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Sanctuary Toolkit

Developed for Unitarian Universalist congregations
considering offering physical sanctuary

Sponsored by:



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Resistance and Solidarity: Sanctuary Congregations in an Era of Mass Deportation

At this extraordinary time in our nation's history, we are called to affirm our profound commitment to the fundamental principles of justice, equity and compassion, to truth and the core values of American society. In the face of looming threats to immigrants, Muslims, people of color, and the LGBTQ community and the rise of hate speech, harassment and hate crimes, we affirm our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We will oppose any and all unjust government actions to deport, register, discriminate, or despoil. As people of conscience, we declare our commitment to translate our values into action as we stand on the side of love with the most vulnerable among us.

-- Declaration of Conscience, joint statement of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, January 2017

Introduction

For decades, immigration has been a contentious issue in the United States. During the U.S. presidential campaign of 2016, the political discourse changed in troubling ways. In the heated language used by Donald Trump, the focus shifted from arguments about *immigration reform* to attacks on *immigrants themselves*. Whether speaking of Muslim refugees from Syria or Mexican migrants seeking a better life, campaign rhetoric generated fearful images of lawlessness caused by these "others" who do not belong.

We now face four years of a Trump administration as President Trump moves to deliver on what he promised during his campaign: to further militarize our borders; restrict or eliminate immigration by Muslims; deport 11 million undocumented people, regardless of their age, family situation, or community roots; and punish cities or states that refuse to cooperate with immigration enforcement. And while much of the political dialogue around immigration has focused on residency and citizenship status, in fact the oppressive political climate also influences the rise of Islamophobia, inflicts ever harsher realities on lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and queer identified (LGBTQ) persons, and reflects the broader trends towards the criminalization of people of color in the United States.

Faith communities are mobilizing, and many Unitarian Universalists are among them. In the face of practices that diminish other human beings, we assert the equal worth and dignity of all. As hate crimes increase, we will resist racism and bigotry in all their forms and do what we can to help those most at risk. As immigration policies and the wider system of enforcement tear families apart, we will do what we can to stop them, answering the higher call of love for our neighbors.

We claim the language of “sanctuary” as the way we create safe systems for those under threat because of their status, religion, race or identity. This toolkit was written as a roadmap for Unitarian Universalist congregations who want to offer one form of sanctuary, which is physical shelter for individuals under immediate threat of deportation. The toolkit will touch on other ways to provide sanctuary, such as advocating for sanctuary city policies or investing in community protection networks, and readers are encouraged to visit uua.org/declaration to learn more about those avenues of religious witness and action.

This toolkit was originally created by congregations and coalitions that make up the Sanctuary Movement. It was revised and updated by the Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice (UUCSJ) and UU Refugee and Immigrant Services and Education (UURISE). We hope it will inspire and support you and your community to resist bias and injustice, protect those most at risk, and live out of our core religious values.

What is Sanctuary?

Sanctuary is a way to be in solidarity with the undocumented community by creating safe spaces for the prophetic voices of immigrant leaders to be lifted up as we together confront unjust laws. Through the Sanctuary Movement, faith communities can powerfully enact and embody their commitment to justice. A church that declares itself a Sanctuary congregation is one willing to engage on a spectrum of solidarity actions including welcoming undocumented people, advocating to help stop deportations, assisting with legal clinics, and physically sheltering an immigrant in danger of immediate deportation.

Sanctuary is one way for faith communities to resist destructive and racially charged policies. Grounded in our core religious truths that celebrate diversity, advocate for racial justice, and honor the dignity of each person, we help create the world we envision.

PRAYER FOR TRAVELERS, BY REV. ANGELA HERRERA

(First UU Church Albuquerque, NM)

This is a prayer for all the travelers.
For the ones who start out in beauty,
who fall from grace,
who step gingerly,
looking for the way back.
And for those who are born into the margins,
who travel from one liminal space to
another,
crossing boundaries in search of center.
This is a prayer for the ones whose births
are a passing from darkness to darkness,
who all their lives are drawn toward the light,
and keep moving,
and for those whose journeys
are a winding road that begins
and ends in the same place,
though only when the journey is completed
do they finally know where they are.

For all the travelers, young and old,
aching and joyful,
weary and full of life;
the ones who are here, and the ones who
are not here;
the ones who are like you (and they're all
like you)
and the ones who are different (for in some
ways, we each travel alone).

This is a prayer for traveling mercies,
And sure-footedness,
for clear vision,
for bread
for your body and spirit,
for water,
for your safe arrival
and for everyone you see along the way.

A Short History of Sanctuary

The original concept of religious spaces as sanctuary for refugees is rooted in Judaism. The ancient Hebrew people allowed temples and even whole cities to declare themselves places of refuge for persons accused of a crime which they may not have committed. This practice allowed those wrongfully accused to escape swift and harsh retribution until they could receive a fair trial. In the late Roman Empire, fugitives sometimes found refuge in Christian churches. Later, during the medieval period, the English common law permitted an accused felon to seek sanctuary in a church, and then choose either to submit to trial or to confess and leave the country.

In the United States, the first practical case of anything like sanctuary occurred in the years before the Civil War, when slaves fleeing through the Underground Railroad found safety along the way in churches and private homes throughout the country. Another example occurred during the Vietnam War, when some churches opened their doors to young men resisting the draft. This gave temporary refuge to the resistor, and allowed the congregations to amplify their religious message against war.

In the 1980s, refugees from military oppression and civil wars in Central America began to flee to the United States. The U.S. government did not recognize them as political refugees, even though many were threatened by death squads in their home countries. The Sanctuary Movement was born in response, first established at the Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, AZ. At its strongest, the movement included over 500 congregations that collaborated to move refugees through the United States to safe houses and safe congregations.

The Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s reminded the United States government that it was not following its own asylum and refugee laws for the refugees of Central America. Some clergy members in Arizona and elsewhere were charged with felonies for their involvement in offering Sanctuary. The movement declared victory when the U.S. government awarded refugee status and legal asylum to those fleeing violence in Central America.

Several decades later, beginning in 2007, the New Sanctuary Movement took shape among coalitions of congregations in cities throughout the country. As immigration raids in neighborhoods and work places escalated in a climate of political paralysis for immigration reform, these congregations opened their doors to provide refuge to those facing deportation.

The New Sanctuary Movement helped win prosecutorial discretion through the Morton memo in 2011¹ and President Obama's Executive Actions on Immigration in 2014,² along with local and state ordinances restricting police collaboration with immigration enforcement. Together, these policies helped stop thousands of deportations through case-by-case advocacy. However, under the administration of President Trump, the future of these policies is uncertain; they may be rolled back, following the President's early executive orders to radically increase the number of deportations for current undocumented immigrants and prevent further entry for the tens of thousands of refugees fleeing violence in their own countries.

UU involvement in sanctuary

The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) were both deeply involved in supporting the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s. In 1980, 1984 and 1985, the UUA General Assembly passed resolutions supporting sanctuary and refugee rights, and numerous Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations offered or supported Sanctuary. The UUA Board of Trustees honored congregations providing sanctuary and created a fund to support individuals seeking sanctuary and churches that were providing it. The UUSC acted within coalitions to connect those seeking sanctuary with congregations willing to offer it and led numerous advocacy initiatives to mobilize Unitarian Universalists to press Congress for change. The UUSC also sponsored Congressional delegations to Central America, so those lawmakers could witness the political situations in El Salvador and Guatemala first hand.

In May 2007, the UUA became the first national religious denomination to endorse the New Sanctuary Movement, grounding this support in UU history with the original Sanctuary Movement, our sources and principles, and prior statements by the UUA General Assembly regarding immigration. These statements strongly condemn the current immigration system, support immigration reform, and encourage support for immigrants, regardless of immigration status. In 2013, the General Assembly passed a Statement of Conscience titled "Immigration as a Moral Issue."³ In January 2017, the UUA and UUSC together issued a new Declaration of Conscience denouncing the first Executive Orders from the Trump administration and calling on our faith communities to translate our values into active resistance.⁴

¹ June 2011 memorandum from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Director John Morton: <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/secure-communities/pdf/prosecutorial-discretion-memo.pdf>

² 2014 Executive Actions on Immigration resource page: <http://www.uscis.gov/immigrationaction>

³ Immigration as a Moral Issue – Statement of Conscience:
<http://www.uua.org/statements/immigration-moral-issue>

⁴ Sign the Declaration of Conscience at <http://www.uua.org/declaration>

[UURISE](#) has been an active part of the New Sanctuary Movement since its inception in 2007. It provides consultations, support and technical assistance to UU and other liberal religious congregations in the discernment and provision of sanctuary. The [UU College of Social Justice](#) offers immersion learning programs at the Arizona/Mexico border, a wide array of education and action resources, and justice training programs focused on immigration as well as other issues.

