

Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States

WITH STUDY GUIDE



APPROVED BY THE 216TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2004)

Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States

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Approved by the 216th General Assembly (2004)
Richmond, Virginia

Developed By
The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)
A Ministry of the General Assembly Council

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December 2004

To: Pastors of Churches and Clerks of Sessions Where There is No Installed Pastor, Stated Clerks and Executives of Presbyteries and Synods, and the Libraries of the Theological Seminaries

Dear Friends:

The 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved this “Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States.” That assembly also directed the Office of the General Assembly to place the report as a whole with study guide on the PC (USA)’s website, and to distribute a copy to the presbytery and synod resource centers and the libraries of the theological seminaries, and to make available a copy for each requesting session or middle governing body.

This resolution is presented for the guidance and edification of the whole Christian Church and the society to which it ministers; and will be used to determine procedures and program for the ministry divisions and staff of the General Assembly. It is recommended for consideration and study by other governing bodies (sessions, presbyteries, and synods).

The resolution reaffirms the General Assembly policy on “Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors.” It also reminds the church that “a Christian perspective on immigration challenges us above all to love immigrants, to establish justice for them, and to seek to be reconciled with them in a new and transformed community.” Furthermore, the resolution states “the diversities which immigrants bring contribute to the dynamically evolving multicultural fabric of this society.”

This study and reflection guide is commended to the free Christian conscience of all congregations and the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for prayerful study, dialogue, and action. It is designed for personal and class use in the hope that we may all become more aware of our call to be God’s people in our daily lives and work.

Yours in Christ’s Service,

Clifton Kirkpatrick
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

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Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) recommends that the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) do the following:

1. Approve the Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States, and call upon the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its governing bodies to take the following actions:

- a. Advocate the establishment by law of a comprehensive legalization program for undocumented persons already living and working in the United States.
- b. Advocate the reform of current immigration policies and procedures to ensure a more timely and humane process, with special attention to family reunification and to those persons who have been waiting for their immigrant visas and for naturalization.
- c. Adamantly oppose the exploitation of any and all workers as a violation of the humane and just treatment due to all children of God.
- d. Join with interfaith and secular organizations that are working for comprehensive legalization.
- e. Direct the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) to communicate the above actions to the president of the United States, members of the United States Congress, the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS), and the national and international ecumenical organizations to which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) relates.

2. Direct the General Assembly Council (GAC), through its Ministries Divisions, and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) to do the following as they relate to their respective areas of jurisdiction:

- a. Establish a position in the Office of the General Assembly staffed by an attorney with current relevant information on immigration and visa issues for the purpose of providing reliable advice and counsel to presbyteries and pastors whose members have immigration problems.

- b. Name a point of coordination for all ministry work related to racial ethnic and immigrant church growth and evangelism so that work that now crosses divisional lines can be better coordinated and focused in support of the Racial Ethnic/Immigrant Evangelism and Church Growth Strategy approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998).
- c. Establish an Immigration Sunday on the church calendar, in consultation with Mission Education and Promotion.
- d. Reaffirm the General Assembly policy on “Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors” (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 28–30; 32; 353–355).
- e. Direct the Office of the General Assembly to publish the entire report in the *Minutes* and place the document as a whole with study guide on the PC(USA)’s Website, distributing a copy to the presbytery and synod resource centers and the libraries of the theological seminaries, and making available a copy for each requesting session or middle governing body; and direct the Stated Clerk to notify the church that it is available on the Website.

Rationale

This report and its recommendations are in response to the following referral: *Commissioners' Resolution 01-27. On Full Legalization for Immigrants in the United States of America* (Minutes, 2001, Part I, pp. 62, 502).

I. Introduction

A resolution team was appointed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to draft a resolution responding to a referral from the 213th General Assembly (2001) calling for the “full legalization of immigrants in the United States of America.” The resolution team was asked to bring a draft to the committee’s meeting in January 2004.

The resolution team was composed of Presbyterian clergy and laity from diverse geographical areas and social locations. Only one was a Native American, a Navajo. All of the others had immigrant roots from many locations over varied spans of time. Five members were recent immigrants, having come to the U.S. from Haiti, Honduras, Lebanon, South Korea, and Venezuela. Team membership included such specializations as immigration law, Christian ethics and immigration issues, and national and international refugee and immigration service work. The members of the team included: Donna C. Bradley, In Soon Chi, Jacqueline Cho, Jonas Georges, Moufid Khoury, Susan Krehbiel, Sarah Barron LaBadie, James Hickson Lee, Adan Alexander Mairena, Ricardo Moreno, Kerri Sherlock, Sharon Stanley, and Trina Zelle.

Staff to the team were: Belinda M. Curry, associate for Policy Development and Interpretation for the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy; Angel Suarez-Valera, associate for Immigrant Groups Ministries-USA; John Robinson, associate for Refugee Ministry and Government Relations of the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Program; Catherine Dodson, young adult intern for the Presbyterian Washington Office; and Hector Rodriguez, associate for Hispanic Congregational Enhancement. Dana Wilbanks served as consultant and primary writer.

Most of the resolution team met October 16–19, 2003, in Niagara Falls, New York, along the U.S./Canada border. As part of its agenda, the team visited a program in Buffalo, named *Vive la Casa*, which assists asylum seekers to obtain safe haven. This was a profoundly moving experience for everyone. *Vive* provides a place for asylum seekers to stay for several weeks with three meals a day and overnight lodging.

As well as providing temporary hospitality, *Vive* gathers information from the asylum seekers that can be helpful as they make their claim. *Vive* works closely with Canadian officials in ways that help to ensure humane treatment and to expedite the processing of the asylees’ claim. Team members were particularly distressed by the differences in treatment

asylum seekers receive from U.S. officials compared to Canadian officials. Few applications are approved on the U.S. side, and asylum seekers receive little encouragement or assistance in making their claims. In Canada, however, the right to seek asylum is more consistently honored, even as Canada’s practice is far from perfect. We were told, however, that Canada may not be able to accept as many asylees in the future due to changes in agreements with other countries. One important consequence of this development is that more asylum seekers will remain in the United States with a desperate need for safe haven.

The team prepared a content outline for its report. The writer prepared a draft from the outline, and the draft was discussed in a conference call on January 6. Revisions were made in the draft and the report was forwarded to the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy for its consideration and action.

