

The Church Council's decision to affirm the Poor People's Campaign's vision without official endorsement followed from the significant disparity with the PPC's fundamental principles and demands. It should be noted that it was a staff recommendation that a different action would have set an unprecedented departure from the standards of ELCA denominational endorsement. At the same time, the Church Council's action recognized the value of the PPC's basic concerns and those tenets that align with the ELCA's commitments to speak and act for justice and to work against systemic racism, poverty, economic justice and ecological devastation. The Church Council's action specifically encouraged the churchwide organization, synods, congregations and members to become involved with the issues as faithful witness to God's call to do justice and to show love for the neighbor.

ELCA members and congregations have and will continue to participate in Poor People's Campaign activities. ELCA Advocacy has actively engaged in raising awareness about the PPC through its advocacy blogs, highlighting ELCA member voices speaking to their involvement in local mobilizing and activism. Churchwide staff have and will continue to embrace opportunities to connect with the PPC that speak to systemic racism, economic injustice and ecological devastation, and to encourage grassroots involvement.

Recommended for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Oregon, New England and Metropolitan New York synods concerning the National Poor People's Campaign; and

To affirm the Church Council action [CC18.11.23u] recognizing "the importance of the Poor People's Campaign in bringing an end to systemic racism, economic injustice, ecological devastation and related injustices; to support the vision and goals of the Poor People's Campaign that are in alignment with this church's social teachings; to encourage the churchwide organization, synods, congregations and members to become involved with the issues as a faithful witness to God's call to do justice and show love for the neighbor."

Category A7: Immigrants and Refugees

1. Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7F) [2019]

WHEREAS, our faith calls upon us to welcome the sojourner, care for the most vulnerable among us, and reflect God's love for the stranger and "alien" in our land, and this is made clear in scripture (Matthew 25:35, Exodus 22:21); and

WHEREAS, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has researched Temporary Protected Status (TPS), granted by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to eligible foreign-born individuals, who are unable to return home safely due to conditions or circumstances preventing their country from adequately handling their return, and recommends this status as a humane and essential support for immigrants to our country; and

WHEREAS, TPS means that during a designated period, TPS holders are not removable from the U.S. and not detainable by DHS on the basis of immigration status, are eligible for an employment authorization document (EAD), and are eligible for travel authorization; and

WHEREAS, TPS provides these men and women the opportunity to rebuild their lives and raise a family in safety; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran Church throughout its history has been a church with deep roots in migration, immigration, and care for the stranger and vulnerable among us; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages its congregations to advocate for the protection of TPS holders and for temporary protected status for all those who are eligible; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod recommits to being an advocate and justice seeker for immigrants, and communicates the synod's concerns to members of Congress and other federal, state and local elected officials, and encourages all congregations and their members to express their love for immigrants to their elected officials; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages its congregations to participate in Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) Migrant and Refugee Sunday activities and encourages its congregations to pray for immigrants, for just and humane governmental policies that reflect the nation's core values of welcome and inclusivity, and for a world where no one need flee their home for fear of violence, oppression, or economic hardship; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod encourages its congregations to discern ways to lift up World Refugee Day in worship and service; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2019 ELCA churchwide assembly to recommit to being an advocate and justice seeker for immigrants and communicate the church's resolute commitment to the protection of TPS holders to the president and members of Congress.

Background

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has a strong history of assisting and welcoming those forced to flee their communities and seek refuge outside their countries of origin. The commitment of the church to the protection of refugees has been strengthened by our relationships with companion churches and our partnership with Lutheran and faith-based organizations, particularly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) in the United States. Today, as the number of refugees globally is at its highest in recorded history, the ELCA continues to honor its immigrant roots by supporting efforts to assist refugees abroad and welcoming those seeking refuge to the United States.

