

Immigration and Refugee Issues

ACSWP Introduction

The Presbyterian General Assemblies first began to speak out on immigration and refugee issues when the aftermath of World War II and the partitioning of Europe displaced millions of people. Presbyterians reached out to the European refugees and bid their government to allow immigration above and beyond the normal immigration quotas (UPCNA, 1947, p. 1110; PCUS, pp. 162-164; PCUSA, p. 204). The Assemblies reaffirmed their call for "opening up immigration" in 1948 (1948 PCUSA, 1948, p. 89; PCUSA, p. 204). Congress, in the meantime, was not as anxious to reform immigration law as the churches were. This fact led the 1953 PCUSA Assembly to call for a comprehensive review of the nation's immigration policies (PCUSA, 1953 p. 184). By the time the 1959 UPCUSA Assembly endorsed World Refugee Year, it was evident that the refugee problem was a continuing dilemma (UPCUSA, 1959, p. 580).

In subsequent years the Assemblies spoke to the problems of Indochinese, El Salvadoran, Haitian, Afghan, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Ethiopian refugees. The continuing 20th century phenomena of refugees seeking security and safety from political and economic oppression moved the 1980 UPCUSA and 1982 PCUS Assemblies to issue general statements on the world refugee situation.

An enduring problem for American Christians is posed by Mexican migration to the United States. The UPCUSA and PCUS Assemblies jointly adopted the policy statement "Mexican Migration to the United States: Challenge to Christian Witness and National Policy" in response to the problem and urged specific action to make real the "love for neighbor" that Christians are called to express in relations with all people. Two sentences from that policy statement characterize the best in Presbyterian thinking on the subject of immigration: "Political and geographical boundaries are in and of themselves part of the human social existence. ...However, the only boundaries Christians recognize ultimately are those established by justice and love" (UPCUSA, 1981, p. 257; PCUS, 1981, p. 426).

In the 1980's the problems of illegal immigration and persons seeking asylum from war-torn areas in Central America reached crisis proportions. When some Presbyterians acted to oppose what they saw as callous disregard for the lives of political refugees on the part of the government, the General Assemblies expressed support for their actions in what was called the "sanctuary movement." The Assembly also addressed continuing problems with refugees from Cuba and Haiti. (*See also **Chapter Three-Cuba**, **Chapter Five-Haiti** and **Chapter Five-United States**.*) Likewise, the Assemblies continually called for compassionate, lenient U.S. immigration policies toward Asian Americans and South East Asian refugees.

Immigration issues continued to be of concern to General Assemblies in the 1990s. In California proposition #187 limited access to public social services to documented immigrants. (California alone has 1.7 million undocumented immigrants.) This debate has also figured prominently in the states of Florida and Texas. In light of this growing concern, the 206th General Assembly (1994) adopted the "Call to Presbyterians to Recommit to Work and Pray for a Just and Compassionate U.S. Immigration Policy" by reaffirming the 202nd General Assembly's (1990) resolutions (PC(U.S.A.), 1990, p. 520).

The 206th General Assembly (1994) reaffirmed the 202nd General Assembly (1990) action regarding immigration. The 206th G.A. then added: "mindful that myths are strong and form the basis of much of the current immigration debate, we call upon the church to seek to learn more about the basic differences between refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and undocumented persons. We also call upon Presbyterians to take the time to learn about costs and benefits associated with immigration. ...we do not

support the development of a national identification card because of the potential discriminatory use of such a document. We do support efforts to advocate for more federal resources to return to those communities and states most impacted by immigration, recognizing that, although immigration as a whole is a benefit to the nation, there are short-term costs that should be borne more equitably." (PC (USA), 1994, p. 243)

The 211th General Assembly (1999) adopted a resolution on the "Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors" as the basis of a new level of engagement with immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, at all levels of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The resolution came in response to a referral from a Commissioners' Resolution from the 209th General Assembly (1997). The resolution pointed out grave issues raised by new immigration laws (1996) and other policies, such as the sweeping welfare reform in 1995. The resolution also gave special attention to the challenge that new neighbors present to our congregations.

1947 Statement – PCUSA, 1947, p. 204

We believe that it is the will of God that the hungry be fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered. God's will is our duty. We seek to serve God's purpose in our lives and in our national policy. No policy of government is either right or wise that denies help to the homeless and hungry. . . .

