

RESOLUTIONS AND MEMORIALS
FOR
2023 SYNOD ASSEMBLY
OF THE
SOUTHWEST CALIFORNIA SYNOD

Southwest California Synod Resolution Ending Private Immigration Detention Centers

WHEREAS, The United States government maintains the world's largest immigration detention system, made up of a network of approximately 200 jails across the country – 79 percent of people in ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) custody are held in privately owned or operated facilities,

AND WHEREAS, ICE currently holds over 20,000 persons in detention facilities and detained a total of over 300,000 individuals in fiscal year 2022, at an average cost of \$2 million dollars a month for private prison companies to maintain,

AND WHEREAS, 56 percent of ICE detainees have no criminal record and many more have only minor offenses, including traffic violations, and includes persons seeking asylum from threats to their lives in their home countries and persons seeking to navigate the complex U.S. immigration system who should be able to do so with their loved ones and in community, not behind bars in immigration detention

AND WHEREAS, privately managed detention centers have little accountability to the persons they detain or to the public or to publicly created standards and are managed to produce a profit over the care of those in detention

AND WHEREAS, substantial documentation of instances of abuse, neglect, denial of access to lawyers or medical care, and separation of and from families within private detention facilities, particularly against Black and Indigenous migrants, have been noted by congress, media, and independent reports,

AND WHEREAS, President Joe Biden issued an executive order in January 2021 to phase out federal private prisons, but it failed to include privately operated ICE detention centers, and private prisons are able to circumvent the order by entering intergovernmental service agreements with counties receiving federal funding for immigration,

AND WHEREAS, ICE maintains a privately operated detention center in Adelanto, CA and the ICE processing facility in Bakersfield, CA,

AND WHEREAS, our historic strong Lutheran tradition of welcoming the foreigner and stranger calls us to honor and respect immigrants and seek humane treatment for those seeking refuge and safety, seeing in them the refugee Holy Family and Jesus himself, and seeking to treat immigrants as we would want to be treated.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA calls for the canceling of all contracts for private companies managing detention centers,

AND RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod call on the federal government and ICE to call on states which manage state operated detention centers to follow this same course.

AND RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod calls on our representatives in Congress and the leadership of U.S. immigration agencies to pursue community-based case management services as true alternatives to detention collaboration with service providers equipped to provide migrants with a warm welcome and reception, which has proven to be more humane, efficient, and cost-effective,

AND RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod Bishop communicate these actions to appropriate officials in the government and immigration agencies,

AND RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod encourage each congregation of the Synod to engage their members in study of this issue and encourage individual members to communicate this action of the Synod with their federal and state representatives.

SIGNATORIES

The Rev. Eric C. Shafer, Retired Pastor, Southwest California Synod

The Rev. Albert Starr, Interim Pastor, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Santa Monica, CA

The Rev. Jim Boline, Pastor, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Santa Monica, CA

The Rev. Caleb Crainer, Pastor, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

Samantha Ladue, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Santa Monica, CA

The Rev. Peg Schultz-Akerson, Pastor, Lutheran Church of the Master, Los Angeles, CA

The Rev. Roderick Hines, Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

Jaffa Castaneda Carrera, ADORELA, Hollywood, CA

The Rev. Drew Stever, Pastor, Hope Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

John Halbert, President, Church Council, Hope Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

The Rev. Jennie Chrien, Shepherd of the Valley, West Hills

Deacon Tempie Beaman, Ascension, Los Angeles, CA

a) What is the financial impact of this resolution on our synod budget? If expenditures are required, what are the sources of income anticipated to accomplish the purpose of the resolution?

Estimated less than five hours for bishop and staff to investigate proper recipients, research and craft letter and send correspondence.

b) What are the personnel implications within our synod—or churchwide? Who will be responsible for implementation of the resolution?

No personnel implications.

c) How does this resolution enhance and forward the mission of the church and our synod?

This resolution takes a courageous stand for justice and fair immigration policies in solidarity with marginalized populations.

Southwest California Synod Resolution - Support of Afghan Adjustment Act

WHEREAS, In the aftermath of the U.S. troop withdrawal and the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban in August 2021, over 80,000 vulnerable Afghans were evacuated who had assisted the U.S. efforts there, and later that year 76,000 of those evacuees were transferred into the U.S.. In addition, the U.S. continues evacuation and protection efforts for vulnerable Afghans left behind in Afghanistan.

AND WHEREAS, most of those evacuees were processed under “humanitarian parole” legal processes because other immigration processes were too slow, leaving them in a status which is limited and is a temporary condition with no clear path to permanent status.