LIRS and the ELCA have long advocated for the protection of unaccompanied children, refugees, asylum-seekers and trafficking victims with the United Nations and the U.S. government. This joint advocacy work requires a holistic response that includes attention to improving conditions outside the U.S. and ensuring that individuals who are fleeing persecution or violence receive protection in the U.S. and that their due process rights are respected. In moments of economic, human-security and environmental crisis in Central America that cause massive displacement, the ELCA has stood alongside affected communities and our companion churches. In 1989, the ELCA adopted a social policy resolution to extend hospitality and support to Central American refugees and to continue working with LIRS to provide asylum. More recently, after thousands of children and families were displaced from their communities, the ELCA developed a comprehensive, whole-church strategy to protect and welcome Central Americans forced to migrate: Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO). AMMPARO was developed to respond to the suffering of thousands of unaccompanied children and families that are displaced from their communities due to violence, lack of opportunities and environmental issues.

Lutherans across the U.S. have been eager to address the worldwide refugee crisis, in which one in every 122 humans is either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This includes an ever-increasing number of Syrian refugees as the six-year conflict in Syria has now displaced more than 11 million people, nearly five million of whom have crossed at least one border, confirming it as the world's single largest refugee crisis since World War II.

Another challenge to the resettlement program is that, over the last three decades, refugee populations arriving in the United States have changed significantly. With ongoing conflicts in almost every region of the world, LIRS and the ELCA are witnessing refugees with increased needs, including single-women-headed households, survivors of torture and trauma, and refugees with severe medical and mental health needs. However, the funding and infrastructure of the U.S. resettlement program has not kept pace with the program's evolving mandate and challenging refugee trends. ELCA congregants can [advocate through LIRS](#) for a flexible and welcoming resettlement program and robust funding that meets the needs of all vulnerable people.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a legal immigration status that allows citizens from other countries who are present in the U.S. during a catastrophe in their country to remain in the U.S. safely until conditions in their countries of origin change drastically. Lutheran social teaching promotes protection of the most vulnerable and keeping families together, and advocates for treating immigrants with dignity. This church has been working toward just and humane policies affecting migrants in and outside the United States.

ELCA [recently encouraged its constituents](#) to support [H.R.6](#) (the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019) in the House of Representatives, which, if passed into law, would provide a pathway to citizenship for qualifying Dreamers and for TPS and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) holders living in the United States. This bill is overwhelmingly positive since it has been expanded from just Dreamers to include protections for immigrants with TPS and [DED](#)—two temporary immigration programs. Supporters of H.R.6 would need to address their senators to pass this bill, which would allow Dreamers, TPS holders and DED recipients to receive a pathway to citizenship.

In April 2019, the ELCA welcomed news of the settlement agreement on the Central American Minors (CAM) Program, urging the Administration to protect vulnerable populations, especially those 2,700 Central American children that will have a chance to seek protection in the United States and be reunified with family members. In a press statement, ELCA Advocacy emphasized the importance of amplifying the CAM settlement in an effort to hold the administration accountable for actually processing these children fairly and equitably.

Last, ELCA participated in the development of a document on the effects of ending current TPS agreements. The online link can be found [here](#).

Recommended for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod concerning advocacy for immigrants and refugees;

To recommit to advocacy for Temporary Protected Status extensions through ELCA Advocacy and Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO);

To reaffirm the ELCA’s partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in calling for fair and compassionate immigration policies and practices that keep families together and the joint work with AMMPARO; and

To encourage synods, congregations and members to advocate for legislation that welcomes the stranger to this country and to their communities through AMMPARO.

Category A8: Deportation

1. Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J) [2019]

WHEREAS, the Book of Leviticus states, “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God,” and

WHEREAS, the policy of the government of the United States has moved from acceptance of refugees to harassment, detention and deportation; and

WHEREAS, the brutality of this policy has been visited directly upon Betty Rendón, a student pastor in the Greater Milwaukee Synod, and her family; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorialize the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to speak in opposition to the inhumane policies of harassment, detention and deportation implemented by the United States government, policies that are in opposition to the biblical teachings at the foundation of the church and that congregation members in the ELCA are encouraged to communicate to their elected officials to:

1. Protect migrants, refugees and those fleeing violence;
2. Stop separating immigrant or refugee families;
3. Increase the number of refugees we are willing to accept from the current historically low numbers, and
4. Remove practices that create unreasonable and insurmountable barriers to those seeking asylum.

