

Encouraging Immigrant Welcoming Congregations
A Resolution for Consideration at the 2017 ‘Aha Pae‘aina

Sponsor: Church of the Crossroads.

Date of Adoption by Sponsor: March 9, 2017

Summary: Urges UCC churches to become Immigrant Welcoming Congregations.

Biblical, theological, and ethical rationale: Our Jewish and Christian traditions honor the text from Leviticus 19:33-34 (adapted from NRSV): “When an immigrant resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the immigrant. The immigrant who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the immigrant as yourself, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt.” In Matthew 25 Jesus speaks of those who will receive the kingdom: “When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger you welcomed me.” Jesus also says (Mark 12:31 NRSV): “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”¹

Suggested conference missional team for implementation: Justice and Witness

Encouraging Immigrant Welcoming Congregations

Whereas immigrants, regardless of their legal status, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, bring us as offerings their stories and experiences, dreams and hopes, energy and skills; and,

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has a long history of addressing social justice issues such as immigration; and,

WHEREAS, the Immigrant Welcoming Congregation model is a flexible approach that each church may customize to its own needs and circumstances, with the following menu from which activities may be selected:

- Building relationships through face-to-face encounters
- Learning about root causes of immigration
- Studying United Church of Christ teachings on immigration
- Exploring immigration in documentaries and in film
- Exploring immigration in worship and communion
- Holding small group or congregation-wide book study
- Engaging in prayerful action, such as participation in local activities that support immigrants; and,

WHEREAS, the concept of welcoming immigrants has roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition as written in Leviticus 19:33-34: “of God’s love for the sojourners treating them as if they were one of us and loving them as we do ourselves”; and,

¹ Source: “On Becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Church,” a resolution submitted to General Synod 2017 (<http://uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/GS31-11-Immigrant-Welcoming-Church.pdf>).

WHEREAS, the Native Hawaiian values of aloha and ho'okipa, or open-hearted hospitality, have allowed us to enjoy the richness that immigration has brought to Hawai'i; and,

WHEREAS, the immigrant support movement has become particularly relevant because the federal administration has made a drastic and sudden shift in its treatment of undocumented immigrants, using harsh tactics to round them up and deport them, although many have not broken any laws and have been living peacefully in their communities for many years; and,

WHEREAS, some of these immigrants face deportation to countries that are characterized by high rates of insecurity, violence, and poverty; and,

WHEREAS, nationally, half of the undocumented immigrants who are adults have lived in the US for ten years or more, and an estimated 20,000 undocumented immigrants live in Hawaii, most from Asian countries;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that United Church of Christ congregations in Hawaii are encouraged to become Immigrant Welcoming Congregations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ support other conferences and their Immigrant Welcoming Congregation resolutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ, as a national denomination, be encouraged to adopt the 2017 General Synod Resolution, "On Becoming An Immigrant Welcoming Church," submitted by the Minnesota, Wisconsin, Northern California-Nevada, Massachusetts and Central Pacific Conferences.