STATEMENT ON PRESIDENT OBAMA’S EXECUTIVE ORDER ON IMMIGRATION REFORM

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Stated Clerk, the Rev. Gradye Parsons last night reacted to the President’s announcement of deferred action for the undocumented parents of citizen and legal resident children:

**“Tonight the prayers of millions have been answered. Soon many of our neighbors will no longer be at risk of deportation. Still, we lament for those who will not gain relief from this program. This church will stand with those that qualify for relief as they enter the process and we will also continue to stand with those still at risk of deportation by visiting them in detention, protecting them in our sanctuaries and by praying and pressing for broader and more lasting relief through comprehensive immigration reform.”**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is thankful that President Obama’s executive order, which stands in a long, bipartisan tradition of executive authority protecting vulnerable populations of immigrants. This action will allow undocumented immigrants who are parents of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to register with the federal government. These persons, if approved, will receive a three-year period of protection from deportation and permission to work. This action also expands eligibility for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to an additional 300,000 young people. Although the President’s plan will not make beneficiaries eligible for U.S. citizenship or green cards, their ability to work and feed their families, while providing livelihoods for themselves, is an extraordinary move forward from the current immigration policies. It is estimated that this action will benefit some five million people and their families.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has consistently called for the protection of family unity in immigration policy and for comprehensive immigration reform. The 206th General Assembly (1994) adopted the “[Call to Presbyterians to Recommit to Work and Pray for a Just and Compassionate U.S. Immigration Policy](http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/_immigration/ga219resolutions.pdf).” Again, in 1999, 2004, 2010, 2012, and 2014 Presbyterians, through General Assembly actions and guided by theological and ethical principles, continued to call for a commitment from both Presbyterians and the government to work toward welcoming immigrants into communities and providing just laws that affect those who live and work in the United States.

**“We believe that the President's executive order is a step in the right direction,”** said the Reverend J. Herbert Nelson, PC(USA) Director for Public Witness, **“however it does not fully address our commitment to comprehensive immigration reform. We will continue to call for major reform of U.S. immigration policies that will provide a viable path to citizenship for all immigrants in the United States, including the 11 million undocumented neighbors currently living and working the shadows.”**

The President’s action provides a new foundation on which Congress must build. The Rev. Nelson continued by calling on Congress take the President’s lead by **“enacting meaningful, comprehensive reform that provides a pathway to citizenship, enacts the DREAM Act, demilitarizes the borders, and protects family unity. Today, we are not where God will eventually take us, but the President’s action moves us closer to our vision for one nation, under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all.”**

# *“Give me your tired, your poor,*

# *Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,*

# *The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.*

# *Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:*

# *I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”*

# *- Emma Lazarus, engraved on the Statue of Liberty Greeting Arriving Immigrants on Ellis Island*