Background

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has a strong history of welcoming the stranger. The commitment of the church to welcome migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and their families has been strengthened by this church’s relationships with companion churches and partnership with Lutheran and faith-based organizations, particularly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) in the United States and globally through the Lutheran World Federation.

Lutherans have a deep-rooted history in refugee and immigrant issues. After World War II, one in every six Lutherans in the world was a refugee or displaced person. The strong immigrant roots and vibrant immigrant members led to Lutheran church bodies establishing LIRS in 1939 as the national organization to serve uprooted people. LIRS and the ELCA have long advocated for the protection of vulnerable populations and family unification in immigration policies.

The 2016 Churchwide Assembly affirmed this stance when it approved the Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) strategy. [CA16.03.07] [AMMPARO](#) calls the whole church—congregations, synods and the churchwide organization—to assist migrant children and families fleeing humanitarian crises in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala.

Family unity and the acknowledgment that there is God-given dignity in all people has been a cornerstone of advocacy by the ELCA, its AMMPARO strategy and LIRS. Despite efforts, the number of migrants detained by immigration officials has skyrocketed in recent years due to policies that criminalize all migrants. These enforcement policies and practices can leave any noncitizen, including green-card holders, asylum seekers, trafficking victims, and torture survivors, at risk of detention and deportation.

[There were 10.5 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. in 2017](#), representing 3.2% of the total U.S. population that year, which is a drop from the peak of 12.2 million in 2007, when this group was 4% of the U.S. population. According to estimations by the Migration Policy Institute (2015), approximately 4.1 million U.S.-born children have undocumented parents. Children with parents that have been deported suffer economic and psychological consequences, including [“psychological trauma, material hardship, residential instability, family dissolution, increased use of public benefits and, among boys, aggression.”](#)

The Administration and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have announced they will continue to target undocumented migrants and work closely with [Immigration Control Enforcement agencies \(ICE\) to enforce](#)

[deportation](#). In response, the ELCA has strengthened its commitment through ministry with its global companion churches in Central America and with churches and agencies in countries of transit and in the U.S. In the ELCA, there are 133 welcoming and sanctuary congregations, and several members across the U.S. are court advocates through the [ELCA's Guardian Angels program](#).

The ELCA continues to honor its immigrant roots by our support of migrant ministries and advocating for laws that focus on love, family and welcoming the stranger.

On May 16, ELCA Advocacy issued an [action alert](#) calling on members to contact their lawmakers and speak out against immigration policies and enforcement that tear families apart and that support immigration deterrence strategies, which when implemented can have misguided and inhumane impact. The AMMPARO strategy calls instead for the U.S. government to keep families together while investing in programs that address the root causes of migration.

Recommended for Assembly Action

To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Greater Milwaukee Synod concerning deportations;

To reaffirm the long-term and growing commitment of this church to migrants and refugees and to the policy questions involved, as exemplified most recently in the comprehensive strategy Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO);

To call congregations, synods and the churchwide organization to speak in opposition to the inhumane policies of harassment, detention and deportation implemented by the U.S. government; and

To request that appropriate staff in AMMPARO and the Domestic Mission, Global Mission, and Mission Advancement units develop a plan for additional tools that provide for education and discernment around deportation.

Category A9: Sanctuary

1. Metropolitan New York Synod (7C) [2019]

RESOLVED that Sanctuary not only means the provision of shelter but is a

- RESPONSE to raids, detentions, deportations, and the criminalization of immigrants and refugees; a
- STRATEGY to fight individual cases of deportation, to advocate for an end of mass detention and amplify immigrant voices; a
- VISION for what our communities and world can be; and a
- MORAL IMPERATIVE to take prophetic action of radical hospitality rooted in the ancient traditions of our faith communities; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Metropolitan New York Synod declare itself one of the first major metropolitan Sanctuary Synods of the ELCA ready to help protect refugees and undocumented people from arrest and deportation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers (ICE), in partnership with organizations like Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, The New Sanctuary Coalition, The New York Immigration Coalition, New York Legal Aid Society, and the ELCA's AMMPARO program by:

