Proposed Resolution Regarding Advocacy for Immigrant Justice and Promotion of Truth and Reconciliation

Resolved, that the 131st Annual Convention of the Diocese of Los Angeles submit the following resolution to the 82nd General Convention of the Episcopal Church meeting in 2027:

> **Resolved,** the House of _____ concurring, that the 82nd General Convention recognize that secrecy in migrant detention leads to abuses and inhumane conditions, reaffirm its staunch opposition to migrant detention in line with Resolution 2022-D031, advocate for abolition of the immigration detention system, and call for an end to the practice of third-country removals and other inhumane immigration enforcement practices; and be it further
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> **Resolved,** that this Convention direct the Office of Governmental Relations and the office of the Presiding Bishop to oppose on behalf of The Episcopal Church any legislation that provides funding for construction, expansion, or operation of migrant detention centers; and be it further
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> **Resolved,** that The Episcopal Church affirm that the call to welcome the stranger (Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 10:19, Matthew 25:35) and the commitment to Migration With Dignity found in Resolution 2024-C031 require immigration policies that protect the rights of migrants and support immigration without discriminatory regard to national origin; and be it further
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> **Resolved,** that this Convention direct the Office of Governmental Relations and the office of the Presiding Bishop to support immigration reform legislation that implements the values of Migration With Dignity with the following policy goals:
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> To protect the right to asylum, including at national borders, and support asylum-seekers
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> To prioritize the unity of families in the immigration process
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> To protect due process rights for all migrants and avoid migrant detention
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> To protect the civil rights of all categories of immigrants within U.S. borders and provide them a pathway to continued residency and eventual citizenship, reaffirming and extending the goals of Resolution 2009-B006

To provide increased pathways for legal immigration to the United States for people who wish to migrate to that country, regardless of their national origin;

and direct the Office of Governmental Relations and the office of the Presiding Bishop to report back at least annually to the Executive Council regarding progress toward these legislative goals; and be it further

Resolved, that The Episcopal Church embark in the coming triennium on a pilot process of Truth and Reconciliation for harms done to immigrant communities by abusive policies and for the church's complicity in them, to include: encouraging dioceses, parishes, and missions to convene truth-telling processes and restorative-justice healing circles, adapted for local context; bearing witness publicly; and developing records of harms done; and be it further

Resolved, that this Convention direct Episcopal Migration Ministries, in partnership with the Episcopal Migration Response Network, to assist in coordinating local and diocesan pilot programs for truth-telling processes and healing circles; and be it further

Resolved, that $20,000 be allocated for this resolution, to support such truth-telling processes and healing circles, to be distributed by Episcopal Migration Ministries through grants to dioceses.

Submitted by

Hannah Bowman. St. Michael and All Angels, Studio City on behalf of LA Sacred Resistance

Endorsed by

The Rev. Canon Jaime Edwards-Acton, St. Stephen's, Hollywood, co-chair LA Sacred Resistance

The Rev. Dr. Francisco Garcia, co-chair LA Sacred Resistance

Ms. Sandra Martínez-Moore, St. Paul's, Pomona

BACKGROUND

This resolution calls for responses to the crisis of inhumane governmental responses to migration in three ways: by strengthening The Episcopal Church's opposition to migrant detention; by deepening and clarifying The Episcopal Church's advocacy for just and welcoming immigration policy; and by encouraging the development of processes of truth-telling and sacred storytelling for communities harmed by inhumane immigration enforcement, detention, and deportation.

Detention

The Episcopal Church has a policy of opposition to migrant detention, laid out in Resolution 2022-D031. This resolution builds on that opposition to take a clear moral stance against the inhumanity of immigration enforcement as it is practiced in the United States at this time. This includes policies of detention of migrants, which is increasing rapidly in scale, as well as "third-country removals" which can lead to people fleeing persecution being sent back into danger.

