

## **Ash Wednesday Statement on**

### **Refugees and Immigrants**

*3/1/2017 1:45:00 PM*

CHICAGO (March 1, 2017) – The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and leaders from The Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada have issued an Ash Wednesday statement addressing refugees and migrants.

The statement follows:

Ash Wednesday, 2017

### **Remember the Refugees and Migrants**

On this day many people will participate in a liturgy including the Imposition of Ashes. Some presiders blot these ashes upon our foreheads and we are reminded that we are but dust and to dust shall we return. Others trace them upon our forehead in the sign of the cross, a reminder of the place to where the Lenten journey takes us. Even at the outset of this holy season we are reminded that while for some the cross is a stumbling block and for others mere foolishness, it is for those who are being called, the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23). Remembering Christ crucified we are mindful not only of our personal need for repentance and renewal in doing the work of God, but indeed of the need of all humanity to repent of our indifference to the brokenness of our relationships, to the suffering of millions of people worldwide who are starving, oppressed, enslaved, or seeking sanctuary even if it be in a place far from their homeland.

This Lent we call our Churches to be continually mindful of the global refugee and migration crises, and the injustices and conflicts that have swelled the statistics to a number greater than ever in the history of the world. We acknowledge the good work done by so many of our synods and dioceses and parishes in sponsoring refugees, welcoming them, accompanying them and advocating for them as they settle in our countries. Similarly, we commend the compassionate work of our partner churches in other lands and intergovernmental bodies caring for migrants and refugees. We call on our Churches not to weary of this good work in the name of God.

Given the current political climate in the United States, it is important to say that while both our countries recognize the need for measures ensuring homeland security, we also stand up for the long established policies that welcome migrants and refugees. That is not to say any of them are not beyond reform. But it is to say that fair and generous policies strengthen the economy of our nations and enriches the economic, social and cultural fabric of our countries – a fabric woven by both the First Peoples of these lands and all those who have settled here through numerous waves of migration throughout our histories.

Fair and generous action and deliberations are from our perspective, deeply grounded in the Law of Moses, in the teaching of the Prophets and in the Gospel of Jesus. For some two millennia millions of people have found consolation in the suffering of Jesus upon the cross and in his holy name they have prayed for the compassion and justice of God in the midst of the terrible circumstances of their lives – circumstances that compel them to flee their homelands, making their way over dangerous treks of land. Sometimes they find refuge in new nations and frequently they make their way to ports where they can board vessels and make what are often treacherous voyages in the hope of reaching a land free of the oppression they have known. Some make it. Many don't.

May this Season of Lent be especially marked by our prayers and advocacy for refugees and migrants – on the run, in United Nations camps, in waiting, in our communities... And let it be marked by a continuing resolve in welcoming the stranger in our midst, for such hospitality is in keeping with the faith we proclaim. (Matthew 25:31-40)

In Christ,

The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz  
Primate  
Anglican Church of Canada

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson  
National Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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