



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

May 27, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During 2014, thousands of families from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador arrived in the United States seeking protection. In response, the government made the tragic decision to open family detention centers in South Texas and imprison asylum-seeking families. Persons of faith and persons of conscience, however, made a different decision. They decided to welcome these families fleeing from violence. I am writing today to thank the thousands of people who chose welcome over prison.

To let families know that there are people in the U.S. who do care about them, groups, like the Interfaith Welcome Coalition in San Antonio, visit families in detention. Understanding the complexity of asylum applications and the difficulty of preparing such a case while confined, church members offer housing to pro bono lawyers who travel to represent the families. Appalled at the high bonds assigned to women and children seeking protection in the U.S., churches gather funds to pay these bonds and set families free. Churches from Yuma, Arizona, to San Antonio, Texas, provide welcome by offering temporary housing and other assistance to families fortunate enough to be released from detention. Church members and seminarians from Austin and Houston travel to take part in marches and actions to let the government know that we disagree with the practice of detaining families. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been at the center of much of this outreach. To all who have chosen welcome and contributed, I thank you.

This past Sunday we celebrated Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit arrived and everyone, though speaking in their own language, understood the other. Christ died, Christ rose, and Christ came again to bring us together and allow us to understand one another, regardless of language, nationality, and borders. I thank each church and member living out the spirit of Pentecost during this time of crisis in our country.

Yours in Christ,

The Reverend Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)