II. Pastoral Context

A Presbyterian elder who is an immigrant from Venezuela, Ricardo Moreno, tells the stories of two parishioners in a congregation. Rosa (not her real name) is a sixteen-year-old with a 3.5 grade point average in high school. Yet she will not be able to go to college because she and her parents are undocumented, and she cannot obtain in-state tuition rates or state scholarships. Her mother is a maid and her father is a cook. What would we advise that Rosa do?

Arturo (not his real name) worked primarily as a day laborer and had started attending a congregation. Both he and his wife are undocumented. His wife is sick at home, and they are living in a one-room apartment. While he was moving a refrigerator in a temporary job, he broke his leg. Although he was able to receive emergency care, he is not able to receive the long-term therapy he will need in order to be able to work again. What would we advise that Arturo and his wife do?

Another story the committee heard was about a recently established Presbyterian congregation of new immigrant Christians. Initially, they had formed themselves into a fellowship that was accepted by one of our presbyteries. Within three years, they had hired a pastor and grew in membership. They had not received financial assistance from the denomination. At the time they were received as a PC(USA) congregation, they had an active membership of 110. In a confidential conversation with the pastor, he reported that 65 percent of the membership was composed of undocumented immigrants.

These stories remind us that the subject of “undocumented workers” often hides the human realities of people’s lives. The stories also reveal that undocumented

workers are not simply “out there” but are in our churches and in our communities. The 208th General Assembly (1996) approved “the goal of increasing the racial ethnic membership to 10 percent of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) membership by the year 2005, and to 20 percent by the year 2010” (Racial Ethnic/Immigrant Evangelism and Church Growth Strategy Report, *Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp. 89–90, 406–19). As the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to increase its diversity and expand its ministries to racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities, we find that increasing numbers of immigrant workers are present in our midst. Our friendship with these neighbors can become a window to a deeper realization of the cruelties and vulnerabilities many immigrants experience in the U.S.

The church is called to witness to the reconciliation that Christ brings to the world. This is no cheap covering over of divisions and differences. Instead, reconciliation points to a dynamic unity of richly diverse humankind in which justice is established and each one is treasured as a gift of the Creator. General Assembly policies consistently emphasize that the “confession of Jesus Christ as Lord transforms ‘strangers’ into neighbors who are welcomed into our communities” (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, p. 353, a.(3)).

On September 11, 2001, residents of the U.S. experienced the insecurities brought by terrorism with unprecedented vividness. Sometimes we fail to recognize that many of the world’s peoples live with these realities every day of their lives. Indeed the pervasiveness of violence in one form or another has a great deal to do with the massive movement of people all over the world—for safety, for livelihood, for their families’ future. Furthermore we need to become aware that we unthinkingly accept the profiling of Arab and Muslim Americans and put them in great difficulty because of our societal concern for security. Indeed none of us is truly secure until all are secure.

In recent years the General Assemblies have affirmed a set of theological principles and policy principles that have guided the response of previous assemblies to immigration and refugee issues (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 364–71). They have called on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to open itself to the transformation God has in store by encountering more purposefully our new immigrant neighbors (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, p. 365). In 2003, the General Assembly sharply criticized United States’ border policies for causing great human suffering (*Overture 03-14. On the Crisis of Migrant Workers Deaths in the Borderlands—From the Presbytery of de Cristo*, *Minutes*, 2003, Part I, pp. 39, 613–14).

This resolution on the legalization of undocumented workers responds to the challenges presented by large numbers of these workers in the United States. While the issues are complex and no policy response is without its weaknesses, the current situation has become intolerable. Both pro-immigration and anti-immigration activists agree

that the current policy is not working. The immigration system is broken and something must be done. The resolution offers a way to respond that is consistent with General Assembly actions over many years.

III. Interpreting the Issues

Persons who are living and working in the United States without legal authorization are often referred to as “illegal aliens.” Instead, General Assemblies have consistently adopted the term “undocumented workers.” This change in wording is crucial. These immigrants are persons bearing the image of God, and the vast majority have come to the U.S. to work. Our language needs to reflect the Christian belief “in the intrinsic worth of each human as a person made in the image of God” (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, p. 353, a.(2)).

It is very difficult to know how many undocumented workers are in the U.S. since, by definition, they are not counted. Estimates are generally somewhere between nine to fifteen million. These persons are responding both to internal conditions in their home countries and to the need in the U.S. for low-wage labor. Immigration experts often call this the push-and-pull factor. It is important to recognize in this analysis that undocumented workers are not “forcing themselves” on a reluctant host society. Their labor is needed and desired by employers and by consumers.

Moreover, what is happening in the United States reflects a worldwide movement of huge numbers of people, largely from the south to the north. Some are moving because of well-founded fears of persecution (refugees). Others are moving because they do not have the jobs and life opportunities in their home countries that provide a realistic hope for a better future for themselves and their families. While many undocumented persons cross the border into the U.S. without legal authorization, there are also many who enter the U.S. legally with a valid visa but stay after the time has expired.

A. What Is the Situation Like for Undocumented Persons?

One important reason for the growing support for undocumented workers is the injustices and vulnerabilities these persons experience. During the summer of 2003, the “Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride” traveled across the U.S. from many different cities to Washington D.C. to generate support for documented and undocumented workers’ rights.

Undocumented immigrants constitute an underground labor force. The workers must keep a very low profile; otherwise they might be exposed and subject to deportation. They cannot afford to confront unjust treatment by employers, and they have virtually no rights they can appeal to in order to pursue cases of mistreatment. Yet they are working. They are contributing their labor, paying their taxes,

and purchasing goods. The vast majority are law abiding. Those with children send them to schools. Family values are exceedingly important to them.

Undocumented workers often fill particularly “undesirable” jobs that current residents avoid. They are paid at the lowest end of the wage scale. Many employers are reasonably fair and humane. In fact, some develop strong personal ties to these workers. Still there are others that take advantage of the workers’ legal vulnerability by threats, imposing excessive demands and withholding portions of even their minimal wages.

Workers are often separated from their families with little chance to be reunited soon. Many are subjected to implicit as well as explicit racism. They have access to emergency health care but not long-term treatment, even though they may have injuries related to their jobs. They cannot organize with others to protest unjust treatment or to petition for changes in their work situation. They do not receive benefits that other workers receive. Their undocumented status puts them at considerable jeopardy and in abject subordination even as they are doing productive labor and contributing to the U.S. economy.

