

# Resolution

## Addressing the Welcome of Immigrants and Refugees by the Reverend Schenectady Classis

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**BE IT RESOLVED:** That Schenectady Classis publically affirms a position of welcome and hospitality to all immigrants and refugees.

**WHEREAS:** The General Synod of the Reformed Church in America has issued statements and resolutions reflecting this position.

- In 1993, the General Synod's Commission on Christian Action stated, in part, that:
  - The scriptural mandate includes provisions for strangers in Old Testament law, along with accounts of love, faith, hospitality, courage, and repentance embodied in foreigners within the nation of Israel. Jesus' healing ministry touched several foreigners. In fact, Scripture shows us that strangers are often central to God's work and witness.
  - Christians should never let strangers remain "across the tracks." They should never be away from the core of our lives, never farther than the other side of our own table...The first tables to which all strangers should be welcome are those in the homes of Christian families.
  - Through a multitude of channels, our efforts should aim to imitate the restorative work of God by assuring strangers a secure place, a dignified life, blessings in present crises, and hope for the future.
  - The scriptural call is clear: we must receive strangers with open hands and hearts...The challenge for the RCA is to remember our roots as strangers in a new land, to heed Scripture's teaching, and to energetically set out to realize God's vision for family. We must start noticing the strangers in our midst: foreign students and their families, new, and even third-generation immigrants; migrant workers; foreign entrepreneurs, engineers, doctors, and government representatives; and refugees.  
*(MGS 1993: 88-89, 96)*
  
- In 2007, the General Synod resolved that:
  - The wellness and safety of immigrants in the United States, legal and illegal, is an issue of the kingdom of God and it matters to the RCA and to Reformed churches...As public policy continues to be debated and citizens weigh in, may the scriptural witness of the RCA and its members continue to consistently advocate for the rights of the poor and oppressed...As the church continues to embrace the vision of being a multiracial and multiethnic community, may the RCA faithfully and hospitably extend the welcome and love of Christ to the illegal immigrant

populations in the United States and advocate for legislation that will protect and serve them. (*MGS 2007: 252-253*)

- In 2018, following a motion from the floor, the General Synod voted:
  - “To direct the general secretary to write a letter to the president of the United States condemning the separation of immigrant children from their families and strongly supporting immigration reform and DACA; and further, To urge congregations to encourage their local politicians to enact legislation that supports immigration reform and DACA.” (*MGS 2018*)

**WHEREAS:** several Scriptural references towards immigrants and refugees affirm this position:

- “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 the 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.” (Leviticus 19:33-34, NRSV)
- For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19, NRSV)

**WHEREAS:** The people of God were warned not to oppress the foreigners among them, knowing full well that those foreigners would not have been followers of YHWH and the Israelite faith:

- “You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 23:9, NRSV)
- “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 3:5, NRSV)

**WHEREAS:** Jesus himself warns against the mistreatment of those in need:

- “Then he will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” (Matthew 25:45, NRSV)

**WHEREAS:** The Belhar Confession also states that:

- God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged;

- that God calls the church to follow [God's self] in this, for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;
- that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others. (Belhar Confession, Article 4)

**THEREFORE:** Schenectady Classis publically affirms the statements previously affirmed by General Synod, in order to challenge the current anti-Muslim, anti-immigration, anti-refugee, and racist rhetoric heard in the media from various speakers and religious groups, particularly in light of the forced separation policies currently enacted at our borders. We recognize that General Synod statements are not binding on lower assemblies, which is the reason why we feel it prudent to issue our own statement.

We understand that discussions regarding immigration, refugee welcome, race, and the Islamic faith are complex and may stir passionate emotions. While we acknowledge that we do not have all the answers to these difficult questions, we resolve that we, as members of Schenectady Classis, will seek to “do justice and love mercy” and lead the way in promoting a posture of welcome to immigrants, refugees, and any persons who face oppression the basis of their race, ethnicity, immigration status, or refugee status.

**BE IT SO:** Adopted by the Executive Committee of the Reverend Schenectady Classis, on the nineteenth day of June, in the two thousand eighteenth year of our Lord.