

Sanctuary Movement 2014: Stopping Deportations

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.”

- Psalm 91:1-2

As the faith community, we are called to accompany our community members, congregants and neighbors facing deportation.

Table of Contents

Why now? Understanding this Moment for Movement.....	Page 2
What is Sanctuary?	Page 2-3
<i>An Ancient Tradition of Faith Communities/ The Sanctuary Movement in the 1980s / Sacred Texts / Current Day Sanctuary Movement</i>	
Goals and Strategy.....	Page 4
Talking Points and Messaging	Page 4-5
Who is Seeking Sanctuary?.....	Page 5
How do we “Declare Sanctuary?”	Page 6-7
<i>Joint Public Declaration of Sanctuary</i>	
Advocacy.....	Page 7
Leadership of those in Sanctuary.....	Page 7
What are the logistics of Sanctuary?.....	Page 8-9
<i>Living Arrangements/ Legal Questions / Community Support/ Training other Congregations</i>	
Communications.....	Page 9-11
<i>Sample Press Advisory / Sample Op-Ed / Social Media</i>	

Why now? Understanding this Moment for Movement

People of faith from all traditions have been calling on Congress to pass immigration reform, yet Congress has failed to move forward on meaningful legislation. Meanwhile, the deportation machinery has only become more advanced under the Obama Administration, with an alarming rate of more than 1,000 people being deported every day, totaling more than two million deportations over the last five years. The organizing efforts of undocumented youth and people of faith in 2012 pushed the administration to create the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which has allowed over 500,000 DREAMers to travel and work legally.

The time has come for President Obama to expand deferred action to all undocumented people. The White House has been holding listening sessions with immigration, business and faith organizations over the last two months. They are preparing for action, but recently the President made a political calculation to once again delay executive action until after the election resulting in more deportations and more separation of families.

As people of faith we have a responsibility to act. Along with partner organizations people of faith have been advocating to stop individual deportations in our community. It is time we escalate this effort to keep families together by offering our neighbors who face a deportation order safe refuge and sanctuary in our congregations.

What is Sanctuary?

An Ancient Tradition of Faith Communities

Sanctuary is one of the most ancient traditions that we have as a people of faith. The ancient Hebrew people had allowed temples and even whole cities to declare themselves places of refuge for persons accused of a crime, a practice that allowed those wrongfully accused to escape swift and harsh retribution until the matter could be resolved. In the late Roman Empire fugitives could find refuge in the precincts of Christian churches. Later, during the medieval period churches in England were recognized sanctuaries, offering safe haven for a temporary period to accused wrong doers. In the United States the first practical provision of anything like sanctuary occurred in the years before the Civil War. The Underground Railroad came into being to help slaves flee the South and find safety in many congregations throughout the country.

The Sanctuary Movement in the 1980s

When refugees from the Civil Wars in Central America began to flee to the United States in the 1980's, the U.S. government did not recognize them as political refugees. Many were deported and received by death squads upon their return. From this dire injustice, the Sanctuary Movement was born. It peaked with over 500 congregations establishing an underground railroad whereby refugees move through the United States to safe houses and safe congregations. Many clergy in the Tucson area were indicted and eventually acquitted for their involvement in assisting Central American refugees. The Sanctuary Movement sought to remind the United States government of its own asylum and refugee laws, which they were not following when it came to the refugees of Central America.

Sacred Texts

- God calls people of faith to remember that they once were strangers in a strange land and they must, must welcome the stranger as an expression of covenant faithfulness (Leviticus 19:33-34)
- We must “learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:17)
- We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27)

LINKS on Sanctuary Movement

[The Public Sanctuary Movement: An Historical Basis of Hope](#) by Eileen Purcell

[The Origins of a Political Trial: The Sanctuary Movement and Political Justice](#) by Sophie H. Pririe

Current Day Sanctuary Movement

Drawing on this tradition, communities of faith have once again seen the need to declare Sanctuary for immigrants as the rise of deportations continues to separate families. In the 1980’s we were compelled by the call to welcome the stranger, as we opened our doors to newly arriving refugees. Now we are moved by the call to love our neighbors as ourselves, as those who are entering into Sanctuary are most often long term members of our communities - our neighbors.

In 2007, an initiative known as the New Sanctuary Movement took shape with coalitions of congregations in major cities throughout the country. As work place and neighborhood raids escalated, these congregations opened their doors to provide refuge to those facing deportation. See [NSM toolkit here](http://imirj.org/new-sanctuary-movement-toolkit-for-congregations/) (<http://imirj.org/new-sanctuary-movement-toolkit-for-congregations/>).

Today, we are in a different political reality. Because of [the Morton Memo and Prosecutorial Discretion](#) we have won thousands of cases and stopped numerous deportations through case by case advocacy. Those entering sanctuary now are eligible for Prosecutorial Discretion, but local ICE field offices have been very reluctant to offer this relief of deportation through deferred action. There is a substantial gap between the policies and priorities set forth by President Obama’s Administration and the Morton Memo with the practices in ICE field offices across the country.

Recently in Arizona, the need for Sanctuary has increased and deportations continue to terrorize communities. See below News on Sanctuary Resurgence.

[Churches Offer Sanctuary to Immigrants in Danger of Deportation](#)

[Church Gives Sanctuary to Undocumented Man](#)

We are closer than ever to winning deferred action for all. The work of Sanctuary is of critical importance to keep families together and escalate pressure on our elected officials.

Goals and Strategy

- 1) *Immediate Local Goal:* As the faith community, we are called to accompany our community members, congregants and neighbors facing deportation. By offering sanctuary we can fight individual cases, advocate to stop deportations, and win deferred action at a case by case level to keep families together.
- 2) *The National Goal:* Win affirmative administrative relief from deportations by expanding deferred action to all undocumented people currently residing in the U.S.

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.

Continue to pressure elected officials to offer legal status and a pathway to citizenship to the 11 million immigrants that are already in this U.S. and create a viable path for new arrivals.

Talking Points/ Messaging

General Talking Points:

- As the faith community, we are doing what Congress and the President have refused to do: protect immigrant families from our broken immigration system.
- We are witnessing the rebirth of the sanctuary movement in the US. We are seeing a widespread and growing commitment by faith communities to provide sanctuary to moms and dads and others in need of protection.
- With the President breaking his promise to take executive action on immigration – and choosing political expediency over family unity – the urgency has only increased for providing Sanctuary to family members facing deportation.
- Our congregations open their doors to provide sanctuary we stand in solidarity with immigrant leaders fighting to keep all families together, regardless of immigration status.
- We urge the Department of Homeland Security to exercise and live up to its mandate to exercise prosecutorial discretion and stop deporting our undocumented community members who contribute so much to our congregations, communities and country.
- We urge the President to use his broad legal authority to act immediately to stop deportations and expand deferred action for all.

Talking Points for Specific Sanctuary Cases:

- As people of faith, we are called to welcome the sojourner and love our neighbor. In the case of INSERT NAME, he/she has been part of our community for a long time. He/she is not a stranger but our neighbor and we are accompanying him as he stands up for his right to stay united with his family

- INSERT NAMES want to make sure their family stays together and that INSERT NAME does not become one of the over 1,000 people unnecessarily deported each day under the current administration's policies.
- One of our key belief statements as the DENOMINATION is: INSERT STATEMENT. As in the tradition of the prophets and apostles, God calls the church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted. We are responsible to a higher calling, a higher law, that takes precedent over our flawed and outdated immigration laws.
- The church has been a space of sanctuary for those wrongly persecuted for thousands of years. The ability to provide humanitarian sanctuary defines who we are and our call as people of faith to care for the most vulnerable among us.
- We witnessed the power of the Sanctuary Movement was in the 1980s. The church was able to protect Central Americans from being deported and returned to death squads in the Civil Wars they faced at home, which the United States refused to recognize. Thousands upon thousands of lives were spared because of the Sanctuary movement.
- Now in the midst of our broken immigration system, faith communities once again must demonstrate leadership and action to keep families together, to keep parents with their children, to protect our brothers and sisters like INSERT NAME, to demand the Obama Administration enact affirmative administrative relief through deferred action from deportation for all undocumented people.
- Hold the Obama administration accountable to their own words for prosecutorial discretion and not deport law-abiding immigrants who work, pay taxes, and are part of the fabric of our congregations and communities.
- We are asking Secretary Jeh Johnson and President Obama to grant deferred action for INSERT NAME today. We are also asking the Administration to do justice and create the opportunity for the millions live without fear of deportation and stay united with their families through expanding deferred action.

Who are those seeking Sanctuary?

This relationship is key as it is the legal service team who are able to accurately assess whether someone has administrative relief available to them and therefore is able to enter into Sanctuary with a reasonable expectation of receiving a stay of removal or having their deportation order closed all together. By the time an individual needs to enter into Sanctuary all other legal avenues have been pursued and a final order of deportation has been issued.

The legal service team then consults with Sanctuary organizers and involved pastor to begin a conversation about a potential Sanctuary case. Ideally this happens months in advance, but sometimes the individual comes to a legal clinic or local organizers in the 11th hour, requiring a congregation to act quickly.

How do we “Declare Sanctuary?”

The public aspect of the Declaration of Sanctuary is critical. It is by bringing attention to the case, mobilizing the community, and advocating for the individual that we are able to successfully get cases closed. We encourage every community of faith to enter into a time of prayer and discernment so that when cases arise, they are ready to act. Once a congregation has made the decision to declare Sanctuary for an individual it is publicly announced at a press conference and prayer vigil, at which time the individual and their family enters into the premises of the house of worship. The individual in need of Sanctuary remains at the house of worship until they are granted a stay of deportation. Of course, an individual may decide at any time to leave Sanctuary for any reason and should have the full support of the community to do so. Living within Sanctuary is not an easy thing; the financial cost of not working, the media attention, the strain on a family can all be burdensome.

There has been liturgy developed by Southside Presbyterian Church and Shadow Rock UCC in Phoenix that can be adapted for a prayer vigil declaring Sanctuary, but individual congregations should develop liturgy that is appropriate to their own religious background and setting. (NEED LINK HERE)

Joint Public Declaration of Sanctuary

Declaration of Sanctuary Movement 2014

To sign on please go to this [LINK](#)

Dear President Obama, Secretary Johnson and Director Muñoz,

As faith leaders, we write to you regarding our brothers and sisters facing deportation. Our faith traditions share a moral and ethical responsibility to protect and accompany immigrants fighting their deportations and risking everything to keep their families and communities together. We publicly commit to offer or support Sanctuary in our sacred spaces for those lifting their voices to transform our damaging and unjust immigration laws.

We believe that the Sanctuary Movement today reveals the human cost and moral crisis caused by more than 1,000 deportations per day. We call on all people of faith and conscience to share our commitment to protect and accompany immigrants facing racial profiling, workplace discrimination and deportation.

We ask that you immediately grant legally recognized forms of relief, such as a stay of removal or deferred action to all community members currently in Sanctuary. Furthermore, we urge you to immediately expand deferred action in the most accessible and broadest form.

We are also welcoming children and families fleeing violence into the safety of our faith communities as they seek humanitarian protection in the U.S. We ask the Administration to stop fast tracking removal proceedings, which prevents individuals from obtaining necessary legal counsel and preparation for their case. Instead, the Administration should affirm and implement the humanitarian protections in the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and expand funding for access to legal services.

Congregations Offering Sanctuary –(Will list below)

Faith Communities and Faith Based Organization in Support of Sanctuary (Will be listed below)

Advocacy

One of the most important aspects to Sanctuary is the advocacy that we do on behalf of an individual. In partnership with legal service providers and immigrants' rights organizers a strategy is developed and a multitude of different people are identified as the focus of our efforts, like Department of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson and the White House in general. They and other members of the administration are the focus of phone calls and letter writing. There is also a great deal of work organizing a broad base of support for the individual as well as finding key allies. Often the City Council and the Board of Supervisors as well as local religious leaders are 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. We have developed relationships with key allies in Washington, DC and partnerships with national organizations who have worked closely with us on cases. Having an effective media plan is extremely important in garnering the type of attention needed to sway decision makers to close the deportation case.

Petitions with Groundswell:

<http://action.groundswell-mvmt.org/petitions/tell-the-obama-administration-save-rosa-from-being-deported>

<http://action.groundswell-mvmt.org/petitions/tell-the-obama-administration-stop-luis-from-being-deported-keep-your-promise>

Sample Letter of Support from Good Shepherd United Church of Christ

<http://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/8-24-14-GoodShepherdUCC-Sanctuary-letter-University-Presbyterian.pdf>

Work to get Denominational Support

United Church of Christ News reports on Denver launching Sanctuary Coalition

<http://www.ucc.org/news/colorado-ucc-joins-sanctuary-coalition-09102014.html>

<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2014/9/17/letter-president-support-sanctuary-and-hope/>

Leadership of those in Sanctuary

This is perhaps the most important aspect of Sanctuary; we are not the leaders of this movement, those in Sanctuary are. It has been the courage and the faith of those who have come out of the shadows to say, "we are undocumented and we are unafraid" that has inspired our work. Those taking Sanctuary are putting everything on the line and are often risking a great deal for the benefit of the larger movement; their leadership, their voice, their opinions and wisdom should be prioritized at all times. They should be involved in every aspect of the campaign, if they desire to be. Sanctuary is hard work and requires great sacrifice - if at any time a family wishes to leave Sanctuary, their wishes should be respected and celebrated. We should always remember that Sanctuary is not something that we do for our undocumented brothers and sisters, it is something we do *with* them.

What are the logistics of Sanctuary?

Living Arrangements

Ideally, the family will have space on the grounds of the house of worship that will not be used for any other purpose for the duration of Sanctuary. They should be encouraged to arrange the room in whatever way they would like and to make it as much like home as they can. Easy access to showers, bathrooms, and a kitchen should be considered in designating a space for the family (sometimes showers will need to be configured in some way for those locations without permanent showers). Because the entire purpose of declaring Sanctuary is to keep a family together, the entire family is invited to stay at the house of worship. While the individual living in Sanctuary does not leave the premises, the family comes and goes as they choose. At times the family can become overwhelmed by visitors and media. They should be encouraged to establish whatever boundaries they need.

It is the practice of immigration officials and law enforcement agencies to respect the sanctity of houses of worship by not coming on their property for the purpose of apprehending an individual who has an order of deportation. That being said, it is a good practice to always have someone at the house of worship with the person who is in sanctuary, even at night. This accompaniment is important in a volatile political climate where protestors may show up. But more than that, it is a comfort for the family to know they are not alone.

Legal Questions

Everyone always wants to know - are we breaking the law? Law is a lot like scripture - its up to your interpretation. There is a law against bringing in and harboring persons not authorized to be in the U.S. (insert footnote. INA Sec.274) While we are clearly not bringing people in, whether we are harboring someone is up for interpretation. 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 the dark of secrecy. (insert footnote. U.S. V Costello, 66 F.3d 1040 (7th Cir. 2012)) Other courts have interpreted harboring to be simple sheltering. (insert footnote. U.S. V Acosta de Evans, 531 F.2d 428 (9th Cir. 1976)) The other reality is that immigration officials know that if they went into a house of worship to arrest a pastor they would have a public relations nightmare on their hands.

ICE Sensitive Locations <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/ero-outreach/pdf/10029.2-policy.pdf>

The space of sanctuary is sacred. Immigration officials know that if they went into a house of worship to arrest a pastor they would have a public relations nightmare on their hands. To date no one has ever been arrested for offering Sanctuary.

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

Community Support

Families living in Sanctuary are often in need of support in a multitude of different ways. Most importantly they need the support of our friendship - so plan game nights, hang out with them, do what you can to make them feel at home and a part of your congregational family. It is also important that they are able to retain some normalcy as a family - this can often be done by enabling them to cook for themselves. You may find that congregation members will want to show their love and support by bringing food, which may be helpful a few nights a week, but it is important that the family is able to care for themselves and control as much as possible

in a situation that is very much out of their control. Instead of bringing meals, encourage people to bring food that they can cook with.