1950 Statement – PCUSA, 1950, p. 247

[The Assembly urged] that the Presbyterian Church continue to do its full share in supporting Church World Service, the cooperative agency for displaced persons work.

[also recommended] that provisions be made for the same careful screening of people from this group (Eastern Europe) which as been applied to Displaced Persons and the admission of those who can be integrated into our democracy in an enlarged, selective immigration quota in addition to the Displaced Persons provision.

1953 Statement – PCUSA, p. 184

[The General Assembly urged] that the continuing Congressional Committee on Immigration and Naturalization Policy commence public hearings immediately looking toward the framing and swift enactment of legislation that is wholesomely American. . . .

1959 Statement – UPCUSA, p. 580

The 171st General Assembly Endorses the purposes of World Refugee Year,

[and] Believes that the refugee problem is a continuing one and that real solutions must be based on political and social justice, international co-operation, and the universal recognition of fundamental human rights.

1966 Statement – PCUS, p. 173

. . . In a world of revolution, rapid change and sharp conflict of ideologies, Christians have an opportunity and duty to be a reconciling and healing force between nations and peoples and races where possible.

The churches and voluntary agencies in the United States should prepare to expand greatly their services to refugees and to those injured or affected by the war, and to play their full role in the gigantic task of reconstruction and reconciliation.

. . .

1975 Statement – PCUS, p. 136

. . . b. We recognize the crucial immediate needs of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees for sponsors and for assistance in the very difficult job of resettlement. We note that even those churches and individuals who are most eager to help need knowledgeable assistance in their communications with federal and state governments, refugee camp administrators, national relief agencies, and local sources for assistance. Therefore this Assembly:

(1) Urges the churches and members to seek ways of assisting those refugees by sponsorship and other resettlement assistance. . . .

1980 Statement – UPCUSA, p. 217

[The General Assembly asks]:

[8]a. That Congress appropriate adequate funding for internal refugee resettlement;

b. That the government refrain from any use of a refugee community as a base for political or paramilitary action against those governments from which people fled.

c. That severe penalties be imposed for the unscrupulous lawyers, immigration consultants, travel agents and others who prey on the population . . .

d. That the United States government oppose any refoolment, that is, the involuntary return of refugees to the country from which they have escaped.

e. That the government seek through positive action, including economic aid to ameliorate those conditions emerging from conflicts that create continuing exodus of refugees . . .

f. That the government exercise great caution in working to establish "special processing centers," especially in Southeast Asia, to protect them from becoming permanent camps of the 1990's.

g. That the administration support the Haitian class action suit that would grant Haitian refugees political asylum in the United States.

h. That the government desist from any plans to resettle refugees in the Pacific Trust Territory . . .

1981 Statement – PCUS, 1981, pp. 47 & 147

Therefore be it resolved that the 121st General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States:

Calls upon the President of the United States to halt immediately mass deportation and exclusion proceedings for refugees from El Salvador and Haiti until effective means of guaranteeing constitutional due process are in place and equal protection is provided similar to that accorded the Indochinese, the Cubans, and others who flee persecution.

1981 Statement - PCUS, 1981, p. 426; UPCUSA, 1981, p. 291

Mexican Migration to the United States: Challenge to Christian Witness and National Policy

Mexican immigrants reveal again our divided mind about immigration. They are denounced as illegal, yet eagerly sought as workers. They are sent back across the border to Mexico with one hand, and recruited back to the United States with the other. They are told they are needed and at the same time that they are not wanted. They are regarded both as burden and benefit. It is in this setting and with the recognition of a unique relationship between the United States and Mexico as neighbors in history and culture that our churches are challenged to address migration issues.

Political boundaries are part of the human condition and are often useful. . . . The boundaries of God's Kingdom are not the same as the boundaries of nations. The only boundaries the Christian recognizes are those established by justice and

love.

Our relationship with Mexican migrants, then, is best understood in terms of love for the neighbor. How may we extend love then to these neighbors so that their humanness may have full expression? . . . Love means seeking community with Mexican migrants, an openness to the sharing of lives, an active appreciation for the gifts of Mexican culture mediated to us in their personhood . . . Moreover, love for neighbor also commits Christians to the pursuit of justice. Love extends to the poor who remain in Mexico, not only to those who emigrate to the United States, so Christians will seek justice in policies of aid and trade that promote the whole well-being of these our neighbors.

