Faith Leaders Support Refugee Resettlement in Texas

Dear Governor Abbott and Texas State House and Senate Members,

We write as leaders in national, state, and local faith communities to express our deep disappointment in the plans for the Texas state government to withdraw from administering the U.S. refugee resettlement program, which became effective recently. Likewise, we are strongly concerned about several bills introduced at the state legislature that would place undue burdens on refugee resettlement agencies and the communities they serve.

We are grateful for the more than 22 refugee resettlement offices in Texas. Most of these offices have specific faith roots, and all work consistently with multi-faith partners to ensure effective resettlement and integration into Texas communities. We take seriously our deep call to “welcome the stranger” and to show compassion for vulnerable populations facing persecution.

As diverse faith communities, we have been proud to assist together in the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of refugees around the United States since the end of World War II. Our refugee neighbors have demonstrated faith values of resilience, determination, and hope. These are some of our strongest values as Americans and as Texans. Our relationships with refugee families have enriched our congregational communities, and have helped our members understand and provide healing in the face of many of the deepest conflicts around the world.

Throughout our nation’s history, the public-private partnership of the U.S. refugee resettlement has served as an international model for welcome and an effective way for the vulnerable to find new hope. Additionally, it has helped the comfortable demonstrate welcome across boundaries and practice the virtue of hospitality. We can be both safe and welcoming of refugees. Indeed, in this time when one in every 113 people globally is an asylum seeker, internally displaced, or is a refugee, and where there are more refugees in the world than at any time in recorded history, we must re-double - not turn back from - our life-giving heritage of refugee resettlement.

Therefore, for the above reasons, we call upon you to re-commit your support for and participation in the U.S. resettlement program, and urge you to oppose any anti-refugee proposal. We look forward to continuing to assist with refugee resettlement in Texas. We urgently request you continue to offer welcome to refugees within our great state of Texas.

Sincerely,

National Faith Leaders
Rev. Dr. John McCullough, President & CEO, Church World Service
Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister & President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ
Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
Rev. Dr. Ronald Degges, President, Disciples Home Missions, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Rev. Julia Brown Karimu, President, Division of Overseas Ministries and
Co-Executive, Global Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
Rev. Dr. John Moos, Global Ministries, Executive Minister, Wider Church Ministries and Co-Executive Global Ministries Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
Rev. Vy Nguyen, Executive Director, Week of Compassion, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Director, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Rev. Dr. Mary Schaller Blaufuss, Global Sharing of Resources, United Church of Christ
Rev. Coretha Loughridge, Interim Regional Minister & President for the SW Region, Texas (Disciples of Christ)
Suzanne Akhras-Sahloul, Syrian Community Network
Jasmine Bowden, African American Ministers in Action
President Shirley Cason-Reed, Women's Missionary Society
Pastor Michael Bober, Ecumenical Catholic Communion
Father Michael Konwgowmis, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Texas Leaders of Congregations and Faith-Based Organizations

