

1 **DRAFT Resolution**

2 **General Assembly of the NCC and CWS**

3 **A CALL TO ACTION ON COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM**

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5 **BACKGROUND**

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8 In September 2008, the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches and Church
9 World Service, following actions by the boards of both organizations, adopted a
10 “Resolution on Immigration and a Call for Action.” The resolution declared the
11 unqualified support of both organizations for immigration reform, and their firm commitment
12 to support local congregations in national and local advocacy for immigrants and their
13 families.

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15 Since that time, people of faith have become increasingly involved in advocating for
16 immigration reform. In the past two years, faith communities have hosted more than 300
17 prayer vigils calling for expressions of welcome for immigrants by local communities and for
18 moral courage on the part of politicians to bring about immigration reform.

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20 Activities aimed at creating a welcoming atmosphere have included potluck dinners and
21 other fellowship events to bring recent immigrants and U.S.-born community members
22 together. In addition, thousands of persons of faith have met with their members of Congress
23 to urge their support of immigration reform.

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25 Both the National Council of Churches and Church World Service and their member
26 communions have been actively engaged in these and other initiatives to advance reform
27 and to facilitate ministries to those persons caught in the current immigration dilemma.

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29 Congregations have held scripture studies and pastors have preached on the topic of
30 welcoming the stranger. Many communities around the country have participated in a
31 nationwide fast and prayer chain based on the call in Isaiah 58:6 (*“Is this not the fast that I*
32 *choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed*
33 *go free, and to break every yoke?”* NRSV)

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35 As deportations have increased over the past year, congregations have increased their
36 support and outreach to immigrant communities, assisting family members during the
37 deportation and detention of their loved ones. Most recently, thousands of people of faith
38 called their members of Congress during a national call-in day supporting the DREAM Act,
39 which would provide a pathway to legal status for children who, by no fault of their own, do
40 not have legal status.

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42 In April 2010, the Arizona legislature enacted an anti-immigrant bill, SB 1070, which would
43 have mandated local police act as federal immigration officials and encouraged racial
44 profiling by police, social service providers, and community members in an effort to expand
45 apprehension of undocumented immigrants. Our immigrant brothers and sisters – citizens,
46 green card holders, and undocumented immigrants – live in a state of fear -fear of
47 exploitation, discrimination, apprehension, detention, and deportation from their families.
48 While a federal judge blocked the most controversial parts of SB 1070, it sparked a
49 nation-wide conversation which has led to more than 22 states considering similar types of
50 legislation.

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Since the enactment of this harsh legislation in Arizona, faith leaders from around the country traveled together to that state to stand in solidarity with immigrants and return to their communities with their first-hand accounts of the fear that is plaguing the immigrant community. Faith leaders have also reported on the organizing efforts in Arizona that bring hope to those facing injustice.

Be that as it may, the immigration debate has become increasingly heated, and narrowly focused on the immigrant population without addressing the avarice of unscrupulous landlords and employers, as well as our own complicity in benefiting from the labor of low-wage workers. Situations around the country have proven that the need for immigration reform is greater than ever. For example, the Fremont, Nebraska provision to require landlords and employers to check immigration status and deny housing and employment to undocumented immigrants has created an atmosphere of dread. The unprecedented power given to landlords and employers intimidates immigrants who feel it is unsafe to report crimes or exploitative practices of landlords or employers. As a result of this reluctance to contact law enforcement officials, community safety as a whole is jeopardized. Examples of this are common in areas where undocumented immigrants avoid contact with police, landlords and employers for fear they will be deported.

Unfortunately, the Fremont law has prompted similar action around the country.

Even more alarming in the national debate are proposals calling for the revocation of the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which has defined citizenship and the rights of citizens since the Civil War. Such proposals have garnered media attention and support, despite the fact that should they be enacted, children of undocumented immigrants born in the U.S. would be stateless persons.

These widespread anti-immigrant efforts underscore the pressing need for the federal government to take immediate action on humane immigration reform. Without reform, United States immigration policies have and will increasingly become a confusing, dangerous patchwork of ineffective and counterproductive laws.

CALL TO ACTION

As we observe the increase of terror and fear in our communities due to anti immigration legislation and increased deportations, we declare as persons of faith that we must recommit ourselves to stand with our immigrant brothers and sisters, our neighbors, to do all we can to enact immigration reform.

Trusting in God and God's justice, we issue the following call to action:

We call on the President of the United States and leaders of the Congress to recommit themselves to the comprehensive, effective, just and humane reform of immigration laws and enforcement structures.

We call on one another, members of the boards of the National Council of Churches and Church World Service and the representatives of member communions to the General Assembly, as well as the millions of faithful Christians who worship in our

100 churches, to actively engage national, state and local legislators to insist on
101 comprehensive immigration reform at every level.

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103 **We commit ourselves** to engage national, state and local legislators to voice our
104 opposition to Arizona’s anti-immigrant SB 1070 and similar laws that have been
105 introduced in more than 22 states. Moreover, we commit ourselves to help educate
106 our communities about the dangerous consequences such laws have on our nation
107 and local communities, and we commit to one another to join in prayer and advocacy
108 for those who are harmed by unjust legislation as well as for those who are working to
109 overturn it.

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111 **We call on one another** and on member communions to take part in the
112 upcoming “New Year’s Resolution Campaign” which asks people of faith to make a
113 New Year’s resolution to call their members of Congress each week with the simple
114 message: “I’m your constituent and I support immigration reform that reunites families
115 and helps undocumented immigrants. What are you doing to support immigration
116 reform?”ⁱ

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118 **CONCLUSION**

119 At no point in our lives will we be able to say with complete honesty and full conviction that
120 we have done all we can to fulfill Christ’s call to ministry in Matthew 25:36-46. However, by
121 fully engaging our communities in direct service, welcome, education, and advocacy on
122 behalf of our immigrant brothers and sisters, we will have found a way to faithfully pursue this
123 vital and definitive call to “welcome the stranger.”

ⁱ The campaign will include YouTube videos featuring faith leaders and lay persons sharing their stories, reflections, and New Year’s Resolutions to help enact immigration reform, as well as blog posts, bulletin inserts, and reminder magnets to encourage others to do the same and call their members of Congress once a week in support of immigration reform. CWS and NCC members can support this effort of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition by disseminating information and resources to local congregations, helping them implement this campaign through theological reflections on immigration and the new year, and by featuring their faith leaders in the YouTube videos and blogs promoting the campaign and cross posting these resources on their respective websites.

ADOPTED NCC GOVERNING BOARD, 9/21/2010
ADOPTED CWS BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 10/20/10