- Developing a network of sanctuary congregations
- Coordinating accompaniment trainings— being silent advocates during check-ins or hearings
- Creating a plan for awareness building around issues of immigration and refugees
- Advocating for just immigration policies, including fairness in admitting and protecting refugees; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Metropolitan New York Synod endorse, fully support, and help train congregations seeking to be sanctuary congregations, creating a network of sanctuary in our synod, whose work would include but not be limited to:

- Help congregations explore why and how to identify themselves as sanctuary congregations,
- Reach out to nearby immigrant congregations or communities,
- Expand or redevelop existing programs with a focus on reaching out to immigrants and refugees,
- Create and distribute “Know Your Rights Cards” to undocumented persons,
- Reach out and network with other sanctuary congregations to share support and information,
- Provide short-term respite sanctuary during immediate crisis,
- Train in and participate in accompaniment program,
- Participate in the ELCA's AMMPARO program for unaccompanied minors,
- Encourage participation in “Jericho Walks” around Federal Plaza, and
- Host Immigration Consultations with legal professionals for immigrants; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan New York Synod memorialize the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to adopt a similar resolution for the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Background

Christians have offered sanctuary for two thousand years, continuing an ancient biblical practice in which cities and houses of worship provided refuge and asylum for people fleeing injustice. Beginning in the 1980s, the Sanctuary Movement was a faith-based initiative to protect Central American refugees fleeing civil war and seeking safety in the U.S. Today, the New Sanctuary Movement is a revived effort to protect undocumented migrants from needless jailing procedures and deportation, and addresses the dire situation within the Department of Health and Human Services that has resulted in the stripping of services to refugees and unaccompanied children. In contrast with the historic Sanctuary Movement, many of the migrants protected under sanctuary have lived in the U.S. for an extended period.

While there is no uniform or legally accepted definition of sanctuary, its overall purpose is to protect people from immigration laws that lead to the deportation of undocumented people who are part of our communities and may have U.S. citizen children. Part of what it means to provide sanctuary to immigrants seeking protection is having lawyers handling their cases. If they are hosted in a congregation, it is a temporary measure.

The ways in which sanctuary is provided varies by congregation, but it can include providing a physical shelter, inviting and welcoming all to worship regardless of immigration status, providing services to migrants such as “Know Your Rights” presentations, and assisting all regardless of immigration status. Moreover, actively advocating for migrants and for a fair and just immigration system is part of sanctuary.

In 2016, the Churchwide Assembly adopted the Strategy to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO). AMMPARO invites congregations to become “Welcoming Congregations,” which means they commit to spiritually and physically accompanying migrants in their communities, pray for migrant children and families, and advocate for a just and humane immigration system. ELCA sanctuary congregations that host and support immigrants seeking protection do these same activities and have joined AMMPARO.

While these activities are completely legal, other activities such as knowingly concealing, harboring or shielding (or attempting to conceal, harbor or shield) an undocumented immigrant from detection by the authorities are not. Likewise, knowingly transporting or moving (or attempting to transport or move) an undocumented immigrant from one place to another, where the transportation helps the immigrant remain in the United States unlawfully, is illegal. Each congregation has its own theological reasons for taking part in the New Sanctuary Movement, but the call of our faith is universally seen as a way to protect human dignity in a system that not only seems to disrupt family reunification processes but also leans toward unjust immigration enforcement, detention and investigations.

Through the AMMPARO strategy, the ELCA already affirms the spirit of the sanctuary movement by encouraging congregations to serve and support the protection of migrants in their communities. Within AMMPARO, there are already self-determined ELCA sanctuary synods and sanctuary congregations that define and practice sanctuary differently. The ELCA sanctuary synods are Oregon, Sierra Pacific, Southwest California, New England and Metropolitan New York. All of these sanctuary synods, as well as many ELCA sanctuary congregations, already connect with the AMMPARO movement.

