

## Becoming a Sanctuary Diocese

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RESOLVED, That the 191<sup>st</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont accept the challenge to live into God's mission to be "just peacemakers," as so clearly articulated by our Convention speaker, the Reverend Canon Kelly Brown Douglas; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the people of the Diocese of Vermont, as disciples of Jesus Christ and persons of faith and conscience, embrace the call to stand in solidarity with those who have, and will, come among us seeking refuge, asylum and lives with dignity for themselves and their families and take seriously the biblical mandate to "honor the immigrant in our midst as one of our own" (Lev. 19:34); and be it further

RESOLVED, That the 191<sup>st</sup> Convention encourage congregations and institutions of the Diocese of Vermont to serve as places of welcome and healing, provide other forms of material and pastoral support for all persons, regardless of immigration status, and work alongside our neighbors to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of Vermont support Episcopal Church initiatives to engage in education, organizing, advocacy, legal direct action, and other methods as deemed appropriate in each context to ensure the safety and security of all immigrants and refugees and that the Diocese urge its congregations and institutions to do likewise; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of Vermont commend and learn from the work of Episcopal Migration Ministries and from other Episcopal dioceses that have declared themselves to be sanctuary dioceses such as New York (2024), Chicago (2019), Washington (2018), San Diego (2017), Los Angeles (2016); and be it further

RESOLVED, That the 191<sup>st</sup> Convention ask the Bishop of Vermont and the Executive Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont to create and empower a Sanctuary Task Force of up to ten members (clergy and lay) with a one-year charge to:

- explore declaring ourselves to be a sanctuary diocese;
- propose some interim steps for the diocese and congregations;
- and report to the 192<sup>nd</sup> convention with proposals on how we might become sanctuaries for the strangers in our midst to whom we show hospitality, "for by doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2).

### EXPLANATION

The United States of America is a nation enriched and sustained by immigrants. Nonetheless, newer immigrant families suffer on the margins of our society. They are scapegoated during difficult economic times and victimized by harsh anti-immigrant governmental policies.

As a nation, we are facing new calls for massive deportations and restrictions on basic human rights. Several dioceses, notably, the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago and the Episcopal Diocese of New York have already passed resolutions that declare their dioceses to be sanctuaries, in the classical sense of the term—a place of refuge and safety—where advocacy and assistance is offered.

Here in Vermont, almost 1000-1200 dairy farm workers are undocumented.

(<https://vermontbiz.com/news/2024/october/18/dairy-workers-report-unsafe-work-low-pay-migrant-justice-study>). In 2018, 30,813 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) composed 5 percent of Vermont's population, and 39,080 people (6 percent of the population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent. Vermont was home to 15,768 women, 12,388 men, and 2,657 children who were immigrants. The top countries of origin for immigrants were Canada (20 percent of immigrants), Nepal (7 percent), Jamaica (6 percent), the Philippines (6 percent), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (5 percent). ([https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants\\_in\\_vermont.pdf](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_vermont.pdf)).

These are our neighbors, who contribute to the vibrancy of our communities and our economy; yet they are in danger. Likewise, our LGBTQI neighbors, who are increasingly under scrutiny, need assurance that their basic human rights are respected.

The 81st General Convention, meeting in Louisville, KY, July 2024, passed a number of resolutions related to migration and dignity, two in particular that inform this resolution: [D026 Enable Episcopal Migration Ministries to More Fully Live Out its Mission](#) [C031 Migration with Dignity](#)

Resolution D026 addresses the importance of [Episcopal Migration Ministries](#) (EMM), which serves refugees and asylum seekers and works through the [U.S. Refugee Admissions Program](#). EMM is the refugee resettlement and migration ministry of The Episcopal Church, with a primary focus on refugees, as well as support for those eligible for humanitarian parole. Since 1988, EMM has resettled more than 100,000 individuals to communities across the United States. EMM is The Episcopal Church's convening place for collaboration, education, and information-sharing on migration.

The Migration with Dignity conceptual framework adopted in Resolution C031 not only resonates with our Baptismal Covenant to “respect the dignity of every human person,” but it also is increasingly used by international communities/organizations to address the multiple and interconnected forces that drive migration.

Our 2017 diocesan convention focused on human dignity and welcomed Donna Hicks, author of the book, *Dignity*. Her main thesis is that all of us are born with God-given dignity and no one has the right to take it away from us. In accepting the challenge of Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas to make just peace, this resolution continues in that vein, assuring others that the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont will not only continue to respect the dignity of every human being, but also will find ways to act on that commitment.