As we look at the human faces in the migratory streams between Mexico and the United States, we are struck by the extent of the need and the magnitude of the suffering. We are moved by the plight of the poor in Mexico which leads them to seek work in the United States. We are angered by their vulnerability to abuse, exploitation and injustice in their efforts to earn an income. We are grieved by the extended separation of families in migration patterns and the obstacles to keeping families together. We admire the courage of immigrants in seeking opportunity in the face of much uncertainty and numerous hazards.

[The General Assembly recommends:]

A. Immigration Policy -- The following provisions specifically related to Mexican citizens should be incorporated into a revision of United States immigration laws:

1. Amnesty. Grant permanent resident alien status, based on proven residence for a certain period of time prior to a fixed date, to all qualifying undocumented Mexicans currently in the United States, including non-working spouses and dependent children.
2. Special Immigration Category. Provide a new immigration category, Temporary Worker, for Mexican citizens, . . .
3. Temporary Worker Visa. Provide a visa to entitle a citizen of Mexico to come to the United States for an initial six-month period to seek employment . . .
5. Proof of Right to Employment. Provide, through the federal government, some non-counterfeitable and nontransferable right-to-work document for all citizens and noncitizens legally entitled to work in the United States . . .

1982 Statement – UPCUSA, p. 519

[The General Assembly expresses distress and concern] . . . that the treatment of the Haitians now in the United States is similar to the inhumane and unsatisfactory treatment of Cubans, Indochinese, Japanese, Mexicans, etc., in years past and present; and . . .

1. Call upon President Ronald Reagan to immediately rescind his interdiction mandate to intercept and turn back freedom-seeking Haitians on the high seas.
2. Urge President Ronald Reagan to grant refugee status to all Haitians within the jurisdiction of the United States.
3. Request that all Haitians currently being confined in holding centers be immediately released for assimilation into American communities . . .

ACSWP Commentary

The Assembly proposed that Haitian refugees now residing in the U.S. be given immediate temporary asylum and urged that "official negotiation between the governments of Haiti, the Caribbean Basin, and the United States call a mini-summit meeting to help determine a solution to the reasons for Haitian citizen exodus" (PCUS, 1982, p. 75).

1982 Statement – PCUS, p. 125

On the World Refugee Crisis

[The General Assembly] Appeals to its congregations to intensify their efforts to:

- a. Deepen the understanding of the complex social, economic, and political realities that create and affect refugees;
- b. Promote and undertake biblical, theological reflection as an indispensable base for the churches' ministry with refugees;
- c. Work with our government to assure that the basic human rights are respected, including the right of every person to stay, to leave and to return to their [sic] country;
- d. Promote dialogue with refugees of all faiths who have come to live within our communities and help to ensure opportunities and places of worship for them;
- e. Emphasize the church's pastoral responsibility to serve the spiritual needs of refugees;
- f. Use to the fullest the resources of refugees and of local host communities to work towards rapid self-sufficiency and developmental goals.

1982 Statement – PCUS, p. 124

The General Assembly reaffirms the Constitution of the United States of America which grants due process of law to all persons who reside in this country, whether legally or illegally. We remind immigration officials of their oath to obey the law as it applies to the deportation of undocumented persons.

1984 Statement – PC(USA), p. 736

Therefore, the 196th General Assembly (1984):

1. Continues to oppose as both illegal and immoral the policy of the current administration to deny safe haven to Central American refugees in the United States;
2. Expresses deep concern about the attacks by the current administration on church workers who in ministering with refugees from Central America are trying to prevent them from being sent back to their countries of origin where they face great personal danger;
3. Expresses its firm support and encouragement for those individuals and churches, who, from the base of their Christian convictions or for humanitarian reasons, have risked imprisonment in order to save the lives of refugees from Central America by helping them to avoid being sent back to the countries they have fled; . . . [CR]

1984 Statement – PC(USA), p. 740

...Therefore, the 196th General Assembly (1984) calls upon the Attorney General of the United States to take such measures as necessary to ensure the safety of asylum seekers, the proper determination of refugee status, and the provision of services to temporary asylum seekers in accordance with the above principles for protection of refugees and asylum seekers. [CR]

1985 Statement – PC(USA), p. 768

[The General Assembly]:

