
The Process of Becoming a Sanctuary Church

at St. John's Presbyterian Church (SJ)

as of August 2017

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Discernment of Becoming a Sanctuary Church

In 2016, the SJ session approved a motion to begin discerning providing sanctuary space at SJ. Over the past couple years, partners at St. John's shared growing concern for refugees and immigrants in our area. Through Interfaith Welcome Bay Area Refugee Support, we participated in creating welcome kits for refugees as well as collecting donations for the Teddy Bear Lift project that provides teddy bears to children displaced from their homes. Also, through Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, some partners also began to attend meetings on how to support undocumented immigrants as well as be trained on how to be an observer during Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids. The growing involvement from SJ partners led to intentionally discerning how SJ as a church can support refugees and undocumented immigrants in our area.

SJ created a new Sanctuary Team that will gather at least once a month to coordinate efforts and share resources.

Education about Sanctuary Movement

The Sanctuary Team, SJ and congregational leadership will provide several resources:

1. Update the SJ website with descriptions of the New Sanctuary Movement, Sanctuary Cities, what Sanctuary looks like, legal risks, and links to a variety of information and media.

2. Sanctuary Team Members wore special name tags during Coffee Hours, inviting anyone to talk with them about Sanctuary.
3. Create Q & A Handout regarding Sanctuary to make available during worship, e-newsletter, and website that will answer . . .
 - What it means to be a Sanctuary Church
 - How the process of providing Sanctuary works
 - What legal risks are involved
4. Invited Jose Sotelo from Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity to share his testimony as an undocumented immigrant.
5. June and September worship will focus on Sanctuary through preaching, sharing of stories, and prayer stations.
6. Throughout September, depending on congregational response, we can extend timeline, provide congregational meetings for more info, and/or plan educational workshops.

Sermons and Worship

June – Theme: Loving Our Neighbor

- June 4, 2017 – Pentecost Sunday. Prayer stations that focused on stories of immigrants and refugees.
- June 11, 2017 – Guest Speaker: Jose Sotelo
- June 18, 2017 – pastor Theresa preached on the greatest commandment and our call to love our neighbor.

September – Theme: Immigration and Sanctuary

- September 10, 2017 – Prayer stations that focus on sharing stories of migration, immigration laws, and sanctuary information.
- September 17, 2017 – Guest Speaker: John Templeton will share a personal story of criminalization. Criminalization and immigration are often connected with one another.
- September 24, 2017 – Members of the Sanctuary Team will share stories of migration. Possibly take a congregational photo in front of the “We Choose Welcome” sign.

September Session Meeting - SJ Declares itself a Sanctuary Church

Motion: That St. John’s Presbyterian Church declares itself a Sanctuary Church and as such will provide legal and support resources for undocumented immigrants as well as work in

partnership with Interfaith Movement for Humanity on accompaniment of immigrant families or youth; advocacy; and networks of projection of rapid response.

Next Steps if motion passes

1. As an immediate first step, pastors sign the National Sanctuary Movement pledge on behalf of St. John's Presbyterian Church.
2. The Sanctuary Team will regularly meet to network with other congregations and faith communities. When appropriate, they will provide opportunities for the congregation to engage.

SJ Website Content re: Sanctuary

SANCTUARY MOVEMENT

Welcome! We invite you to look through the materials on this webpage to familiarize yourself with the New Sanctuary Movement.

What is the New Sanctuary Movement?

Calling upon the ancient traditions of our faiths, which recognized houses of worship as a refuge for the runaway slave, the conscientious objector, and the Central American refugee fleeing the civil wars of the 1980s, sanctuary is once again growing among communities of faith that are standing in solidarity with immigrants and marginalized communities facing immoral and unjust deportation and discrimination policies.

View the video below for an overview.

(Sanctuary Sample Reel from Theo Rigby, Vimeo) <https://vimeo.com/189690725>

What are Sanctuary Cities?

Sanctuary Cities are municipalities that have adopted policies of protecting undocumented immigrants by not prosecuting them for violating federal immigration laws in the country in which they are now living. Such a policy can be set out expressly in a law or observed only in practice. The term applies generally to cities that do not use municipal funds or resources to enforce national immigration laws, and usually forbid police or municipal employees to inquire about a person's immigration status. The designation has no precise legal meaning.

This January 25, 2017 Wall Street Journal Article describes how Sanctuary Cities work and how President Trump's recent executive order may affect them.

What are Sanctuary Churches?

Sanctuary Churches support the efforts of the Sanctuary Movement or are willing to open their doors to people fearing repatriation. Churches, along with schools and hospitals, are considered "Sensitive Locations" by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. That means federal agents will avoid arresting, searching or interviewing people there under most circumstances.

Read ICE's 2011 Memoranda regarding its enforcement policy on Sensitive Locations.

Prior to the November presidential election, there were 400 Sanctuary Churches nationwide. Since the election, there are over 800 churches across the country now involved in creating sanctuary spaces for undocumented immigrants and people in need.

Currently, there are no Sanctuary Churches that offer physical sanctuary on the San Francisco Peninsula.

What does Sanctuary look like?

There are four ways that congregations are demonstrating their commitment to Sanctuary: physical sanctuary for someone facing final deportation; accompaniment of immigrant families or youth; advocacy; and networks of projection of rapid response.

Congregations that offer physical sanctuary on religious property, as a way to protect individuals from the reach of ICE, are supported by other congregations and community groups committing to be part of a local network of Sanctuary by assisting with hospitality, protection, and advocacy.

Read more about how Sanctuary is being provided.

What are the legal risks for congregations?

Those who are entering sanctuary will most likely have an opportunity to win relief from deportation. This means that they are not a high priority for deportation and that ICE can and should grant them prosecutorial discretion. In essence, the Sanctuary Movement is holding the administration accountable to their own standards and guidelines as put forth by the President's Executive Actions.

There is risk in offering Sanctuary, however, the field practice over the last forty years shows that no congregation has been prosecuted for allowing undocumented people to find shelter and safety in their house of worship.

Read the following Sanctuary Legal Tool Kit for an opinion and FAQs.

What additional resources exist to learn more?

National Sanctuary website and toolkit: www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org

Bay Area Organizations: www.im4humanintegrity.org

Sign the Sanctuary Pledge: <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/sign-the-pledge.html>