

## **Statement of the General Convent on the European Migration Crisis**

In recent months, Europe has faced an influx of migrants and refugees on a scale not experienced since World War II. Hundreds of thousands of people have been setting out from North-Africa and Western-Asia to seek safety and a better future in the countries of the European Union because life in their home countries is dominated by military conflict, pressure, occupation, threat of terror, persecution, and economic despondency. We must recognize and declare that the root causes for this unprecedented rate of migration are social, economic, political and civilization crises as well as the persecution of Christians, which is not often considered by EU leaders. Their solution requires common coordinated steps by international organizations and the states which are affected. A proper solution to the crisis can only be achieved if the causes of forced migration end and each person can live in peace and be given the chance to lead a better life in their country of origin. Therefore we call upon the governments who are responsible, the leaders of the European Union, and those who are in power to do everything possible to achieve this end. We call upon members of our churches to pray for this to the Triune God

We do so because we are convinced that the European Union is not only an association of economic interests, but a manifestation of spiritual, political and moral values, which are rooted in the Judeo-Christian culture and formed over many centuries, and which, according to the Scripture, our church thinks of as principles to be safeguarded. It is our common responsibility to nurture these values, endorse them and do our utmost so that they can play a vital role in shaping society and the character of our children and grandchildren. Therefore we ask the European Union and the responsible decision-makers to determine immigration and refugee policies beside the aspects of solidarity and active love, based solely on these European values rather than economic expediency or fear and prejudice. Our conviction is that if we fail to do this, immigrants will not respect our values either. We realize that it is the right of the European Union and individual countries to make their own decisions about reception and that they exercise their political authority and responsibility. Those who have been welcomed, however, are entitled to treatment according to the Christian values which we represent.

We remember the crises that affected, and still affects, the countries in the Carpathian Basin – their refugees, who because of the wars and conflicts in our region, were forced to come live among us; those for whom a safe life in their homeland is but a distant hope. Ignoring them is as serious a failure as any unilateral handling of the problem of migration. We, the Presidium of the General Convent, state that the primary task of the European Union is to care for its citizens and to ensure their protection. Protection goes hand in hand with the guarantee of basic human rights without discrimination everywhere and in every condition by eliminating double standards and discrimination.

The biblical commandment of solidarity is unconditional. “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18): this applies to everyone, because all human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 27). Jesus Christ regarded this commandment as the summary of God’s order and the law of life (Matthew 22:37–39) and teaches us that when we help those in need, such as strangers, the sick and prisoners, it mirrors our faith (Matthew 5:43, Matthew 24:31–46). Therefore, our church’s inescapable task is to help people in need: those fleeing from direct threat to life and those coming simply in the hope of a better life. We must help those who are practicing Christianity and those of other faiths; those who have no qualifications and those who are graduates; those are simply travelling through our country and those would like to settle here permanently. We affirm this with the teaching of the Bible, according to which the

primary direction of our Christian care and love is the circle of those whose care is entrusted to us: our closer and extended family, our smaller and larger communities, and our nation. We are reminded that we must guarantee the human dignity of refugees and migrants, as well as speedy and fair evaluation of their cases. Likewise, we encourage all people of good will, our responsible leaders and others, to do the same. We thank the aid organizations of our churches and those congregations and church members who have already taken part in this service, and we ask and encourage others to do so always.

„Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Balatonfüred, 11 November 2015

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