

In Support of Salvadoran Refugees

A Resolution approved by General Synod XIII (1981)

Providing safe haven for people whose lives are endangered by strife in their home country surely demonstrates the most basic of our commitment as followers of Jesus Christ. As a witness of faith in our God, who calls us to help the widows and orphans and enjoins us not to oppress the aliens among us, we can do no less.

WHEREAS, current conditions in El Salvador have caused over 100,000 people to flee the country in fear for their lives and have displaced 500,000 people within El Salvador (according to information provided by Church World Service of the National Council of the Churches of Christ). 22,000 people have been killed there since January, 1980; and

WHEREAS, the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the U.S. has been apprehending and deporting Salvadorans to El Salvador, regardless of reports that those returned are likely to be killed. Salvadoran children are being returned unaccompanied by their parents or any adult, to El Salvador; and

WHEREAS, indefinite voluntary departure status has been granted in the past during crisis situations similar to current conditions in El Salvador; for example, in recent years nationals of Nicaragua, Uganda, and Lebanon have been granted this status when their lives were endangered had they been forced to return to their countries; and

WHEREAS, Salvadorans and others from Mexico and Central America are being held at detention camps such as El Centro and San Ysidro near the U.S.-Mexican border under conditions which no outside public delegation is being allowed to inspect. There are reports of abuses at these camps.

THEREFORE, The Thirteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon the Department of State of the United States of America to grant indefinite voluntary departure status with employment authorization to all Salvadorans in the United States, on the basis of conditions in El Salvador; and

The Thirteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service to halt all deportations of Salvadorans to El Salvador and to cease its policy of deporting children unaccompanied by adults; and

The Thirteenth General Synod requests the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ to implement this resolution by making appropriate communications to the Department of State and to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and by communicating the text of this resolution to the press.