Information on the rapid expansion of immigration detention in President Trump's second term (as of January 2026): https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/report/immigration-detention/ More information from the Brennan Center for Justice on how the enormous budget approved for immigration enforcement is supercharging the detention system: https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/how-ices-budget-boom-changing-immigration-detention

A helpful explainer from Detention Watch Network on immigration detention: https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/issues/detention-101

More on third-country removals, from Amnesty International: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2026/06/how-do-us-third-country-removals-work-and-are-they-legal/

Advocating for abolition of the immigration detention system does not mean that border enforcement will no longer exist. Even without an immigration detention system, Customs and Border Patrol officers still have the ability to refuse entry to migrants, and if there are concerns such as open criminal warrants when someone presents themselves at a port of entry, those can be handled with due legal process. Migrants can proceed through the immigration court system without any apparatus of detention. Identity checks at ports of entry, notices to appear in immigration court, and a system of orderly adjudication of

immigration does not require the detention of migrants outside of the existing criminal legal system.

While sometimes reformers call for building newer, better immigration facilities to assure more humane conditions of detention, we have ample evidence that building new facilities leads to new harms as more people come into contact with the detention system. Reforms must aim to shrink the scale of the detention system and reduce the number of people in contact with it. Reforms that call for new "humanitarian campuses," such as the Dignity Act, are nonetheless creating new sites of detention and are outside of the scope of reforms for which The Episcopal Church should advocate. A helpful guide to determining whether reforms will help reduce and end the detention system or will counterproductively feed it is available from Detention Watch Network here: https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/resources/analysis/2022/ending-immigration-detention-abolitionist-steps-vs-reformist-reforms

Immigration Policy

Current U.S. law makes legal immigration almost impossible. See, for example, this explainer from the Cato Institute on why most people who wish to immigrate to the U.S. are unable to do so: https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/why-legal-immigration-nearly-impossible

Under the second Trump administration, some of the few remaining pathways, such as the refugee resettlement program, have been further narrowed: https://forumtogether.org/article/fact-sheet-u-s-refugee-resettlement/

This resolution calls for a framework for advocacy for immigration law based in the simple idea that we should welcome those who wish to immigrate to the United States.

The advocacy goals for immigration law reform presented here build on many former resolutions approved by General Convention, such as:

2009-B006, which called for legislation "to allow undocumented immigrants who have established roots in the United States and are often parents and spouses of U.S. Citizens to have a pathway to legalization and to full social and economic integration in to the United States," and which also opposed invasive immigration enforcement tactics such as ICE checkpoints;

2006-A017 which called for undocumented aliens to have "reasonable opportunity to pursue permanent residency, for legal workers to be allowed to enter to respond to

recognized labor force needs, for due process for all, and for border enforcement to be proportionate and humane";

1985-D113 which called upon Congress to "enact immigration legislation of a positive nature that will recognize human realities of the millions of undocumented people in the country" and to protect the right to seek asylum;

2015-D048 which reaffirmed 2009-B006 and called for "The Episcopal Church to support the goals of expanded immigration relief for youth and parents designed to keep families together;

2018-D009 which "set forth Christian principles to guide response to human migration" including, in part, respecting the human rights of migrants, maintaining family unity during migration, addressing root causes of migration, supporting refugee resettlement and respecting the principle of non-refoulement (not sending asylum seekers back into danger), maintaining safe routes of transit for refugees, and developing long-term solutions for people displaced by climate change;

2018-C033 which advocated for comprehensive immigration reform which would include "keeping families together, respecting the United States Bill of Rights, honoring human and worker rights, and providing a pathway to citizenship";

2018-C009 which urged The Episcopal Church "to become a sanctuary in support of immigrants," including a "pledge to challenge and question any unjust immigration law, policy, or practice that is inconsistent with our biblical mandate to 'not wrong or oppress a resident alien' (Exodus 22:21)" and which also "affirmed our church's support for U.S. executive policies that deemphasize immigrant enforcement action against those who have not committed felony crimes, and reaffirmed our church's support for congressional action for comprehensive and just reform of the broken U.S. immigration system as called for in General Convention resolution 2009-B006";

2018-A178 which "denounced inhumane immigration policies" and "called for a halt to the implementation and intensification of inhumane and unjust immigration policies and practices such as detaining and separating children from parents; ignoring the reproductive health needs of women and girls in detention centers and converting military bases to immigration detention centers for children," advocating for the "specific vulnerabilities and needs of immigrant women, parents and children."

Truth and Reconciliation

Truth and Reconciliation work became famous in national responses to civil conflict, most famously the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa following the end of apartheid. A helpful introduction to Truth Commissions as a model is available from the International Commission on Transitional Justice here: https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Book-Truth-Seeking-Chapter2-2013-English.pdf. But Truth and Reconciliation work can also be taken on at the smaller scale, and can take a variety of forms.

