

John Gantt, Ohio
Alan Miller, Penn Northeast
Walter John Boris, Central Pacific

7. ADDRESSING THE STATE OF GLOBAL FORCED MIGRATION

Moderator Williams indicated that the next item of business was a resolution entitled Addressing the State of Global Forced Migration. He called on Yolanda Adams of the Southern Conference to present the recommended action.

Yolanda Adams moved on behalf of Committee #3 that the Thirty-second General Synod adopt the resolution Addressing the State of Global Forced Migration, as amended by Committee, and she spoke to the motion.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

19-GS-16 VOTED: The Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the resolution Addressing the State of Global Forced Migration.

(VOTE: 669 Yes; 12 No; 10 Abstentions – 691 electronic submissions registered)

ADDRESSING THE STATE OF GLOBAL FORCED MIGRATION
A Resolution of Witness

Text of the Resolution:

Whereas, the global state of forced migration and displacement has reached a crisis, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, with currently more than 68.5 million people forcibly displaced from their homes for reasons of war, violence, persecution, climate change, economic injustice, impoverishment, colonialism and its legacy, and exploitation, among others, a trend that continues to increase with no sign of a reversal (2017 UNHCR report); and

Whereas, more than 85% of those who are displaced are currently in countries that have little economic or structural capacity to provide care or services for them, while those nations who are far better able to do so, including the United States, have (for the most part) placed restrictions on refugee admissions, asylum applications and other forms of immigration, even while benefitting economically from the impoverished and unstable countries from which many of these displaced persons flee; and

Whereas, policy debates and general discourse on migration in the United States and in Europe have, with a few notable exceptions, centered on justifications of restrictions that are racist, xenophobic, bigoted, and slanderous, and have specifically named people who are brown and black, from specific countries, and of certain faiths, particularly Islam, as excluded; and

Whereas, those countries that do host refugees and migrants often receive compensation from the US and Europe to keep the migrants “warehoused” in their countries; and

Whereas, thus far, the global community has failed terribly to address comprehensively and collaboratively the massive movement of people, most often for reasons of self-interest, preservation of privilege, power, and wealth, enabling wealthy economies to benefit from the labor of migrants with little acknowledgement of obligations for the security and welfare of the migrants themselves; and

Whereas, due to restrictions and strict regulations, people take tremendous risks to reach safety and a new home, crossing deserts, seas, and other difficult terrain, for days, weeks, and months, only to reach reinforced and militarized borders, detention, and incarceration, likely rejection and forced return; not to mention the thousands who do not survive the journey at all; and

Whereas, the United Church of Christ has a long history of providing welcome and creating robust structures of welcome for the resettlement of refugees within the United States; and

Whereas, global partners of the United Church of Christ are advocating for and responding to the needs of the displaced and refugees among them, often with our support through Global Ministries, One Great Hour of Sharing, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)'s Week of Compassion offering, including:

- People fleeing from high levels of structural, social and economic violence in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and seeking asylum elsewhere to escape horrific conditions;
- African migrants and refugees who have become bottle-necked in North Africa, including in Morocco, in their attempt to make their way to Europe;
- Refugees from conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, now living in camps in Tanzania;
- Syrian and Iraqi displaced persons and refugees who have escaped war and conflict, now located throughout the Middle East and in Europe;
- Generations of Palestinian refugees displaced and dispossessed of their homes and property following the wars of 1948 and 1967, in the Middle East and beyond;
- People from throughout Southern Asia where millions are forced to migrate, and are trafficked and pushed into various forms of slavery;
- People at risk from climate change in the Pacific Islands, including Tuvalu, where rising sea levels threaten to flood and eventually eliminate whole island countries;

Whereas, General Synods of the United Church of Christ have advocated for a more humane US immigration policy (GS 2007), comprehensive immigration reform (GS 2013), and for the UCC to become an immigrant welcoming church (GS 2017); and, with the guidance of our global partners through Global Ministries, advocate for the rights and dignity of displaced persons and migrants the world over;

Be it therefore resolved, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

Affirms a vision of God's family that is all-inclusive, accepting, and welcoming, recognizing the dignity of every human being; and rejects the divisive discourse of fear, xenophobia, bigotry, and

racism that pervades the discourse on global forced migration, including as it relates to policy debates on immigration; and

Calls upon the members of the United Church of Christ in all settings to take seriously the matter of global forced migration: to pray, learn, and actively engage in education about the current state of global forced migration using resources made available through the church, specifically Global Ministries, the UCC's Humanitarian and Development Ministries, and the UCC National Collaborative on Immigration; and

Urges members of the UCC to participate in practicable ways to address the state of global forced migration through

- support of denominational partners around the world who are responding to the needs of displaced people, whether they are refugees, migrants, internally displaced, asylum-seekers, or others, through Global Ministries and One Great Hour of Sharing;
- engagement in refugee resettlement programs in the US through the UCC's Humanitarian and Development Ministries;
- advocacy for the rights of refugees everywhere based on the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951); and for Palestinian refugees specifically as stipulated in UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948), and for continued US funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency;
- advocacy and action on issues of economic justice, climate justice, and immigration justice; and
- efforts to dismantle racism, to learn about different cultures and religions, including Islam, and to counter any form of discrimination, bigotry, and xenophobia when encountered; and

Calls upon the US Administration and Congress to take seriously the issue of global forced migration, leaving behind partisan discourse and promoting actively the principles of the United Nations' Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, which seeks, among other things, to:

- address all aspects of international migration, including the humanitarian, developmental, human rights-related and other aspects;
- make an important contribution to global governance and enhance coordination on international migration;
- present a framework for comprehensive international cooperation on migrants and human mobility; and
- set out a range of actionable commitments, means of implementation, and a framework for follow-up and review among Member States regarding international migration in all its dimensions; and

Calls UCC members and settings to advocate for the US to work with the global community toward these goals.

Funding:

The funding for the implementation of this resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

Implementation:

The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

8. TA1: CT, RI, and MASS CONFERENCE MERGER

Moderator Williams indicated that the next item of business was a resolution coming directly to the floor of General Synod. The resolution was submitted by three southern New England Conferences to merge into a single Conference.

Per the United Church of Christ Constitution Article IX, paragraph 52 “the boundaries of any new Conference or any adjustment of boundaries between Conferences, shall be determined by the Conferences concerned with the approval of the General Synod.” Accordingly, the role of the General Synod in this instance is to approve or reject the proposal of the Conferences concerned without further amendment to the resolution.

Yvette Wynn, Vice Chair of the Business Committee, moved that the Thirty-second General Synod adopt the resolution and yielded her time to speak to the motion to Jocelyn Gardner Spencer of the Connecticut Conference, Linda Mesler of the Massachusetts Conference, and Marilyn Kendrix of the Rhode Island Conference.

Discussion:

Five people spoke in favor; two people spoke against.

19-GS-17 VOTED: The Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the resolution TA1 Motion to General Synod 32, 2019.

(VOTE: 601 Yes; 90 No; 24 Abstentions – 715 electronic submissions registered)

TA1 MOTION TO GENERAL SYNOD 32, 2019

A Prudential Resolution

Text of the Resolution

Whereas, in a 2014 study of the health and vitality of its conferences, the United Church of Christ found that Conferences need and desire to work collaboratively; and

Whereas, in June 2017, the Annual Meetings of the Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ, the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, and the Connecticut Conference each voted to approve a resolution calling for the creation of a new Conference of the United Church of Christ in Southern New England; and