americans of faith and goodwill across generations; and

**WHEREAS**, Disciples leaders and ministries have made numerous statements in print, through press conferences, through amici briefs, and in congregations concerning EO 13780 and in support of refugees, inspired by scriptures such as Romans 10:12-13, which declares "no difference between Jew and Gentile;"<sup>5</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, ecumenical partners, the National Councils of Churches in the United States, and the Canadian Council of Churches have issued statements in support of refugees and the refugee resettlement programs of the United States and Canada, and the Canadian Council of Churches have likewise called the U.S. to accountability to offer safety to refugees seeking to claim asylum at our border per the Safe Third Country Agreement;<sup>6</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, global ecumenical partners are urging our partnership in welcoming refugees; and

**WHEREAS**, scripture includes the stories of persons who are displaced as exiles and refugees (Genesis 42-43; Exodus 2:15-22; Ruth 1; Psalm 137; Acts 11), including the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:13-15); and the witness of scripture exhorts us to love our neighbors (Luke 10:25-28; John 13:34; 1 John 4:7), care for strangers and foreigners (Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 24:22; Deuteronomy 10:18-19;

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Order 13780: "Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States," <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/06/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states>

<sup>2</sup> Supreme Court Ruling, June 26, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/26/politics/travel-ban-supreme-court-ruling/index.html>

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Background Briefing on the Implementation of Executive Order 13780 Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States," June 29, 2017, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>"UNHCR Guidelines on Reunification of Refugee Families," July 1983

<sup>5</sup> See list of public statements in "Background"

<sup>6</sup> See list of public statements in "Background"

Jeremiah 22:3-5), show hospitality (Genesis 18:1-8; Luke 10:25-37; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1-2), and meet the needs of others (Deuteronomy 24:17-22; Matthew 25:35-46; Luke 18:18-22);

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 8-12, 2017, calls on members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to pray for refugees, for an end to the global conflicts, economic injustices, and impacts of climate change that displace people from their homes, and for welcome for refugees in all nations; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 2017 General Assembly calls on members and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to learn about and engage in the refugee resettlement process and the effects of EO 13780 and similar refugee policies, including through volunteering and relationships with refugee resettlement agencies, including our long term partner Church World Service;<sup>7</sup> and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 2017 General Assembly calls on the United States government to revise the functioning definition of a “bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States” to include refugee resettlement agencies as well as grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews, and friends, and requests the General Minister and President and the Presidents of Disciples Home Missions and the Division of Overseas Ministries with Refugee and Immigration Ministries to communicate this request to Secretary Rex Tillerson, Secretary John Kelly, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 2017 General Assembly encourages ministers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to include in their preaching and teaching the stories of refugees and the Christian call to offer hospitality and compassion to refugees, and to celebrate the gifts and contributions of refugees through “Refugee Welcome Sundays;” and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 2017 General Assembly encourages members and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to communicate to their elected representatives--at local, state, and federal levels--concern for refugees, support of the United States refugee resettlement program, desire for increased numbers of refugees resettled in the United States, and opposition to any reduction in refugee admissions and to discrimination against refugees;<sup>8</sup> and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 2017 General Assembly affirms and celebrates the work of partner organizations providing humanitarian aid to refugees and refugee resettlement in the United States and Canada; and

**FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED** that the 2017 General Assembly encourages members and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to connect with their nearest refugee resettlement agency and to support local refugee communities, initial refugee resettlement, and ongoing multi-cultural and inter-faith partnerships with refugee communities.<sup>9</sup>

Rev. Cyd Cowgill, First Christian Church, Lynchburg, VA

Rev. Nancy Carol Stahl, First Christian Church, Charlotte, NC

Rev. John Bain, First Christian Church, Stillwater, OK

Rev. Jennifer Riggs, Central Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN

Rev. Bob Perry, First Christian Church, Falls Church, VA

Rev. Dr. Stephen Gentle, National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C.

Rev. Miriam Gentle, National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C.

Rev. William Lee, Loudon Ave Christian Church, Roanoke, VA

Andra Moran, Woodmont Christian Church, Nashville, TN

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<sup>7</sup> Information about refugee policies and legislation can be found on the “Advocacy” page of the Refugee and Immigration Ministries website.