Sanctuary and resistance in the era of President Trump

In the United States, immigration is addressed and controlled at the federal level. Though state and local governments can influence the American immigration system through enforcement and cooperation, it is federal leaders whose decisions have the widest impact in the system. With the inauguration of Donald Trump as President in January 2017, we are entering uncharted political territory. In addition to the President himself, senior administration leaders, including Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly and Attorney General Jeff Sessions, have been vocal in their intent to reverse many Obama era policies and step-up a hardline approach to immigration enforcement.

The first weeks of the Trump administration set in motion some ominous changes. They offer a clear indication of the administration's intention to:

- Hold all undocumented migrants in detention until they can be deported (including women, children, and men convicted of no crimes);
- Build "an impenetrable physical wall on the southern border"; since a border wall already exists along much of this border, this implies further militarization;
- Pressure local and state police to enforce federal immigration actions;
- Punish institutions, cities, and states that declare forms of sanctuary by withholding federal funds;
- Treat Muslims and immigrants from Muslim countries with specific suspicion and further restrict their ability to enter the country;
- Vastly expand the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents;
- Suspend visas for immigrants from designated countries with Muslim majorities, regardless of refugee status under international law; and
- Punish employers who hire undocumented immigrants.

Throughout his campaign, Trump used language declaring entire populations of people by race, religion and national origin to be criminal or suspect. The immediate uptick in hate speech and assaults around the country in the wake of Trump's election demonstrates the ways such language emboldens advocates of white supremacy and other hate groups.

As people of faith, we are called to accompany our community members, congregants and neighbors facing deportation. Offering physical sanctuary, or helping another group to offer sanctuary, is one way to help individuals who face this threat.

An offer of physical sanctuary is a way to fight individual cases, advocate to stop deportations, and keep families together. It is a powerful witness to justice and a concrete way in which to live out our faith. But it is a decision that requires thorough preparation and a clear discernment process by the host congregation, in close collaboration with local migrant rights organizations. It also requires great dedication on the part of any person entering as a sanctuary guest, since for them the experience is tantamount to house arrest: they cannot leave the campus of the church for any reason until their immigration case has been decided without risking arrest.

The Sanctuary Movement has grown and flourished because of the courageous leadership and fierce drive of the undocumented people who have put themselves and their freedom on the line. Their voices, wishes, opinions and leadership should be prioritized and respected throughout the process. Through providing or supporting sanctuary, we are doing this important work *with* them, not *for* them.

Again, the offer of physical sanctuary is just one form of action toward immigration justice: there are many other ways for your congregation to enact our religious values and stand in solidarity with migrants! If your community is unable to offer physical sanctuary, you can still become a support congregation to another church, and engage in vigorous advocacy for immigration justice.

Specific goals of the current Sanctuary Movement include the following:

- Accompany our community members, congregants and neighbors facing deportation through joining the Sanctuary Movement and working to stop deportations case-by-case, and by advocating to stop unjust deportation policies;

- Amplify the moral imperative to stop deportations by lifting up the stories of sanctuary cases and ensuring the prophetic witness of the immigrant taking sanctuary is heard at the national level;

- Defend administrative policies such as prosecutorial discretion so that we can still win stays of deportation case by case and keep sacred spaces and schools protected under the Sensitive Locations guidelines;

- Work alongside undocumented students to defend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival program (DACA)

- Support local work to defend Sanctuary cities or local detainer policies and push back against unjust policies that enlist local police to do immigration enforcement such as the Secure Communities (S-Comm) or 287g in the jails.

- Participate and help create protection networks to provide know your rights education, sanctuary space, legal assistance, housing assistance and bail support funds;
- Stop extension and further militarization of the border wall and any attempt to increase criminalization or mandatory sentencing for immigrants;
- Defend asylum seekers by pushing back against expedited removal and helping provide critical resources such as legal assistance so they can defend and win their case.

Step-by-Step Guide To Sanctuary

Before beginning your path to offering sanctuary, it is important to read this entire toolkit first. It is organized around the process of deciding to offer sanctuary, followed by key resources and questions. Getting familiar with those resources and questions will help you guide your congregation down the path towards the right decision for you in your context.

“COME, COME” – LESLIE TAKAHASHI MORRIS, ADAPTED FROM RUMI

From *Voices from the Margins*, edited by Jacqui James and Mark Morrison-Reed

Come, come, whoever you are
Come with your hurts, your imperfections,
your places that feel raw and exposed.
Come, come, whoever you are
Come with your strengths that the world shudders to hold
come with your wild imaginings of a better world,
come with your hopes that it seems no one wants to hear.
Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving we will make a place for you,
we will build a home together.
Ours is no caravan of despair.
We walk together; Come, yet again come.

I. Who Are We?

It is important for your community to begin where you are. Your church’s *physical* reality will impact what you can do: are you a suburban, urban, or rural church? What is the state and setup of your facilities? Are you easy to reach with public transportation? Is your surrounding community diverse racially, economically, and/or culturally?

Your path forward will also be impacted by where most church members are located *culturally*, within the complicated tangles of race, class, privilege, and power, and how willing they are to have honest conversations about these issues. And finally, your work will be influenced by where social justice is typically located within the life of your congregation. Are social change issues regularly lifted up in worship and religious education, or more commonly done within committees

or task forces? Is there a history of collective engagement and an institutional framework, or is it left up to individuals to organize?

Remember that Sanctuary is just one possible option on a wide spectrum of useful and powerful actions. Here are some examples of actions to advance sanctuary in other ways:

- Include immigration justice as a theme in worship and religious education
- Education within the congregation
- Education beyond the congregation (such as public forums)
- Fundraising for justice organizations or causes
- Direct service (such as tutoring at a school, transporting migrants to their legal aid appointments, being a language practice buddy)
- Active involvement with the UUA, UUSC, UURISE, UUCSJ, or a State Action Network⁵
- Advocacy (petitions, showing up at the legislature, meeting with the mayor)
- Active involvement in local interracial, immigrant rights, and/or interfaith coalitions
- Building or deepening a relationship with a community organizing or advocacy group that represents and is led by members of a marginalized group in your area
- Divesting church endowment funds from private corporations whose actions are contrary to your values
- Public witness (vigils, marches, hanging Black Lives Matter banners)
- Protest and demonstrations, showing up with the church banner
- Direct civil disobedience (such as publically serving as a sanctuary church)
- Nonviolent disruption (such as participating in rapid response networks to witness to or block an immigration enforcement raid)

What is your current social justice structure? If your congregation has little or no recent history of social justice involvement, start by exploring the tools and resources available from the UUA. These will help you start and support a social justice program, and lay the groundwork for further action steps.⁶

If your congregation already has a program for social justice but does not yet have a group working on immigration issues, find out what steps you need to pursue in order to initiate a new group.

⁵ Find a listing of all UU state action networks at <http://www.cuusan.org>

⁶ See more tools and tips at <http://www.uua.org/action>

II. Laying the Groundwork

Create powerful, accountable partnerships

No effective action for justice happens in isolation; each victory has been won by many people working together toward their common goal. The decision to offer sanctuary requires your congregation to be in partnership with immigrant rights groups and with other faith communities. **If you do not already have these connections established, now is the time to begin.**

Investigate which other nearby religious communities have an active involvement with immigration justice. Begin with outreach to other UU congregations, but make sure to also check in with Jewish and Muslim communities as well as Christian churches; remember that many of these include large populations of immigrants. The New Sanctuary Movement has included representatives from nearly every faith tradition.

If possible (and if you haven't already), get connected to an interfaith network, such as a local affiliate of People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO), the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) or the Gamaliel network. These are examples of congregationally-based community organizations (CBCOs), dedicated to bringing faith communities together for social justice, and have often been key supporters of immigration justice action.

Research which immigrant populations are largest in your metro area, and what immigrant-led groups are actively working for their rights. Reach out to the groups in your area to find out what immediate campaigns they're engaged with and what kind of help they need from religious communities. It is especially important to find out whether these local groups are looking for faith communities to offer Sanctuary. If they are not, then your solidarity may take a different form.

Remember to follow the leadership of the people most directly affected! Immigrants often organize and advocate for their own communities, so it's important that your congregation know and respect this groundwork and acknowledge that those most affected by injustice are the experts on their own needs.

