A Statement on Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope for Immigrants and Refugees
Submitted for the Alliance of Baptists Annual Meeting, April 2017
by Carol Blythe

We, the Alliance of Baptists, seek to join our efforts to those of other religious communities striving for the same sacred purposes and stand united in our resolve to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God in fellowship with the vulnerable, the outcast, the widow, the orphan, the immigrant, and all persons in need.

As Americans we are a nation of displaced persons. We oppose the recent executive order that drastically reduces refugee admissions; temporarily suspends the entire U.S. resettlement program; ends the resettlement of Syrian refugees; indefinitely bans individuals from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan from entering the United States; and includes preferences for religious minorities (which actually places them at greater risk in some countries).

As the world faces the largest displacement crisis in recorded history, the United States should, this year, resettle at minimum 85,000 refugees, the same number we welcomed last year. We speak out today against the notion that refugees are a threat to our safety - they are not. Refugees are ordinary people fleeing life-threatening adversity and they are the most heavily vetted individuals ever to travel to our country; to suggest otherwise simply does not represent the facts.

We also oppose recent orders to build a wall and deport our undocumented community members. These orders counter the values we as people of faith hold dear: to welcome the stranger and assist those most in need.

As Christians, we have a moral responsibility to speak out and advocate alongside all immigrants and refugees to stop these unjust and immoral executive orders. We hereby pledge to do everything in our power to restore and maintain hospitality and welcome to all people — regardless of where they are from, how they pray, or what language they speak. As we are reminded by Jesus in Matthew 25:35, "For I was a stranger and you welcomed me," we recognize the face of Christ in the migrant, the immigrant and the refugee.

In that spirit, we pledge the following:

1. We affirm the importance of welcoming policies and a robust refugee resettlement program that provides protection to the most vulnerable, regardless of their nationality or religion. We call on Members of Congress to affirm the importance of welcoming policies and robustly support and fund the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

2. We reaffirm our earlier statement "Just and Humane Immigration Reform" (2012) and commit anew today to join other faith leaders and communities in calling on the U.S. Congress and state legislatures to pass just, humane, equitable and comprehensive immigration reform.

3. We join our ecumenical partners through Church World Service in honoring refugees' and immigrants' journeys, educating our communities about the biblical call to welcome refugees and
immigrants, and invite Alliance of Baptists congregations and members to take action to publicly support refugee resettlement and the immigrant members of our communities.

4. We encourage our congregations and members to organize and facilitate multi-faith meetings with local, state and national policy makers to educate them about our united support and action in solidarity with refugees and immigrants, and urge them to serve as champions by supporting policies that affirm welcome, meeting with their immigrant and refugee constituents, and appropriating adequate resources to serve refugees.

5. We pledge to do everything in our power, as individuals and as faith communities, to protect the immigrants among us from hostile action by our government. Working alongside our immigrant neighbors, we will create sanctuary spaces and raise money for legal assistance.

7. We affirm the Ecumenical Declaration to Protect Welcome and Restore Hope organized by Church World Service in February 2017. In that regard, we join our ecumenical partners in Church World Service in promoting a future that is rooted not in a spirit of fear, but in a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. “Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action” (1 John 3:18). We join our partners through Church World Service and other multi-faith coalitions in protecting welcome and restoring hope.