

J-178

Subject: Welcoming of Syrian and other international refugees

Sponsor: The Rev. Kara Wagner Sherer

RESOLUTION

Resolved, that the 178th Convention of the Diocese of Chicago directs the Bishop and the Bishop's Staff to communicate to the Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner the Convention's support for the welcoming of Syrian and other international refugees, regardless of their religious affiliation, and that the Convention urges the governor to support financially the existing government programs to resettle refugees; and

Further resolved, that the Convention urges Episcopalians throughout the Diocese to contact Governor Rauner and other elected officials and urge them to support government programs for refugee resettlement; and

Further resolved, that the Convention encourages congregations to become involved in supporting refugee resettlement, through RefugeeOne.

EXPLANATION

Our Baptismal covenant calls us to "work for justice and peace and promote the dignity of every human being."

The Episcopal Church and individual Episcopalians are already supporting the ecumenical partnership organization RefugeeOne (www.refugeeone.org), which has resettled 131 Syrian refugees this year,

The Chicago City Council adopted a resolution on November 18, 2015 which "reaffirms the City of Chicago's status as a sanctuary city, and its commitment to remain a city of sanctuary and refuge for refugees from all around the world ..." and urged city agencies to collaborate to "provide shelter and sustenance for refugee families"

The following letter can provide a template for appeals to elected officials. This letter was sent by Charis Davidson, parishioner of St. John's in Chicago, to Governor Haley of South Carolina, her home state.

Dear Governor Haley,

During the years I've lived and studied in South Carolina, there have been many times I've disagreed with you. There have also been times I've been encouraged and inspired. I was grateful for your leadership in removing the Confederate flag from the Statehouse grounds and in the aftermath of South Carolina's historic flooding. I know that you have a hard job, and that we'll never agree on everything. However, I am heartbroken and feel betrayed by your change of stance yesterday on allowing Syrian refugees to enter South Carolina.

Governor Haley, I'm utterly baffled that you, as the child of immigrants to South Carolina, would refuse to welcome and house innocent victims who are fleeing for their lives. As I've watched the news play out in Syria and Iraq these last several months I've said that this must have been what the beginnings of World War 2 looked like, as the unthinkable evil that was Nazi Germany began. And in the past couple of days I've watched governor after governor declare that Syrian refugees will not be welcome in their states. This must be what it was like to witness the Holocaust- to see entire nations destroyed by unthinkable evil, to watch innocent families flee for their lives and yet have nowhere to go. I am shocked at the heartlessness displayed by so many Americans, and feel helpless in the face of hate and ignorance.

Advent is coming soon- the season when we as Christians remember Jesus' first coming into this world, and his promise that he will come again and make all things right. We also remember Herod's brutal slaughter of innocent children, and Jesus' family being forced to flee into Egypt. And so, since I have no idea what else to do, I will grieve, I will cry and pray for Syria and those whose country has been destroyed. I will pray that Christ returns swiftly and set all things right, and I will beg you to change your mind.

Sincerely,
Charis Davidson