Here is a list of national organizations with which the UUA, UUSC and UUCSJ have collaborated. You are encouraged to explore their work, and many of them will have local chapters in your city:

Immigrant-Led

[Mijente](#)

[#Not1More Deportation](#)

[Cosecha](#)

[United We Dream](#)

[National Day Labor Organizing Network](#)

[Fair Immigration Reform Movement](#)

[Sanctuary Not Deportation](#)

Muslim Solidarity

[MPower Change](#)

[Muslims for Social Justice](#)

[CAIR](#)

[Shoulder to Shoulder](#)

Faith-Based

[PICO Network](#)

[We Say Enough](#)

[Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#)

[The New Sanctuary Movement](#)

Racial Justice

[Black Lives Matter](#)

[Showing Up for Racial Justice](#)

Form an Immigration Justice Leadership Team

Community is the ground in which we're all rooted, and our work for justice needs to be grounded there, too. Begin by pulling together a faithful core team dedicated to exploring how your church might answer the call for immigration justice in the era of Trump. This team should be willing to meet frequently, perhaps every two weeks at least in the beginning. If you are able to include at least one member of your governing Board, this will help keep communication channels clear and open.

This team will have a variety of responsibilities, and will lead the discernment process. Besides educating themselves on the issues, logistics, and legalities, they will need to determine how to respond to opposition to the idea of sanctuary, and how to address anti-immigrant feelings or other challenging statements by those inside and outside the congregation. The team will consult with your religious professionals and governing Board on the decision-making process, including how many members should engage before a vote, and what percent of the congregation must vote in favor of taking action. Because it has the potential to be a long term commitment, it can be helpful to approve offering sanctuary by a super-majority vote.

COVENANT: Many teams begin with a covenant for how they will work together, particularly because as a group member you'll be exploring challenging issues. Consider basic things on

which you can agree, such as listening respectfully, or making time for all perspectives to be heard.

GROUNDING PRACTICES: Establish practices that will keep you grounded in our faith and values, and will sustain you when things get difficult. Practices might include opening and closing your meetings with meditative words or prayer; starting with a brief personal check-in; using song or poetry. Choose practices that remind you and your team of the spiritual grounding for your justice commitments. You will find links for readings and other resources in our Appendices.

SCHEDULE: Create a plan and schedule for your team based on the structures and processes your congregation uses for social justice engagement and decision-making. Remember that reaching agreement on a big decision like Sanctuary can take many months.

LEADERSHIP: If you have a minister, director of religious education, or social justice coordinator, engage them early and often. Invite them to meetings, keep them updated, and invite them to discuss their perspectives on the issues. You will need the leadership and confidence of these religious professionals to help you bring the information and discernment to the congregation as a whole.

CONTINUAL EDUCATION: As the Leadership Team, make a commitment to continue your own education about immigration justice issues. This will also help you present the books, films and other tools that will help educate the congregation.

Use a racial justice lens

Though Unitarian Universalism has a long history of commitment to racial equality, our heritage also includes the history of white privilege. Much of the “flavor” of our worship services, language, music and current demographics reflect this history, and many of our most honored religious ancestors were highly educated and privileged white people. No matter how dearly we hold the principles of racial justice and multiculturalism, each of us has been shaped by the ways white privilege has been denied to us or handed on to us, based on our accidents of birth.

This reality inevitably impacts our engagement with the immigration justice movement, in which local and national initiatives are often led by immigrants themselves. If your congregation has not yet had frank conversations about racial justice and white privilege, begin by building this lens into your work for immigration justice. You can do this through study circles, workshops, and

involvement with your local chapter of racial justice advocacy groups such as Black Lives Matter or Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ).⁷

Remember that even as our congregations are mobilizing in support of migrants, many Black Americans, First Nations people, and other people of color remain deeply vulnerable to racist language and actions. As we explore the concept of offering literal physical Sanctuary, we also must stay alert to those within and outside our congregations whose experience makes them wonder what sanctuary they might find from the ongoing violence of racism.

Assess your capacity

Once you have connected with local partners, created a Leadership Team, and laid the initial groundwork outlined above, you are ready to lead your congregation into a discernment process about whether to become a sanctuary congregation. It could take your congregation weeks or even several months to move through the steps outlined in this section, depending on how actively educated and involved your church has already been with immigration justice. Many important actions *other than* a declaration of Sanctuary can be taken during the course of the process (see page 11).

Before you begin the meetings and conversations for discernment with the whole congregation, review the capacity of your Leadership Team, your congregational volunteers, and your physical and financial resources. Stay connected with your coalition partners outside of the congregation (immigrant rights groups and other religious communities), and be sure you know both what they need, and what they can offer to this effort. Sanctuary is a form of accompaniment and involves many factors besides housing and feeding those in sanctuary, including spending time together, arranging for visitors, assisting with childcare, and advocating for the attainment of legal status where possible.

Location

Review your congregation's location, as outlined under "Who Are We?" above. As a group, list out and discuss the elements within your own setting that mediate toward or away from the possibility of becoming a sanctuary congregation.

For instance, things that would end up in the "plus" column might be your physical location in an accessible part of town, existing relationships with immigrant rights groups, current and past congregational involvement on these issues, active members or friends of the church who are

⁷ Find a local SURJ chapter at <http://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/>

undocumented, and engagement on the part of your members in multicultural competence and racial justice.

Things that would end up on the “minus” column might be the absence of these elements. In addition, you would list in this column such things as an episode of schism or division around political issues in your congregation’s past; your knowledge of members who strongly object to offering sanctuary; and challenges such as a pending move, deep financial distress, or a ministerial transition that will take a lot of your congregation’s energy and attention.

Cross-cultural awareness and competence

Unless your congregation includes a large number of immigrants, your decision to offer sanctuary will be a cross-cultural experience. By definition, your guest will be of foreign origin. In addition, they may be different from the majority of your congregation’s members in culture, language, religion, customs, food preferences, and in a host of other ways.

Like all cross-cultural encounters, there will be challenges. In particular, those of us who are white are challenged to become ever more aware of the norms and consequences of racial privilege, and the cultural assumptions to which these often lead. As Unitarian Universalists, we explicitly honor the rich diversity of the human family and affirm the equal worth and dignity of all people. Your Leadership Team might wish to study together some of the recent books, study guides, and videos designed to help Americans better understand the ways racism continues to function through our institutions, laws and culture. In turn, this will help you be more awake to and sensitive about the racial and cultural differences your group will encounter in coalition work and in the offer of sanctuary.

Assess the logistics of offering sanctuary

Assess your logistics needs in the context of your congregation’s physical, human, and financial resources. **Keep in mind that hosting someone in sanctuary could last for a year or more.** This inventory is not meant to be a judgment of your congregation’s commitment to justice, but a clear and honest assessment of its strengths and challenges in considering becoming a sanctuary. Engaging in this inventory within your Leadership Team will help you anticipate and find answers to the same issues congregation members will be thinking of once you invite them into the discernment process.

Review your physical space

DEDICATED SPACE: What private space can be dedicated solely to the use of your guest or guests? Keep in mind that this must be for all times of day and night and all days of the week, including Sundays. Consider as well:

- Will beds fit easily into the space?
- Is there easy access to a nearby bathroom, including a shower?
- Is there closet or wardrobe?
- Is there regular access to a kitchen? If not, can you set up a fridge, microwave, stovetop or hot plate, food storage area, and a sink?
- Is there consistent access to the internet? This is *essential*, since it will be your guest's only way to communicate with family and friends.
- Can a TV and DVD player be set up in the space?

If any of the things named above are lacking, your group will want to research the feasibility and cost of making physical changes, such as putting in a shower. As part of this assessment, you might find out whether any parishioners are home contractors, or whether partners have members willing to contribute pro bono labor. Crowdsourcing or crowdfunding is a good way to share the costs of such capital improvements, in which many people make small donations to an online fundraising campaign.⁸ This is also a good time to make sure there is adequate signage for emergency exits and regarding rules and areas for smoking; that fire extinguishers are accessible and in working order; and that first aid kits are up to date.

IMPACT ON RENTALS: What might be the impact of providing sanctuary on rentals or other groups using your facility? Be sure you have a complete understanding of all that goes on in your church space, so that you can anticipate the impact on others. For example, if a childcare center rents space in your building, they may have strict rules or licensing regulations they must follow regarding having non-affiliated adults on the premises during childcare hours.

Other groups to consider are Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous groups or other community meetings, other faith communities worshipping in your space, and outside rentals of your sanctuary for weddings or other events.

IMPACT ON CONGREGATIONAL USE: As you consider the room or rooms that would be dedicated to hosting a person in Sanctuary, review all of the other common ways your building is used. Make a list of events or uses that could be impacted (or could impact your guest) such as use of your primary sanctuary (for worship, choir practice, weddings, funerals, bar/bat mitzvahs)

⁸ UURISE can help set up a Faithify or other crowdfunding campaign for this.

and of your classrooms and other spaces, such as for evening classes or gatherings, Coming of Age or Our Whole Lives gatherings, or other youth group meetings and retreats.