There may also be the need for financial support, particularly if the individual in Sanctuary normally works. People should be encouraged to give to the family, either directly or through the house of worship (these donations to benefit an individual are not tax deductible). Care should be taken to respect the pride of the family in these situations. It is difficult for all of us to be in a situation where we have to depend on others. We have often reminded individuals that by being in Sanctuary, they are engaged in hard work, both for their families but also for the movement and that work should be compensated.

Training other Congregations

Instead of only one or two congregations taking on the work of Sanctuary, it is important that other congregations also show support. In Arizona, clergy and lay leaders have joined together in advocacy efforts, joint sign-on letters, logistical support, vigils and cooking. Having other congregations engaged creates training opportunities for leadership from other congregations to become accustomed to the work of Sanctuary, an experience they can bring back to their congregation as they prepare themselves for a future opportunity of offering Sanctuary.

Communications

It is important that we use common messaging so that we can influence and push forward a national narrative on Sanctuary and the urgency for the Administration to act on these cases and on wider administrative relief (See Talking Points Pg. 3-4)

Sample Press Advisory

September 9, 2014

Contact: XXXX

Phone

Email

Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition Formation

Five congregations join immigrant community members in declaring Sanctuary

Calling on President Obama to fulfill his promise and act now

Rev. Mike Morran invites all faith communities to join the coalition saying “Because each of our traditions value love, justice, and dignity, we extend this invitation to all Metro Denver faith communities to join in forming a broad multi-ethnic and interfaith coalition assuring sanctuary for immigrant members of our communities. Please contact us if you are interested in becoming a host or support congregation.”

“As President Obama and congress continue to delay addressing the very immigration policies’ that damage our communities, we feel particularly called to publicly declare our commitment. We dare to do what they have not yet done, to stand with our immigrant brothers and sisters, to declare their human dignity and recognize the

sacredness of their contributions as members of our communities” added Rev. Anne Dunlap of Chadash Community, United Church of Christ.

WHEN: **WEDNESDAY, September 10, 3:00PM**

WHERE: **First Unitarian Society of Denver**
[1400 Lafayette St.](#)
[Denver, CO 80218](#)

WHAT: **Press conference to declare the formation of the Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition**
 Statements from Rev. Anne Dunlap, Chadash Community and Rev. Mike Morran, 1st
Unitarian
 Street theater from immigrant families in deportation
 Members of five congregations joined together in song

WHO: **American Friends Service Committee, Chadash Community United Church of Christ, First Unitarian Society of Denver, Mountain View Friends Meeting, Boulder Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, and the Immigration Justice Task Force of the First Universalist Church of Denver**

DIRECTIONS: Weather permitting we will gather on the Southeast corner of Lafayette and 14th Ave. If it rains we will move inside the church.

WEB SITE: <http://www.afsc.org/office/denver-co>

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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/>

Social Media

If all the organizations involved expand our social media work, our outreach to the public is larger. When we are able to garner traditional media, we must make sure to push it out through social media.

Hash tags allow you to enter a forum of everyone else using the same hashtag, this amplifies the impact of the twitter post. Many Sanctuary

#not1more #allin4relief #allinfor11million #keepyourpromise #letrosastay #timeisnow

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

Allies

@GroundswellMvmt @CWS_IRP @bend_thearc @PICOnetwork

Targets

@BarackObama @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 #LetLuisStay! Add your name in solidarity → LINK TO PETITION #Sanctuary #Not1More
- .@WSJ: Churches Offer #Sanctuary to Immigrants in Danger of Deportation @MirJordan #not1more #allin4relief SHARE→<http://on.wsj.com/1wij26u>

(the initial period "." is important)

- .@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

Sample Facebook Posts

- A church is fighting NAME's deportation by offering #Sanctuary. Add your name in solidarity LINK TO PETITION #LetLuisStay
- Tell Homeland Security Chief Jeh Johnson and President Barack Obama to #LetLuisStay! Add your name in solidarity → LINK TO PETITION #Sanctuary #Not1More
- Wall Street Journal: Churches Offer #Sanctuary to Immigrants in Danger of Deportation <http://on.wsj.com/1wij26u> #not1more #allin4relief