Dr. Ian Shelburne, Northwest Church of Christ, Abilene
The Rev. Dr. Alan Baroody, Member at large, Grace Presbytery, Addison
Reverend John Andrews, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Amarillo
Dina Alhussayni, Al-Hedayah Islamic Center, Arlington
Rev. Kevin Johnson, St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Arlington
Rev. Dean Reed, First United Methodist Church Dallas-Fort Worth, Arlington
Rachelle Moreland, Director of Student Ministry, New World United Methodist Church, Arlington
Rabbi Lev Baesh, Congregation Kol HaLev, Austin
Inelle Bagwell, United Methodist Women, Austin
Reverend Meg Barnhouse, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, Austin
Rev. Dr. Whitney Bodman, President, Texas Impact, Austin
Rev. Laura Brewster, Northwest Hills UMC, Austin
Elder Don Brimberry, Westover Hills Church of Christ, Austin
President Mandeep Chadha, Singh Sabha Gurdwara of Austin, Austin
Rev. Bill Clark, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Austin
Rabbi Amy Cohen, Temple Beth Shalom, Austin
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Rev. Christopher Dunn, Chaplain, Mission Presbytery, Austin
Rev. Linda Elford, Crestview United Methodist Church, Austin
Reverend Paul Escamilla, Saint John's United Methodist Church, Austin
Imam Mohamed-Umer Esmail, Nueces Mosque, Austin
Rev. Taylor Fuerst, First United Methodist Church, Austin
Rev. John Gage, United Christian Church of Austin (Disciples of Christ), Austin
Rev. Carrie Graham, The Church Lab, Austin
Reverend Abigail Herrera, Servant Church, United Methodist Church, Austin
Rev. Shelley Homeyer, ECO Presbyterian Missionary, Austin
Rev. Anna Humble, United Church of Christ (UCC/DOC), Austin
Rev. Bobbi Kaye Jones, Tarrytown United Methodist Church, Austin
Satwinder Kahlon, Joint Treasurer, Singh Sabha Gurdwara of Austin, Austin
Cheryl Kaufman, PhD, Member of Christ Church Anglican, Austin
Rev. Dr. Charles, Kutz-Marks, University Christian Church - Austin, Austin
Rev. Dr. Don Longbottom, Designated Conference Minister, South Central UCC, Austin
Rev. Kevin Mitchell, Highland Park Baptist Church, Austin
Amy Moehnke, St. David's Episcopal Church, Austin
Rev. Michael Mumme, First United Methodist Church of Austin, Austin
Barbara Murdock, Public Affairs Representative, Austin Texas Stake, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Austin
Karen Perkins, Gateway Community Church, Austin
The Rev. Dr. William Poe, Central Presbyterian Church, Austin
Rev. Kimberly Rogers, Central Presbyterian Church, Austin
Reverend Anthony Scoma, Southwest Family Fellowship, Assemblies of God, Austin
The Rev. Dr. Matthew T. Seddon, St. John's Episcopal Church, Austin
Pastor Landon Shultz, PhD, Bluebonnet Hills Christian Church (D/C), Austin
Reverend Genevieve Sprinkle, Interfaith Ministry, Austin
Rev. Nikki Stahl, United Christian Church of Austin (UCC/DOC), Austin
Rev. Cathy Stone, First United Methodist Church, Austin
Rev. Nicole Cruz Talkington, Chaplain, Austin
Rev. Karen Thompson, Metropolitan Community Church of Austin, Austin
Natasha Ulack, Director of Children's Ministries, University United Methodist Church, Austin
Rev. Tom VandeStadt, Congregational Church of Austin UCC, Austin
Rev. Linda Bourianoff, Hyde Park Presbyterian Church, Austin
Flor Castellanos, Crossroads Church Austin, Austin
Feliberto Pereira, Children's Ministry Coordinator, Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries, Bayview
Rev. Ken Ehrke, Embrace United Church of Christ, Bedford
Rev. Dr. Kevin Henson, St. Timothy, Bedford
Rev. Diane McGehee, United Methodist Church, Bellaire
Rev. Dr. Ricky Burk, First United Methodist Church Boerne, Boerne
Rev. J. D. Allen, First United Methodist Church of Boyd, Boyd
Deaconess Cindy Andrade Johnson, United Methodist Church, Brownsville
Pastor Melissa Ashmore, Burleson
Rev. Lora Brandis, Horizon Unitarian Universalist Church, Carrollton
Sherry Dunn, Holy Covenant UMC, Carrollton
Rob Evans, Holy Covenant United Methodist Church, Advocates for Peace and Justice, Carrollton
Senior Pastor Rev. Carol D. Sparks, Holy Covenant UMC, Carrollton
Bob Michael Advocates for Justice & Peace, Carrollton
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Choie Ming, Former Youth Leader, GHBCF, Center
Rev. James Henley, Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention, Clear Lake
Pastor Dan Darby, Coldspring United Methodist church, Coldspring
Rev. Scott Moore, Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Conroe
Melinda Schoppe, Spiritual Director, Lord of Life Lutheran, Conroe
Rev. Rodney Whitfield, Faith United Methodist Church, Corinth
Rev. Christina Hockman, Unitarian Universalist Church of Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi
Rev. Dr. Beth Marie Halvorsen, St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Cypress
Rev. Jen Kindsvatter, Celebration Lutheran Church, Cypress
Julie Meissner, Co-founder, Abba's House of Welcome, Cypress
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Jason Clarke, Executive Director, Seek the Peace, Dallas
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Liberty Ford, Daughters of Abraham, Dallas
Monica Frazier, University Park United Methodist Church, Dallas
Cantor Vicky Glikin, Temple Emanu-El, Dallas
Dr. Nelly Kaakaty, Vice President, American Muslim Professionals of Dallas, Dallas
Rev. Dr. Michael Gregg, Royal Lane Baptist Church, Dallas
Rabbi Kimberly Herzog Cohen, Temple Emanuel-El, Dallas
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Alysa Marx, Seek the Peace, Dallas
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Rabbi Debra Robbins, Temple Emanuel-El, Dallas
Rev. Dr. Owen Ross, Christ’s Foundry United Methodist Mission, Faith in Texas, Dallas
Noor Saadeh, MAS Dallas, Daughters of Abraham, Dallas
Celia Saunders, Temple Emanu-El Dallas WRJ, Dallas
Joel Schwitzer, American Jewish Committee, Dallas
May Sebel, Temple Emanuel, Dallas
Freda Stern, Temple Emanu El, Dallas
Rabbi David Stern, Temple Emanu-El, Dallas
Senior Minister Andrew Stoker, First United Methodist Church, Dallas
