



## OFFICE OF IMMIGRATION ISSUES

The 220th General Assembly  
(2012)

On Advocating for comprehensive  
Immigration Reform

### Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

220th General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) resolves to do the following:

1. Urge all congregations to consider the biblical mandate to love the stranger among us and to see Jesus in his or her face. To this end we urge congregations to:

a. reexamine reasons behind the fears that jobs will be taken away by immigrants in our communities;

b. support denominational goals toward diversity and make efforts toward a better understanding of immigrant sisters and brothers' language and culture;

c. practice biblical hospitality to immigrant groups, particularly those formed for religious or self-help purposes.

2. Urge all councils within the church to join with other faith communities, business organizations, law-enforcement entities, and other civil society groups to educate and advocate for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level. Elements of such reform, from our perspective, must include:

a. Making family unity a priority by avoiding separation of families, revising visa preferences and caps, and eliminating visa backlogs;

b. Providing a reasonable and inclusive path for undocumented migrants presently living in the United States to eventually gain citizenship without imposing punitive costs, wait times, or other irksome conditions;

c. Facilitating integration of immigrants into their communities by celebrating the culture and languages of their homelands, by providing civics education and legal assistance to regularize their status, and by providing access to all social services;

d. Requiring humane enforcement procedures that develop measures to reduce human smuggling and migrant deaths, and that aim to eliminate human and civil rights abuses; abolishing enforcement programs such as Operation Streamline and arrangements that involve local agencies in the enforcement of immigration laws, such as "287(g)" Agreements and the Secure Communities Program;

e. Eliminating lengthy detention for migrants, except those accused of dangerous crimes, strengthening due process protections at every stage of the system, and establishing and stringently enforcing minimum standards of care in all detention facilities;

f. Protecting all workers from exploitation, abuse, and affronts to their dignity by enforcing labor and employment laws that provide fair wages, the right to organize and to seek redress for grievances;

g. Providing safe, legal, and realistic paths for future migration, consistent with the needs of the U.S. economy without undercutting the employment of anyone already working in the U.S., allowing new

migrants to bring their families with them and allowing them the freedom to change places of employment.

3. Urge all councils within the church to join Christ's mission of building communities, encouraging them to:

a. Draw from materials readily available\* to provide education to congregations and surrounding communities concerning economic contributions of immigrants, problems migrants face as a result of current legislation, and its practical application during and after crossing the border;

b. Create welcoming worship services and programs with migrants in the area;

c. Build relationships by celebrating gifts, listening to stories, and accepting all as children of God; and

d. Supporting migrant communities through providing and funding educational programs and by advocating access to higher education.

4. Direct the General Assembly Mission Council, through the Office of Public Witness and other related ministries, and the Office of the General Assembly, through the Office of Immigration Issues, to advocate for other measures that will improve the plight of immigrants in our midst:

a. Call on Congress to immediately pass legislation comparable to the DREAM Act that provides a pathway to citizenship for eligible students. Simultaneously, urge the administration to provide temporary legal status for students eligible under the DREAM Act or comparable legislation in the meantime.

b. Urge the administration and Congress to enact clear, enforceable detention reforms, including rigorous medical treatment standards and increased access to pastoral care, legal counsel, and legal orientation programs. And to expedite the release of individuals who pose no risk to the community and expand the use of community-based alternatives to detention that are more humane and cost-effective.

c. Direct the Office of the General Assembly to urge the Border Patrol to cease the practice of lateral repatriation that separates migrant families.

d. Direct the Office of General Assembly to urge the administration to end policies such as Secure Communities and 287g programs that lack oversight and transparency and have led to racial profiling and have undermined the stability of communities and their trust of law enforcement agencies.

e. Draw attention to the human rights crisis along the border region between Mexico and the United States that has led to the deaths of thousands of migrants, affirm the right of individuals and organizations to provide life-saving humanitarian aid in the border regions, and urge church councils to support humanitarian aid efforts. Join a multitude of other communities by becoming an official member of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, whose principles are echoed above and laid out in the *Interfaith Platform on Humane Immigration Reform*.

f. Direct the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, in consultation with the Office of Immigration Issues and other appropriate offices, to investigate how free trade agreements are affecting immigration into the U.S., and to report its findings to the 221st General Assembly (2014).

g. When selecting venues for church-related activities, especially church-wide events, consider the safety and freedom from harassment of all who might attend.

5. Invite church-wide prayer for all suffering on both sides of the border, recognizing that fear, hatred, tension, and division in our communities is counter to God's desire for human life.