<sup>8</sup>Contact Refugee and Immigration Ministries for regularly updated resources for visits with your elected leaders.

<sup>9</sup>To find refugee resettlement offices in your area, go to:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/580e4274e58c624696efadc6/t/595a92019de4bbb650b10ec0/1499107841341/Public+Affiliate+Directory+7-3-17.pdf>. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) partners most closely with Church World Service. If they are not in your area, we encourage you to link with your local agency.

Bishop Valerie Melvin, First Christian Church, Reidsville, NC and North Carolina Region  
Rev. Sandy Messick, Northwest Regional Christian Church  
Jennifer Larson, Westside Christian Church, Portsmouth, VA  
Deb Perry, Chevy Chase Christian Church, Chevy Chase, MD  
Judi Frost, Arlington Heights Christian Church, Arlington Heights, IL  
Sara Simons, Woodlands Christian Church, The Woodlands, TX  
Stephen Michael King, Woodmont Christian Church, Nashville, TN  
Chrissy Stonebraker-Martinez, Franklin Circle Christian Church, OH

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Summary of the Development of EO 13780**

On January 27, 2017 President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 13769, which suspended for 120 days entry of all refugees, suspended for 90 days the entry of travelers from 6 majority Muslim countries, and suspended indefinitely entry of travelers and refugees from Syria. Almost immediately upon implementation, mass protests began at airports and ports of entry across the country. Several federal courts blocked implementation of parts of EO 13769 until a US District Court blocked the ban nationwide on February 3, 2017. The US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the District Court decision.

On March 6, 2017, The President issued Executive Order 13780, which superseded the January order. Two federal appeals courts (the Courts of Appeals in 4th and 9th Circuits) blocked implementation of EO13780 (<http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/25/politics/read-travel-ban-ruling/index.html>) and <http://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/general/2017/04/20/17-15589%20Interfaith%20Group%20Amicus.pdf>). The Trump administration appealed the two cases to the Supreme Court, requesting a stay of the lower court decisions until such time as the Supreme Court would hear the full case. On June ##, The Supreme Court partially granted the administration's request, allowing limited implementation of EO 13780 (<http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/26/politics/travel-ban-supreme-court-ruling/index.html>). The Supreme Court will review both cases in full in October.

The Supreme Court Ruling restricted implementation of EO13780 to those travelers who could not prove a "bona fide relationship with any person or entity in the United States." On June 28 the United States Department of State issued guidelines for interpreting the Supreme Court restrictions ([http://live.reuters.com/Event/Live\\_US\\_Politics/989297085](http://live.reuters.com/Event/Live_US_Politics/989297085)). As of conference calls with press and resettlement agencies on June 29, 2017 the State Department was unable to provide a rationale for the narrowness of the definition applied to "bona fide relationships," specifically why the definition excludes grandparents, aunts and uncles, and refugee resettlement agencies.

The historically low refugee admissions number and refugee travel ban in EO 13780 are harming refugees who should be arriving now, as well as those who are unable to continue through the process. The policy changes in EO 13780 are causing many time-sensitive refugee vetting steps to expire, necessitating expensive re-testing that has not occurred as of yet. Furthermore, the suspension of refugee resettlement to the United States is effectively dismantling resettlement organizations both overseas and in the United States, resulting in cuts to staff and services, as well as office closures among resettlement partners.

### **Refugee and Resettlement Facts:<sup>10</sup>**

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<sup>10</sup> UNHCR: "The Global Refugee Crisis at a Glance," <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>, June 19, 2017

"Refugee Resettlement Facts," United Nations High Commission on Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement-in-the-united-states.html>

- The global refugee crisis has reached an unprecedented number of 65.6 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, including 22.5 million refugees
- More than half of all refugees are women and children
- 56% of refugees are being hosted in the regions of the Middle East and Africa
- Refugees undergo extensive security screening, often over a period of 18-24 months
- Screenings for refugees resettled to the United States involve eight U.S. federal government agencies, six different security databases, a minimum of five separate background checks, four biometric security checks, three separate in-person interviews, and two inter-agency checks
- Less than 1% of all refugees will be permanently resettled; the vast majority will live for decades in camps or temporary accommodations
- Resettlement agencies receive funding based on the number of people resettled in a fiscal year. The drastic reduction in the resettlement ceiling limits resettlement office funding, resulting in reductions in staff and services, and, in some cases, office closures. This adversely affects refugees currently in process as well as those who have been resettled recently.
- Global refugee principles since their outset have proclaimed that "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."<sup>11</sup>

