

## Temple Beth Hatfiloh (TBH) Resolution on Supporting Immigrants and Refugees

### Current Context

People of faith from all traditions, including Judaism, have called on Congress to pass immigration reform since at least 2003, yet Congress has failed to move forward on meaningful legislation. A sanctuary movement is again playing a critical role in responding in the post-election reality wherein fear, discrimination and xenophobia are taking a prominent role in our country's politics. With the promise of the current administration to deport millions, as people of faith we have a moral responsibility to act. Sanctuary is a tool that helps raise consciousness about the injustice of these aggressive efforts by offering our neighbors who face possible deportation assistance and sanctuary.

### Jewish Values

Sanctuary is a tool in alignment with deep Jewish values to welcome strangers. From Abraham heeding the call by God to leave the land of his birth, to the story of the liberation from Egyptian slavery as told in Exodus, to the story of the wanderings in the desert on the way to the Promised Land, the Jewish spiritual narrative in the Torah is based in relocation and migration.

The Torah teaches 36 times that we shall love and not oppress the stranger, because we were strangers in the land of Egypt. The act of *hachnasat orchim*, of welcoming guests, is one of the primary acts of *gmilut hasadim*, acts of lovingkindness. The idea of sanctuary too is found in Torah as the Israelites are told that upon settling the land they are to establish cities of refuge to protect those who are unjustly accused from vigilante mob justice. And beyond our sacred texts, Jewish history is replete with stories of immigration. Even within the last century, our ancestors have sought a better life by immigrating to this country. And within the last century, our ancestors have been refugees fleeing oppression and genocide. Both our Jewish spiritual teachings and our history compel us to act on behalf of the immigrant and the refugee.

### TBH Immigration and Refugee Task Force

The TBH Immigration and Refugee Task Force has hosted several meetings at the synagogue, including one where Michael Ramos from the Church Council of Greater Seattle spoke from his respected experience as head of social justice ministries. At these meetings, representatives from at least nine other South Sound congregations have shared their commitment to respond to the urgent needs of targeted immigrants and refugees. The task force has developed this Proposal after discussion with members of the board, individual TBH members, at a congregational meeting of 40 participants on 11/5/17, and reviewing written comments.

### Proposal

As a congregation committed to Tikkun Olam, we propose the following:

1. The Immigration and Refugee Task Force is recognized by the TBH Board as a Task Force whose purpose is to work within the TBH community, with other local faith communities, and with other local organizations to promote safety and justice for our neighbors regardless of immigration status.

2. TBH supports advocating for immigrants regardless of immigration status, with the goal being to influence public policies through actions such as: writing letters to the editor; contacting government officials; participating in demonstrations.

3. TBH supports offering assistance/accompaniment to immigrants regardless of immigration status. This could include: volunteering with Cielo; accompanying individuals to appointments or hearings; providing transportation.

4. The Immigration and Refugee Task Force will explore the possibility of utilizing TBH for short or long-term physical sanctuary in partnership with other local faith organizations. The Task Force will explore legal implications, TBH building accommodations and safety, the development of criteria related to accepting individuals for sanctuary and a process by which rapid decisions could be made. Within the next four months, the Task Force commits to submitting to the Board a recommendation regarding the use of TBH for physical sanctuary and will submit monthly updates to the Board until then.

5. The Task Force will be responsible for distribution of relevant information to the congregation, plan congregational discussions for member input, and maintain a list of concerns raised by congregants and identified responses and solutions. The list will be available to all members upon request.