One crucial practice of justice is to correct the abuses occurring in our midst. The awful conditions that are experienced by undocumented workers are not intolerable to them because they are desperate for the income. But these abuses should be regarded as intolerable by others of us. Undocumented workers are put in the position of a servant class. Michael Walzer, a political philosopher, asserts that to use a person’s labor without making available the full rights of citizens is akin to tyranny (*Spheres of Justice*, Basic Books, 1983, pp. 56–61).

B. Contributions to the U.S.

Undocumented immigrants bring a great deal that is positive to our communities. This needs to be acknowledged and affirmed as we consider immigration reform. It is well known that immigrants are hard working risk-takers who have endured a great deal to emigrate to the U.S. It is often extraordinary what these immigrants have to deal with in this new land. Yet they persist with tenacity and courage in the face of great difficulties that would discourage many of the rest of us. They bring the gifts of their identities and cultures, which often include prevailing through experiences of war, persecution and tyranny.

They contribute to the economy through their labor. They pay taxes. They have a strong commitment to their children and to families. Some of their children excel in school and would like to be able to go to college. They sometimes organize new business activities that help to revitalize local economies. They are living with us and among us in our various communities. The immigrant success stories are still being lived out over time. General Assemblies have

referred to immigrants as gifts of God to our society as well as to the church (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, p. 365). These gifts are tangible in terms of the contributions they are making, often without recognition.

Persons who have been living in our communities and participating in a responsible way are, morally speaking, already members of our society. Membership is at its heart relational in character. When persons live and work as citizens do, they are in fact members even if their relationship to the community has not been formally established. The de facto membership of undocumented immigrants should be acknowledged and legalized.

C. Immigration Law

United States immigration policy is one of selective admission. Through our legal immigration system, U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents may petition for close family members. Most immigrants are admitted in the family unification category; 480,000 family-based immigrants may be admitted each year. United States employers may also sponsor immigrants. Generally, U. S. employers must prove that no U.S. worker could fill the position. A certain number are authorized to immigrate each year. Like the family-based category, employment-based immigration is also limited numerically: only 140,000 persons per year may be admitted for purposes of employment. The U.S. also admits a very limited number of refugees (persons fleeing persecution) each year. Thus, immigrants may come to the U.S. through very limited channels. Individuals, families, or churches cannot “sponsor” an immigrant unless the individual is a close family member, potential employee, or refugee/asylee.

Currently, there are long backlogs in both the family-based and employment-based immigration categories. For example, a U.S. citizen seeking to bring his adult son or daughter to the U.S. from Mexico can expect to wait approximately ten years for an immigrant visa. A lawful permanent resident seeking to bring her spouse and children to the U.S. should expect to wait about five years. The long waits for immigrant visas have led many immigrant advocates to call for an increase in the numbers of immigrants permitted into the U.S. each year.

Undocumented immigrants who are present in the U.S. without a visa or who entered the U.S. illegally generally cannot change to a legal status while remaining in the U.S. In addition, undocumented immigrants who leave the U.S. and then seek to return on a legal visa may not be permitted to enter for a period of three to ten years and sometimes may never again be permitted to enter legally. Because of this legal predicament, many undocumented immigrants choose to remain in the U.S. “below the radar.” In the past, Congress has created laws to allow undocumented immigrants to “legalize” their status. These laws have always been temporary: the window of time for “legalizing” status

is always limited. Currently, there is no law in place to allow a new immigration applicant to “legalize” his or her status.

The U.S. government allocates significant resources to enforcement of the nation’s immigration laws. There are three primary mechanisms of enforcement. The first mechanism, border controls, was an issue addressed by the 215th General Assembly (2003). In this action, the General Assembly declared its opposition to “Operation Gatekeeper” and other strategies of enforcement that have had disastrous consequences for Mexican migrants and Hispanic peoples living along the border (*Overture 03-14. On the Crisis of Migrant Worker Deaths in the Borderlands—From the Presbytery of de Cristo, Minutes, 2003, Part I, pp. 39, 613–15*). Second, employers are required to make sure employees are legally eligible to work. However, employers cannot always tell which documents are authentic. Third, undocumented immigrants may also be located through the criminal justice system. None of the enforcement methods are full proof and all of the methods have some negative impact on immigrant communities.

Persons who are in the U.S. without documentation are subject to deportation or voluntary return to their home country. The few who are able to return voluntarily are not prohibited from applying for legal immigrant admission to the United States, though the backlog of applicants makes this prospect illusory.

D. Policy Developments

In recent years, a number of proposals for immigration reform have been introduced. Most reform measures focus on the need to make the border region safer for Mexicans who want to emigrate, the need for some kind of legalization program for undocumented workers in the United States, and the need for opening channels through which additional Mexicans could work legally in the U.S. These discussions reveal the considerable discontent with the current law and the widespread support for something different, even among persons with widely different political points of view.

Some cities and states have taken initiatives to work with Mexican consulates to provide identification papers for undocumented workers from Mexico. For example, these I.D.s could be used as the basis for securing driver’s licenses. This is a recognition that the security of the society as well as the safety of the immigrants themselves would be better served by acknowledging and formalizing their presence.

When faced with the implications of strictly enforcing the current law, the public time after time favors making exceptions or practicing flexibility of one kind or another. Does the public want an undocumented high school honor graduate to be deported? No. Does the public want undocumented restaurant and hotel workers to be deported en masse? No. Does the public want seasonal low-wage resort workers to be unavailable? No. Whatever the merits of the

existing immigration policy might be, the will to enforce it has largely collapsed.

A comprehensive legalization program makes it possible to clear the slate and to implement a different approach that will respond better to the dynamics of migration in today’s world and to the specific needs of migrants, employers, and communities. It is time to face the reality honestly rather than intentionally ignore it and leave undocumented workers in the underground world of invisibility where they are deprived of their rights.

Prior to September 11, 2001, Presidents Bush and Vicente Fox seemed close to reaching an agreement about immigration reform. On January 7, 2004, President Bush returned to this pressing issue with a major policy presentation. The president recognized that the current immigration system is inhumane and is not enforceable. The centerpiece of his proposal is a greatly expanded “guest worker” program that would enable undocumented workers to become eligible to work legally for a three-year period. The workers must be employed and sponsored by their current employers. During this time, the workers would be free to travel freely and to live with their spouses and minor children. The three-year period would be renewable but could not be extended indefinitely. “Guest workers” would be eligible to apply for permanent residence but only through the existing immigration admissions system.

