

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FULFILLING COMMITMENT AS A SANCTUARY CONGREGATION, OLYMPIA SYNAGOGUE WELCOMES MOTHER AND CHILD

Olympia, WA—Following on a commitment made last year to become a Sanctuary congregation, Temple Beth Hatfiloh announced on Thursday that it has welcomed Maria Pablo Matias and her child into Sanctuary. A victim of domestic violence, Maria and her child fled their native Guatemala only to have their petition for asylum denied. Rather than face deportation, they have chosen to enter sanctuary while a legal remedy is sought.

Temple Beth Hatfiloh officially became a Sanctuary congregation in August, 2018 after a long, congregation-wide process of study, discussion and reflection, thus joining the over 1100 congregations across the country that have taken a similar step. The leadership and members of the congregation see this act as fulfilling its spiritual mission and honoring Jewish history.

“Temple Beth Hatfiloh welcomes our guests in alignment with our deep Jewish values and religious teachings to welcome the strangers among us,” said Rabbi Seth Goldstein, who has served as the spiritual leader of Temple Beth Hatfiloh for 16 years. “Both our Jewish spiritual teaching and our Jewish history of migration and immigration compel us to action.”

TBH is joined in the effort by the Greater South Sound Network for Immigration and Refugee Support, a coalition of 16 local Olympia-area faith communities who have pledged mutual support to congregations offering sanctuary.

“We are living in troubled times in this country, times that continue to see racist, xenophobic and violent rhetoric used to vilify both documented and undocumented immigrants. It is imperative that people of good will, people of faith, come together to challenge unjust, inhumane acts perpetrated in our name at the border. To offer sanctuary to those living in fear,” said the Rev. Carol McKinley, Affiliated Minister at the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation. “Today, as Temple Beth Hatfiloh opens its doors to offer sanctuary, we Olympia communities of faith pledge our support to this congregation in this compassionate and just act.”

TBH’s Sanctuary efforts grew out of the decision in December, 2016 by the City of Olympia to become a Sanctuary City. In the wake of that decision, a community organization called Strengthening Sanctuary was founded to promote the values and actions of immigrant justice in the Olympia community. Faith communities, recognizing their historic and unique position to offer sanctuary to those in need, formed the Network while individual congregations investigated the possibility of sanctuary.

TBH has also partnered with CIELO, a local immigrant support organization, as well as the Church Council of Greater Seattle and Washington Immigration Solidarity Network, and national Jewish organizations T’ruah and HIAS as part of a national network working towards Sanctuary, not deportation.

“The Church Council of Greater Seattle applauds TBH in its decision to offer the loving hospitality of sanctuary. The experience of Maria and her son cry out for immigration protocols that recognize that victims of domestic violence deserve the right to asylum and to live in their adopted country in peace and unafraid,” said Michael Ramos, Executive Director of the Church Council of Greater Seattle. “We stand with TBH and all faith communities in our common work to alleviate suffering, remove fear and humanize and transform unjust immigration policies and practices.”

As part of this effort, Temple Beth Hatfiloh hopes to publicize the inhumanity of policies that separate families and loved ones, challenge the scapegoating and dehumanization of community members considered “other,” and advocate for a just and compassionate immigration and asylum policy in the United States.

TBH invites support in its Sanctuary work. Those seeking to volunteer may contact TBH at tbh@bethhatfiloh.org. Those seeking to make a financial contribution may do to the designated “Sanctuary Fund” through Interfaith Works, P.O. Box 1221, Olympia, WA 98507 or www.interfaith-works.org

Established in 1937, Temple Beth Hatfiloh is a center for Jewish life in the South Sound region, serving the spiritual, educational, cultural, and social needs of the Jewish community in Olympia and the surrounding area. TBH also fulfills its spiritual mission by engaging in acts of *tzedakah* (righteousness) and *tikkun olam* (repair of the world.) More information at www.bethhatfiloh.org