AND WHEREAS, both the U.S. House and Senate have introduced bipartisan bills to provide a path to permanent status for Afghan evacuees (HR8685 and S4787) which have yet to be enacted,

AND WHEREAS, there are current efforts to re-introduce these bills in the new session of Congress,

AND WHEREAS, these bills in both the House and Senate seek to establish a special task force to give care to issues of eligibility, vetting, security and relocation,

AND WHEREAS, amongst champions of the bill are the US Chamber of Commerce, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans for Foreign Wars, American Legion, With Honor Action, Association of Wartime Allies, top military commanders, including Joint Chiefs of Staff, Generals, and Admirals of the Afghanistan war.

AND WHEREAS, the bill has been endorsed by the editorial boards of The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Bloomberg, The Washington Post, Maine’s The Bangor Daily News, and Greensboro’s News & Record. Hundreds of articles, interviews, and op-eds – many penned by veterans themselves, including Afghanistan veteran Jack McCain, the son of former Senator John McCain – have called for the passage of the AAA as part of fulfilling America’s promise to its allies. Last year as Ranking Member of the Senate Veteran Affairs Committee Senator Moran put it, “For two decades countless Afghans stood by our servicemembers and risked their lives and their families’ lives to support our troops in Afghanistan. Veterans of the Afghan War are now calling for Congress to provide safety and certainty for their allies and friends who assisted them.

AND WHEREAS, nearly every U.S. ambassador assigned to Afghanistan since 2002 signed a letter urging Congress to include the Afghan Adjustment Act in the omnibus spending bill besides the Polling that showed three in every four Americans want to see Congress act to provide permanent protection to Afghan evacuees by passing the Afghan Adjustment Act (S.4787/H.R. 8685), known as the “triple A”.

AND WHEREAS, the Lutheran church and the ELCA have strong traditions of welcoming immigrants and assisting in their resettlement, and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services has played a major role in receiving and relocating these particular Afghan evacuees, and

AND WHEREAS, one of the largest concentrations of these Afghan evacuees in our country is in the territory of the Southwest California Synod,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA go on record as supporting these Afghan evacuees in their effort to achieve paths to permanent status in the U.S., and

AND RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod instructs our Bishop to communicate to our appropriate representatives in the U.S. House and Senate our endorsement of the Afghan Adjustment Act and our hope that such legislation is enacted swiftly, and

AND RESOLVED that the congregations of the Southwest California Synod commit to informing their members of this issue and pending legislation, and encourage members to directly communicate this support and urgency to their federal representatives.

SIGNATORIES

The Rev. Eric C. Shafer, Retired Pastor, Southwest California Synod
The Rev. Albert Starr, Interim Pastor, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Santa Monica, CA
The Rev. Jim Boline, Pastor, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Santa Monica, CA
The Rev. Caleb Crainer, Pastor, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA
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b) What are the personnel implications within our synod—or churchwide? Who will be responsible for implementation of the resolution?

No personnel implications.

c) How does this resolution enhance and forward the mission of the church and our synod?

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Resolution Regarding Non-Disclosure Agreements

WHEREAS The 2022 Southwest California synod approved the **Memorial Regarding Non-Disclosure Agreements** (22-02);

AND WHEREAS The 2022 Churchwide Assembly received with gratitude this memorial along with memorials from the Delaware-Maryland and Northwestern Ohio synods concerning separation agreements;

AND WHEREAS These memorials were approved by a vote of 776 to 27 as Assembly Action CA22.03.14;

AND WHEREAS The Church Council was directed to update the “Churchwide Organization Personnel Policies” to appropriately limit the use of non-disclosure agreements consistent with these memorials’;

AND WHEREAS synods, congregations, agencies, institutions, and other parts of the ELCA were urged to limit the use of non-disclosure agreements to the small minority of cases in which they are truly necessary to protect confidential and sensitive materials related to donors, personnel, legal, information technology and similar categories;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED;

That the Southwest California Synod separates the satisfaction of severance packages from considerations outlined in separation agreements (Non-disparagement agreements, non-disclosure agreements, and others).

AND RESOLVED, That the Southwest California Synod adopts provisions in guiding documents that provide independent legal counsel to individuals from Synod staff being asked to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements.

AND RESOLVED, That the Southwest California Synod encourages Congregations to adopt provisions in guiding documents that provide independent legal counsel to individuals being asked to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements.

Signers,

Pastor Caleb Crainer (author), St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church, Los Angeles

Jaffa Castaneda Carrera, ADORELA, Hollywood, CA

Pastor Rod Hines, Messiah, Los Angeles, CA

Deacon Tempie Beaman, Ascension, Los Angeles, CA

The Rev. Drew Stever, Pastor, Hope Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

John Halbert, President, Church Council, Hope Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA

The Rev. Jennie Chrien, Shepherd of the Valley, West Hills, CA

Renee Brandt, Lutheran Church in the Foothills, La Canada Flintridge

a) What is the financial impact of this resolution on our synod budget? If expenditures are required, what are the sources of income anticipated to accomplish the purpose of the resolution?

