



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

June 7, 2019

To Members of Congress:

I write to you as the highest ecclesial officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a national church of 1.6 million members. Presbyterians had been resettling refugees decades before the creation of the current Refugee Resettlement Program and are still assisting today. Resettling the world's most vulnerable has been an important expression of Jesus' light in the world. Presbyterians understand that call. As we face a growing historic crisis, we must respond as a place of welcome and not turn away. We ask that you ensure that we reach the resettlement goal of accepting 30,000 refugees set by the president for FY2019. We also urge you to set the resettlement goal at 95,000 for FY2020.

As early as 1947, the Presbyterian church was asking for the resettlement of 100,000 individuals. In the General Assembly policy adopted that year, the church said, "As more and more refugees come to our shores, let us open our hearts, our homes. ..." In Matthew 25, we are asked to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and provide shelter for the homeless. We, as Presbyterians, have faithfully engaged this work as we have resettled countless individuals and families. We choose welcome.

On this day after Father's Day, we think of the generations of refugee fathers who have worked hard to set down roots in this country in order to provide a future for their children. Fathers like Ihsan who arrived in the U.S. two years ago with his wife and two children and were received by a Presbyterian church in Maryland. We also pray for those refugee fathers who are stuck overseas unable to reunite with their family already here because of the Executive Order to ban Muslim refugees and decisions to drastically reduce the number of refugees to be resettled.

Refugee resettlement stories are stories that should inspire hope and resilience, not fear and scarcity. Refugees breathe new life and energy into our communities. They bring inspiration and motivation. They may live a precious life of vulnerability, but they are not vulnerable. Refugees embody the awesome strength of the human spirit. Resettlement work reminds of us of the importance of living in community. Refugees are not a burden but are a light. Faith communities around the globe know and understand that story. They may have been forced from their homes, but not from their dignity. Many Americans choose to welcome them, providing a platform of support, and allowing their new neighbors to grow and flourish.

We respectfully urge you to return U.S. refugee resettlement to the robust program of previous years. People deserve the opportunity to live freely and with dignity. You can hold the Administration accountable to the goals they set for FY2019 to resettle 30,000 refugees this year. Restore the United States as a global leader in resettlement by urging the Trump Administration to set the refugee admissions goal to at least 75,000 refugees in FY2020 and commit the necessary resources to make it happen.

In the Faith We Share,

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly