



Episcopal Bishops of Texas Respond to Gov. Abbott's Action

Texans are not known for being fearful, but for their generous hospitality and big-hearted welcoming. In fact "Texas" means friendship. Texas is great precisely because of the great diversity of backgrounds represented in its people. Therefore, we are extremely concerned that Governor Greg Abbott has announced his intention to pull the state of Texas out of the U.S. refugee resettlement program.

Refugees will still lawfully and peaceably resettle in Texas, but the coordinating role that the state has played will be facilitated instead by a designated non-profit organization. We appreciate the Texas state government's work to cooperate throughout the transition to facilitate uninterrupted care for the refugees and trust the governor's word that this will go smoothly.

Refugee service providers will work closely with the state of Texas and local communities during the next 120 days to ensure that the transition does not put refugee families at risk of losing critical services. Already, refugees only receive short-term services to help them integrate and rebuild their lives. Local communities and organizations that assist refugees are committed to making sure that there are no gaps in services, but with just four months, this will still be a tremendous effort. These groups will continue their important work of welcoming and supporting refugees in their new homes.

Texas leads the nation in refugee resettlement, and a decision to pull out of the refugee resettlement program after nearly 40 years of peaceful participation is inconsistent with our proud history of welcoming refugees.

More than that, as Christians, we follow a Lord who calls us to care for those who suffer and to show our love for God by loving our neighbor. Our Scriptures teach us that in caring for "the least among us" we are caring for Jesus, and that "Perfect love casts out fear." We stand in the Abrahamic tradition that insists on generous hospitality toward strangers and sojourners.

While vigilance against terrorism is a real concern, Gov. Abbott's decision reacts fearfully and broadly against the wrong people, most of whom have given up everything to escape violence and terror and find freedom among us. This decision does not reflect the overwhelmingly welcoming spirit from faith and community partners across Texas. Every day we see Texans practicing their commitment to courage and hospitality by welcoming refugee families and helping them become Texans and Americans.

Refugees want nothing more than to work hard, send their children to school, and build new lives in safety. Refugees are taxpayers, consumers, business owners, and leaders in a broad range of industries across Texas.

We urge our state leaders to reject fear-based policy making that is not worthy of our proud state and abandons families who have already gone through so much. That's not who we are as Texans, and it does not reflect the very best Texas values. As Episcopal leaders we pledge to work toward a solution to the crisis that now faces Texas. Our prayers are with all those refugees who today are fearful and concerned for their future in Texas. We pray for our governor and for our elected leaders. We pray for the employees who will be tasked with very difficult decisions in the coming days. And, we pray that we may continue to uphold a spirit of peace, love and hospitality to all who come to Texas seeking a new home.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. C Andrew Doyle, Bishop Diocesan, Diocese of Texas

The Rt. Rev. Dena Harrison, Bishop Suffragan Diocese of Texas

The Rt. Rev. Jeff Fisher, Bishop Suffragan Diocese of Texas

The Rt. Rev. Michael Vono, Bishop Diocesan, Diocese of the Rio Grande

The Rt. Rev. Gary Lillibridge, Bishop Diocesan, West Texas

The Rt. Rev. David Reed, Bishop Coadjutor, Diocese of West Texas

The Rt. Rev. Scott Mayer, Bishop Diocesan, Diocese of Northwest Texas; Bishop Provisional, Diocese of Fort Worth

The Rt. Rev. Rayford High, Jr., Bishop Assisting, Diocese of Fort Worth

The Rt. Rev. Sam Hulsey, Bishop Assisting, Diocese of Fort Worth

The Rt. Rev. George Sumner, Bishop Diocesan, Diocese of Dallas