

Statements from the Christian Reformed Church

Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony

Find online here: <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/contemporary-testimony/our-world-belongs-god>

God's New People

34. In our world,
where many journey alone,
nameless in the bustling crowd,
Satan and his evil forces
seek whom they may scatter and isolate;
but God, by his gracious choosing in Christ,
gathers a new community—
those who by God's gift
put their trust in Christ.
In the new community
all are welcome:
the homeless come home,
the broken find healing,
the sinner makes a new start;
the despised are esteemed,
the least are honored,
and the last are first.
Here the Spirit guides
and grace abounds.

The Mission of God's People

41. Joining the mission of God,
the church is sent
with the gospel of the kingdom
to call everyone to know and follow Christ
and to proclaim to all
the assurance that in the name of Jesus
there is forgiveness of sin
and new life for all who repent and believe.
The Spirit calls all members
to embrace God's mission
in their neighborhoods
and in the world:
to feed the hungry,
bring water to the thirsty,
welcome the stranger,
clothe the naked,
care for the sick,
and free the prisoner.
We repent of leaving this work to a few,
for this mission is central to our being.

Synod 2010: Committee to Study the Migration of Workers

Find online here: <https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/Migration.pdf>

“... the experience of being displaced—of being a migrant and a refugee—lies at the very heart of the biblical narrative.”

“God desired Israel to extend to the strangers among them every kindness and courtesy because in so doing, the Israelites would be mirroring their God who extended his grace, his lovingkindness, to the Israelites who were just as much an immigrant people in God’s eyes as anyone else on the earth.”

“... the gospels present the ministry of Jesus as being all-inclusive. But of particular interest to Jesus and to his kingdom were first and foremost precisely those people whom the religious establishment in his day excluded—in great contradistinction to everything God had taught in his law. The last, least, lost, and lonely fringe members of the world—the strangers in our midst—were the ones Jesus saw and loved first of all.”

“Churches are called to be hospitable to immigrants, but hospitality alone will not solve the myriad problems that plague the immigration systems in the United States and Canada.... Christians are right to advocate for immigration policies within a given nation that will be more just, fair, and generous and that will assist the nation in welcoming more strangers as citizens, not fewer.”

Statement on the Treatment of Refugees from CRC leaders (2017)

Find online here: <https://www.crcna.org/news-and-views/crc-leaders-release-statement-treatment-refugees>

As leaders of denominational ministries and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in the United States and Canada, we are alarmed by the recent U.S. president's executive order drastically cutting the number of refugees who will be welcomed to the United States, and pausing all refugee resettlement for 120 days. The Old Testament repeatedly issues a call to welcome, love, defend, and not oppress the foreigner (e.g. Ex 23:9, Deut 10:19, Lev 19:34, Zech 7:10); the New Testament emphasizes the virtue of hospitality toward strangers (e.g. Matt 25:35, Heb 13:2). It is clear that our church has been called by Scripture and our own unique history to the work of welcoming refugees, and the need to welcome has never been felt more deeply than today.

The CRC has long been a church quick to welcome refugees. And in fact, many members of our churches came as refugees themselves. So many of our congregations, in both the United States and Canada, have experienced the blessing that comes with walking alongside a newly arrived family as they restart their lives in a new place. In some cases, those refugee friends have joined our churches, becoming members of the CRC family. We are better, stronger, more faithful, and nearer to the kingdom because of the way God has worked through those relationships.

Co-sponsoring refugees has become a fundamental part of who we are, and how we experience God.

With the executive order just signed by the U.S. president, the church is harmed:

- We are gravely concerned that a 120-day pause on the resettlement process will do irreparable damage to the infrastructure that allows refugees to come to the U.S., effectively crippling the future of refugee resettlement in the U.S.
- In the midst of the biggest refugee crisis in recorded history, the notion that the U.S. would reduce the number of refugees it welcomes by more than half is unacceptable, and it threatens to lead other countries to follow suit to grave consequences for so many who have no other option for survival.
- We are concerned that while Canadian policies are more accommodating to refugees, public opinion about refugees seems to be turning negative. This is especially true in the wake of the influx of refugees fleeing the United States for Canada. One quarter of Canadians recently polled said that they feel Canada should adopt a policy similar to that in the U.S.
- We are concerned about reports that refugees already in the U.S. are attempting to flee again — this time to Canada — because they feel our U.S. communities have become threatening for them.

When we are called to welcome the stranger, but then policies or attitudes prevent people from coming, we cannot be the church we are called to be.

And so we ask that:

- All CRC churches participate in a day of prayer on Sunday, March 12, 2017, to lift up the U.S. administration, leaders in the Congress, and refugees around the world who are so gravely impacted by decisions like these. A suggested prayer can be found at bit.ly/2tpFOXb
- We in the U.S. call on our representatives in Congress to stand against these policies which do not reflect our values. Take action at the Office of Social Justice's Action Center here: justice.crcna.org/action-center
- We in Canada call for continued leadership in refugee resettlement, and for a review of the Safe Third Country Agreement due to the recent increase in refugees coming in from the U.S. Take action at the Centre for Public Dialogue's Action Centre here: crcna.org/publicdialogue/action-centre
- We are in the midst of the largest global refugee crisis in memory. This is not the time to close our doors and end our welcome; this is not the time for us to be silent.

Colin Watson
Director of Ministries and
Administration

Darren Roorda
Canadian Ministries Director

Mike Hogeterp
Director, Centre for Public Dialogue

Reggie Smith
Director, Offices of Race Relations and
Social Justice

Mark Stephenson
Director, Disability Concerns

Moses Chung
Director, Christian Reformed
Home Missions

Gary J. Bekker
Director of Christian Reformed
World Missions

Carol Bremer-Bennett
World Renew Director, United States

Joyce Borger
Director of Worship Ministries

Kurt Selles
Director, Back to God Ministries
International

Bonnie Nicholas
Director, CRC Safe Church Ministry

Syd Hielema
Director of Discipleship and
Faith Formation Ministries