

1 18.04 RESOLUTION ON ACCEPTANCE AND RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN THE UNITED
2 STATES

3
4 WHEREAS we are compelled by the fundamental principles and commandments of our faith
5 exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus; and

6
7 WHEREAS the ELCA affirms our calling, which includes being, “committed to defend human
8 dignity ... to remove obstacles of discrimination and indifference; and speak out on timely,
9 urgent issues on which the voice of this church should be heard;”¹ and

10
11 WHEREAS the ELCA supports its members in their callings to: “love their neighbor, to
12 advocate justice and mercy in situations of brokenness; to work with and on behalf of the
13 poor, the powerless, and those who suffer; and to use our power and influence with
14 political and economic decision-making bodies to develop and advocate policies that seek
15 to advance justice, and peace;”² and

16
17 WHEREAS the United States has a proud history of providing refugee status for persons
18 fleeing violence and poverty in their homelands, but refugee families are being refused
19 entry into the US and are being torn apart by detention and deportations; and

20
21 WHEREAS the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
22 confirms an unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from
23 their homes, the highest level of displacement on record, 22.5 million of whom are
24 refugees, over half of whom are minor children³; and

25
26 WHEREAS the Office of UNHCR confirms 10 million stateless people have been denied a
27 nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment; and

28
29 WHEREAS the Office of UNHCR confirms that in our current world “nearly twenty (20)
30 people are forcibly displaced every minute as a direct result of conflict or persecution, ...
31 and that the combination of multiple conflicts and resulting mass displacement, fresh
32 challenges to asylum, the funding gap between humanitarian needs and resources, and
33 growing xenophobia”⁴ continue to fuel hostility further endangering the lives of persons
34 and families seeking to escape harmful conditions in their homelands;

35
36 WHEREAS historically the United States of America has sought to cooperate with member
37 nations of the United Nations in accepting placement of UN Refugees after completion of
38 the UN’s extensive multi-national, inter-agency system for identification, qualification,
39 verification, and resettlement of refugees, a process requiring not less than 18-24 months
40 to complete; and

41

¹ ELCA Social Statement *The Church In Society: a Lutheran Perspective* (1991).

² Ibid.

³ Office of the UN High Commissioner on Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html> (last accessed April 10, 2018).

⁴ Ibid.

42 WHEREAS in the fiscal year ending September 2016, the United States admitted 84,995
43 refugees, and from October 1, 2016 through January 24, 2017, an additional 31,143 were
44 admitted⁵; and

45
46 WHEREAS the current administration lowered the cap for admissions to 45,000; however,
47 “Six and half months into the federal fiscal year, which began on October 1, 2017, only
48 11,000 refugees have been resettled by the United States,”⁶ and under current policies of
49 the US Department of Homeland Security, refugees are routinely denied entry to the United
50 States, regardless of in-country family relationships, no record of criminal activity, extreme
51 hardship, known issues of violence and extreme poverty in their country of origin; and

52
53 WHEREAS among those allowed entry, there are documented cases of UN refugees being
54 taken into custody and held in detention rather than being released into the care of refugee
55 resettlement agencies, including Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and its
56 affiliate-partner, Lutheran Services of the Carolinas; and

57
58 WHEREAS, refugee minor children are being removed from the custody of their parents and
59 physically detained in locations separate from their parents; and

60
61 WHEREAS the number of refugee admissions in 2017 was reduced to approximately one-
62 half the number allowed in December of 2016;

63
64 WHEREAS, our faith teaches us to welcome the stranger in our land, for in as much as we
65 receive the stranger in need, we receive the Lord;

66
67 THEREFORE, BE IT **RESOLVED** that

68
69 • the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America meeting in
70 Assembly, call upon the United States Congress, the President of the United
71 States, and the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, to cooperate
72 with the United Nations, its member states, and the international community to:

73
74 - honor its commitment to accept no fewer than 45,000 refugees for
75 resettlement within the borders of the United States and its territories
76 before the end of fiscal year 2018, and in fiscal year 2019 accept no fewer
77 than 75,000 for permanent migration or temporary protection from physical
78 violence, human trafficking and other forms of involuntary servitude, until it
79 is safe for them to return to their homeland OR they are eligible for and
80 achieve permanent citizenship in the United States; and

81

⁵ “Key Facts About Refugees to the US,” Jens Manuel Krogstad and Jynnah Radford, The Pew Research Center, January 30, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/30/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/> (last accessed April 15, 2018).

⁶ “Making Sense of the Decline in US Refugee Admissions, Gabe Cahn, April 13, 2018, HIAS.org <https://www.hias.org/blog/making-sense-decline-us-refugee-admissions> (last accessed April 15, 2018).

- 82 - halt the detention and deportation of refugees shown by UN processes to
83 be not guilty or under suspicion of commission of felonious crimes, until
84 comprehensive immigration policy reform, including provisions for
85 assimilation of refugees, is fully enacted by Congress; and
86
87 - provide adequate facilities to maintain the structure of refugee families, for
88 the sake of care, comfort, and preservation of family unity; and
89
90 • the North Carolina Synod meeting in Assembly, encourage its congregations and
91 its members to call for humane, compassionate treatment of persons designated
92 as refugees, including maintaining family unity; and
93
94 • the North Carolina Synod meeting in Assembly urges the bishop of the synod, or
95 his designee, to make the synod's position on this matter known throughout the
96 synod and to the public at large; and
97
98 • the North Carolina Synod meeting in Assembly calls upon our synod leaders,
99 pastors, deacons, and congregations to support the work of Lutheran Immigration
100 and Refugee Services, its affiliate-partner Lutheran Services Carolinas, and the
101 ELCA's *Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation*
102 *and Opportunities* (AMMPARO) program⁷ to welcome refugees, and to advocate
103 for public policies welcoming the stranger as the Lord.
104

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

109

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

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