

SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD: RESOLUTION 2017-2  
REGARDING SANCTUARY SYNOD

WHEREAS solidarity with others is called for throughout Holy Scripture: “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as a 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) “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Mt 25:35c); and

WHEREAS we as a church and nation are composed largely of immigrants, yet immigration has become a crucial and sometimes divisive issue in our society; and

WHEREAS for the past seventy years Lutherans in the U.S. (especially through the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) have welcomed, protected, and provided for over a half million displaced and vulnerable persons; and

WHEREAS the Sierra Pacific Synod of the ELCA has the highest number of immigrants of any ELCA synod in our nation, and in our cities, towns and agricultural areas, congregations serve multicultural neighborhoods where the influx of immigrants is often vital to the economy; and

WHEREAS the threat to undocumented immigrants has increased so that they live in fear of deportation, separation from their families, lose of their jobs, or being unable to return to school; and

WHEREAS the ancient, biblically-rooted idea of sanctuary was to provide places of refuge. In this country, although the concept of sanctuary has never been recognized in law, in the 1980s this tradition was revived as congregations — including some in this synod — became sanctuary congregations, providing safe havens for Central Americans fleeing civil conflicts and seeking protection from deportation. Now, under new circumstances, many other faith communities and cities are declaring themselves to be sanctuary churches or cities; therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Sierra Pacific Synod of the ELCA declares itself to be a Sanctuary Synod; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Sierra Pacific Synod pledges to support and encourage the congregations and members of this synod to support meaningful reform of immigration law and policy; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Sierra Pacific Synod pledges to resist by advocacy, protest, and nonparticipation those policy proposals that target and seek to deport millions of undocumented immigrants, and to advocate against attempts to eliminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Sierra Pacific Synod in Assembly urges its congregations to consider serving as places of welcome, refuge, healing, and doing other ministries of material and pastoral support for those targeted due to their immigration status or other differences, and that we work alongside others to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Sierra Pacific Synod assist in equipping congregations, clergy and lay leaders to engage in such work, appropriate to local contexts, capacity, and discernment by designating a staff person to work with the Synod Discipling Teams and Deans of Conferences for this priority; and be it further

RESOLVED that a representative group of the submitters in consultation with the bishop will convene a synod wide sanctuary movement task force to strategize in implementing this resolution and will report to the next Assembly on accomplishments and results. The task force is charged to address the following:

1. how best to coordinate with our sister synods in California, local and national sanctuary communities and institutions, immigrant rights groups and coalitions, especially with the ELCA church wide initiative,

"Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities" (AMMPARO)

2. creating a process for congregations to help them discern their call to become Sanctuary Churches
  
3. identifying resources and other information for congregations who are or who are considering becoming Sanctuary churches regarding immigration policy and enforcement and any potential legal issues arising from the various types of assistance that congregations could provide to undocumented immigrants, and other needs and resources for undocumented immigrants.

*Approved by the 2017 Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly, Saturday, May 6, 2017*