

RESOLUTION TITLE:

Enable Episcopal Migration Ministries to More Fully Live Out its Mission to Aid Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Undocumented Immigrants, and Other Migrants in the United States and Internationally

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention reaffirm the following mission statement of Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) as adopted by General Convention in 2000: “The Episcopal Church in Service to Refugees and Immigrants”; and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention affirm that The Episcopal Church seeks to serve immigrants regardless of their immigration status or geographical location, within the limits of its ability; and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention acknowledge that due to restrictions attached to U.S. federal government funding, the vast majority of EMM’s current annual budget must be dedicated to people in the U.S. who have “refugee” and certain other narrowly defined immigration statuses, thereby excluding services for the vast majority of immigrants including but not limited to asylum seekers, undocumented immigrants, and immigrants who are located outside of the United States; and be it further

Resolved, That this General convention affirm that Episcopal Migration Ministries must continue to pursue its mission regardless of the availability of funding from the U.S. federal government; and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention assert that Episcopal Migration Ministries should be empowered to take additional steps (for example hiring additional staff, providing training to partners and volunteers, providing resources to people in need, building the capacity of congregations, etc.) in order to aid categories of immigrants other than those who may be served with funding from the U.S. federal government; and be it further

Resolved, That General Convention request a budget allocation of \$200,000.00 for the implementation of this resolution.

EXPLANATION:

- **General Convention resolved in 2000 (2000-A053)¹ to adopt the following mission statement for Episcopal Migration Ministries: “The Episcopal Church in Service to Refugees and Immigrants.”**
- **The Episcopal Church has repeatedly affirmed its call to aid migrants, regardless of their formal legal status**, for example by recommending that Episcopal Church “institutions and congregations become places of welcome, refuge, healing, and other forms of material and pastoral support for those targeted for deportation due to immigration status...”

¹ 2000-A053: Adopt Migration Ministries Mission Statement. Accessed February 27, 2024: 2018-C009: Urge Church to Become a Sanctuary in Support of Immigrants. Accessed February 27, 2024: https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_generate_pdf.pl?resolution=2000-A053

(2018-C009).² This resolution and others have provided sound theological grounding for aid to immigrants.

- **Increasing numbers of people around the world live as “forced migrants” or “forcibly displaced persons”** (see final bullet point below for a glossary of immigration terms): at the end of 2022 108.4 million people had been compelled to flee from their home countries or regions as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing the public order, compared with 89.3 million at the end of 2021.³
- **Forced migrants seeking safety in the United States are overwhelmingly people of color.** In federal year 2022 (the most recent year for which data are available) approximately 54% of refugees admitted to the U.S. were from Africa, 37% were from Asia, 10% were from Latin American or the Caribbean, and 9% were from Europe or Central Asia. In that same year the countries of origin of people granted asylum were from the following countries, in rank order: P.R. China, Venezuela, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Honduras, Afghanistan, Turkey, Russia, and Mexico, with a remaining 39.5% from countries not listed.⁴ In 2021, Undocumented immigrants were most likely to be from Mexico and Central America (66%), Asia (11%), South America (9%), Europe/Canada/Oceania (7%), the Caribbean (4%), and Africa (3%).⁵
- **“As climate change makes some parts of the earth uninhabitable, a climate migration crisis looms that international law is not prepared to address.”**⁶ Climate change fuels forced migration in many ways: For example, by increasing the likelihood and frequency of natural disasters, increasing extreme poverty and conflict over dwindling resources, and exacerbating social tensions that can lead to scapegoating and warfare.⁷
- **EMM obtains the vast majority of its annual budget from the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, which require that funds be used exclusively to benefit individuals within the United States who have formal “refugee” status or other narrowly defined legal status.**⁸
- **EMM is barred from using the abovementioned funds to work with the great majority of forcibly displaced persons within the United States,** including but not limited to

² 2018-D009: Set Forth Christian Principles to Guide Responses to Human Migration. Accessed February 27, 2024: https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2018-D009

³ Cf. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Global Trends Reports for 2021 (<https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-trends-report-2021>) and 2022 (<https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022>).

⁴ Gibson, Irene. (November 2023). *Refugees and Asylees: 2022, Annual Flow Report*. Office of Homeland Security Statistics, U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Pp. 2, 23. Accessed March 15, 2024: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/2023_0818_plcy_refugees_and_asylees_fy2022_v2_0.pdf

⁵ Van Hook, Jennifer, Julia Gelatt, and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto. (September 2023). A Turning Point for the Unauthorized Immigrant Population in the United States. *Migration Policy Institute*. Accessed March 15, 2024: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/turning-point-us-unauthorized-immigrant-population>

⁶ Prange, Mia. (December 19, 2022.) Climate Change Is Fueling Migration. Do Climate Migrants Have Legal Protections? *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed March 19, 2024: <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/climate-change-fueling-migration-do-climate-migrants-have-legal-protections>

⁷ IOM International Organization for Migration. (2008). *Migration and Climate Change*. IOM Migration Research Series No. 31. Accessed March 19, 2024: <https://publications.iom.int/books/mrs-no-31-migration-and-climate-change>

⁸ Services funded by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement are also accessible to people with the legal statuses outlined here (accessed February 27, 2024): <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/status-and-documentation-requirements-orr-refugee-resettlement-program>

undocumented immigrants (over 11 million),⁹ asylum seekers (approximately 240,000 applicants per year),¹⁰ and millions worldwide whose migration is made necessary by climate change.¹¹