Identify liaison roles

Be sure you have someone who will keep your minister and Board regularly informed, and at least one member who is also active in the wider immigration justice coalition in your area. Ask that each member of your group be familiar with this Tool Kit before you begin your work.

III. Discernment: Are You Called to Offer Sanctuary?

The decision to offer sanctuary is a decision to publicly resist current immigration law. It is a powerful and courageous step, especially in an anti-immigrant political climate. Therefore, you must find ways to engage your entire congregation in the discernment process. Your ultimate decision need not be reached by consensus, but all members must feel that their voices and concerns have been heard through a number of public forums.

If you have carefully done the groundwork and exploration, offered opportunities for education on immigration issues, and established connections with immigrant rights groups and other interested faith communities, you are ready to involve your congregation in discernment toward making a decision about offering sanctuary.

You have likely been in contact with your minister and Board of Trustees or Parish Committee throughout the process, so be sure they are informed about all stages of educational meetings, discernment conversations, and decision-making so that this can be conveyed to the congregation. Most congregations require decisions of this nature to be made at an all-congregation meeting convened according to your by-laws. Be sure that such a meeting is scheduled as part of the arc of discernment, so that people know from the start when the decision is to be made.

1. Offer multiple ways to explore the issue and support the discernment process. These should include:

- At least one worship service in which your minister's sermon presents the challenges and opportunities of Sanctuary within the context of our religious values and commitments;
- Information on your church website, in the newsletter, and in the order of service and in the lobby and office about the coming informational meetings and the discernment process;
- Continuing educational opportunities: film screenings, book discussion groups, covenant circles focused on related topics;
- Guest speakers, at worship or in forums, if possible including clergy or lay leaders from other congregations that have declared sanctuary; people who have been in sanctuary; and members of your local immigration rights organization. Remember that some of these speakers might be available to you via videochat.

2. Set up a schedule for small group or "cottage" meetings. These are not decision-making meetings, but a way for the Leadership Team to share information and gather feedback. They will

be especially valuable in helping you understand where the deepest concerns or reservations lie, and what further research you may need to do in order to respond to those concerns.

Choose a variety of times, days of the week, and locations in order to maximize participation. Ideally, all of the gatherings will be scheduled within a short window of time (2-3 weeks), which makes it easier to keep them in people's awareness. Be sure you use all methods of communication available to publicize these meetings.

Each small group gathering should include no more than 15-25 people, so be sure to schedule enough of them to allow all members a chance to participate if they choose. Each small group meeting should have a facilitator from the Leadership Team who is thoroughly familiar with the issues and who will:

- Open the meeting with a chalice lighting, some moments of centering silence, and a reading that helps frame the meeting as one grounded in our faith;
- Be sure that all participants have a chance to speak and ask questions;
- Be prepared to respond accurately and patiently to those who may be strongly opposed; and
- Have copies of your FAQ information sheet.

Each small-group meeting should have at least one person from the Leadership Team who will take notes. It is helpful to have people who attend these meetings sign in with their email addresses, so you can update them or answer questions later. You might consider having members of your Leadership Team available via phone and email for any concerned members who are homebound or otherwise unable to physically attend a meeting.

3. Assess the feedback you have gained from the meetings. Questions and issues that arose which have not already been addressed by your team should be investigated; you can reach out to your local coalition and/or to UURISE for additional research, discussion, and discernment. Follow up with the individuals or all attendees via email with decisions and answers.

4. If you are unsure of whether or not your congregation is near agreement, hold a “town hall” meeting. This is a chance for the entire congregation to gather and to hear one another's hopes and concerns around Sanctuary, but **without any vote being taken**. It is an opportunity for any last concerns to be fully aired; and is best scheduled no more than one week before your decision-making meeting.

At the town hall meeting, it may be helpful if you:

- Begin with a summary of what you heard at the cottage meetings;
- Provide your most up-to-date frequently asked questions (FAQs), highlighting any new information;
- Updates on the political climate, especially if the immigrant community in your area has been directly impacted by new raids; and

- Updates from your local sanctuary coalition, sister congregations, or interfaith organization.

At the conclusion of your town hall meeting, you may wish to take a straw poll in order to determine whether or not there is enough agreement to proceed with your congregational vote the following week. The vote can be simply yes/no, or you can try to gauge sentiment through ranking, such as asking people to place themselves on a scale according to how they're feeling about the sanctuary decision. For example:

5 = Strong Yes, 4 = Yes, 3 = Neutral/It's fine, 2 = No, would prefer not, 1 = Strong NO

If there is no clear consensus, a very weak consensus, or some very strong opposition from your members, then your leadership team may decide to consider changing your congregational meeting to include only a resolution to support sanctuary. You can always decide to revisit the question of providing physical sanctuary at a later date.

5. If you're confident there is a significant amount of consensus, convene your congregational meeting as originally scheduled. Be sure that all elements of your process are in accord with your standard processes or bylaws. This generally requires that you post the proposed resolution on which you are requesting a vote, via a variety of formats (in the lobby, website, newsletter, etc.). Be sure you include whether or not this will be a yes/no vote, or if amendments will be allowed. At your congregational meeting:

- Make sure the resolution as it has been posted in advance is available in hard copy
- Begin with a summary of what you heard at the meetings, any additions to your FAQs, updates on the political climate and/or from your partner organizations
- Remind people that the vote will be up/down or that amendments/modifications will be allowed.

6. If your resolution to declare Sanctuary passes:

- Notify the sanctuary coalition, UURISE, and any other partners including , including the [National Sanctuary Movement](#)
- Email socialjustice@uua.org to have your congregation added to online list of Unitarian Universalist sanctuary congregations;
- Consider holding a press conference to announce your support of sanctuary (see the Appendix for sample press releases); and
- Organize your schedule and volunteer team for next steps.

IV. Next Steps

Danos un corazon grande para amar

Danos un corazon fuerte para luchar.

Pueblos nuevos, creadores de la historia, constructores de nueva humanidad.

Pueblos nuevos que viven la existencia como riesgo de un largo caminar.

Give us a heart large enough to love,

Give us a heart strong enough to struggle.

New people, creators of history, builders of a new humanity—

New people who live their existence

as though for the risk of a long journey.

- Juan Antonio Espinosa, from Las Voces del Camino,

the Spanish language supplement to the UU hymnal, Singing the Living Tradition.

An offer of Sanctuary means a significant commitment not only of space, but of volunteer time and energy. Some of the things volunteers will be needed for are listed below. Hopefully you have already tackled these elements as part of your preparation for your congregational vote on sanctuary. If not, it's time to begin: the more of this you can accomplish *before* you are presented with an individual's immediate need, the more prepared you will be as a sanctuary community.

You may want to designate specific members of your Leadership Team to act as coordinators for these various roles.

Logistics

MEALS: Each person is different, and your guest may want more company or less (it's important to ask!). But in addition to supplying food that can be easily prepared by your guest, you'll want volunteers who can prepare and drop off food, and others willing to stay and share a regular meal to provide company and solidarity. This includes coordinating food purchases that can be easily prepared by your guest, as well as volunteers who can prepare and drop off food, and others willing to stay and share a regular meal to provide company and solidarity. Each person is different, and your guest may want more company or less (it's important to ask!). But in addition to supplying food that can be easily prepared by your guest, you'll want volunteers who can prepare and drop off food, and others willing to stay and share a regular meal to provide company and solidarity.

If members would like to spend time with your guest or guests, it is important that they call or otherwise make arrangements ahead of time (as we would do with anyone we are visiting in our own private lives) to be sure company is expected and welcomed. Remember that your guest in Sanctuary is a whole and complex person whose immigration story is not their entire life – they will want a chance to visit about a wide range of other topics! Be conscious that language differences may exist, so set up appropriate translation arrangements if necessary.

MEDICAL: Is there a physician, nurse practitioner or other medical professional in the congregation or within your partner organizations who is willing and able to make a “house call” if needed? Is there a local clinic grounded in the community and justice work that might be willing to send a nurse or doctor to the congregation if needed?

PASTORAL/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: If your guest is active in a faith tradition, having regular contact with clergy from that tradition might be helpful, in which case volunteers may need to help arrange this. Regular contact with others staying in sanctuary and/or those who have successfully completed a sanctuary stay may also be very helpful. Those who are currently in sanctuary, and those who have successfully completed sanctuary support each other with phone or video calls. A robust internet connection will be necessary to facilitate this communication. If your sanctuary guest has family in the area, volunteers may be needed to help transport them to and from the church for visits.