1. Appeal[s] to the U.S. State Department to expedite negotiations so as to allow for immigration of American-Asian persons who wish to come to the United States at the earliest possible date and that we communicate our concern and this appeal to the appropriate office of the State Department and to the Secretary of State of the United States;... [CR]

1985 Statement – PC(USA), p. 767

[The General Assembly]:

1. Protest[s] the clandestine eavesdropping on church meetings by U.S. government undercover agents without warrants or judicial supervision as a serious threat to the Constitutional guarantee of religious freedom and the separation of church and state;
2. Demand[s] that all charges against the refugees and sanctuary workers based on or connected with such surveillance be dropped and any deportation proceedings be halted; . . . [CR]

1986 Statement – PC(USA), p. 478

[The General Assembly]: ...6. Expresses deep concern about the ruling of Judge Earl H. Carroll to bar from consideration in the trial of the sanctuary workers a number of issues central to any reasonable determination of justice in the case, namely religious motivations, the situation of people in El Salvador and Guatemala, and the obligations of the United States government to protect political refugees as delineated in the Refugee Act of 1980 and international agreements such as the United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Geneva Convention Relating to the Treatment of Civilians in Times of War.

7. Reaffirms the protest of the 197th General Assembly (1985) against the clandestine infiltration of church meetings by United States government undercover agents without either warrants or judicial supervision; and affirms the participation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in legal action to prohibit any future recurrence of this practice which constitutes a serious threat to the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and the protection of privacy.

...12. Calls upon the present Administration to cease the harassment and prosecution of church workers engaged in humanitarian work with Central American refugees and to redirect its efforts, together with churches and other concerned groups, toward addressing in the most humane way the needs of refugee families and individuals in the country. [R]

1986 Statement – PC(USA), p. 875

[The General Assembly]:

1. Express its concern over the appalling conditions under which the Cuban detainees are kept in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary;
2. Urge the Bureau of Prisons and the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the U.S. Department of Justice, to take immediate measures to improve the living conditions of the Cubans detained in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary; transfer to other facilities those detainees that are in overcrowded cells; grant these detainees individual parole hearings and release into the community those against whom no charges can be sustained; . . . [CR]

1988 Statement – PC(USA), p. 971

[The General Assembly directs] appropriate ministry units of the General Assembly Council to do the following as soon as possible:

1. Provide the whole church with information addressing the above realities, including practices of detention and deportation and the procedures of immigration control, legalization and employer sanctions;
2. Challenge practices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service that seem to violate the intention of the Refugee Act of 1980. [CR]

1990 Statement – PC(USA), p. 520

IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT OF 1986

. . . While it is clear that the United States is undergoing profound change, including economic restructuring and an expansion of cultural identity, it is equally clear that blaming immigrants for the problems brought on by change is contrary to our best ideals. It is time to move back to a posture of hospitality, generosity, and fairness.

A. That the 202nd General Assembly (1990), in recognizing the special claim that immigrants make on Christian conscience and the contributions they make to U.S. society, take the following actions:

[1] b. Reaffirm the following principles, which are part of past General Assembly actions, as the basis for evaluating the [Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986] IRCA and advocating changes in U.S. immigration policy. Any immigration policy must

- (1) provide for the human needs of refugees and immigrants;
- (2) assure non-discriminatory humanitarian aid and application of laws and policies;
- (3) uphold full constitutional and civil rights for refugees and immigrants as well as U.S. citizens;
- (4) protect the lives of persons;
- (5) give special consideration to the needs of women, children, individuals with special needs, and the unification of families;
- (6) insure provision of adequate resources, as needed, to communities in order to reduce possibilities of conflict between immigrant groups and racial/ethnic U.S. citizens; and
- (7) combat vigorously any expression of racism either in policies or the implementation of them.

C. Affirms that a just and compassionate U.S. immigration policy must also:

- (1) recognize that a sovereign nation has a legitimate need to regulate immigration;
- (2) uphold international standards and accords regarding protection to refugees and persons in refugee-like situations;
- (3) affirm, in concert with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment";
- (4) address the U.S. economic, political, and military policies that may contribute to conditions compelling human displacement and migration; and
- (5) require that, as a goal of alleviating the root causes of migration, the consideration of human displacement be an essential part of shaping U.S. foreign policies.

