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ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS

FOR GLOBAL PEACE WITH JUSTICE

2018 Theme

A World Uprooted: Responding to Migrants, Refugees and Displaced People

We live in a time of upheaval and uprootedness - a world in which each year millions of people cross borders in search of more secure and sustainable lives, while white supremacist ideologies continue to impede the fight for justice and peace for all of God's people. As we witness historically high levels of migration, we also find that racism, sexism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination are also on the rise in our communities and used for political gain. At the root of this global upheaval and migration are the push factors of violent conflict, climate change, and corruption which often intersect with one another. At a time when there is such need around the world, we grieve that the U.S. has greatly reduced its refugee admittance numbers while smaller, poorer countries are stepping up to welcome and provide refuge for those in need. As people of faith, we know we can do more. We believe God is with Dreamers, the migrant and the outcast and calls us to create places of sanctuary; to offer hospitality to the stranger, to welcome all – regardless of faith, race, gender or nationality – and to break down the dividing walls that separate us.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2018 will focus on the uprootedness of our world. We will analyze current policy and envision ways to more fully and justly respond to the global and local needs of displaced communities. Through prayer, worship, advocacy training, and networking, we will seek policy changes that advance hope and overcome the devastating impacts of conflict, climate change and corruption on God's people.

Global Impacts

There are now close to 250 million migrants worldwide - an increase of more than 40 percent since 2000. Of the more than 70 million people who have become migrants since 2000, approximately 50,000[i] have perished along the way to safety and stability. Lacking access to protection and/or facing militarized borders, some migrants turn to smugglers, many of whom deceive migrants and feed the growing atrocity of human trafficking in both the sex and labor industry. A more just and compassionate response to human migration and immigration is needed.

Of the many causes of migration, violent conflict remains one of the major push factors around the world. The continued war in Syria, conflict in Colombia, and gang violence in Honduras have displaced entire communities and pushed refugees across Europe and to the southern border of the U.S. At the same time, extreme poverty, corruption, and corporate land grabs for farming, tourism, minerals, and oil have displaced populations in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.[ii] Our failure to address the reality of climate change and take care of our environment has also resulted in migration as droughts and desertification force populations off land in Africa's Sahel region; rising sea level threatens the existence of nations such as Fiji and Tuvalu; and hurricanes destroy the homes and livelihoods in Haiti, the Caribbean and the Philippines. More than 10 million people now live without any nationality; these "stateless people," like the Roma and Rohingya, are alienated because of their ethnicity or religion.



In the U.S.

Here in the U.S., conflict, corruption, and climate change also catalyze the movement of the most vulnerable and this displacement further compounds their struggles. Many urban public schools do not have the resources they need to promote learning and eliminate the pervasive achievement and opportunity gap between students of color and white students. Transient communities also prevent a stable environment for learning. Community members who are incarcerated are often moved far from their homes and families, while unfair sentencing and a justice system in desperate need of reform continue to negatively impact families and communities for generations. Deportation forces capture people seeking a better life, perpetrate human rights abuses, and label our fellow human beings as “illegal.” Extreme weather disasters have destroyed Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and displaced entire cities in Texas, Florida and other places along the Gulf Coast as a result of climate change. Native Americans continue to be forced off ancestral lands in places like Standing Rock. Unarmed African Americans continue to lose their lives unnecessarily without justice prevailing while a resurgence in hatred and bigotry once again tarnish our communities. Gentrification has moved poor people out of cities and further away from employment and other opportunities for advancement.

Unfortunately, our elected leaders have not acted to counter these systemic issues with policies that address these factors, and we have ultimately failed to build secure futures for our most vulnerable.

As policymakers push to further militarize our borders and our city streets, deny refugees access to protection, separate families based on legal status, and allow white supremacist ideologies to drive public policy in areas such as immigration, education, criminal justice and religious liberty, to name a few, people of faith must proclaim a different vision. In the face of our uprootedness, we will seek policy change that reflects God's vision for the world; a world in which all are given equal opportunity to thrive, planted in lands flowing with abundance and safety instead of uprooted by conflict or crisis.

Join us at this year's gathering, “***A World Uprooted: Responding to Migrants, Refugees and Displaced People***,” from April 20-23, 2018 in Washington D.C., where we will equip ourselves to boldly speak and act on behalf of the least of these, proclaim God's mandate for justice, righteousness and mercy and encourage one another to be salt, light and beacons of hope in an uprooted world.

Scriptures for the 2018 Theme

Deuteronomy 10:17-20

“For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear.

Matthew 25:34-40

“Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'”

[i] <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/infographics> [ii] <https://www.farmlandgrab.org/>