### **Public Statements from Disciples Ministries and Ecumenical Partners:**

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has been active in resettling refugees since World War II. Many Disciples congregations have sponsored refugee families, collected supplies or funds to assist with resettlement, and welcomed refugees into their congregations and communities. Support of refugees through resettlement, humanitarian aid for refugees both nationally and internationally, public advocacy for welcome, and legal assistance are integral commitments within various ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including Week of Compassion, Refugee and Immigration Ministries and Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel within Disciples Home Missions, and Global Ministries. Examples of recent statements in support of refugee welcoming include:

- "Disciples Statement in Response to Supreme Court Ruling," <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Disciples-Statement-in-Response-to-Supreme-Court-RulingFINAL.pdf>
- "[Brief for Interfaith Group of Religious and Interreligious Organizations as Amici Curiae Supporting Affirmance](#)" to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, No. 17-15589, April 20, 2017,  
Disciples Home Missions signed onto this brief, as did our longstanding partner, Church World Service. Pp. 27-28 document losses of CWS staffing at the Resettlement Support Center in Kenya, cutback by Episcopal Migration Ministries of more than 20% of its national staff and affiliates, and World Relief's closure in February 2017 of five offices and layoff of 140 staff members after the first Executive Order suspending refugee resettlement.
- "[Brief for Interfaith Group of Religious and Interreligious Organizations as Amici Curiae Supporting Plaintiffs-Appellees](#)" to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, No. 17-1351, April 19, 2017.,  
Disciples Home Missions signed onto this brief, as did our longstanding partner, Church World Service.
- "Ecumenical Declaration: Protecting Welcome; Restoring Hope," <https://greateras1.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ecumenical-Declaration-Protecting-Welcome-Restoring-Hope.pdf>

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<sup>11</sup> "UNHCR Guidelines on Reunification of Refugee Families," July 1983, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/globalconsult/3bd0378f4/unhcr-guidelines-reunification-refugee-families.html> See, in particular, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948 and the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966.

- “Welcoming Refugees,” The Canadian Council of Churches  
<https://www.councilofchurches.ca/whats-new/welcoming-refugees/>
- “NCC Urges Hospitality, Care Toward Refugees,” National Council of Churches in the United States <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/ncc-urges-hospitality-care-toward-refugees/>
- “Legal Challenge of Safe Third Country Agreement Launched,” Canadian Council of Churches, July 5, 2017, <http://ccrweb.ca/en/media/legal-challenge-safe-third-country>
- “Letter from the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI) to Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),” July 3, 2017, [http://www.globalministries.org/appeal from fcei on migration to italy and european migration policies](http://www.globalministries.org/appeal-from-fcei-on-migration-to-italy-and-european-migration-policies)

#### Relevant News:

Dunn, Trevor (2017, June 30). “As Trump travel ban takes effect, lawyers mobilize at Canadian airports.” *CBC Toronto*. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/travel-ban-lawyers-airport-1.4184742>

Golshan, Tara (2017, June 29). “Trump Travel Ban Is the Most Difficult For Refugees.” *Vox* <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/6/26/15873690/supreme-court-travel-ban-refugees>

Kinglsey, Patrick and Karam Shoumali (2017, July 1). “For Abused, Gay Iraqi in Turkey, U.S. Refugee Freeze is Cruellest Hit.” *New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/01/world/europe/turkey-iraq-refugee.html>

Smith, Samuel (2017, June 30). “Trump Travel Ban Guideline Incorrectly Interprets Supreme Court Order, Refugee Advocates Say.” *The Christian Post*.  
<http://www.christianpost.com/news/trump-travel-ban-guideline-incorrectly-interprets-supreme-court-order-refugee-190298/>

(2017, June 29). “Refugee Advocates Prepare For New Challenges Under Travel Ban” *All Things Considered*. *NPR*. <http://www.npr.org/2017/06/29/534915970/refugee-advocates-prepare-for-new-challenges-under-travel-ban>

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**The General Board recommends that the General Assembly  
ADOPT GA-1721. (Discussion time: 12 minutes)**