2. That [the General Assembly] regarding public policy concerns:

- a. advocate for the repeal of employer sanctions as a provision of immigration legislation.
- b. calls upon the administration to provide comparable legal residency status to immediate family members of amnesty applicants granted temporary residency in order to ensure family unity, in accord with the congressional intent of IRCA;
- c. call for an updated amnesty program with a more recent cutoff date to provide for legalization of undocumented immigrants established in the U.S. who were unable to benefit from the limited legalization provisions in IRCA; . . . [R]

1999 Statement – PC(USA), pp. 353-355

Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors

The 211th General Assembly (1999):

a. Reaffirm[s] the guiding theological and ethical principles contained in the historical review of Presbyterian policy on immigration and refugee issues, and commit to rediscover its identity as a church of the stranger.

(1) Christians are obligated by the loving will of God to seek to ensure that the basic needs of persons for food, clothes, shelter and safety are met (Matt. 25-35-40).

(2) Christians believe in the intrinsic worth of each human as a person made in the image of God.

(3) The Christian confession of Jesus Christ as Lord transforms "strangers" into neighbors who are welcomed into our communities.

(4) Churches are called to ministry with refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants, and to public witness on their behalf.

(5) Christians have the responsibility to challenge and to shape government policy regarding refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.

(6) Love of neighbor requires Christians to seek justice for refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.

(7) Faithfulness to Christ means Christians always live in tension with national values and policies.

(8) Christians may affirm certain values in national and international life as consistent with their theological vision of human community.

b. Reaffirm[s] the guiding policy principles contained in the historical review of Presbyterian policy on immigration and refugee issues and to utilize them to rediscover its identity as a church of the stranger.

(1) Christians should engage in pastoral, compassionate, educational, and prophetic ministries with refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.

(2) The provision of sanctuary for asylum seekers may be an appropriate moral response for churches even though the United States government regards this witness as illegal.

(3) Churches should vigorously advocate the church's right to religious freedom in their ministries with refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.

(4) Refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants should be treated humanely and justly in government policies and in our communities.

(5) The United States should respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and adhere to international laws and accords that seek to implement standards of universal human rights.

(6) Christians should seek the elimination of discrimination and racism from government policies and community responses.

(7) The United States government should ensure that the constitutional rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants to due process of law are protected.

(8) Sovereign nations should exercise their authority to regulate immigration with a presumption toward generosity rather than restrictiveness.

(9) The United States should open jobs to neighbors with a strong and continuing historical connection who need and want to work so long as there are jobs available and the poor already residing in the United States are not further disadvantaged.

(10) Restrictions on immigration should be enforced humanely.

(11) The United States government should make the causes of human displacement a major priority in United States foreign policy.

c. Direct[s] the General Assembly Council, through its Ministries Divisions, to coordinate the various initiatives for ministry with immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers by:

(1) Urging sessions and presbyteries to develop new approaches to ministry with new neighbors and to share those

models that are successful in order to be mentors and models for others; and encouraging presbyteries and synods as the locus of support to congregations and individuals called into caring ministry with immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

(3) Encouraging Presbyterians to express pastoral concerns and prayers for those whose[sic] service[sic] in the Immigration and Naturalization Service, acknowledging that they often find themselves faced with difficult, morally ambiguous, and even morally indefensible situations in the enforcement of U.S. immigration policy.

(4) Identifying and/or developing resources for pastoral care with asylum seekers and immigrants who are in detention.

d. Reaffirm[s] the 209th General Assembly (1997) Resolution on "Welfare and Poverty" policy on the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, urge[s] presbyteries and congregations to respond to the plight of refugees and immigrants during the next year when public assistance ends, and to advocate publicly on their behalf so that their basic needs will be met.

e. Reaffirm[s] the consistent witness of General Assemblies on behalf of due process in legal proceedings and urge[s] Presbyterians, presbyteries, and congregations to engage in advocacy efforts to ensure that foreigners in the United States have the same legal protections that citizens enjoy, including the right to legal counsel.

f. Advocate[s] for the repeal of those sections of the 1996 immigration law that provide for the expedited removal of asylum seekers and immigrants without a full hearing, including the right of appeals, urging presbyteries and sessions to do similar advocacy. Until these sections are repealed, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the United States government should cooperate with efforts to monitor independently the way "expedited removal" is applied.

