

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

We Episcopalians know that welcoming the stranger among us is one of our greatest responsibilities and joys. For more than twenty-five years, the General Convention of The Episcopal Church has called for immigration measures that would give to undocumented immigrants the dignity and respect that we all possess as citizens of the realm of God.

At the 77th General Convention in July 2012, The Episcopal Church expressed its concern about United States [refugee policy](#) and [unjust immigration enforcement](#). Now these issues are in the spotlight, as more than 52,000 children fleeing violence have streamed over our southern border. Many of them are making a dangerous journey by themselves to escape murder rates and gang violence in Central America, particularly El Salvador and Honduras, that are unparalleled except in countries at war.

People sometimes ask me what difference the social justice resolutions of General Convention make. This summer, with your help, they can make a difference in the lives of these refugee children.

President Obama has asked Congress for \$3.7 billion in additional funding to handle the crisis, and his proposals included welcome steps to help stop the violence in Central American countries. But his administration has also moved to hasten deportations and discourage people from seeking asylum and protection, even though many of the children crossing the U. S. border are fleeing horrific violence and should therefore be treated as refugees.

Even the President's incomplete response to the crisis is likely to be hamstrung in Congress by politicians more focused on mid-term elections than on children in crisis. It is troubling that many of these elected officials invoke their faith as they campaign for office on platforms of exclusion and fear. People of faith, however, know better and must act and advocate accordingly.

We are called upon not only to be charitable, but also to go beyond charity. We must oppose the false choice being offered by those who want to prevent refugee children from entering the country. "We can't start taking care of others if we can't take care of our own," a protester near San Diego told the Desert Sun newspaper, articulating the widespread belief that we live in a world of scarcity and must hoard for ourselves rather than share with others.

Every faith refutes this claim: Christians are instructed to do to others as we would have others do to us, Jews to heal the world, Buddhists to have compassion for all who suffer, Muslims to devote a portion of their income to caring for the poor, and the list goes on. Eight-seven percent of Americans say they belong to a religion, and nothing in the holy books of those faiths teaches us to turn these children away. We must insist that the debate in Washington is not simply about treating refugees with compassion, but ensures that we hear their claims, safeguard their futures, and offer their countries the assistance necessary to restore peace at home.

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings
PRESIDENT of the HOUSE OF DEPUTIES



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The staff of the Office of Government Relations has compiled the research and advocacy tips in this packet to help Episcopalians across the country meet with our members of Congress while they are home for their August recess. I know from experience that our elected representatives take note when their constituents are passionate enough about an issue to ask for a meeting. They sit up and pay close attention when they understand that we are there because of our faith in a God who longs for justice and mercy.

In our Baptismal Covenant, we have promised to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being. Advocacy for just public policy is one way of fulfilling that commitment, and the witness of General Convention guides our way. Especially in this moment of crisis for so many children fleeing across our southern border, I pray that in how we act and in what we advocate, we will be worthy of our beliefs.

Faithfully,



The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings
President, House of Deputies

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