18.04 RESOLUTION ON ACCEPTANCE AND RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN THE UNITED
STATES

WHEREAS we are compelled by the fundamental principles and commandments of our faith
exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus; and

WHEREAS the ELCA affirms our calling, which includes being, “committed to defend human
dignity ... to remove obstacles of discrimination and indifference; and speak out on timely,
urgent issues on which the voice of this church should be heard;¹ and

WHEREAS the ELCA supports its members in their callings to: “love their neighbor, to
advocate justice and mercy in situations of brokenness; to work with and on behalf of the
poor, the powerless, and those who suffer; and to use our power and influence with
political and economic decision-making bodies to develop and advocate policies that seek
to advance justice, and peace;”² and

WHEREAS the United States has a proud history of providing refugee status for persons
fleeing violence and poverty in their homelands, but refugee families are being refused
entry into the US and are being torn apart by detention and deportations; and

WHEREAS the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
confirms an unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from
their homes, the highest level of displacement on record, 22.5 million of whom are
refugees, over half of whom are minor children³; and

WHEREAS the Office of UNHCR confirms 10 million stateless people have been denied a
nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment; and

WHEREAS the Office of UNHCR confirms that in our current world “nearly twenty (20)
people are forcibly displaced every minute as a direct result of conflict or persecution, ...
and that the combination of multiple conflicts and resulting mass displacement, fresh
challenges to asylum, the funding gap between humanitarian needs and resources, and
growing xenophobia”⁴ continue to fuel hostility further endangering the lives of persons
and families seeking to escape harmful conditions in their homelands;

WHEREAS historically the United States of America has sought to cooperate with member
nations of the United Nations in accepting placement of UN Refugees after completion of
the UN’s extensive multi-national, inter-agency system for identification, qualification,
verification, and resettlement of refugees, a process requiring not less than 18-24 months
to complete; and

² Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
WHEREAS in the fiscal year ending September 2016, the United States admitted 84,995 refugees, and from October 1, 2016 through January 24, 2017, an additional 31,143 were admitted\(^5\); and

WHEREAS the current administration lowered the cap for admissions to 45,000; however, “Six and half months into the federal fiscal year, which began on October 1, 2017, only 11,000 refugees have been resettled by the United States,”\(^6\) and under current policies of the US Department of Homeland Security, refugees are routinely denied entry to the United States, regardless of in-country family relationships, no record of criminal activity, extreme hardship, known issues of violence and extreme poverty in their country of origin; and

WHEREAS among those allowed entry, there are documented cases of UN refugees being taken into custody and held in detention rather than being released into the care of refugee resettlement agencies, including Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and its affiliate-partner, Lutheran Services of the Carolinas; and

WHEREAS refugee minor children are being removed from the custody of their parents and physically detained in locations separate from their parents; and

WHEREAS the number of refugee admissions in 2017 was reduced to approximately one-half the number allowed in December of 2016;

WHEREAS, our faith teaches us to welcome the stranger in our land, for in as much as we receive the stranger in need, we receive the Lord;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that

* the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America meeting in Assembly, call upon the United States Congress, the President of the United States, and the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, to cooperate with the United Nations, its member states, and the international community to:
  - honor its commitment to accept no fewer than 45,000 refugees for resettlement within the borders of the United States and its territories before the end of fiscal year 2018, and in fiscal year 2019 accept no fewer than 75,000 for permanent migration or temporary protection from physical violence, human trafficking and other forms of involuntary servitude, until it is safe for them to return to their homeland OR they are eligible for and achieve permanent citizenship in the United States; and


- halt the detention and deportation of refugees shown by UN processes to be not guilty or under suspicion of commission of felonious crimes, until comprehensive immigration policy reform, including provisions for assimilation of refugees, is fully enacted by Congress; and

- provide adequate facilities to maintain the structure of refugee families, for the sake of care, comfort, and preservation of family unity; and

• the North Carolina Synod meeting in Assembly, encourage its congregations and its members to call for humane, compassionate treatment of persons designated as refugees, including maintaining family unity; and

• the North Carolina Synod meeting in Assembly urges the bishop of the synod, or his designee, to make the synod’s position on this matter known throughout the synod and to the public at large; and

• the North Carolina Synod meeting in Assembly calls upon our synod leaders, pastors, deacons, and congregations to support the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, its affiliate-partner Lutheran Services Carolinas, and the ELCA’s Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) program to welcome refugees, and to advocate for public policies welcoming the stranger as the Lord.

Respectfully Submitted by the NC Synod Social Justice and Advocacy Ministries Team:
Michael E. Jones, Convener; Rev. Kyle Bates; Deacon Deborah Johnson; Deacon GeoRene Jones; Ms. Delia, Ms. Jenny Simmons, Rev. Johnathan Schnibben, Mr. Timothy Snyder, Mrs. Linda Warren, Rev. Dr. Beverly Wallace.

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

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