ACCESS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS: People living in sanctuary often have family members who are citizens or legal residents; they do not need to live within your walls, but they will want to visit your guest often. If your church is not easily accessible by public transit, you will want to ask about the family’s transportation needs and the capacity of your volunteers to help out.

INSURANCE QUESTIONS: Whether or not having a guest in sanctuary could create risk for the congregation financially is nearly always a question that arises logically during the exploration and discernment process. Questions often revolve around particulars of insurance coverage: If the guest were to cause a fire, would damages be covered? If ICE broke down a door in pursuit of your guest, would insurance replace it?

It’s important to review a copy of your actual policy (not the summary), and consult with an attorney or insurance agent to find out if they see anything that could preclude or exclude coverage. If you choose to inform the insurance agent of your plans for sanctuary, you may want to frame it in the context of the congregation’s mission, e.g. “we are living out our faith by providing a safe space for someone in need. Is there anything we should change in our current coverage?”

If you’re told that housing a guest would be excluded from your current coverage:

- Ask for specifics: what language specifically in the policy excludes someone living there from coverage?

- Would the current policy deny other guests of the church coverage?
- Is it because the person is there overnight? Is it because they are “living there”, or would the policy apply similarly to events like youth-group sleepovers? Try to get specific reasons and where in the policy the language limits or excludes so you aren’t falling prey to a chance to charge you more for no actual additional coverage.

Find out what kind of a rider would need to be added to add coverage, and what it would cost. You may also want to consider how many claims your congregation has had in the past 5 or 10 years to assess risk of a claim related to or during the time of sanctuary, then assess the congregation’s comfort with risk.

For more information on insurance questions, see the Appendix.

Advocacy and witness

As your guest’s case winds its way through the system, all immigration-related legal issues should be handled by the immigration attorneys. But there is a key role for volunteers to play with advocacy, depending on the specific circumstances and issues surrounding the individual; and physical accompaniment can be an essential protection as well as a way to bear witness to the need for systemic change in the immigration system.

ACCOMPANIMENT AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE: Under President Trump’s administration, protocols for immigration raids and arrests will change. This could mean that ICE agents will be encouraged to enter spaces until now considered “sensitive,” such as schools and churches, possibly by force. Your team will need to determine whether overnight accompaniment is needed under some circumstances (such as an indication that ICE may enter the church and physically remove the person staying in sanctuary).

At a minimum, it will be important for the person in sanctuary to have ready phone access to a staff member or volunteer in case of emergency or an official showing up at the door. Depending on how sanctuary churches will be treated under President Trump’s administration, your congregation may need to form a “rapid response network” of people who would show up immediately in the case of a raid. They would decide in advance whether to simply maintain a prayerful witness; film and record what unfolds; or risk arrest by surrounding the building or blocking enforcement vehicles. These decisions should be made in consultation with your guest and with the coalition of sanctuary support congregations in your area.

If you have a minister, that person is likely to have a key role in the pastoral dimensions of accompaniment. This can range from informal conversations with your guest, to assisting with cross-cultural communications. It may also involve navigating parishioners’ reactions if encounters arise with immigration agents. Be sure your minister is on board with you!

ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC LIAISON: The success of your sanctuary guest’s case under current immigration policy rests not only on the skill of the lawyers and the merits of a specific situation, but on the ways the story is told and the degree to which it is kept in the public eye. Winning your case in the “court of public opinion” is often very helpful to winning with ICE. Most successful cases include an interfaith team that can be relied on to rally people to a variety of public actions as part of your support strategy.

You will need someone willing to coordinate and communicate about your sanctuary case. This person will be a liaison between the legal team and the coalition supporting sanctuary (within and beyond your congregation) and will help coordinate advocacy. Tactics for this work include press conferences, vigils, petitions, meetings with elected officials, phone and email campaigns. Because your declaration of sanctuary is a public one, you may need to field concerns not only from members of your congregation but from neighbors, as well. It can be helpful to anticipate the concerns you may hear, and to plan your responses.

Beyond Sanctuary Congregations

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”

- Audre Lorde

“Where there is so much to be done, there must be something for me to do.”

- Dorothea Dix

There are many ways we are all currently called to act to resist injustice and increase solidarity in defiance of the threats made by President Trump’s administration to the rights and safety of undocumented people, immigrants and refugees, Muslims, Black Lives Matter activists, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, and people with disabilities, among others. Becoming a sanctuary congregation is one strategy of many needed in the current moment.

Our work towards solidarity will be most effective and transformational if done with an intersectional approach that centers the leadership, insights, and experiences of those most adversely affected by the current political climate, and the long history of systemic oppression that has led us to this moment. Engaging in sanctuary organizing and other forms of solidarity invites us to continually ground our efforts in a commitment to anti-oppression learning, practice, and partnership and to carefully discern what actions we have the capacity and commitment to fully undertake and sustain.

As a campaign of resistance, solidarity, and transformation is developed by UUSC, the UUA, and other partners, we will continue to share new resources and additional toolkits to guide your activism related to strategies other than Sanctuary. Meanwhile, you can find some useful resources on the UUCSJ webpages, [Tools for Sanctuary & Solidarity](#) and [Options for Congregational Action](#).

Please consider signing onto the [Declaration of Conscience jointly issued by UUA and UUSC](#) to commit individually or as a congregation to putting Unitarian Universalist values into action to resist hate, fear, and bigotry. New tools and stories will be available to signers of the Declaration and all friends and allies via the UUA, UUSC, UUCSJ, UURISE and other partners on an ongoing basis.

Share Your Story, Stay Connected

*There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.
Ask: "What's possible?" not "What's wrong?" Keep asking.
Notice what you care about. Assume that many others share your dreams.
Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters. Talk to people you know.
Talk to people you don't know. Talk to people you never talk to.
Be intrigued by the differences you hear. Expect to be surprised.
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.
Invite in everybody who cares to work on what's possible.
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.
Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know.
Real listening always brings people closer together.
Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.
Rely on human goodness Stay together.*

- Margaret Wheatley

Some of the greatest resources we have in this work can be found by turning to one another. Your stories and reflections, whether they have to do with successes, challenges, or anything in between, may be of tremendous value and encouragement to others engaged in sanctuary and solidarity organizing. Whether you are new to these efforts or have been working on them for years, sharing your questions, suggestions, and unique perspectives can help us create a community of shared learning and collective strength.

We invite you to lift up examples of what you have found works well or does not work at all, what you are curious about or struggling with, what kinds of tools or resources you are seeking or have found useful, and what motivates you to do this work and stick with it. Please let the staff at UURISE and the UU College for Social Justice know if you would like to be matched up with others in your area or if you are willing to serve as a resource and peer support to others. Please share your story and get connected at this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SanctuaryStories>

Appendix

Frequently Asked Questions

Some of the information that follows has been covered above as well, but you and your Leadership Team may find this format useful, especially as a way of sharing information with your congregation. You may want to add questions and answers that are specific to your own location and the questions your members are asking.

Is providing Sanctuary illegal? Can we be arrested or charged with harboring an alien, or some other immigration related crime?

Because sanctuary is most commonly provided in conjunction with a public declaration of who the person in Sanctuary is, and why they are being provided sanctuary, there is not an intent to conceal. It is also important to note that no congregations have been prosecuted for providing sanctuary in the past forty years.⁹

Could they take away our nonprofit status?

Declaring sanctuary and providing shelter to someone in need is an act of faith and an act of justice. It is not a campaign or electioneering act. Churches are considered nonprofits, and nonprofits are prohibited from engaging in political campaign activity, which is generally determined by supporting or opposing a candidate for elected office. However, nonprofits are free to advocate for political issues and publicly criticize policies and elected officials. As such, declaring or providing Sanctuary should not have any impact on nonprofit status.¹⁰

What stops ICE, Border Patrol or local law enforcement from coming in and arresting someone in sanctuary?

Faith communities (churches, temples, mosques, etc.) are one of the enumerated “sensitive locations” identified by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as locations where immigration enforcement actions (interview, arrest, searches, and surveillance) should not occur. It is important to note that **this is DHS policy, and not law**. The longstanding policy was clarified in a DHS memo in 2011.¹¹ It is unknown if the DHS will change this policy in the future.

⁹ Note that the UUA, UUSC, UURISE and UUCSJ do not construe this document as providing legal recommendations, and encourage all congregations considering sanctuary to secure their own legal advice.

