

Re-Launching the Sanctuary Movement:
Recognizing our History, Responding Faithfully to our Times

Upholding sanctuary means to build on historical and recent sanctuary efforts, rooted in the hospitality of faith communities. While we vocally support policies that are consistent with “sanctuary cities,” our traditions are motivated by breaking down barriers to human relationship, “standing on the side of love”: to provide companionship and hope, and – as a matter of justice – to change unjust policies, practices and narratives that lead to dehumanization, persecution and even in some cases, death.

In 2017, the Sanctuary Movement undertakes four interrelated actions:

1. Long-term, publicly communicated, hospitality in a congregation for individuals and families at particular risk of separation from loved ones, especially children, who may have an opportunity for legal protection and whose sharing of their experience will give voice to the need and value of true immigration reform: permanent residency and pathway to citizenship, family reunification, justice on the job and due process.
2. Rapid response hub and support congregations, who will serve as places of respite and refuge on a short-term basis in the case of local raids, sweeps or communal fear of harassment or hate violence, in conjunction with existing community efforts.
3. Accompaniment, as called upon, to access community services and even schools, hospitals and congregations (known as “sensitive locations”), as well as ICE appointments, court hearings and other scenarios where impacted individuals or communities may experience fear.
4. Solidarity in practice, a faithful, moral, lived commitment: to counter rhetoric and action that prevents immigrants or refugees from full participation in communal life; and, to change unjust laws so that equity and social justice benefit those who migrate to live and thrive.

Sanctuary, for our faith communities, is the declaration that, in embracing people who are vulnerable to deportation, hope remains alive as it is embodied in action. In the end, love wins. Sanctuary is a moral expression of faith, a reflection of conscience, a communal welcoming of the immigrant neighbor at our door. In so doing, we honor a higher law.

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