

February 21, 2024 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

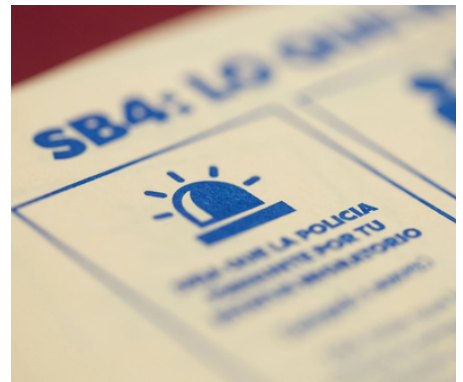
PC(USA) discourages certain gatherings in Texas

Texas' immigration bill targeting immigrants and asylum seekers could also put others at risk.

By Adrian White
for the Outlook

Presbyterians in Texas and nationally are seeking ways to respond to Texas Senate Bill 4 (SB4), which would make border crossing from Mexico without required documentation a state crime and not just a federal one. It is the latest legislative effort to criminalize immigration, and

the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) recently released an update discouraging PC(USA) organizations from holding national meetings in the state of Texas, except for those planned at Presbyterian sites such as schools and conference centers. Acting Stated Clerk Bronwen Boswell clarified that OGA is not advising a boycott but is asking national committees and other groups to “take care when meeting.”



“We’re asking that we refrain from national meetings where people would be coming from a variety of areas and backgrounds to be in Texas at this time,” Boswell said. She hopes the advisory is a way of “shedding light on the injustice that is being raised in Texas about all of this. For us, the story was able to raise once again the policy that we have as Presbyterians.”

The action reflects a policy passed at the 219th General Assembly in 2010, which indicates PC(USA) organizations should “Refrain from holding national meetings at hotels or non-PC(USA) conference centers in those states where travel by immigrant Presbyterians or Presbyterians of color or Hispanic ancestry might subject them to harassment due to legislation similar to Arizona Law SB 1070/HB2162” — the notorious 2010 legislation known as the “show me your papers law.” The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against that law in a 2012 decision declaring “states may not implement their own immigration laws,” according to *Ballotpedia*.

Ministers and advocates in the state of Texas are working to make sense of the SB4 and discerning how to respond. Ezequiel Herrera, for one, is glad the national church is drawing attention to the crisis facing the communities he serves. Herrera works as the Rio Grande Valley evangelist for Mission Presbytery, which includes Central Texas and much of the border region, and he pastors a new worshipping community called New Life Faith Community/Comunidad de Fe Nueva Vida. Continued on p. 3

OUR WORSHIP CHANNELS

CLICK ON THE LOGOS



Lenten Lunches



at FPC

Join each at noon Wednesday in Lent
for a simple meal
and discussion of the Book of James.

**WE WILL RETURN TO THE SANCTUARY
FOR WORSHIP THIS WEEK.**

PC(USA) discourages certain gatherings in Texas, continued

“It seems it will be very difficult to be a law-abiding citizen in Texas complying with SB4 and also being a disciple of Jesus Christ and living into Matthew 25,” he said. “How can you reconcile the two? How can you bear witness and extend a helping hand to a person in need if by doing so you might find yourself violating the law and potentially being charged with serious crimes?”

Texas SB4 is just one aspect of an increasingly complex set of federal and state policies facing immigrants, asylum seekers, and the people who serve them. There are even two SB4s in Texas right now, passed in different special legislative sessions in 2023. The second one, signed in December by Gov. Gregg Abbott, also deals with state immigration law, and it increases the “minimum sentence from two years to 10 years for people convicted of smuggling immigrants or operating a stash house,” according to a story in the *Texas Tribune*.

The OGA advisory about SB4 in Texas comes at a time when many states are passing laws that criminalize people based on characteristics including gender expression and pregnancy status. Valerie Young, synod executive and stated clerk for the Synod of the South Atlantic, which includes Florida, hopes to not see additional OGA policies discouraging travel to these states. In a state where immigration and the rights of transgender people are both contentious legislative issues, Young has other thoughts about possible responses.

“Personally, I would rather the denomination lean into having meetings in these places and taking that opportunity to have our voices heard about the policies and treatment of people of all kinds,” she said. “There is much work to be done in advocating for humane policies of all kinds. Not meeting people where they are and joining in that important work means that we miss an opportunity to speak love and truth in the world.”