¹⁰ For more information on political engagement for nonprofits, see the UUA’s Real Rules: <http://www.uua.org/action/realrules>

¹¹ <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/ero-outreach/pdf/10029.2-policy.pdf>

Could President Trump ignore or override the Sensitive Locations memo?

Yes. Although it is possible, there is a long history of recognizing the sanctity of faith communities, and in the past when this has been challenged, faith communities have joined together to demand the continued respect of this sanctity, even when the groups agreed on little else.

What if our insurance says they will drop us? Or deny coverage of anything related to providing sanctuary?

One of the most important first steps in the discernment process is getting a copy of the actual insurance policy – not just a summary – and reading through the policy with an eye for limitations and restrictions on housing, overnights, providing shelter, etc. It may be helpful to consult with an attorney to help decipher the language. Following that, you may contact the insurance company to discuss the policy and the fact the congregation is considering providing 24/7 shelter to someone in need. If the insurance company says that is an uncovered activity, make sure to have them point to the exact language that prohibits the activity so it is understood what would need to change in the policy, or what type of rider would be needed to cover the activity. In general, one would expect that the general liability section of a congregation's policy would be sufficient, but it is prudent to look at the full policy to ensure it does not preclude someone "living" on site.

In the end, each congregation will need to determine what level of risk they are willing to accept. Questions to consider include:

- If the insurance company says they will deny claims related to offering sanctuary but we are unable to see how they could, are we willing to risk it and fight them in court if there is a claim?
- How many claims have been submitted under any policy in the past 5 years? 10 years?
- Is our current insurance company trying to dictate or restrict the way that the congregation's faith manifests?

When and how does offering sanctuary start and end?

Being a sanctuary congregation (provider or supporter) starts when the congregation makes the decision to do so. Physical sanctuary starts when an immigrant takes up protective residence in the building. Sanctuary ends when the government rules favorably on the immigration case, when the person in sanctuary decides they no longer need or want to be in sanctuary, or when the guest permanently leaves the physical sanctuary of the congregation for any other reason.

How long does Sanctuary last?

There is no set time frame: it could be weeks, months or even over a year.

What if we can only offer Sanctuary for a couple of weeks/months, etc.?

Unfortunately, there is no way to know how quickly a Sanctuary case will be resolved, and as such a congregation must be prepared for sanctuary to last as long as needed. If your congregation is only able to commit to a short period of time, you are better suited to be a Sanctuary support congregation until you are able to make a long-term commitment.

What happens if the person in sanctuary loses their case?

One of the reasons so few people enter sanctuary is that there needs to be a consensus between the legal team, the advocates, and the person themselves that theirs is a winnable case.

Sanctuary is not offered to every person at risk of deportation – only to those who are believed to have a strong case. There is no guarantee that any case will have a positive outcome, but to date, many sanctuary cases have been successful, in part because of the process by which cases are chosen. If at some point it becomes apparent that there will not be a satisfactory determination on their case, or if the person in sanctuary decides that being in sanctuary is no longer a viable or worthwhile option, there will need to be a careful and intentional conversation to decide when and how to end the stay.

Why does a person need sanctuary?

Generally, people enter sanctuary because they have received a final order of deportation but believe that they have a legitimate case that either has not been thoroughly presented or appropriately argued before an immigration judge, and/or their immigration attorney believes they may be eligible for prosecutorial discretion. Often there are extenuating circumstances that could or should have been raised in their defense of deportation that were not, due to expedited rulings, lack of or inadequate counsel, etc.

How do we decide if we want a specific person to come into sanctuary?

When your congregation is notified of a person in need of sanctuary, your Immigrant Justice Leadership Team will need to respond quickly, and reach out to the requesting party (immigration attorney, community or grassroots group, etc.) to get as much information about the person seeking sanctuary and their immigration case as possible. That information is what the congregation will use to determine if they want to provide a safe refuge for this particular person. In recognition that a decision about a particular person may have to be made very quickly, some congregations have empowered their Board to do so.

What if there is someone who needs sanctuary, but we aren't ready? Or don't feel comfortable?

Declaring yourself to be a sanctuary congregation does not obligate you to take anyone or everyone into sanctuary. It is still up to your congregation to decide at the time if you are ready, and if the person in need is someone they want to commit their time and resources to assist.

What if they have a criminal record?

Each congregation must decide the parameters of the type of candidate they will consider for sanctuary. We *strongly* encourage congregations to make this determination on a case-by-case basis, rather than declaring a rule such as “no one with a criminal history”. Examples of why that broad rule can be problematic include:

- Undocumented people who cross the border more than once are charged with a felony, which puts them in the broad category labeled “criminals” by the federal government
- If the arrest or conviction was part of the persecution the person was fleeing in their home country;
- Under current immigration laws,
- If the person has an old record (DUI, assault, etc.) from years ago that represents where they were at the time, but not where they are in now; and
- Immigrants are more likely to have arrests and convictions for mutual issues (ex: racial profiling by law enforcement, dealing with racist neighbors/co-workers, etc.)

What if we take someone into sanctuary and later decide it isn’t working out?

In the same vein that declaring sanctuary doesn’t demand that a congregation accept every and any person requesting sanctuary, neither does accepting a person into sanctuary mean that under every circumstance they person must stay in sanctuary in your church even if it isn’t working. That said, the act of going into sanctuary is often in direct defiance of an order of deportation or an imminent order of deportation, so the person in sanctuary is in an even more vulnerable position after entering sanctuary. There would need to be a very serious, and impassable problem that multiple and varied attempts had failed to rectify before the very serious decision to terminate a sanctuary stay should even be considered. If were to be the case, it would be necessary to be working with the Sanctuary coalition, your interfaith partners, and UURISE to try to find a new sanctuary placement and develop a plan for the safest possible transfer of the person from one sanctuary location to another.

What if the person wants to leave sanctuary?

Sanctuary can feel like house arrest, and there is nothing about it that is easy. It requires a lot of courage, faith, and sacrifice for the person entering sanctuary, so at any point that they determine that they want to do something else, that decision should be honored. Is it always up to the person in sanctuary to determine if it is successful, necessary, and worth the sacrifice.

PHYSICAL SPACE

How much space do we need?

There isn’t a minimum amount of square feet required, but there does need to be sufficient private space to allow for a bed and for their belongings (dresser or wardrobe, etc.). If there is not a specific room, you might consider walling off part of a larger area to create an appropriate room.

Do we need to have a shower?

Yes. Although one can “clean-up” in a sink for a short period of time, this is not realistic for a multi-month stay.

What if we don't have a shower or private space?

If you do not have private space or a shower your congregation will need to decide if there is space that could be set aside and created as a private shower, if a shower could be added to existing bathroom facilities, or a new bathroom or shower could be constructed. If there is not space to build a private area or shower, then your congregation would be better off becoming a Sanctuary Support Congregation.

What if we have a childcare center at our church?

You will need to research the licensing regulations and the lease to determine if offering sanctuary could put the center or your legal contract with the center in jeopardy. Generally, there will be ways to provide sanctuary that do not put the center's license at risk, but you need to understand the regulations in order to craft rules or modify the building structure accordingly. Often it is as simple as declaring that the person in sanctuary will not have access to the childcare center when children are present.

What are our options for involvement if we don't have space to provide sanctuary?

There are many types of involvement, with the strongest being to become a Sanctuary Support congregation. If you have sufficient will at your congregation, you might consider a strong partnership with a congregation that can provide the physical space – agreeing to split costs, volunteer shifts, organizational management, advocacy and witness, etc. Working to advocate for pro-immigrant legislation, policies and ordinances is very important, as well as working with cities, counties, and states to decrease their partnerships and cooperation with DHS, ICE, and Border Patrol, declaring themselves immigrant Welcoming, and/or Sanctuary jurisdictions.

Does the person in Sanctuary need to be in the place of worship, or can they stay in the parsonage or other building owned by the congregation?

There is not hard and fast rule, but the general consensus is that use of the parsonage or another building would only work if it is on the same parcel of land as the place of worship. If the parsonage is on a distinct piece of property, even if it is only a block or so away, then it will not fall within the intended protections of the “sensitive locations” memo. As the provision of Sanctuary occurs by utilizing the government's own policies, it is prudent to try to work within the clear reading of those policies.

LOGISTICS OF SANCTUARY

Can the person in sanctuary leave to go shopping? To the doctor? To work?

No. Once someone enters sanctuary, they must stay in sanctuary either until they receive a positive outcome on their immigration case, they decide they no longer need/want sanctuary, or an emergency requires them to forfeit the safety of sanctuary. It is important to remember that by entering sanctuary, they have chosen to defy orders of ICE to leave the US, so once they have defied those orders, they must remain in the protective space. It is often helpful to think of sanctuary as a form of “house arrest” or non-prison detention. It is recommended that your congregation a sympathetic physician, nurse practitioner or other medical provider, or a health clinic willing to do “house calls” as needed for non-emergency issues.

