



Statement of Episcopal Church  
Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori  
and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)  
Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson  
January 30, 2008  
The Episcopal Church of the Atonement, Chicago



We are confronted by the overwhelming reality that 33 million people worldwide are refugees -- people who have been uprooted by violence and persecution, including 13 million people who have fled their countries of origin and more than 20 million people displaced within the borders of their homelands. We give thanks that this has not deterred congregations and resettlement agencies from acting faithfully on their behalf.

These staggering statistics about the global refugee crisis may divert us from the awareness that refugees are children of God -- each is someone's son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister. The refugees here today, and their personal accounts of suffering and survival, should remind us that we are in the presence of courageous and persistent individuals. These people show us the fruits of new beginnings and the reality of resurrection.

The gospel urges us all to be bearers of hospitality, and to receive the stranger as if we were welcoming Christ into our midst. Organizations, churches and parishioners who are engaged in this work -- including Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries -- are welcoming some of the world's most marginalized and vulnerable people. This witness of service and hospitality not only helps those who come seeking a new life, but reminds us that love does triumph over rejection and alienation. Our nation has prospered thanks to the gifts of those who came to this land seeking a better life. Across the country we know that those stories continue, with new immigrants and the gifts they bring with them.

The current migration climate in this country is often focused on exclusion and restriction. As people formed by a generous and embracing gospel, we must challenge our leaders to avoid cultivating an unwarranted atmosphere of fear. We must not encourage building walls or denying basic human rights to those who clamor for security and justice. Our perspective should be one of abundance, for we are blessed with abundance and guided by the mandate to love all as part of God's good creation.

We urge members of our churches to embrace the opportunities presented by newcomers to incorporate their stories into our own and to advocate for just national policies on resettlement and migration. We give thanks for those who are living out this understanding and who seek to live into the biblical imperative to welcome the stranger. We give thanks for the blessing among us of those who have received a welcome and are enriching our lives with their gifts and witness.