While this proposal recognizes the need for major reform, it is an unsatisfactory response to the status of undocumented workers. Many of these workers have lived and worked in the U.S. for years. Under the president’s proposal, they would have only a remote chance to become permanent residents and citizens. By becoming “guest workers,” they could be forced to return home after three years regardless of their community ties and significant contributions. While friendly to employers’ needs for immigrant labor, the proposal is harsh to the workers and exceptionally complicated to administer. A humane and just policy requires a comprehensive and realistic path to legal permanent residency and citizenship, rather than a second-class population of American workers.

E. Response to Concerns and Questions

Proposals about comprehensive legalization are being made in a social and political climate greatly impacted by September 11, 2001, and its aftermath. Anxieties and fears have been intensified. Newcomers are regarded with greater suspicion. It is important to address these concerns. An important dimension of a Christian response is theological. That is, an obsessive concern with security can never be fully satisfied, and it can inhibit us from receiving the stranger as a neighbor whom we are called to love. Our only true security is to be found in God, not in constructing walls that separate us from others.

Is our society being swamped by newcomers? No. For one thing, the undocumented workers are already here and living among us. They are gradually being incorporated and so do not represent a large additional population. And this incorporation continues to be remarkably successful over time. In this resolution, we are primarily concerned with what response to make to those who are already here. Immigrants do indeed present challenges to host societies. But these challenges are also opportunities to continue the primarily positive story of immigration in the shaping of a multicultural and multiracial United States.

Would a legalization program signal disrespect for law? There is no question that the current law is being ignored by many, not because they have a thoroughgoing disrespect for the rule of law, but because they no longer have confidence in the justice and effectiveness of this law. When the law no longer persuades, then it is more prudent to change the law than to enforce it more vigorously. Adherence to law rests in the final analysis on the consent of the people. A fresh start is required as a prelude to a new law that better responds to the dynamics of migration and that elicits the support of the American people.

Is legalization fair to those who have been waiting for years to be admitted legally? In a certain sense, it is not fair to them. But how is this best corrected? Realistically, it is not plausible to deport undocumented immigrants and then bring in those who have been waiting for admission. Moreover, it is quite likely that many of them would not want to work in the jobs that undocumented immigrants have been filling. Again, it is better to look in a fresh, humane, and realistic way at the need of the U.S. for immigrant labor and the best ways to fulfill this need.

The above question helps to direct our attention to the need for new approaches to the unification of families. Too many families have been separated for too long. A restructuring of the family preference category should be given a high priority in comprehensive reform of U.S. immigration policy.

IV. Biblical and Theological Basis

As Christians we seek to respond to the challenges and opportunities of immigration from the perspective of our faith. The biblical witness will not give us specific answers to complex policy questions today. But it provides us with authoritative insights about God's will for persons and communities. Let us identify several of those insights that are especially pertinent to the dynamics of immigration.

A. *What Was I Before and What Am I Now* (Deut. 10:18–19; Eph. 2:19–20)

In Soon Chi was a member of the resolution team. She is an elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and lives in

Lexington, Kentucky. In Soon presented a moving meditation to the group about her experience as an immigrant from South Korea. She told of her family's long journey as refugees from China to Pusan, South Korea, after the end of World War II, their desperate poverty, the death of her baby sister due to pneumonia, and her migration to the United States. The following is an excerpt from her meditation:

I came to this country as a foreign student a long time ago. Although I came here with all the legal documents, I was fearful because of cultural shock and I suffered an inferiority complex because of my language barrier. Now, I am a citizen doing all kinds of community work including serving as an election officer.

We are here to do our God-given work for the fear ridden and deprived strangers who came here with a hope to earn a living, to find a better life and to have a secure life with freedom. We are here to help these outsiders to become our good neighbors. We have to remember that once we were all foreigners in this land, not only spiritually, but also physically and socially.

This is a new challenge. As God loves us and grants us so many blessings, I dare say we must pursue ways to help these wounded people. I sincerely hope this meeting represents our first steps on the road that will lead to changed lives of our undocumented immigrants. So, they too have all the privileges of beings citizens of this land as well as being citizens of the Kingdom of God.

B. *Hospitality to the Stranger* (Lev. 19:33–34; Deut. 10:18–19; Matt. 25:44–45; Heb. 13:2)

Old Testament teachings challenged Israel to remember the time when they were "aliens" in the land of Egypt. By remembering, they will love the strangers as they do themselves and will treat them as fellow citizens. The provision of hospitality to the stranger is one of the most frequently cited marks of covenant faithfulness. In the New Testament, Jesus identifies with the stranger and emphasizes hospitality as one of the indispensable acts of discipleship. Indeed God may be present in the guise of a stranger, bringing news that we can hear only by receiving her or him.

In General Assembly policy on immigration, the theme of hospitality to the stranger is often emphasized. Immigrants are frequently experienced as "others," different in ethnicity and cultural background. They also are radically vulnerable, without the familial and societal structures of support that residents rely on without a second thought.

We are commanded not to treat immigrants with cruelty and unkindness but with hospitality, remembering that most of us too have an immigrant past and all have been recipients of God's mercy. Yet being a stranger is not a permanent status or identity. In Christ, strangers become neighbors. With hospitality comes community and mutuality in our relationships with one another.

C. *Gifts of the Stranger* (Acts 10 and 11:1–18; 2 Cor. 1:3–7; Matt. 25: 21–28)

It is tempting to think of hospitality in a paternalistic way. That is, those of us who are residents should do something for immigrants who are needy. To be sure, Christian responsibility does entail responding to the specific needs of neighbors. But what is often missed is the recognition that immigrants bring something that residents also need. Immigrants bring their hopes and dreams, their commitment to their children, their hard work, their contributions to the communities of which they are part. They also bring opportunities for residents to open ourselves to new learnings about ourselves, our world, and indeed our faith.

In the General Assembly policy on “Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors,” the biblical account of Peter and Cornelius was lifted up as especially pertinent. It was through Cornelius, the outsider, that Peter came to recognize that Gentiles were included in the church's mission and ministry. This had a transformative impact on the church. Similarly today, churches are called to seek relationship with immigrant neighbors and to open ourselves to the transformation Christ is bringing to churches and to our society through them.

