

# ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES *of* OREGON

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## **EMO Statement on Refugee Resettlement**

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon—a statewide, ecumenical and interfaith organization—along with Catholic Charities and Lutheran Community Services have been resettling refugees in Oregon for many decades. Religious organizations dedicate themselves to this work because each of our traditions speaks with moral clarity about our responsibility to love, to protect, and to welcome the “stranger” in our midst. As people of faith, this is not an option, it is a command. The Bible says in Leviticus, “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love them as yourself.”

As Americans we value charity, hospitality, tolerance and justice. Read the words enshrined on the Statue of Liberty, the United States’ great symbol of welcome to the refugee: “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free ... Send these, the homeless, the tempest tossed to me ...”

Today we come together with grave concerns about the very soul of our nation. The number of displaced people in the world has never been higher. By the end of 2017, there were over 68 million forcibly displaced people in the world, including 28.5 million refugees.

Yet, in each year of his presidency, Donald Trump’s Administration has drastically reduced the number of refugees who are allowed to seek safety in our country, as they flee persecution, oppression and war.

In just two years, the number of refugees allowed to resettle in the United States has been cut dramatically. During the 2016 fiscal year, under the Obama Administration, 110,000 refugees were resettled in the United States. Last fiscal year, the Trump Administration reduced that number to a historic low of 45,000.

In Oregon, over 67,000 refugees have been resettled since 2003. However, those numbers have fallen sharply since the Trump Administration’s immigration policies took effect in 2017. During the 2016 fiscal year, 1,780 refugees were resettled. At the end of June 2018, with just three months left in the fiscal year, only 465 refugees have been resettled in our state.

### **MEMBER DENOMINATIONS**

African Methodist Episcopal Church ■ American Baptist Churches of Oregon ■ Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ■ Christian Methodist Episcopal Church ■ Church of the Brethren ■ Community of Christ  
Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon ■ Episcopal Diocese of Oregon ■ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ■ Greek Orthodox Church ■ Presbyterian Church (USA)—Presbytery of the Cascades  
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) ■ Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland ■ United Church of Christ ■ United Methodist Church ■ Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

It has recently been reported that the Administration is considering lowering the number of refugee arrivals to the United States in the coming fiscal year to anywhere from 15,000 to 25,000. Make no mistake, the Administration is seeking to dismantle the entire refugee resettlement system in our country. ***This is un-American, and it is unacceptable.***

It is unconscionable that the United States, in a time of unprecedented crisis, should turn its back on the suffering of ordinary people fleeing extraordinary adversity. **We implore the Trump Administration to increase the number of refugee arrivals to 75,000** (view Church World Service's [#Welcome75k Toolkit](#) for actions to take in this effort).

Our refugee resettlement agencies provide vital and on-going services to our refugee population once they arrive. This marginalized community has many barriers to overcome in order to reach their full promise and potential in their new homes. If refugee resettlement agencies are forced to shut down, the safety net for our refugees will be gone.

To deny the world's most vulnerable people their last hope of living and thriving in safety is to deny our common humanity. This is not who we are. Our hearts are heavy for refugees who believed our promise to them; for their family members who are here and desperately waiting to be reunited with their sister, brother, parent or child; and for the spiritual poverty of a nation that would close its borders to a world in need.

We are resolved today to continue standing in solidarity with our refugee and immigrant brothers and sisters. Together with our partners and the many communities of welcome across the country, we will not waver in pursuit of all options at our disposal, so that we can continue serving and protecting refugees, regardless of where they are from or how they pray.

*Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of Christian denominations, congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy.*