

## **Draft: Resolution on migrant minors and family separation at the US borders**

**June 15, 2018**

Whereas, the predominant Judeo-Christian witness in scripture is to stand with the most vulnerable members of society, such as refugees, widows, orphans and all children. Among the many references are these:

You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. Ex. 23:9;  
When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. <sup>34</sup>The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. Lev. 19:33-34;  
For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’  
Matt. 25:35-36, and

Whereas, according to the witness of St. Matthew (Mt. 2:13-15), Mary and Joseph fled with their infant, Jesus from Herod’s state-sponsored violence in his directive to murder all the children under the age of two in order to murder the infant, Jesus. They took refuge in Egypt until it was safe to return home, and

Whereas our assembly theme and speakers have led us to explore the theology of the “neighbor” with new insight and rigor, and have led us to see that the Scriptures define the “neighbor,” not in terms of geographical proximity or sameness, but, as fellow western Pennsylvanian Fred Rogers also taught, in terms of “whomever God sends along our path,” regardless of their circumstances or background, and

Whereas in recent months, changes in federal policy have led to the intentional separation of children from parents seeking asylum in the United States, with parents being detained in federal jails awaiting adjudication, while children are taken away into the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and

Whereas with some 658 children split from 638 adults placed in “the prosecution process” between May 7-May 21, 2018 alone, according to Customs and Border Protection’s statistics sent to Congress, and nearly 1,800 families separated since October 2016, according to Reuters, and

Whereas, this policy of family separation has already led to permanent trauma for young children taken from their parents, whose harmful effects will last long after they may be eventually reunited with their parents after the judicial process concludes, and

Whereas, Presiding Bishop, the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, convened ELCA ecumenical and inter-religious partners in a statement (included in its entirety with all the signatures

as a companion to this resolution) addressing concerns over a recent U.S. government policy calling for more stringent enforcement of federal immigration laws, specifically the recent practice of separating children from their parents at the border, and

Whereas, as longstanding Church teaching has affirmed the family as a foundational societal structure to support human community the household as an estate blessed by God, stated that the security of the family provides critical mental, physical and emotional support to the development and wellbeing of children, and

Whereas, for refugees, leaving their communities is often the only option they have to provide safety for their children and protect them from harm. The practice of tearing children away from parents who have made a dangerous journey to provide a safe and sufficient life for them is unnecessarily cruel and detrimental to the well-being of parents and children, therefore

Be it resolved that, this synod in its assembly, continue to serve and love our neighbor, urgently praying for the children and families that suffer as a result to this policy, and

Be it further resolved that, we affirm and support the continuing ELCA ministries of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) and companion ecumenical ministries working on behalf of refugee families, and finally

Be it resolved that we join our voices with Presiding Bishop Eaton and all who urge the US Administration to stop their policy of separating families at our borders.

The Rev. Stephen Bond – New Life, Marion Center and Hope, Homer City

The Rev. Martin and Sarah Fox Roth - retired, Holy Trinity, Greenville

The Rev. Arlene Schweitzer – retired Chaplain, Torrance State Hospital, Torrance

The Rev. Jayne M. Thompson – Campus Pastor, Thiel College, Greenville