As a denomination, through AMMPARO, the churchwide organization provides educational and practical resources and information for congregations as they consider their role in providing sanctuary and joining their local sanctuary movement. As AMMPARO, staff have encouraged welcoming congregations to connect to their local sanctuary movement or other organizations that serve migrant communities. The ELCA Church Council action taken in November 2017 [CC17.11.33w] supported the spirit of the sanctuary movement and requested the churchwide organization to provide guidance and information.

In this memorial, the ELCA is being called to take specifically defined actions through its congregations, synods and churchwide expressions. These are concrete ways the ELCA can support migrants and refugees in our communities. None of the recommended actions by the Memorials Committee breaks U.S. law in any form and all contribute to the protection of vulnerable people in our midst.

Recommended for Assembly Action

**To receive with gratitude the memorial from the Metropolitan New York Synod concerning sanctuary;
To reaffirm the long-term and growing commitment of this church to migrants and refugees and to the policy questions involved, as exemplified most recently in the comprehensive strategy Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO);**

To recognize that the ELCA in congregations, synods and the churchwide organization are already taking the actions requested by this memorial; and

To request that appropriate staff on the AMMPARO team and the Domestic Mission, Global Mission, and Mission Advancement units review the existing strategies and practices by the five current sanctuary synods and develop a plan for additional tools that provide for education and discernment around sanctuary.

Section B

Israel/Palestine

Category B1: Just Peace

1. Southeastern Minnesota Synod (3I) [2017]

WHEREAS, in regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, United States financial support and media coverage have favored Israel; and

WHEREAS, the Israeli government has: since 1948, in violation of international law, subjected Palestinians to human rights abuse and ethnic cleansing; daily intimidated and harassed the Palestinians by setting up check points, road blocks and curfews; demolished homes; confiscated land; and illegally arrested, beat, killed and confined Palestinians; and

WHEREAS, 4.5 million Palestinians remain in refugee camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan; and

WHEREAS, the wall built by the Israeli government inhibits the access of Palestinians to medical treatment, employment, and contact with family and friends; and

WHEREAS, many Jewish people and Jewish organizations, in Israel and the United States, defend and support Palestinians; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, in assembly,

1. encourage its members to learn about all aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
2. request its bishop to recommend resources for learning about this conflict;
3. support its members in urging their congressional representatives to work for a just and peaceful resolution of this conflict; and
4. memorialize the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to divest any church-related investments that support Israel until this conflict is resolved.

Background

Since its inception, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has taken up the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2005, a [Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine](#) (Strategy) was developed that summarized then-current policy and outlined proposed outcomes with respect to accompaniment, awareness-raising and advocacy. Among the Strategy's outcomes were:

- a. Israelis and Palestinians coexisting in justice and peace, as citizens of viable and secure Israeli and Palestinian states.
- b. A reduction in poverty and unemployment among Palestinians and access to basic services (e.g., health care, education).

Mid-range outcomes:

- An end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.
- An end to terrorism and violence by individuals, groups and states.
- The establishment of and international support for a viable, contiguous Palestinian state.

Short-range outcomes:

- An end to further expansion of the separation wall on Palestinian territory and the related appropriation of natural resources (e.g., water, farmland).
 - A cessation of all settlement activities and withdrawal from settlements on Palestinian territory to the 1967 boundaries.
- c. A negotiated, final status agreement, which includes a "shared Jerusalem" that can serve as a capital to both Palestine and Israel, with access by and full rights in the city for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The Strategy also sought "stronger advocacy by the ELCA and its members with the U.S. government that reflects the urgency of the situation in Israel and Palestine and provides a more effective voice for peace with justice in the region. This will be done, wherever possible, in partnership with ecumenical and other partners." ELCA staff participate in several ecumenical coalitions and interreligious dialogues where advocacy about the conflict is taken up.

To these ends, the ELCA established a "Peace Not Walls" campaign to achieve these and all the other desired outcomes in the Strategy.