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Aisha U-Kiu, Founder, American Muslim Professionals of Dallas, Dallas
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Rev. Aaron White, First Unitarian Church of Dallas, Dallas
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Rev. Eric Folkerth, Northaven United Methodist Church, Dallas
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Rev. Dr. Robert E. Mosher, SSC, Columban Mission Center, Roman Catholic Church, El Paso
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Daniel Kasten, Holy Covenant UMC, Advocates for Justice, Farmers Branch
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Rev. Charles Johnson, Bread Fellowship, Fort Worth
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Rev. Robyn Michalove, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth, Fort Worth
Deacon Tracie Middleton, Trinity Episcopal Church, Fort Worth
Reverend Tom Plumbley, First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Fort Worth
Rev. Father Mart G. Pool, Fort Worth
Rev. Dr. Nancy Ramsay, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth
Reverend Doctor Charles Rolen, University Christian Church, Fort Worth
Reverend Craig Roshaven, Unitarian Universalist Association, Fort Worth
The Reverend William Stanford, Ecumenical Officer, Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth, Fort Worth
Rev. Karl Travis, First Presbyterian Church, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth
Reverend Jessica Vacketta, University Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Fort Worth
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Dr. Newell Williams, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth
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Rev. Ron Trimmer, Hope United, Georgetown
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Pastor Michael Dunn, First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Houston
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Rev. Emily Everett, First United Methodist Pasadena, Houston
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Pamela Gideon, Palmer Episcopal Church, Houston
Rev. Abot Gaelyn Godwin, Houston Zen Center, Auspicious Cloud Temple, Houston
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Rev. Joshua Hale, Mission Bend United Methodist Church, Houston
Pastor Michelle Hall, Houston
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The Rev. Brandon Peete, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and School, Houston
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Rev. Hannah Terry, Westbury United Methodist Church, Houston
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Rev. Tommy Williams, Senior Pastor, St Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston
Cindy Wu, Access ECC, Houston
Pastor David Wu, Access Evangelical Covenant Church, Houston
Rev. Dr., John Wurster, St. Philip Presbyterian Church, Houston
Pastor Arturo Cadar, CrossRoads UMC, Houston
Rev. Vickey Gibbs, Resurrection MCC, UFMCC, Houston
Rev. Mona Lopez, Cathedral of Hope Houston, Humble
Reverend Robert Gross, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Hurst
Katherine McCalmon-Moore, Grand Lakes Presbyterian Church, Katy
Minister Julia Ansu Welch, Lago Vista Buddhist Association, Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, Lago Vista
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Pastor Aaron Dawson, Monterey Church of Christ, Lubbock
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Rev. Chris Michaelis, New Hope Lutheran Church, Missouri City
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Rozella White, Houston City Director, Mission Year, Missouri City
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Rev. Dr. Will Reed, First United Methodist Church, Pasadena
Rev. Kelly Sullivan, First UMC Pasadena, Pasadena
Rev. Keith Swatzel II, Sunset United Methodist Church, Pasadena
Dr. Criselda Alvarado, CrossRoads United Methodist Church, Pearland
Imam Basem Hamid, ShadowCreek Muslim Community Center, Pearland
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Farhana Ali, Board Member, Texas Muslim Women's Foundation, Plano
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Ayaz Malik, Islamic Association of Collin County, Plano
Reverend Paul Mussacho, Preston Meadow Lutheran Church, ELCA, Plano
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Pastor Keith Hileman, Trinity Fellowship Church, Richardson
The Reverend Katy Rigler, St. Barnabas Presbyterian Church, Richardson
Rev. David Schaefers, First Presbyterian Church, Richardson
Rev. Lillian Smith, Canyon Creek Presbyterian Church, Richardson
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Sister Sharon Altendorf, Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, San Antonio
Lenna Baxter, Interfaith Welcome Coalition, San Antonio
Reverend Suzanne F. Isaacs, United Methodist Church, Rio Texas Conference, San Antonio
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Interim Pastor San Williams, University Presbyterian Church in San Antonio, San Antonio
Rev. Jerry Frank, Catholic, San Juan
Rev. Jimmy Cobb, Ph.D. (Retired), San Marcos
Rev. Scottie McIntyre Johnson, San Marcos Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, San Marcos
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Brenda Owens, White's Chapel UMC, Southlake
Dr. Todd Renner, Co-Pastor, White's Chapel United Methodist Church, Southlake
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Rev. Luis Ramirez, Cypress Trails United Methodist Church, spring
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Alyssa Stebbing, Outreach Director, Episcopal Migration Ministries, The Woodlands
Sister Peggy Kenny, SHSP, Metro Alliance, San Antonio
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The Rev. Dr. Michael Marsh, Uvalde
Cody Chumbley, Youth Minister, South Main Church of Christ, Weatherford
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Tyler Jarvis, Oak Ridge Church of Christ, Willow Park
Ron Johns Jr, Oak Ridge Church of Christ, Willow Park