Boswell said OGA won’t stop at this advisory. Her office has meetings set with presbytery and synod leaders in Texas to learn more about how they are responding to SB4 and other legislation that targets immigrants, as well as what support they need from the national church, Boswell said. She added: “If a Texas presbytery said, ‘We’re having a big protest,’ we’d say, ‘We need to be there with you.’”



Rev. Adrian White is a writer, Texan and life-long Presbyterian living and serving in Nashville, Tennessee. They earned their M.Div at Vanderbilt Divinity School and serve on the national board of directors for More Light Presbyterians.



“When you get to be my age, your friends start dropping like flies— and no one suspects you.”

Better Together Bible Study

Monday, February 26, 2024

Finley Memorial Presbyterian Church

1:00-2:00 p.m.

Join John Tindall in exploring
the great stories and themes
of the Bible

This week's topic:
Exodus—
wandering through the wilderness...

calvin and hobbes



IT'S UNIQUE DESIGN SENDS A BLINDING SPRAY OF SNOW ON ITS PASSENGERS AT THE SLIGHTEST BUMP. NOTE, TOO, THE LACK OF ANY STEERING MECHANISM.



This Week in History.



After 14 years as an independent republic, **Vermont** is admitted to the Union as the fourteenth State.

February 18, 1791



Mikhail I is unanimously elected Tsar by a Russian national assembly, beginning the Romanov dynasty, which would rule until 1917.

February 21, 1613



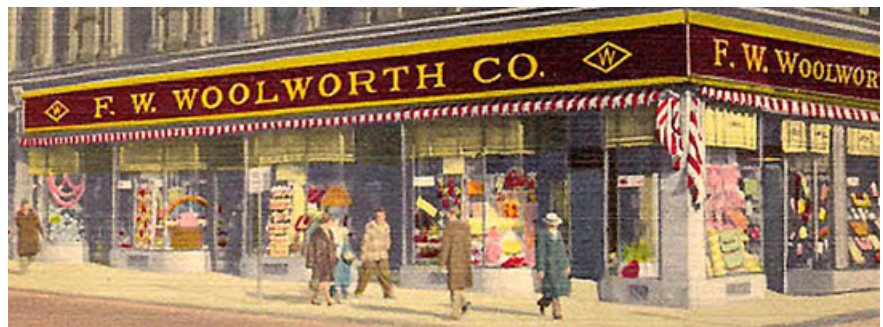
Thomas Edison patents the phonograph, which uses grooved wax cylinders to record sound.

February 19, 1878



Gioachino Rossini's opera **The Barber of Seville** premieres at the Teatro Argentina in Rome.

February 20, 1816



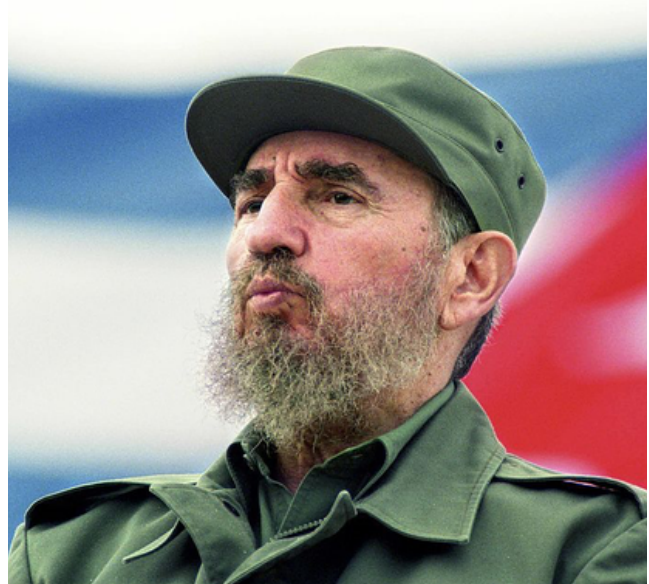
Frank Woolworth opens his first five-and-dime store in Utica, NY.

February 22, 1879



The **Federal Radio Commission** is created by an act of Congress to regulate radio frequencies in the United States. It would later become later the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

February 23, 1927



Fidel Castro retires as the President of Cuba and the Council of Ministers after 32 years. He remains as head of the Communist Party for another three years.

FEBRUARY 24, 2008