Immigrants are not simply objects of charity but subjects who bring rich gifts in their own personhood. All of us have surely been recipients of these gifts in the broadening and deepening of human relationships. Yet it is not all smooth or easy, especially for the immigrants themselves. Their experience is often characterized more by suffering than by hospitality. We are reminded in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 that we are called to participate in the sufferings of others, and to console one another as we are consoled by God. God calls us to solidarity of such depth with immigrants that we experience their suffering as our own, supporting and being supported in an indistinguishable unity.

D. *Justice as the Distribution of Power and Resources* (Matt. 12:1–8; Micah 6:8; Lev. 25:18–19; Amos 5:24)

One member of the resolution team offered a vivid depiction of a Christian view of distributive justice. It is not

a “cut the cake” image that suggests a finite amount of goods to be sliced up so that everyone gets a piece. Instead it is a “stretch the dough” image. By stretching the dough, more can be shared. In the Bible, injustice is not seen as the result of insufficiency. Instead injustice comes from some hoarding excess while others suffer from deprivation. Injustice comes from exercising power on behalf of some while holding others in subjection.

In the U.S., immigrants contribute a great deal to the creation of societal dough. Indeed they add to the totality of the dough, so that the dough keeps growing. Because of their work, there is more that can be stretched. It is not that they are taking more slices from the cake, reducing the size available to everyone. Immigrants contribute to the abundance from which they deserve a fair share. The problem of injustice is not that the immigrants are costing the U.S. too much. Instead they are not receiving a fair share of what they are helping to create.

Reformed theology teaches that a persistent manifestation of human sinfulness is the inclination of the powerful to use their power for their own interest rather than for the common good. For Christians, the implication is not that power is inherently evil but that power must be widely distributed so that all may have an influence on the shape of social and economic policies. It is not accidental then that undocumented workers receive minimal wages and no benefits and also that they have virtually no power to be able to alter the conditions of their labor. A Christian view of justice insists that undocumented workers receive what is due them and that the obstacles to their empowerment be removed.

E. *Peace and Security* (Matt. 10:39; Isa. 65:17–25; Ps. 118:9)

The destruction of the World Trade Center towers in 2001 brought a surge of anxieties about the security of United States' national borders. Processing of travel visa applications as well as immigration and refugee applications has been slowed considerably. Some immigrants, documented as well as undocumented, especially from Arab countries, have been subjected to discriminatory treatment. Thus, added to the other vulnerabilities that immigrants experience is the greater level of suspicion, even hostility, generated by the anxieties about terrorism.

Christians certainly value security as a vital component of the peace for which we work and pray. We yearn for wider societal well-being in which each may flourish without fears of victimization, threat of violence, and injustice. And still we recognize that governments cannot provide total security. True security is to be found in God who often calls us to risk security in our love for neighbor. “Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” The quest for security can become idolatrous. The more

we seek to make ourselves safe, the more vulnerable we can feel. Security can be an obsession that prevents us from living fully and adventurously. Even the great walls of Jericho could not ultimately provide protection for those within.

It is possible, indeed desirable, to take reasonable measures to protect ourselves from terrorist attacks. However, it is possible at the same time to continue to be open to the presence of newcomers. We dare not let fears prevent us from exercising our responsibilities for neighbors, indeed for extending the reach of neighbor love for new neighbors. In this expression of human solidarity we continue to give witness to the peace and justice of God that is intended for all.

F. *Peace and Reconciliation* (1. Cor. 12; Gen. 1:26–28; Eph. 2: 11–18; Acts 17:26–28; Gal. 3:28)

In a Christian understanding, Christ is the presence and possibility of peace. He has broken down the barriers of hostility and enmity that divide peoples from each other. In Christ there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; all are one in the reconciliation Christ has brought about.

As we examine issues related to immigration, distinctions based on nationality and ethnicity have often functioned to legitimate injustice. For Christians, these distinctions must give way to Christ's commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. In fact, the hospitable reception of immigrants is a sign of the reconciling work of Christ in the world. Though diverse, all the world's peoples are one in the family of God, created for relationship with one another that excludes no one.

At the same time that human unity and reconciliation are central to the Gospel, this does not cancel or deny the wondrous diversity of creation. Diversity testifies to the glory of God's creation. The image of the church as body is also descriptive of God's intention for the world. We are created to flourish in our diverse specialness in ways that build a richer community. In a Christian vision, diversity no longer divides and separates or serves as a basis for injustice, but is embraced and transformed through Christ's reconciling activity.

The ministry of reconciliation given to Christians includes "making friends" with immigrant others who so often are treated as "aliens" in our society. Genuine reconciliation cannot take place without also doing justice; namely, ensuring that immigrants' personhood is fully respected, the immigrants' presence is acknowledged and welcomed, the immigrants' rights are fully protected, and immigrants are given the opportunity to be full participants in American life. The diversities which immigrants bring contribute to the dynamically evolving multicultural fabric of this society. As Paul affirmed the cultural distinctiveness of

Jew and of Gentile and offered a vision of unity that could encompass both, so may we see the diversities represented by immigrant populations in terms of the possibilities they open for new relationships and a new society.

In conclusion, a Christian perspective on immigration challenges us above all to love immigrants, to establish justice for them, and to seek to be reconciled with them in a new and transformed community. While this does not automatically settle particular questions of public policy, General Assemblies have consistently advocated justice for these vulnerable neighbors. Furthermore, the General Assemblies have pursued policies that express hospitality and openness to the gifts that immigrants bring to our society. These themes continue to provide guidance as we express our strong support for a thorough legalization program for immigrants living and working in the United States.

Study Guide: Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States

Prepared by Catherine Dodson, *Young Adult Intern, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

Leader's Guide And Introduction

You are about to embark upon a fascinating and vital journey, which may be difficult at times, but will potentially lead you and your study group to greater acceptance and understanding of the many different members of the body of Christ. It could change the face of your church!

In assembling the group, reach out to all generations represented in your church—the study is designed to be accessible to all age groups. It would be worthwhile to consider inviting another church and peoples of other ethnicities, cultures, and social classes to participate in this study. Diversity would enrich the quality and scope of the group's discussions.