What if there is a medical need or a medical emergency?

If there is a medical need, ideally you will reach out to a medical provider or community clinic to have that need addressed within the walls of the sanctuary building. If there is a medical emergency where the sanctuary guest’s life is in danger, then emergency treatment must be sought, unless the guest chooses to deny medical care. These are issues that should be discussed as a part of the decision to bring a specific person into sanctuary.

What if they have to go to court?

This will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis. The first step is to see if an attorney is able to represent them and they can avoid appearing in person. If that is not a possibility, then the guest in sanctuary will need to determine how they want to handle the situation, ideally with advice from their attorney. There is a wonderful example of creative problem solving from Portland, OR where they created a “Church on a bus” in order to transport someone in sanctuary to appear in front of a judge for another issue while remaining physically in a religious space. In part due to community support, the judge dealt with the case at hand and did not involve himself in the immigration case – only asking confirmation from the minister that the person would continue to have a place in sanctuary.

Will the person in sanctuary become part of our congregation?

That is entirely up to the person in sanctuary, but based on our experience, it is highly unlikely. Sanctuary is a social justice commitment, not a recruiting opportunity. It is common for someone in sanctuary to want to maintain and express their own faith.

Who “pays” for the person in sanctuary?

Expenses for food, clothing, laundry, medical, etc. in general will need to be covered by the host congregation, the Support congregations, and the Sanctuary Coalition. Fundraisers, crowdfunding, and grants for justice work can help defray costs and lessen the drain on the congregation’s resources.

Can a small congregation provide sanctuary?

Yes. The size of the congregation does not necessarily matter as long as there is sufficient space, and a sufficient volunteer team that will ideally be from support congregations, interfaith partners, and a sanctuary coalition.

How do we declare sanctuary?

In most cases, the public declaration is an important component of sanctuary. One of the reasons for a public declaration of sanctuary is the light it shines on the specific case, which allows others to organize and mobilize around it. Bringing attention to the case builds a strong case in the “court of public opinion” which results in pressure on DHS and ICE, which often leads to successful closing of a case. Once a congregation has discerned and decided they will provide sanctuary, a public announcement is often appropriate. This decision should be made in conversation with the partner organizations, and Sanctuary coalition. If there is a possible case on horizon, you might wait to announce both the decision and the start of sanctuary at the same time. Public declarations often start with a press conference or a vigil.

When or why would there be private sanctuary?

Private sanctuary, or when a congregation’s sanctuary status has not been publicly announced, is a tactic that is sometimes used for a time before the case becomes public, and is often used as a way to leverage negotiations with ICE with the pressure of a public case looming. In this type of case, the determination is made by the legal team and the impacted person, and often will depend on the current relationship with ICE attorneys. There have been a number of cases won with this tactic, but it is not employed on every case.

Legal Questions

Once your congregation has gone through a discernment process about whether or not you feel called to offer sanctuary and have the location and resources that make it possible, you can turn to other kinds of questions. Some of these will inevitably be questions about whether your congregation is breaking the law, and what the possible consequences might be. Answers to these questions will vary a great deal based on the city and state in which you’re located, and the stands they have taken on sanctuary.

Answers about when, and if, sanctuary violates the law also depend on interpretation of the statutes on the books. For example, there is a law against bringing in and harboring persons not authorized to be in the United States (INA Sec.274). While a sanctuary congregation is re clearly not bringing people into the country, whether that counts as “harboring” someone has been interpreted by the courts. Some courts have interpreted harboring to require *concealment* of a

person. When we declare sanctuary for an individual we are bringing them into the light of the community, not concealing them in secrecy (U.S. V Costello, 66 F.3d 1040, 7th Cir. 2012). Other courts have interpreted harboring to be simple sheltering (U.S. V Acosta de Evans, 531 F.2d 428 (9th Cir. 1976)).

In the past, those entering sanctuary often had a clear pathway to win relief from deportation, which meant they were not a high priority for deportation and that ICE could grant them prosecutorial discretion. However, in the early stages of President Trump's administration it has become clear that no person with immigrant status is guaranteed such a pathway, since even those with visas or green cards have been challenged.

Over the past forty years, no congregation has been prosecuted for allowing undocumented people to find shelter and safety in their house of worship. However, it is important to note that it is unknown about how aggressively migrants might be pursued within sanctuary settings that in the past were considered off limits. Similarly, we do not yet know how President Trump's administration will respond to congregations and other institutions that defy the hostility to immigration and open their doors to migrants. The legal advice provided in the links below was created to help you understand the legal arguments that have been marshaled in support of sanctuary in the past. They will also help you be aware of where legal actions of resistance differ from ones that may be in violation of immigration law. These tools will be updated as UURISE and the UUCSJ learn more about how the current administration responds to declarations of Sanctuary and what legal tools are effectively deployed in response. Additional legal resources are available from the Catholic Legal Immigration Network¹² and the New Sanctuary Movement.¹³

Advocacy Strategies

Advocacy strategies will change rapidly as the Trump administration begins to crack down on Sanctuary cities and possibly on individuals in sanctuary. But however the political circumstances around us change, public advocacy will remain critical.

In partnership with legal service providers, immigrants' rights organizers, and the person in sanctuary, a strategy will be developed and a multitude of different people in government or

¹² Catholic Legal Immigration Network (2014):

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/oadtcpu0vntdn0u/Catholic%20Legal%20Immigration%20Network.pdf?dl=0>

¹³ 2. New Sanctuary Movement Legal Toolkit: <http://lynnhopkinsgroup.com/Toolkit1.pdf>

enforcement will be identified as the focus of your efforts. These might include the local ICE field office, ICE headquarters, city council and the mayor. Depending on the stand your state has taken toward sanctuary, you may also want to lobby your state legislators or your members of Congress through a sustained campaign of phone calls, emails, letter writing, and visits.

Advocacy work also includes organizing a broad base of support for the individual in sanctuary, as well as finding key allies. Often local leaders like the city council or the county board of supervisors as well as local religious leaders can be approached to use their power and influence to get the individual's case closed. We are always working to get more letters of support, more petitions signed, phone calls dialed in and more congregations working with us. Having an effective media plan is extremely important in garnering the type of attention needed to sway decision makers to close the deportation case.

The type of case by case advocacy to win a stay of removal is likely to become much more difficult under the Trump Administration, but we will fight to keep Prosecutorial Discretion guidelines that weigh positive equities of each case and continue to allow our undocumented community members to defer their deportation order. What follows are samples of press releases, opinion pieces, and social media posts that you may find helpful as you craft an advocacy strategy tailored to your geography and the circumstances both of your guest, and of your congregation.

Communications & Social Media

SAMPLE PRESS ADVISORY 1

For Immediate Release - March 20, 2017

Media Contact

Contact Name

Contact Email

Contact Mobile number

*****Media Advisory*****

DATE, TIME, LOCATION

**Congregations Open Doors for Immigrants to Stop
Administration's Deportation Plan**

Through the Sanctuary Movement, faith communities launch new campaign to stop family separation and provide safe refuge in midst of promised deportations

City- The Sanctuary Movement, a network of faith communities in XXX, is holding a press conference to announce faith communities' resistance to President Trump's plan to deport millions of immigrants, which would separate families and devastate immigrant communities. Since the 1980's, the Sanctuary Movement has taken up the call to welcome the stranger by providing safe haven to immigrants and refugees in need. Since President Trump's election, hundreds of congregations nationwide have joined the movement. Now the Sanctuary Movement is calling on congregations across all faiths to open their doors and provide refuge for immigrants facing detention and deportation. Congregations also welcome anyone who has been victimized by discrimination or hate crimes into these sacred safe spaces to unite the community around love, respect, and dignity for all.

These faith communities are also supporting those willing to answer the call to provide sanctuary at schools, hospitals, college campuses, community centers, and family homes. At this press conference, faith leaders commit to work with partner immigrants' rights organizations to create sacred space of sanctuary wherever it is needed.

What: Press Conference of immigrant and faith leaders opposing deportations

When: Time/ Date

Where: Location of press conference

Who: co- sponsor list of organizations

Speakers: List of speakers

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SAMPLE PRESS ADVISORY 2

December 25th, 2016

For Immediate Release

Press Contact: Name of someone easy to reach and knowledgeable on the issue

On Christmas Day Faith Leaders Offer their Churches as Sanctuary to Those Hunted in Raids

We Open Our Doors to Today's Josephs and Marys Despite ICE's Plan to deport them

Sanctuary Movement leaders who have offered their congregations as spaces of refuge for immigrants facing deportation are outraged by the news that Immigration Customs and Enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security plans to conduct raids targeting families who have fled violence and persecution in Central America.

