Oversight and immigration issues

The Book of Order embraces diversity and encourages all to participate in ordered ministry regardless of human condition. It is important, however, to discuss the immigration status of a person under care. As partners in the covenant, the individual under care, the session and the presbytery hold a responsibility to one another to know a non-resident inquirer or candidate’s immigration status and resulting ability to work in the United States. Neglecting to consider this important fact can place the non-resident individual at risk.

Persons who work or accept “scholarships” for activity that looks like work without proper authorization are at risk of losing their immigration status and harming their ability to gain a more permanent immigration status in the future. It is inquirers or candidates, as the partner in the covenant most likely to know their own immigration status, who are responsible for understanding the limitations they have under their immigration status.

While the responsibility lies with the inquirer or candidate, immigration law is confusing and often non-residents do not understand all of the limitations of their immigration status. For this reason, the denomination provides the Office of Immigration Issues in Mid Council Ministries of the Office of the General Assembly to give advice and counsel to presbyteries and congregations with members who have immigration issues. Before working for a church community or engaging in any activity that looks like work for a church community, non-resident inquirers or candidates should contact the Office of Immigration Issues to ensure that their legal immigration status allows this kind of work.