It is important that the leader try to be open to the movement of the group—use this study guide as exactly that, a guide, and allow discussion to flow as the Bible verses, readings, and games prompt it.

Be intentional about creating a safe space, where participants are comfortable saying what they think without fear of reproach. Make it clear that all opinions should be respectfully shared in a meaningful and thoughtful way. Be conscious of any opinions that seem to be left out of the discussions, and reach out to anyone that seems reluctant to share their thoughts. Also, be careful not to pigeonhole a group member as the representative of a particular demographic—opinions given should be one's own and should not be expected to be universal for all Presbyterians, all teachers, or all members of a particular racial ethnic group, et cetera.

It's a good idea to establish some guidelines for the group during the first session, in the form of a covenant or a group agreement. Some suggestions could be: confidentiality, compassion, vested participation, open-mindedness, patience, inclusivity, and so on.

The first session is intended to introduce the members of the group to one another and to the complex immigration issues addressed by the resolution. While prior knowledge of the issue is not necessary, it is important that the facilitator take time to prepare by reading the entire *Resolution Calling*

for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States, along with the Rationale section. It would be helpful to be familiar with previous General Assembly papers regarding immigrants, particularly the *Resolution on Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounters with New Neighbors* (approved by the 211th General Assembly (1999)), as it is reaffirmed by the resolution and summarizes the denomination's social witness policy regarding immigration and ministry to immigrants.

The group should be encouraged to read through the recommendations made by the resolution (p. 8) prior to the first session, as well as the Introduction and Pastoral Context sections (pp. 9–10). Ask them to note any questions, concerns, or hopes that may emerge during the initial reading.

Supplies Needed:

- ▶ Copies of the *Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States* for all participants
- ▶ Bibles
- ▶ A chalkboard/white board *or* butcher paper
- ▶ Chalk/markers
- ▶ Copies of the appropriate Appendices for each session
- ▶ *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990)

Session One: Immigrants and Justice

Readings

- ▶ *Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States*, specifically Recommendations 1.a.–e. (p. 8).
- ▶ Rationale—Introduction and Pastoral Context sections (p. 9).

Bible Passage

- ▶ Amos 5:24
- ▶ Matthew 25:31–46

Opening Prayer

God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, lift us up as we seek to discern your will and learn to welcome the stranger through this study. Be our guide, help us to hear your voice speak through our dialogue and allow us to witness the movement of your spirit as we work together in faith. Amen.

Suggested Activities

Begin the session with a round of introductions, where each participant not only tells who they are, but also their family's cultural background. Suggest that each person respond to any or all of the following questions:

- ▶ What is one of the reasons why they joined the group?
- ▶ What do they hope to learn or gain from these sessions?
- ▶ What are any of their initial questions from reading the resolution?

As a way for the group to become more familiar with one another, as well as with some of the cultural sensitivity issues necessarily involved with the resolution, it is suggested that they play the cross-cultural game described in Session Four of “Our Home Has Room for Everyone,” pp. 24–26 from *God's World, Our Home*—a resource published in 2004 by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program in conjunction with Mission Education and Promotion (see Appendix A,

Resources, p. 24, for further information on this resource). The game should take about twenty-five minutes. Conclude the game with a round of discussion of the participants' perceptions of their experience.

Ask a person from the group to read the Bible passages aloud. Some questions to incite discussion are:

- ▶ Amos talks about God bringing justice and righteousness. Where are some places you have heard this passage quoted*?
- ▶ How do you see justice being wrought in your church or by your community of faith?
- ▶ Who are the “least of these” that Jesus was talking about? How are the “least of these” manifested in the society in which we live?
- ▶ What are some cues that can be taken from the familiar story recounted by Matthew, and how might these relate to the resolution and the pastoral contexts given as *Rationale*?

Readings for Next Session

Reread *Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States*, Recommendations 1.a.–e. (p. 8).

Interpreting the Issues (p. 10): What Is the Situation Like for Undocumented Persons? (pp. 10-11) and Contributions to the U.S. (p. 11).

* Some examples include: Inscribed on the monument to the civil rights movement in Montgomery, Alabama, quoting Dr. Martin Luther King (please see www.tolerance.org/memorial for more information); and inspiration for the “Let Justice Roll”

Session Two: *Politics and Prejudice*

Bible Passages

- ▶ Deuteronomy 10:12–19
- ▶ Hebrews 13:2
- ▶ Luke 10:29–37

Opening Prayer

God, together we proclaim that, “we trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God. Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe the gospel” (From *The Book of Confessions*, A Brief Statement of Faith¹).

Suggested Activity

Break into small groups, and hand each person a copy of the “Quotations” sheet (included as Appendix B, see p. 25).

- ▶ Ask them to share a story about when they have encountered a stranger who was more than met the eye, or to tell about a time when they felt like an outsider in a group of people or a community.
- ▶ Do any quotes strike them as particularly apt?
- ▶ Are there any fears that emerge when they think about “the stranger”? What are they? Brainstorm some of the responses on paper.

Ask the group to respond to the stories cited in the resolution reading for this session. What is their response to the young woman who cannot attend college because she is undocumented? What challenges and difficulties might undocumented workers experience in our communities?

Ask two participants to read the Bible passages aloud to the larger group.

- ▶ What do Luke and the author of Deuteronomy seem to be saying with these passages?
- ▶ How does the story of the Good Samaritan speak to the situation of undocumented persons in our midst, and our reaction to them? Do some of the fears of “the stranger” discussed earlier apply to or affect how we encounter immigrants in our communities?

- ▶ In what ways is the first part of the *Resolution* an answer to the charge we find in all of these passages?

Reading for Next Session

Rationale—Interpreting the Issues: Immigration Laws (pp. 11–12) and Policy Developments (p. 12).

Session Three: *Legalization*

Bible Passages

- ▶ Jeremiah 7:5–6
- ▶ Matthew 12:1–8
- ▶ Mark 2:23–28

Opening Prayer

Use the *Presbyterian Mission Yearbook for Prayer and Study* for a prayer suggestion. Find any of the prayers on a day honoring Presbyterian U.S./Mexico Border Ministry Missionaries, or use the prayer suggested for the current day.

Suggested Activities

Invite a lawyer who deals with immigration or refugee issues to address the group, or a recent immigrant or refugee to tell their story of migration. Allow ample time for questions and answers. If this is not possible, arrange for a teleconference through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services, or some other local immigrant and refugee service provider.

