



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THE REVEREND DR. J. HERBERT NELSON, II
STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

February 10, 2020

Dear Mr. President,

As the highest ecclesiastical officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a church of 1.5 million members, I urge you to do the work of reuniting children separated from their families at the U.S. southern border by United States' immigration policies. In October, we learned that additional children, including those under the age of five, were separated from their families. It is impossible to believe that as a country built on welcome and hospitality, we would enact such policies and then disregard the need to fix erroneous actions. Family separation is a cruel and excessive policy that has to stop. Families must be reunited.

We just celebrated Christmas in the Christian calendar. As we reflect on the birth of Christ, we remember how God came into this world. God, the fully divine, decides to become fully human to understand the suffering and brokenness of the world. Through the incarnate birth, God does not choose to join a family of wealth or political status, but joins a humble, faithful family from Nazareth. Jesus comes to a family who is under the control of an oppressive Roman State. To escape state-sponsored genocide, they flee to Egypt. Our savior and his family entered Egypt as refugees. How does this story call us to relate to those who arrive at our border in search of safety, protection, and stability today?

I urge the president of the United States to direct immigration officers to cease separating families at the U.S.-Mexico border. I urge the president to utilize all available resources to make the Department of Homeland Security identify and assist with the reunification of separated children and families. I urge the Acting Secretary Chad Wolf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to cease the use of family separation as an enforcement policy and urge DHS to cease the use of metering and the Migration Protection Protocols at the border and return to previous levels of entry for asylum seekers into the United States. I urge DHS to increase the training and use of qualified Customs and Border Patrol agents to assist with appropriate identification and treatment of asylum seekers. I call on congressional leaders to pass legislation that restores our nation's commitment to a humanitarian response to this crisis by protecting the

rights of asylum seekers in the United States—faithfully protecting access to due process, legal representation, and the use of alternatives to detention.

God carried us across deserts to the promised land. We were set free. As God has carried us all, as children, to this place, what does God want for us now? Our Loving Creator desires that we all be able to fully realize God's vision of abundant life. God's love is a love that knows no bounds and will not be stopped by any border. As the children of a benevolent and powerful Creator, we must respond with mercy and love. Leaders of this country, you can be a voice grounded in radical love and mercy. I call on you to take actions to be those voices. A little child leads us.

In the Faith that we share,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J. Herbert Nelson, II".

The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

cc: Members of Congress, United States Attorney General, William Barr, and DHS Acting Secretary, Chad Wolf.