

RESOLUTION #1

ON ENGAGING IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION MINISTRY

The following resolution is proposed by the following members of the Clergy and Laity of parishes within the Episcopal Diocese of Washington:

Submitted by: The Rev. Lisa Saunders Ahuja, Rector, St. Thomas', DC; The Rev. Sarabeth Goodwin, Latino Missioner, Episcopal Diocese of Washington; The Rev. Yoimel González Hernández, Associate Rector, St Alban's, and Dean, Latino Deacons School, Episcopal Diocese of Washington; The Rev. Patrick Keyser, Priest Associate, Washington National Cathedral; The Rev. Vidal Rivas, Senior Priest, Iglesia San Mateo; The Rev. Richard Mosson Weinberg, Rector, St. Margaret's

RESOLUTION

1 Resolved,
2 that this 126th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington laments and condemns
3 the inhumanity of the immigration detention system in the United States and the suffering
4 it inflicts on God's beloved children and local communities, and be it further
5 Resolved,
6 that this Convention acknowledges that Episcopalians, the larger body of Christ, and our communities
7 are harmed by this inhumane system. And be it further
8 Resolved,
9 that the Diocese of Washington will prayerfully explore local opportunities for ministries of healing,
10 justice, and reconciliation with individuals and families directly harmed by the immigrant detention
11 system, including those who work in detention facilities, with the goal of developing dignified alternatives
12 to detention that reflect Jesus' command to love our neighbors, and be it further
13 Resolved,
14 that the Diocese of Washington will amplify and support Episcopal Migration Ministries' (EMM) work
15 to connect and equip Episcopal partners who, working together with national and local partners, can
16 strengthen and expand a web of support for detained and formerly detained immigrants and their loved
17 ones, and suffering workers.

EXPLANATION:

In over 200 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities across the country, immigrants are detained in prisons rife with well-documented human rights abuses. Adults and children suffer separation from their families and communities of support indefinitely as their cases proceed through the immigration court system or as they await deportation; they are not in detention to serve sentences for a crime. Families with a loved one in detention often face financial crises, homelessness, and trauma. The daily average population in ICE facilities in 2019 was over 50,000 persons.

Human rights abuses in detention, documented by Episcopalians, the media, and advocates include: lack of access to legal support and medical care; medical neglect and abuse (including lack of testing/treatment/protection for COVID-19); inedible and unhealthy food; extended separation from children, family, and friends; use of solitary confinement for punishment and illness; work programs that pay \$1-\$4 per day; transport in shackles; and forced reliance on expensive commissary purchases to provide for basic needs and to communicate with loved ones. Moreover, workers in this system may also suffer moral injury. Communities become dependent on revenue from these facilities, which disincentivizes scrutiny and accountability.

Our calling is clear per Matthew 25:35-40. God has blessed The Episcopal Church with varied gifts, such as hospitality, prophetic action, compassion, teaching, exhortation, and generosity. Connected and woven together, with support from EMM, these gifts can strengthen a web of support for those harmed by the immigration detention system. The Church is well-equipped to create dignified alternatives to detention (*e.g.* sponsorship of asylum seekers, community-based case management programs, and bond funds) and ministries that repair harm and facilitate reconciliation.

This resolution is consistent with the 2018 General Resolution A178 to Halt the Intensification and Implementation of Immigration Policies and Practices that are Harmful to Migrant Women, Parents and Children. Recently, with support from EMM, the Diocese of Long Island and the Diocese of the Rio Grande approved similar resolutions to engage in Immigration Detention Ministry.