Read the Bible passages aloud to the group. Ask them to share any initial impressions, particularly from the Matthew and Mark passages. What phrases or concepts stand out to them?

Share with the group that one of the actions approved by the 211th General Assembly in 1999 as part of *Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounters with New Neighbors* is “Faithfulness to Christ means Christians always live in tension with national values and policies” (Section a, Recommendation 7).

- ▶ Does this seem to stem from the stories of Christ recounted by Matthew and Mark?
- ▶ In the stories, the Pharisees doubt the lawfulness of the disciples and Christ because of their action—in what ways are we like the Pharisees? How can we seek to be more like the disciples, more like Christ, in regard to immigration?
- ▶ How does this impact our views of immigration reform as a church, and what are some problems in the U.S. immigration system that the Resolution addresses?

Readings for Next Session

Rationale—Biblical and Theological Basis: *What Was I Before and What Am I Now* (p. 13), *Hospitality to the Stranger ...* (pp. 13–14), *Gifts of the Stranger ...* (p. 14), and *Justice as the Distribution of Power and Resources ...* (p. 14).

Session Four: *Economic Justice*

Bible Passages

- ▶ Psalm 113
- ▶ Micah 6:8
- ▶ 1 Samuel 2:4–8
- ▶ Isaiah 3:13–15
- ▶ Luke 6: 20–21, 24–25

Opening Prayer

God, our great provider, you who fed the five thousand continue to feed us. You uplift the downtrodden and strengthen the weak—give us the strength to do your will, to reach out to those in need, and to selflessly follow you. Please give us ears to hear and eyes to see your work in and among us today and everyday. Amen.

Suggested Activities

Begin by singing together “What Does the Lord Require” (*The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990) #405).

Break into small groups of four to five people each. Have each group brainstorm a list of injustices they have encountered or witnessed in the past week. Put a check next to every injustice that has to do with economics/money. Then, gather back together and read those lists aloud to the entire group.

Have a different person read each Bible verse.

Share with the group that it has been said that if all of the verses that address poverty were taken out of the Bible, very few meaningful stories would be left.

- ▶ What is our charge, as Christians, to do for the impoverished?
- ▶ How does this relate to immigrants among us?
- ▶ What might some of the root causes of migration be? How do our actions as consumers affect these root causes? What things could we do differently? What are some solutions that have already been proposed?

Readings for Next Session

Rationale—Biblical and Theological Basis: Peace and Security... (pp. 14-15) and Peace and Reconciliation ... (p. 15).

Session Five: *Peace, Security, and Reconciliation*

Bible Passages

- ▶ Isaiah 65:17–25
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 12
- ▶ Galatians 3:28

Readings for Next Session

- ▶ *Resolution*—Recommendations 2.a.–e. (p. 8).
- ▶ Racial Ethnic Ministries Program Objectives, Appendix C, (p. 26).

Opening Prayer

- ▶ The Lord's Prayer.

Suggested Activities

Have five sheets of paper posted around the room with one of the following phrases written on each:

- ▶ “My life has changed since September 11, 2001 because ...”
- ▶ “To me, security means ...”
- ▶ “To me, community means ...”
- ▶ “Aliens are ...”
- ▶ “Neighbors are ...”

Give each person a marker, and ask each group member to walk around the room and jot down any responses they think of on the appropriate sheet. Ask them to try to respond at least once on each sheet; they should feel free to complete the sentences as many different times as they are so compelled. Stop the exercise when the papers become full. Read the pages aloud, and ask the group to respond with any commonalities they see, or new thoughts they may have.

Read the passages aloud. We seem to be far away from the vision of Isaiah in our current world, torn by strife, pain, and prejudice. In what ways is the resolution seeking to actualize Isaiah's vision? In what ways is your own church working to actualize that vision?

How is our unity in Christ challenged by some of the outcomes of the previous exercise? How is it affirmed?

Session Six: Church Outreach and Growth

Bible Passages

- ▶ Acts 17:26–28
- ▶ Ephesians 11:11–22

Opening Prayer

God, make us instruments of your peace! Use us to build up your body, to spread your good news, to share your love with the world. Help us to exclude no one from our vision of your kingdom, and give us the will to achieve it! Amen.

Suggested Activities

Look at the Racial Ethnic Ministries Program Objectives (see Appendix C, p. 26). Discuss ways these objectives are (or are not) reflected in your own church's programs.

Read aloud Sections 2.a–e of the *Resolution* (p. 8). How do these coincide with the goals of Racial Ethnic Ministries? What are some reasons why the resolution team may have added these additional instructions for the General Assembly entities?

Read the Bible passages, one verse per person. What are some initial impressions/ responses? What words or phrases stand out?

Ask two people to read each passage again.

- ▶ What are some examples of the borders and boundaries that keep us from unity in Christ?
- ▶ How can we tear down those walls that divide us from those who are different, walls present in our churches, lives, and communities?

Readings for Next Session

- ▶ *Resolution*—Recommendations 2.a.–e. (p. 8).

Session Seven: *A Multicultural Church: Members of the Household of God*

Bible Passage

- ▶ Luke 4:18–19

Prayer

God, we wake up this morning and breathe our first breath, a breath of thankfulness to you. Then we say, “What now, God? How can I do your will today, how can I be your hands and your feet in the world today?” Then we say, “Yes! Yes, with your help, we will.” Amen.

Suggested Activity

Divide into small groups of four to five people each. Make a list of action items to take to your session that could broaden the outward vision and multicultural mission of your church, in accordance with the resolution.

Discuss the possibility of the following ideas:

- ▶ Bilingual church services.
- ▶ Write letters to the editor regarding immigration reform, or refugees in your community.
- ▶ Contact your members of Congress and present them with a resolution from your session regarding welcoming immigrants in the United States.
- ▶ Consider the possibility of serving or volunteering in the immigrant communities in your city, as a way of continuing your work on these issues.

Come together as a large group and ask each group to share its action items. Compose a mission statement for the class to take forward into the future.

Suggest that group members interested in involving the larger church in discussions of diversity consider using *Connecting Diversity in the Community*, a video for group study produced by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (see Appendix A, Resources, p.24, for further information on this resource).

End the session with prayer! Consider having a despedida (goodbye party) as a way of celebrating your work together over the past seven weeks.

