

1 18.03 RESOLUTION FOR ADVOCACY AND ACTION FOR IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED
2 STATES

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5 WHEREAS we recognize our church, along with our country, continues to change with the
6 steady of arrival of newcomers to the United States; that newcomers are increasingly
7 assuming leadership roles in our congregations, synods, affiliated educational and social
8 ministries agencies, and church wide ministries; and

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10 WHEREAS as members of a church with roots in immigrant churches and in a nation of
11 immigrants, we are familiar with the stories of persons who left their homes for economic
12 or political reasons, journeyed into an uncertain future and now struggle in a strange land
13 to begin a new life; and

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15 WHEREAS undocumented aliens live, work, and worship among us in the North Carolina
16 Synod, yet their undocumented status leaves them particularly vulnerable to negative
17 stereotypes and exploitation including, but not limited to: human trafficking, work/wage
18 oppression and abuse, substandard-housing, and physical violence and hate crimes; and

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20 WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, engages with these vulnerable
21 children of God in our congregations and church-affiliated agencies including Lutheran
22 Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), Lutheran Services of the Carolinas (LSC), and with
23 ecumenical partners. In all expressions of our church, we assist unaccompanied children,
24 offer pastoral care and guide persons without legal representation to appropriate counsel,
25 and with the citizenship process, and help these newcomers learn to live in their new
26 country;¹ and

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28 WHEREAS, the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* (DACA) program is currently subject-
29 matter of numerous cases now pending in several jurisdictions of the Federal Court system,
30 it is incumbent upon Congress to pass legislation to resolve the crisis faced by some 800,000
31 young persons who arrived in this country as children through no action of their own, some
32 of who are now rostered leaders in our church, students in Lutheran schools and colleges,
33 and with their families are members and friends of our congregations; and

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35 WHEREAS, immigrants and family members without any history of felony crimes, are
36 routinely taken into custody without explanation, and are detained indeterminately without
37 access to proper legal counsel or proper healthcare, in conditions which, “undermine the
38 protection of detainees’ rights, their humane treatment, and the provision of a safe and
39 healthy environment,”² as documented by inspections by the Department of Homeland
40 Security and non-profit agencies established to provide services to detainees; and

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42 WHEREAS, citizen children born in the United States to undocumented parents are forced
43 into foster care upon arrest and detention of their parents, often physically and forcibly

¹ *A Message on Immigration*, as adopted by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly 1997 (CA07.6.39).

² *Concerns About ICE Detainee Treatment and Care at Detention Facilities*, Report of the Office of the Inspector General, December 17, 2017 (OIG-18-72).

44 removed from their custody and detained separately without just cause until they are
45 placed in foster care;

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47 WHEREAS such separation from family members traumatizes the minor children, and their
48 placement with foster care agencies creates undue burden on already limited resources of
49 foster care systems across the United States; and

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51 WHEREAS policies separating families are not in keeping with the Christian teachings
52 regarding the sanctity and preservation of family unity; and

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54 WHEREAS our faith teaches us to welcome the stranger in our land and to treat them as one
55 of our own for in as much as we receive the stranger in need, we receive the Lord (Matthew
56 25:40); and

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58 WHEREAS the ELCA supports its members in their callings to: love their neighbor, to
59 advocate for justice and mercy in situations of brokenness; to work with and on behalf of
60 the poor, the powerless, and those who suffer; and to use our power and influence with
61 political and economic decision-making bodies to develop and advocate policies that seek
62 to advance justice, and peace;³ and

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64 WHEREAS the ELCA affirms our call to “public policy advocacy at state, federal, and
65 international levels that seeks to eliminate racial or ethnic discrimination (and) private
66 sector advocacy that encourages corporate social responsibility for community
67 development;⁴

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69 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT**

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71 • the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America meeting in
72 Assembly, calls upon the United States Congress, the President of the United States, and
73 the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, to act to:

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75 - halt the detention and deportation of immigrants not found guilty of a felony until
76 comprehensive immigration policy reform is fully enacted by Congress; and

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78 - pass permanent legislative solutions to protect Childhood Arrivals, also known as
79 “Dreamers” and provide them an unrestricted path to citizenship; and

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81 - open a pathway to legal status and citizenship to immigrants residing in this
82 country without legal documentation and who are not felons; and

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84 - reform the immigration policies and laws of the United States to provide
85 opportunity for legal migration and a path to citizenship in the United States; and

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³ Ibid.

⁴ ELCA Social Statement *Freed In Christ: Race, Ethnicity, And Culture* (1993).

- 87 • the North Carolina Synod meeting in Assembly, encourage its congregations and its
88 members to call for humane, compassionate treatment of persons designated as
89 undocumented aliens, including maintaining family unity; and
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91 • the North Carolina Synod meeting in Assembly urges the bishop of the synod, or his
92 designee, to make the synod’s position on this matter known throughout the synod
93 and to the public at large; and
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95 • the North Carolina Synod meeting in Assembly calls upon our synod leaders, pastors,
96 deacons, and congregations to support the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee
97 Services, Lutheran Services Carolinas, and the ELCA’s *Accompanying Migrant Minors*
98 *with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities* (AMMPARO) program⁵,
99 to welcome immigrants, and to advocate for public policies welcoming the stranger as
100 the Lord.

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103 Respectfully Submitted by the NC Synod Social Justice and Advocacy Ministries Team:
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105 Jones; Ms. Delia, Ms. Jenny Simmons, Rev. Johnathan Schnibben, Mr. Timothy Snyder, Mrs.
106 Linda Warren, Rev. Dr. Beverly Wallace.

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108 Approved as amended at NC Synod Assembly, June 2, 2018

⁵ Details, opportunities, and scope of the ELCA’s AMMPARO program are available at <https://www.elca.org/ammparo>.