



People participate in a vigil for immigrants and refugees at the United Church of Christ General Synod in Kansas City, Mo., in July. (RNS/Courtesy of Abigail Cipparone)

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The United Church of Christ passed a resolution at its General Synod this week denouncing what it called "domestic terrorism" by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and accusing the Trump administration of weaponizing the U.S. Constitution.

The denomination's criticism focused on immigration raids "carried out by ICE agents working without uniforms, wearing masks or refusing to identify themselves."

The [resolution of witness](#), titled "Responding to the federal government's attack on immigrants, migrants, and refugees," also officially calls for the UCC to divest from "for-profit private detention businesses," naming three such businesses — CoreCivic, GEO Group, and Management and Training Corp. — without limiting churches' divestments to those companies.

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The measure was approved July 14 by a vote of 627-8, with one abstention, at the UCC's 35th biennial General Synod, which began July 11 and continued through July 15 in Kansas City, Missouri. The resolution reaffirmed a prior resolution from the 31st synod, in 2017, "On Becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Church."

The measure was filed as an emergency motion due to the current immigration crackdown by the Trump administration. It was presented to the synod by the Rev. Clara Sims, assistant minister at First Congregational UCC in Albuquerque, New Mexico, representing the Southwest Conference.

Sims, 28, told Religion News Service that the resolution arose from discussions among members of her church who view seriously the call to be an immigrant welcoming community. First Congregational UCC has created an apartment at the church to house immigrants. Its members also offer food and other aid to immigrants arriving on buses from El Paso, Texas, as they are shuttled by U.S. Border Patrol to destinations around the country.

"Our faith has always called us into spaces of risk on behalf of the vulnerable," Sims said, "especially when people are being made vulnerable by really corrupt systems of power."

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Sims' church is part of the UCC's National Collaborative on Immigration, a group of immigrant welcoming churches, many of them in the border region. After input from other churches in the collaborative, the resolution was adopted by the Southwest Conference and presented to the synod as an emergency resolution to fast-track a vote.

"There was a pretty significant concern surrounding human rights violations that have been going on in these detention centers," said Abigail Cipparone, domestic policy advocate for the UCC's Office of Public Policy and Advocacy in Washington.

In addition to affirming the 2017 resolution, the current synod's resolution encourages churches to "pray with and serve immigrants, migrants and refugees, as well as speak prophetically, even as they face extreme threat by the federal government, as well as certain state and local governments, putting at risk the safety of their place of worship, their financial stability, and their very existence."

But Cipparone said the resolution was particularly important "for the congregations all across the country that are already doing this work — that are welcoming immigrants in their worship services during a time when the sensitive-locations guidance has been lifted and now churches are a place where ICE raids could occur."

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"It is important for us to rededicate ourselves to protecting immigrants and refugees, also because of our call as Christians," Cipparone added. "Because of our call to love our neighbor, to welcome those who are really struggling right now. It was really inspiring to see the synod come together in this vote. To see so many people really speak out against what we see as a violation of our Christian values, as a violation of our faith."