Appendix A: Resources

Suggested resources

- ▶ Wilbanks, Dana. *Re-Creating America: The Ethics of US Immigration and Refugee Policy in a Christian Perspective*. Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1996. ISBN37202-0801.
- ▶ Session Four “Our Home Has Room for Everyone” from *God’s World, Our Home*, a peacemaking resource for youth, published by the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program in conjunction with Mission Education and Promotion, a ministry of the General Assembly Council, in 2004. Copies are available from Presbyterian Distribution Service (PDS), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396. To order, call (800) 524-2612 or order online at www.pcusa.org/marketplace. Please specify PDS 70-270-04-011.
- ▶ *Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors*, a report developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) of the General Assembly Council (ACSWP) and approved by the 211th General Assembly (1999). This resource was published by the Office of the General Assembly (OGA). Copies are available from Presbyterian Distribution Services (PDS), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396. To order, call (800) 524-2612 or OGA Sales 1-888-219-6700. Please specify PDS order #OGA-99-029.
- ▶ *Connecting Diversity in Community: Race, Class, Gender, Religion*. Produced by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) of the General Assembly Council (GAC). Copies are available from Presbyterian Distribution Services (PDS), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396. To order, call (800) 524-2612 or order online www.pcusa.org/acswp/connecting.htm. Please specify PDS #68-600-03-001 (VHS) or 68-600-03-001 (DVD).

Background papers and immigration analyses available from:

- ▶ American Immigration Lawyers Association (www.aila.org)
- ▶ American Friends Service Committee Project Voice (www.afsc.org/immigrants-rights/default.htm)
- ▶ Latin America Working Group (www.lawg.org)
- ▶ Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services (www.lirs.org)
- ▶ National Immigration Forum (www.immigrationforum.org)
- ▶ National Council of La Raza (www.nclr.org)
- ▶ Religious Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean (www.rtf.org)
- ▶ Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office (www.pcusa.org/washington)
- ▶ United Farm Workers (www.ufw.org)
- ▶ U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of Migration and Refugee Services (www.nccbuscc.org/mrs)
- ▶ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (www.uscis.gov)
- ▶ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (www.ice.gov)
- ▶ Vive, Inc.: An Organization for World Refugees (www.vivelacasa.org/index.html)

Appendix B: Quotations

- ▶ “I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.”

— Tennessee Williams,
A Streetcar Named Desire

- ▶ “He whom God has touched will always be a being apart: he is, whatever he may do, a stranger among men; he is marked by a sign.”

— Ernest Renan

- ▶ “I had crossed the line of which I had so long been dreaming. I was free; but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land ...”

— Harriet Tubman

- ▶ “Monarchies, aristocracies, and religions are all based upon that large defect in your race—the individual’s distrust of his neighbor, and his desire, for safety’s or comfort’s sake, to stand well in his neighbor’s eye.”

— Mark Twain

- ▶ “Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world. ... We deepen those bondings by connecting with an anti-racist struggle.”

— bell hooks

- ▶ “Strangers are just friends I haven’t met yet.”

— Will Rogers

- ▶ “We meet no Stranger, but Ourselves.”

— Emily Dickinson

- ▶ “Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me, why should you not speak to me? And why should I not speak to you?”

— Walt Whitman (1819–1892),
Leaves of Grass

- ▶ “All strangers and beggars are from Zeus, and a gift, though small, is precious.”

— Homer (800 BC–700 BC),
The Odyssey

- ▶ “So God created humankind ... in the image of God ...: male and female God created them. God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.”

— Genesis 1:27, 31

- ▶ “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

— Hebrews 13:2

Appendix C: Racial Ethnic Ministries Program Objectives

1. Engage an ongoing process of implementing, evaluating and updating the Racial Ethnic Church Growth Strategy adopted by the 210th General Assembly in 1998.
2. Initiate and support leadership training programs that strengthen racial ethnic congregations in mission and ministry.
3. Work collaboratively with racial ethnic caucuses, governing bodies and General Assembly entities on developing effective ministries with racial ethnic congregations.
4. Provide cultural and language specific resources for ministries.
5. Resource the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) governing bodies and leaders in issues, opportunities and problem solving in racial ethnic communities.
6. Provide mission interpretation to racial ethnic communities and help the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) understand the cultural contexts of racial ethnic communities.
7. Work in partnership with the Evangelism and Church Development Program Area on Racial Ethnic Church Development, Redevelopment, Revitalization and Specialized Ministry.
8. Resource appropriate General Assembly entities in the recruitment, placement and retention of racial ethnic leadership for the church.
9. Partner with ecumenical and public sector organizations to advocate for Racial Ethnic Ministries and implement joint projects.
10. Collaborate with theological institutions to increase the number of racial ethnic students and advocate for culturally relevant training.
11. Promote cross-cultural, ecumenical and global relationships for racial ethnic constituencies.
12. Participate as members of the Racial Ethnic Ministries program team.
13. Sensitize the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to the resilience and pervasiveness of systemic racism in church and society and engage Presbyterians in effective anti-racism efforts.
14. Work with governing bodies, congregations, other divisions and PC(USA) related institutions in providing anti-racism training.
15. Develop, in partnership with other program areas, biblically and theologically based anti-racism resources that engender personal and institutional transformation.
16. Update, evaluate and interpret the racial justice policies of the PC(USA).
17. Work with ecumenical and secular agencies in a joint effort to eliminate racism globally.
18. Be a prophetic voice to and for the PC(USA).
19. Propose new policies that enable the church to respond to emerging issues of racial justice.

[Note to the Reader: This information was adapted from the Racial Ethnic Ministries web site <<http://www.pcusa.org/raciaethnic/objectives.htm>>. For more information on Racial Ethnic Ministries in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) go to <<http://www.pcusa.org/raciaethnic>>.]

(Footnotes)

* Some examples include: Inscribed on the monument to the civil rights movement in Montgomery, Alabama, quoting Dr. Martin Luther King (please see www.tolerance.org/memorial for more information); and inspiration for the “Let Justice Roll” Campaign of the National Council of Churches (please see <http://www.ncccusa.org/letjusticeroll/index.html> for more information).

¹ *The Book of Confessions*, 10:2, lines 7–18.

Reflections and Feedback

Reflections and feedback from the study of the *Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States* may be sent to the offices of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP).

Send your comments and reflections to:

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Advisory Committee
On Social Witness Policy

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