- **Depending upon the outcome of the next U.S. presidential election, the American refugee resettlement program may be drastically reduced or even dismantled**, judging from lessons learned between 2017 and 2021: “The Trump administration didn’t just try to throw a wrench in the gears... It actually tried to disassemble the entire resettlement infrastructure.”¹² By following through on such a strategy, the U.S. federal government would not only cause untold human suffering, but it would also leave EMM with a small proportion of its current annual budget. Additional resources are needed to guard against this possibility and meaningfully continue the work of EMM. The wording of this resolution would allow for funds dedicated by General Convention to be used to aid refugees, if such funds were to become unavailable through the federal government.
- **In 2022, General Convention resolved (2022-D045)¹³ that EMM should direct specific attention towards LGBTQ+ people who were compelled to flee their homelands.** A far higher number of them in the United States have asylum seeker status (approximately 30,000 annually) than refugee status (approximately 1,000 annually).¹⁴ Funds dedicated through this resolution could be used to continue and expand this ministry: For example, by providing training to partner and affiliate agencies on how they can be more fully welcoming of LGBTQ+ forced migrants, and by helping partnering congregations to develop direct-service programs for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers.
- **EMM is also barred from using funds from the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement to work with forced migrants outside of the U.S.,** including in regions such as Europe where Episcopal Church congregations seek to aid migrants.¹⁵
- **Other Episcopal Church-related institutions that are working to support forced migrants who are outside of the United States** (for example Episcopal Relief and Development, an

⁹ Migration Policy Institute. *Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States*. Accessed February 19, 2024: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US>

¹⁰ The most recent U.S. Government data indicate 238,841 asylum applications in 2022. Gibson, Irene. (November 2023). *Refugees and Asylees: 2022*. Office of Homeland Security Statistics, U.S. Department of Homeland Security. P. 8. Accessed February 27, 2024:

https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/2023_0818_plcy_refugees_and_asylees_fy2022_v2_0.pdf

¹¹ Prange, Mia. (December 19, 2022.) Climate Change Is Fueling Migration. Do Climate Migrants Have Legal Protections? *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed March 19, 2024:

<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/climate-change-fueling-migration-do-climate-migrants-have-legal-protections>

¹² Finnegan, Conor and Ben Gittleston. (February 18, 2021). Trump “decimated” refugee program hampering Biden’s historic goal: Advocates. In *ABC News*. Accessed February 28, 2024:

<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-decimated-refugee-program-hampering-bidens-historic-goal/story?id=75911102>

¹³ 2022-D045: On Supporting LGBTQ+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Accessed February 27, 2024:

<https://2022.vbinder.net/resolutions/275/finalization?house=HD&lang=en>

¹⁴ Niedzwiecki, Max. (October 2023). *Jesus Didn’t Turn Anyone Away, Neither Do We: Churches Welcoming LGBTQ Forced Migrants*. Centre for Migration Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University, Webinar #23. Accessed February 27, 2024:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377782566_Jesus_Didn't_Turn_Anybody_Away_Neither_Do_We_Churches_Welcoming_LGBTQ_Forced_Migrants

¹⁵ See, for example, the Welcoming and Walking With Refugees program of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, which is supported by Episcopal Relief and Development (an independent nongovernmental organization): <https://www.tec-europe.org/migration/>.

organization that is independent of The Episcopal Church) **could benefit from the partnership and expertise of Episcopal Migration Ministries** (a ministry of The Episcopal Church). For example, Episcopal congregations in Europe could be trained and mentored to use the [Neighbor-to-Neighbor program](#) which helps congregations to provide high-quality service programs to asylum seekers.

- **EMM currently attempts to aid immigrants other than those who are covered by funding from the U.S. Department of State and Office of Refugee Resettlement through volunteer efforts, with minimal time dedicated by existing staff.** This is the case, for example, for the [Asylum and Detention Ministry Network](#) (name to be changed at this General Convention), the [Neighbor-to-Neighbor](#) program, and the [Rainbow Initiative](#), all of which require additional focus for planning, coordination, training, and follow-up functions in order to make the best use of EMM’s international and growing cadre of volunteers.
- **Brief glossary of immigration terminology used in this document:** Legal terminology related to migration is complex and differs by country. These definitions are especially relevant to the United States and to the current proposed resolution. A **“forced migrant”** or **“forcibly displaced person”** is someone who has been compelled to flee from their home country or region as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing the public order. **Refugees** have been recognized by the U.S. government as needing protection and then resettled in the U.S. by EMM and 9 other designated agencies and their affiliates. **Asylum seekers** have entered the U.S. and then petitioned for permission to stay permanently. **Asylees** have been granted that permission. **Undocumented or unauthorized immigrants** are at risk of being expelled from the U.S.
- **Immigration status has wide-ranging implications for the lives of immigrants:**

Immigration status	Employment authorization	Pathway to legal permanent residency & citizenship	Eligible for Medicaid, SNAP (Food stamps), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Eligible for initial refugee program (Reception & Placement) – housing supports, case management, basic needs, referrals, employment assistance	Eligible for additional refugee programs funded by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), including employment services, intensive medical & mental health case management	Eligible to apply for family reunification
Refugee status/visa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Asylum seeker	Not immediately; waiting period of at least 180 days post-asylum application	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Undocumented immigrant	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Asylee	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓

SUPPORTERS

- Rio Grande Borderland Ministries and parish partners
- Episcopal Diocese of San Diego Migration Ministry