g. Advocate[s] for the repeal of those sections of the 1996 immigration law that removes review of that law and its administration from the jurisdiction of immigration judges and the federal courts, urging presbyteries and sessions to similar advocacy.

h. Oppose[s] the routine use of detention as an enforcement tool in addressing common immigration violations, noting the particular hardship this puts on women and children, urging presbyteries and sessions to similar advocacy.

i. Advocate[s] for use of the credible fear standard for releasing asylum seekers from detention, and assuring a more speedy adjudication to reduce unreasonably lengthy stays in detention, urging presbyteries and sessions to do similar advocacy. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) should ensure asylum seekers are not held in local jails, nor detained with local criminals, and that they are provided humane conditions including adequate and appropriate food, personal treatment, medical care, prompt access to legal help, family, and friends.

j. Urge[s] that numerical limits used by the United States on allowing adjudicated asylum seekers adjust to a legal permanent residence (LPR) status be lifted, urging presbyteries and sessions to do similar advocacy.

k. Urge[s] restoration of a more generous admission of refugees, giving particular attention to the annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and ensuring that those refugees identified and screened as being in urgent need of resettlement (rescue) be a priority for United States admissions, urging presbyteries and sessions to do similar advocacy.

l. Advocate[s] for the repeal of sections of the 1996 immigration law that require state and local governments, and publicly funded institutions and programs (such as hospitals, battered women's shelters, WIC, church feeding programs) to report undocumented persons to the INS, urging presbyteries and sessions to do similar advocacy. The 211th General Assembly (1999) further calls on Christians who are under such reporting requirements to weigh in their conscience the claims of this requirement against the biblical injunction to shelter and welcome the stranger.

m. Advocate[s] for review of the sections of the 1996 immigration law that defined misdemeanors as felonies for purposes of deportation and removed the possibility of an immigration judge granting a discretionary waiver from deportation based on a person's whole case, urging presbyteries and sessions to do similar advocacy. The 211th General Assembly (1999) affirms that Christian belief demands that we make an allowance for atonement and redemption of those who have made a mistake but are working to overcome it.

n. Express[es] concern and encourage study of the militarization of our nation's borders for the purpose of dealing with immigration.

2001 Statement – PC(USA), pp. 62, 502

[The 213th General Assembly (2001) referred a resolution and action requests to the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy with the "hope that they make this an urgent priority in the coming year." The action requests were that the General Assembly:

1. Call publicly and openly on the Federal Government to grant a full legalization program for immigrants in the United States of America.
2. Direct the Stated Clerk to advocate for the passage of an immigration bill that brings about comprehensive immigration reform to our laws and allows immigrants who work and live in the United States to apply and receive permanent U.S. residency status.
3. Urge presbyteries and synods to advocate for the passage of this immigration bill with their respective members of the House of Representatives and Senate within their congressional districts.
4. Instruct our offices in Washington, D.C., to work with the appropriate members of the Congress of the United States in the development of the most appropriate immigration reform legislation.
5. Ask the National Council of Churches for their support on behalf of such legislation.
6. Instruct the Stated Clerk of this General Assembly to draft and send letters to the president of the United States and leaders of both houses of Congress, informing them of our firm position in favor of comprehensive immigration reform and asking them for their support on behalf of such legislation.

2003 Statement – PC(USA), pp. 613-614

On the Crisis of Migrant Farm Worker Deaths in the Borderlands

[The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved actions to:]

1. Declare [its] opposition to "Operation Gatekeeper" and other border strategies, which have resulted in an increase in militarization, violations of human rights, deaths from dehydration and exposure, and racial profiling of Hispanic peoples in the borderlands.
2. Request the Stated Clerk to communicate with the president of the United States, the Attorney General, and the appropriate members of Congress. The communication should include the historic social witness policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on Mexican migration, the immorality of the mounting death toll of migrants, and the urgency of a new border policy that will document the migration of workers at the border.
3. Request the Disaster Assistance Program of the Worldwide Ministries Division to be in relationship with congregations, presbyteries, and synods in the borderlands to determine appropriate ministries and assistance for migrants in life-threatening situations.
4. Request that presbyteries and synods in the borderlands consult on the migrant crisis and initiate or support ministries that are meeting the spiritual and physical needs of migrants in crisis.
5. Request the Stated Clerk to communicate with the president of the United States, the attorney general, and the appropriate members of Congress to find a way to issue temporary worker documentation.