
Overture 234-87. On Dealing With Concerns Regarding the Sanctuary Movement and Refugees—From the Presbytery of Northern New York.

[The General Assembly adopted *Overture 234-87*.]

Whereas, the church is committed to a ministry of compassion and justice for those who have fled their homelands due to fear of political persecution and the cycle of violence; and

Whereas, the General Assemblies of 1983, 1984, 1985, and 1986 have supported the validity of sanctuary ministry and given it strong endorsement; and

Whereas, the Immigration Reform and Control Act exacerbates already existing difficulties of Central American refugees in employment, housing, and health care and may jeopardize human rights recognized under international law by its regulations and implementation procedures; and

Whereas, the DeConcini-Moakley amendment granting suspension of deportation to Salvadoran refugees was stricken from the Immigration Reform and Control Act; and

Whereas, the determination of political asylum status remains subject to political considerations as evidenced by the January 1987 General Accounting Office (GAO) Study on Asylum; and

Whereas, the Canadian government has altered its traditional position (of observance of international standards) regarding political refugees in the face of a dramatic upsurge of undocumented persons fleeing the United States; and

Whereas, urban and border communities are overwhelmed by complex social service needs of refugees and lack of public support for basic services, i.e., the Plattsburgh, New York, refugee situation; and

Whereas, competition among ethnic groups for scarce available resources has intensified and fear of strangers has increased among the majority population; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Presbytery of Northern New York respectfully overture the 199th General Assembly (1987) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), working through appropriate ministry units of the General Assembly Council, to do the following as soon as possible:

- 1. Provide the whole church with information addressing the above realities, including practices of detention and deportation and the procedures of immigration control, legalization, and employer sanctions;**
- 2. Challenge practices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service that seem to violate the intention of the Refugee Act of 1980;**
- 3. Seek prompt passage of legislation providing**

Extended Voluntary Departure status for affected groups of Central Americans, particularly Salvadorans and Guatemalans, and to publicize the severe problems being experienced by Central American refugees through regional ecumenical hearings;

4. Advocate changes in United States foreign assistance that would help stop the cycle of violence and cease the creation of more refugees;

5. Resource congregations and governing bodies working with the refugee community to respond effectively through hospitality, counseling, legal assistance, and public policy advocacy.