No financial impact unless synod chooses to pursue NDA agreements in which case the synod would need to provide funds for independent legal council.

b) What are the personnel implications within our synod—or churchwide? Who will be responsible for implementation of the resolution?

This resolution applies to personnel within our synod. The Churchwide Personnel Policies are currently being revised.

c) How does this resolution enhance and forward the mission of the church and our synod?

This resolution advocates for transparent and equitable employment practices, setting a model for congregations to follow when considering NDA agreements.

Southwest California Synod Resolution Providing for Ordination of Candidates Serving as Interim Pastors

WHEREAS, the Southwest California Synod regularly provides opportunities for candidates who are approved for ordination to serve congregations as interim pastors, and

WHEREAS, an approved candidate serving in this capacity is to serve as a pastor with all responsibilities and duties expected of an ordained pastor, and

WHEREAS, a candidate called to serve a congregation in an interim should be given the opportunity to be rostered in order to receive the benefits that come with rostered status such as compensation in line with the current synod guidelines, healthcare and pension, and

WHEREAS, current ELCA policy regarding ordination and congregational Call prohibits ordination for such pastors requiring these servants to assume duties without benefit of ordination, and

WHEREAS, congregations are often confused as to the status of the person serving as their pastor, and

WHEREAS, it is important that a candidate asked to serve as an interim be given the authority and legitimacy that the title "pastor" bestows on the position when doing the important work of interim ministry, and

WHEREAS, the incentive for the person serving in this capacity is to be in search of a regular Call in order to receive ordination, and

WHEREAS, congregations in transition are already in a place of heightened anxiety and deserve the full commitment of the person serving as pastor, and

WHEREAS, interim ministry may be considered "specialized" ministry, but is still in a congregational setting as a regular first call would be, therefore it should be exempt from the standard three-year requirement of congregational work before a pastor goes into specialized ministry. It should be considered a legitimate first call, which means it qualifies a candidate for rostered status, and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Candidacy manual recognizes that the path to ordination is a process and that "The church invites all who engage in any aspect of the candidacy process to center on God throughout the process and to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit." (commentary on manual cover art). Further, the manual states (7.2) that the First Call marks the final step of the candidate's public confirmation of their personal call to rostered ministry, their candidacy journey ... and allows for the Holy Spirit to be at work," and

WHEREAS, the wider church recognizes the need for a revision of the roster process and the 2022 Churchwide assembly directed the Church Council to establish a process for examining constitutional provisions and policies and procedures as they relate to interim, transition, bridge, specialized, non-parish-based, and innovative calls.

THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA calls for Bishop and the Synod Council to fully honor the important work of interim ministry, and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod Bishop and the Synod Council to determine that serving as an interim pastor constitutes a call, and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod provides a means of ordination for first call candidates serving as interim pastors, and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod memorialize the church wide national office to change the current policy and allow first call candidates assigned or called to interim ministries be allowed to be ordained.

SIGNATORIES

The Rev. Nancy Switzler, Our Redeemer,

Oxnard The Rev. Erik Goehner, Holy Trinity,

Thousand Oaks The Rev. Erin Martinson,

Trinity Lutheran, Ventura

The Rev. Emily M.M. Ebert Holy Trinity, Thousand

Oaks The Rev. Julie Morris, Mt. Cross Lutheran,

Camarillo

The Rev. Steve Herder, Ascension Lutheran, Thousand

Oaks The Rev, Julie McCain, Ascension Lutheran,

Thousand Oaks

The Rev. Mark A Marius, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Santa

Barbara The Rev. Dr, Tim Delkeskamp, Ascension Lutheran, Thousand

Oaks

The Rev. Dr. Colleen Windham-Hughes, PhD, MDiv, Associate Dean for

Interdisciplinary Programs and Community Outreach, College of Arts & Sciences,

Professor and Co-Chair, Religion Department / Wilbert & Darlene Carlson

Endowed Chair in Youth & Family Ministry, California Lutheran University

The Rev. Dr. Brooks Schramm, Christ Lutheran,

Goleta The Rev. Lynn Jungkans Enloe

The Rev. Emily Ebert. Holy Trinity, Thousand

Oaks The Rev. Ivan E. Larsen, Retired

The Rev. Dr. Jack T. Ledbetter, Retired

The Rev. Steve Simpson, New Hope, Agoura

The Rev. Nicki Fielder, Shepherd of the Valley, Simi Valley

a) What is the financial impact of this resolution on our synod budget? If expenditures are required, what are the sources of income anticipated to accomplish the purpose of the resolution?