Faith leaders from many traditions remind our decision makers that the story of Christmas is about a prophet and savior born in a stable and a refugee family that fled the political violence.

In defiance of a court order to stop detaining children, the Obama administration has increased the detention of families by 173% over the last several months according to the Migration Policy Institute. And now the administration has announced it will search for and deport asylum-seeking families to the danger they are seeking to escape.

In the spirit of Christmas, faith leaders are declaring they are ready to once again open their doors to provide refuge for immigrants facing deportation and unjust targeting from ICE.

"As pastors we know that each and every family is a holy family and the individuals and families who have fled violence don't just need our prayers, they need sanctuary," explains Rev. Alison Harrington of Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson Arizona. "We open our doors to today's Josephs and Marys despite ICE's plans to deport them.

When we heard that the Obama administration is beginning plans to round up Central American families and deport them back to the violence they have been fleeing, we couldn't help but imagine what would it have been like if the President was pharaoh in Egypt at the time of Jesus' birth when he and his family had to run from the death squads of Herod. What if he had ordered the deportation of the Holy Family?"

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Opinion Pieces

Don't underestimate tried and true tools such as letters to the editor and opinion pieces. Especially when written by members of the clergy, they have a good chance of being published and offer an excellent way to humanize the struggle for immigration justice. Remember that opinion pieces in particular are more likely to be published when they speak to personal experience and stories. They offer a strong alternative narrative and the power of a moral voice when they are grounded in our faith commitments.

Sample Op Eds

The Story of Daniel in the Hill

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/civil-rights/208125-the-story-of-daniel>

Protecting One Dad from Broken Immigration System

<http://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2014/06/29/immigration-system-broken/11726553/>

Twitter

Progressive organizations can spread their message by expanding social media outreach to the public. Whenever we generate or find a story in traditional media that elevates our perspective and work, we should amplify it further through social media.

Hashtags allow you to enter a forum with everyone else using the same hashtag; this magnifies the impact of the tweet.

Hashtags

#not1more #heretostay #sanctuary #sanctuarycities #nobannowall #uua

Tweeting @ an organization or a lawmaker is helpful to pressure decision makers and to invite other organizations to retweet your comment.

Allies

@GroundswellMvmt @CWS_IRP @bend_thearc @unitedwedream

Targets

@POTUS, @Trump, @WhiteHouse, @DHSgov

Sample Tweets

A church is fighting NAME's deportation by offering #Sanctuary. Add your name in solidarity LINK TO PETITION

Tell @DHSgov & @BarackObama to #WeStandWithRosa Add your name in solidarity → LINK TO PETITION #Sanctuary #Not1More

Churches offer #refuge for Central Americans facing U.S. deportation <http://reut.rs/1m9UTgo> via @Reuters #not1more

.@UPCTempe Church Grants #Sanctuary to Immigrant Facing Deportation
http://blogs.phoenixnewtimes.com/valleyfever/2014/09/tempe_church_grants_sanctuary_to_immigrant_facing_deportation.php #not1more

[Note: the initial period "." is important when is in the beginning of the tweet]

ICYMI: On Christmas day faith leaders around the US reiterate their offer of Sanctuary to those hunted in ICE raids. <http://buff.ly/1QWHu80>

Facebook

Facebook is particularly effective when there is a photo to accompany your post. Be sure to keep the post itself very brief and interesting, linking to the story you want people to read.

A church is fighting NAME's deportation by offering #Sanctuary. Add your name in solidarity
LINK TO PETITION

Tell Homeland Security Chief and President to let ____ Stay!
Add your name in solidarity → LINK TO PETITION
#Sanctuary #Not1More

Churches open their doors on Christmas to #immigrants seeking refuge #not1more deportation
<http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2015/12/26/3735048/churches-open-doors-to-immigrants/>

Resources for spiritual grounding and sustenance

As we struggle to discern our paths for action in this challenging political climate, it's important that stay grounded in our deepest values, and in the reminder that we're acting as people of faith. No matter what our discernment leads to, we want our words and deeds to reflect and magnify the best of who we can be: people who bring courage, perseverance, and compassion into our efforts for social justice.

Whether you find comfort and grounding in art, nature, poetry, prayer, meditation, intentional fellowship, or other rituals, now is the time to make your spiritual sustenance a critical component of your justice commitments.

Visit uaa.org/declaration for links to spiritual resources such as spiritual practice study guides, suggested readings and inspirational podcasts.

Study resources for immigration justice

For much of United States history there were very few laws that governed migration, and no documentation was required. The first exclusionary immigration law was passed in 1875, banning Chinese contract laborers; over subsequent years, other such laws were passed, excluding people based on race, religion, political outlook, or country of origin. At other times, such as just after World War II, immigration restrictions were lifted or eased to encourage more labor to flow into the country.

After the attacks of September 2001 and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, immigration laws became much more restrictive and our nation's borders became heavily militarized, especially the southern border. What was once a civil violation, crossing a border without proper documentation, became criminalized as a felony, and detention facilities were expanded to accommodate those now charged with a crime.

Adult religious education resources from the UU College of Social Justice:

- Four-session discussion guide based on the book *Undocumented*, by Aviva Chomsky¹⁴
- One-session discussion guide based on the film *Who Is Dayani Cristal?*¹⁵
- One-session discussion guide based on the film *Harvest of Empire*.¹⁶

¹⁴ <http://uucsj.org/immigrationstudyguide/>

¹⁵ <http://uucsj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Dayani-Cristal-Discussion-Guide.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://uucsj.org/harvest-of-empire-film-discussion-guide/>

Study Resources for Cross-Cultural Engagement

As previously mentioned, your congregation's work with sanctuary will be a cross-cultural experience. Its success will depend on many factors, but among these will be the consistent awareness among your volunteers of how our perceptions and behaviors are shaped by social location. Sensitivity to class, culture, and power dynamics are essential, along with the willingness to listen deeply to someone whose lived experience has been very different from our own.

CASE STUDIES

Consider the following dynamics between congregational volunteers and the guests their church hosted in Sanctuary, drawn from actual encounters.

- a) A church member has volunteered to go grocery shopping for the guest, since those in Sanctuary cannot leave the church building. She brings her small children with her to the church and informs the guest that she's leaving them there (for the guest to babysit) so that the shopping will go faster.
- b) A volunteer comes to visit each week, and declares to other church members (in the presence of the guest) that they are "best friends" with the person staying as a Sanctuary guest. The guest was not consulted about this designation.
- c) A volunteer is helping the guest put away groceries that have just been purchased and comments on what has been requested, saying, "You shouldn't eat so much – you don't want to end up in jail AND fat!"

There are important ways in which your core volunteers can set up habits that will lay the groundwork for a more egalitarian relationship, even when there are clear differences of race, class, culture and social location. For example, as you begin meeting with immigrant rights groups or meeting potential candidates for Sanctuary, make a commitment to have all meetings be bilingual, so that organizers from the group and potential guests who do not speak English are not at a disadvantage. Remember that this will extend the length of your meetings! Some have found that more frequent but shorter meetings work better than longer ones spaced further apart. Even if all but one person speaks English, part of the commitment to partnership and covenanted work is that the meetings are accessible to all, not forcing someone to simultaneously translate in a whisper in order to accommodate the one who does not speak English.

Remember other issues of accessibility. When it comes to meeting times and days, check in with those you most want to meet with on issues like nighttime jobs or classes, transportation to and from meetings, and how they most easily receive information (not everyone uses email). Childcare during meetings is also crucial in order to maximize accessibility and participation. Rather than simply providing childcare, you might also consider having children present and

involved during meetings, such as by setting up materials for making signs (for vigils or press conferences). A childcare provider can read books with the children that have a social justice message; work with them to find cities and countries of origin on a map; making cards or pictures to send to people who are in Sanctuary in other cities; and so on.

Here are further resources on multicultural competence that may be of use:

- Resources from the UUA for studying and conversing about white privilege, multiculturalism¹⁷
- Resources for thinking about racial justice in the context of immigration and Sanctuary¹⁸

Thank you for reviewing this guide! We hope you will find it useful in your path to consider providing sanctuary in your congregation and offering religious witness for human dignity. For any questions, please email info@uurise.org.

Cover photo used with permission from Mike Morran and the First Unitarian Society of Denver.

¹⁷ <http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism>

¹⁸ <http://www.urbyouthcollaborative.org/721/no-sanctuaries/>