Truth and Reconciliation processes have also been undertaken by church bodies, including The Episcopal Church. Past General Convention resolutions calling for such processes in a variety of contexts include:

2024-B010, which in part encourages Title IV processes to consider the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a model;

2022-A127, concerning responses to indigenous boarding schools:

2022-C058, which in part commends Maryland's Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a model for other dioceses;

2022-D074, which proposes a Truth and Reconciliation process for survivors of forced adoptions;

2018-D016, which creates a Task Force for Women, Truth, and Reconciliation in response to gender-based harassment and inequity;

2009-A143, which extends Resolution 2006-A127 calling for an audit on The Episcopal Church's complicity in slavery and includes discussion of truth and reconciliation processes;

2006-A127, which endorses restorative justice and calls for possible Truth and Reconciliation processes around complicity in slavery and also racial privilege.

Other bodies within The Episcopal Church have also engaged in this work. The Diocese of Maryland, for example, maintains a Truth and Reconciliation Commission around issues of racial justice: https://episcopalmaryland.org/social-justice-and-reconciliation/

The Anglican Church of Canada also engaged in a comprehensive truth and reconciliation commission process about the harms done to indigenous people and nations via the residential school system: https://www.anglican.ca/reconciliation/. The Episcopal Church

similarly, has formed a Truth, Justice and Healing Commission on Native Schools: https://episcopalnewsservice.org/2025/11/26/indigenous-boarding-school-research-groups-merge-as-truth-justice-and-healing-commission/

Truth and reconciliation processes related to the harms of immigration enforcement are newer but beginning to be piloted, both within The Episcopal Church and by other bodies. The Minnesota Truth Council, for example, is gathering stories and experiences from Operation Metro Surge: https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/MNTruthCouncil. The important work of sacred storytelling and bearing witness is occurring in various forms in the church. For example, the Bishop of the Diocese of the Rio Grande has been interviewing detained immigrants upon their release, in order to share their stories. This is part of the ongoing work of truth and reconciliation.

Because of the difficulty of implementing a national truth and reconciliation process and the need to adapt truth-telling and sacred storytelling work to the local context, as well as the difficulty of discussing truth and reconciliation in the context of ongoing trauma and harm from a continuing crisis of inhumane immigration enforcement, this resolution proposes encouraging truth-telling processes at the diocesan and local parish/mission level. Pilot programs might include truth-telling/sacred storytelling circles organized and facilitated in affected communities or dioceses, such as a pilot Sacred Storytelling Circles process in progress in the Diocese of Los Angeles. Processes prioritize providing a confidential space for affected people to safely narrate and share their stories of harm done to or witnessed by them, and also gathering information and documentation of harms to be archived or made publicly available, so that the stories are preserved and not lost.

These processes cannot offer accountability or reparation. What they are intended to do is promote healing, bear witness to harms done, and preserve records of harms in the hope of further reparative work and reconciliation in the future.

The role of the national church is in supporting these processes as they are organized at the diocesan and local level. As such, the resolution calls for Episcopal Migration Ministries to provide a central hub for coordinating resources and training among local programs as they develop, and to administer grants as budgeted in the resolution to provide dioceses and parishes/missions with funding for facilitator training and other costs associated with holding such processes. Funding could be used, at diocesan discretion, for training for healing-circle facilitators and for the archiving of records related to truth-telling pilot programs and processes that may be developed at the diocesan, parish, or mission level, or for other needs in the truth and reconciliation process.

SUMMARY

This resolution calls for responses to the crisis of inhumane governmental responses to migration in three ways: by strengthening The Episcopal Church's opposition to migrant detention; by deepening and clarifying The Episcopal Church's advocacy for just and welcoming immigration policy; and by encouraging the development of processes of truth-telling and sacred storytelling for communities harmed by inhumane immigration enforcement, detention, and deportation. It calls on the church to take strong and uncompromising moral stances against inhumane treatment of migrants, including migrant detention, and in favor of a just and welcoming immigration policy. It backs up these moral stances with calls for specific governmental policies for the national church to advocate for. Then it turns to what the church can do, providing a budget, encouragement, and training for processes of "sacred storytelling," to be developed at the local and diocesan level to help affected migrant communities process trauma and to keep a record of harm, as the beginning of a larger truth and reconciliation process.