No financial cost.

b) What are the personnel implications within our synod—or churchwide? Who will be responsible for implementation of the resolution? Would require coordination with Synod staff and Council.

c) How does this resolution enhance and forward the mission of the church and our synod? Would result in more just treatment of candidates approved for ordination to be recognized in their Call

Memorial in Support of the Transgender Community

WHEREAS, Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals (TGNCI) are beloved children of God, created in God's image.

AND WHEREAS, The Human Rights Campaign has tracked a record 17 anti-Transgender bills passed into law in 2022. [Trans Legislation Tracker](#) has recorded over 465 anti-Transgender bills introduced in 44 state legislatures in 2023. 2023 is the [fourth consecutive year](#) of record numbers of anti-transgender legislation across the country.

AND WHEREAS, proposed and passed legislation targets trans adults and trans youth, and the families, educators, and medical professionals who care for them;

AND WHEREAS, this legislation bans or restricts gender-affirming healthcare, in opposition to the standards of care of [more than two dozen major medical organizations](#), and such bans are driven by hatred rather than medical evidence;

AND WHEREAS, other legislation attempts to restrict access to basic educational materials in schools and trans people's access to public places;

AND WHEREAS, trans people are deserving of the [same human rights as all people](#), including liberty, equal protection under the law, health and wellbeing, education, and the ability to form families;

AND WHEREAS, The ELCA's social message "Gender Based Violence" (2015) says "The U.S. social system also functions in ways that devalue people according to age, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status and ethnicity." (Page 9)

AND WHEREAS, The ELCA's social message "Gender Based Violence" (2015) says "This church has an opportunity to step forward to honestly recognize and name gender-based violence under such guises as "submission," or prostitution, or derogatory talk about people who are gender non-conforming. This church will be committed to careful work to identify sources in both church and society that foster, encourage, or tacitly support gender-based violence and to root out these sources by, for example, naming them in sermons or discussing them in educational settings." (Page 13)

AND WHEREAS, The ELCA's social message "Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action" (2019) says "For a woman of color, sexism in the workplace is compounded by the discriminatory effects of racism. If someone is also transgender, data show staggering levels of discrimination and violence." (Page 26)

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly publicly affirm that all people, including TGNCI (Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals), are made in the image of God and are worthy of dignity in church and society.

AND RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to denounce Anti-Transgender legislation in a public statement.

AND RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to direct the Churchwide Office of the ELCA to revise the governing documents so that TGNCI (Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals) may serve as voting members of assemblies or other committees for which participation has previously been defined by a male/female binary.

AND RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, in Assembly, memorializes the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to commit to reviewing ELCA policies and procedures for bias, especially in regard to TGNCI (Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Individuals).

**A Special Thank you to Rev. Nicole Garcia’s article “[The Humanity of Transgender and Nonbinary People](#)” in the Journal of Lutheran Ethics (August/September 2022) for her personal insights and policy references.*

**A Special Thank you to Isabel Ray for helping to compile legislative information.*

SIGNATORIES

Pastor Jennie Chrien (co-author), Shepherd of the Valley, West Hills, CA
Pastor Caleb Crainer (co-author), St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA
Pastor Peg Schultz-Akerson, Lutheran Church of The Master, Los Angeles, CA
Jaffa Castaneda Carrera, ADORELA, Hollywood, CA
The Rev. Drew Stever, Pastor, Hope Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA
John Halbert, President, Church Council, Hope Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, CA
Deacon Tempie Beaman, Ascension, Los Angeles, CA

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No financial cost.

b) What are the personnel implications within our synod—or churchwide? Who will be responsible for implementation of the resolution?

No personnel implications.

c) How does this resolution enhance and forward the mission of the church and our synod?

This resolution takes a courageous stand for justice in solidarity with marginalized populations.

Southwest California Synod Memorial the ELCA to take action on ending the practice of privately run for-profit immigration detention centers.

WHEREAS the Southwest California Synod in its June 2023 Gathering adopted the resolution entitled “Ending Private Immigration Detention Centers”,

AND WHEREAS the Southwest California Synod has a particular interest in seeing this change of policy for the detention center in our territory, yet there are some 200 immigration centers across the U.S., many of which are run by private for-profit companies, to which it is appropriate and needed for our national church to address this issue.

Therefore be it RESOLVED that the Southwest California Synod Assembly memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to call for the end of the U.S. government practice of contracting management of U.S. immigration detention centers out to private for-profit companies, and that the ELCA urge the appropriate legislative authorities and agencies to cease this practice.

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No financial cost.

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