



Disciples Home Missions and Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Letter in Support of Refugee Protection & Resettlement
on the Occasion of World Refugee Day 2019



Dear Distinguished Members of Congress,

June 7, 2019

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 “not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Hebrews 13:2).

Regional Minister Rev. Linda Jones of Jeffersonton Christian Church in Kentucky confirms this is true of her church’s recent experience working with a Sudanese refugee family; *“Peter, his new wife, and three children have brought so much love into the church. He says he has ‘found new life.’ But through him, our church did too.”*

Disciples’ long commitments to refugees permeate our congregations at every level. Our General Minister & President, Rev. Terri Hord Owens, has recently affirmed: *“We are standing in solidarity with immigrants and refugees who are coming to our country to seek a better life, to seek hope and prosperity. Therefore, we invite you to stand with us in advocating that the US does not lower the limit of refugees below 75,000.”*

Our congregations have sponsored tens of thousands of refugees in the years since World War II. In each relationship, 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.

As we prepare for our national General Assembly next month in Des Moines, Iowa, we are likewise inspired by memories of long term Iowa Governor Robert D. Ray, himself a Disciples of Christ member from First Christian Church in Des Moines. Republican Governor Ray chaired the National Governors Association and constantly challenged our Disciples at the national level and his own state residents when he said: *“Don’t tell me how Christian you are. Show me. Don’t tell me of your concerns for refugees when you have a chance to save their lives. Show me.”* Because of Governor Ray, Iowa became a vigorous resettlement site in the U.S.

We invite you to hear these and other testimonies of the importance of refugees to our faith leaders in this set of video clips from our Regional Ministers and clergy in 13 states: <http://bit.ly/2PuXb8N>. Several weeks ago, we were grateful to partner directly with refugees and faith leaders from around the United States in sharing four key goals for the U.S. refugee programs with multiple legislative offices. We again ask now that you support these priorities below, which we believe honor the best of our faith and our national values:

- 1) **Protect the U.S. Refugee Program** by ensuring that our nation sets a Presidential Determination number of at least 75,000 refugees to be resettled in fiscal year 2020, and by insisting that our nation meet and exceed its lowest-ever goal of 30,000 for our current fiscal year 2019.

- 2) **Support the Welcome of Refugees through Legislation** by lending your voice and vote in favor of the “GRACE/Guaranteed Refugee Admissions Ceiling Enhancement Act,” S. 1088 & H.R. 2146 to set a minimum Presidential Determination of 95,000 each fiscal year. (This number represents our average resettlements between 1980 and 2017.) Please likewise support the “NO BAN/National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants Act,” S. 1123 & H.R. 2214, in order to repeal the executive orders that ceased refugee admissions, banned many Muslim-majority country persons from entering, and stopped asylum seekers from making claims between ports of entry. Supporting these bills closely aligns with our national Disciples Refugee Emergency Resolution, [GA-1739](#).
- 3) **Appropriate Adequate Funding for Refugee Protection and Resettlement** by approving \$2.56 billion in Labor/Health and Human Services funding for the Refugee and Entrant Assistance Account/Office of Refugee Resettlement, and \$3.6 billion in State/Foreign Operations funding for the Migration and Refugee Assistance Account/Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.
- 4) **Join the Bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus** if you are a House member. Email Rachel.calanni@mail.house.gov to join. If you are a Senator, we hope you may consider launching such a caucus.

On June 16th, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will celebrate [Refugee & Immigrant Welcome Sunday](#), where our churches will again listen to, learn about, and further strengthen relationships with refugees and immigrants in their communities. As we do that, we will pray for the 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum seekers in our world. And, please know that we will pray for you and your staff, as well, in your important role of leadership as you help to save the lives of refugees.

Respectfully,



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