

CA 18-3

To urge congregations, classes, and regional synods to host showings of 30-minute videos and discussion groups provided by the Interfaith Drone Network; and further,

To encourage those concerned about drone warfare to construct a quilt to represent those who have died in drone strikes and to use quilts as a point of discussion about drone warfare; and further,

To invite concerned RCA members to prepare faith-based op-eds and letters to editors for publications.

Resources

- Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare, www.interfaithdronenetwork.org
- Drones Quilt Project, dronesquiltproject.wordpress.com

Immigration Reform

As a follow-up to the report to General Synod 2017 related to immigration reform, the commission engaged in a review of action steps taken by our ecumenical partners and other faith communities to determine how the church might speak and act related to the issue of immigration reform. The statements, the scriptural call made by the church in the past, and communication to the president of the United States regarding our stance on immigration have been helpful; however, at this time in our national life, something more is required. Each of our Formula of Agreement partners (PC[USA], ELCA, and UCC) and many other faith communities have strong and bold policy statements regarding immigration. Not only do they have bold policy statements, but they also engage in active advocacy and education on behalf of undocumented immigrants and Dreamers.

The United Church of Christ (UCC) designates the first Sunday in May as Immigrants' Rights Sunday. The denomination urges its congregations to lift up immigrants on this day to do the following: learn about their concerns, honor their contributions to our country and communities, hear their pain, pray for their well-being, and listen to where God is leading the UCC regarding issues of immigration. Stories about immigrants are included in worship services and ways to advocate for immigrant justice are explored.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America's Office of Social Justice has a four-pronged approach: educate, worship, advocate, and connect. They conduct "Church Between the Borders" workshops, three-part interactive workshops that spark thought and discussion for Christian groups interested in engaging immigration from a biblical perspective. Participants reflect on the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and consider what that means in their current context. Additionally, the Office of Social Justice has books, guides, worship resources, preaching resources, a blog, and a website dedicated to immigration reform.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has a policy statement that calls for a commitment from both Presbyterians and the government to work toward welcoming immigrants into communities and providing just laws that affect those who live and work in the United States (oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/policy-immigration). Additionally, the PC(USA) has produced a video telling the stories of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients and the uncertainties they live with.

Christian Churches Together makes the following statement regarding undocumented immigrants and DACA: “While immigration is often viewed as an economic, social, or legal issue, it is ultimately a humanitarian and spiritual issue that directly impacts millions of unauthorized immigrants and the entire fabric of our society. The Bible frequently commands us to treat the immigrant justly. Further, every person is created in the image of God and possesses inestimable value. It is therefore paramount that our national immigration system protects the basic human rights and dignity of all persons. Sadly, our current system fails to meet this test and requires comprehensive reform now” (CCT Statement on Immigration Reform, adopted February 2013, christianchurchestogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/CCT-USA-Press-Release-Austin-02-01-13-with-Statement.pdf).

A review of other faith communities and their involvement in the issue of immigration reform and protection of DACA revealed a serious commitment from denominations to support immigration reform and to actively advocate for legislation on behalf of undocumented immigrants. After 20 years, it is time for the Reformed Church in America to join our Formula of Agreement partners and other Christians in making a bold and courageous statement on the issue of immigration reform and in taking active steps to support undocumented immigrants and DACA.

Today, many United States residents live in fear of deportation, and rightfully so. In recent months, husbands, wives, siblings, fathers, and mothers have been arrested while at their jobs, in the streets of our cities, and in their homes. They have been held in detention centers and sent to lands that they no longer call home. Many of these people have worked for less than minimum wage and contributed to building the economy and the growth of the U.S. They have raised their children to love the country. We all have the same dreams for our children. If the church really believes that we are to receive strangers with open hands and hearts, and if the church really believes that we are called to love mercy and do justice as we walk humbly before our God, then the church must also believe that we are called to action beyond our former statements of advocacy, for we live in a time where statements of advocacy must become statements of action.

CA 18-4

To direct the general secretary to write a letter to the president of the United States strongly supporting immigration reform and DACA; and further,

To urge congregations to encourage their local politicians to enact legislation that supports immigration reform and DACA.

Resources

- *Minutes of the General Synod (MGS) 1987*, p. 79
- *MGS 1993*, p. 86, pp. 88–89, p. 96
- *MGS 1995*, p. 90
- United Church of Christ immigration webpage, www.ucc.org/justice_immigration
- CRCNA Office of Social Justice immigration resources, justice.crcna.org/immigration
- PC(USA) video about DACA recipients: “Untold Dreams: DACA Recipients Weigh Uncertain Future,” player.vimeo.com/video/233883403
- Interfaith Immigration Coalition, www.interfaithimmigration.org
- Detention Watch Network, www.detentionwatchnetwork.org
- Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service, www.lirs.org

- International Detention Coalition, www.idcoalition.org
- Migration Policy Institute, www.migrationpolicy.org
- American Immigration Council, www.immigrationpolicy.org
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., www.cliniclegal.org
- Human Rights First, www.humanrightsfirst.org

Gun Safety

In our 2017 report to the General Synod, the Commission on Christian Action determined to study the issue of gun violence in collaboration with the Commissions on Theology, Unity, and Race and Ethnicity and the Commission for Women and issue a report at General Synod 2019. However, in light of the bloodiest Valentine’s Day in the modern history of the United States, the commission would be remiss if it did not speak to the horrific and senseless killing of 17 innocent young people in a Florida high school. It is urgent that the church act now! It has been 41 years since the Reformed Church in America spoke in favor of gun control and adopted three resolutions; these can be found on the RCA website (www.rca.org/guncontrol). The church cannot and must not rest on its laurels of the past when children, youth, young adults, men, and women are daily losing their lives to gun violence. Seventeen young, vibrant, promising lives were snuffed out on Valentine’s Day, and the Reformed Church in America has been essentially silent. Our youth deserve the church to stand up for them, to stand with them, to speak out against evil that will harm them, and speak for laws that will keep them safe. If the youth of North America cannot turn to the church for safety, where can they turn?

As of March 14, 2018, data from the Gun Violence Archive reveals that the United States has experienced astonishing levels of gun violence this year:

Total gun violence incidents	10,804
Total deaths by guns	2,839
Total injuries by guns	4,836
Children killed age 0-11	127
Teens killed age 12-17	543
Killed in mass shootings	46
Officers shot/killed	58
Suspects killed by police	467
Suicides by gun	8,514
Death by accident, ages 0-11	13
Death by accident, ages 12-17	16

According to the Gun Violence Archive, gun incidents have shown a progressive increase every year. That being the case, the U.S. can expect to outpace the 61,536 gun incidents of 2017.

Statistics can make our eyes glaze over, but understanding the pain involved for each of these families can only lead us to grieve like Rachel,

A voice is heard in Ramah,
 lamentation and bitter weeping.
 Rachel is weeping for her children;
 she refuses to be comforted for her children,
 because they are no more (Jeremiah 31:15).