

## Questions and Answers about Sanctuary

### ***What is Sanctuary?***

The Sanctuary Movement is a growing movement of immigrant and faith communities who are standing with groups made vulnerable by the current political climate. Rooted in a long tradition of faith communities providing refuge to those fleeing unjust laws, it began in the 1980s when more than 500 congregations provided support for Central Americans coming to the US to flee civil wars in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. Eventually the US Govt granted Temporary Protected Status to the asylum seekers in 1990. By 1997, they were allowed to apply to become lawful residents. In 2014 with an escalation of deportations under the Obama administration, the sanctuary network was revived to bring attention to a broken immigration system. Churches took a stand against an unjust system that tears families apart and forces the 11 million undocumented people in the US, a majority of whom have lived in the nation for more than 10 years and contribute billions to the economy, to live in fear. The hope was to highlight the need for comprehensive immigration reform. With the current administration, virtually all marginalized communities have come under attack in one form or another. Hate crimes are on the rise, especially targeting Muslim, Middle Eastern and South Asian people. The poor are increasingly being denied basic human rights with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, housing vouchers and many other essential programs that pull millions of Americans out of poverty on the brink of deep cuts. When individuals find themselves in more than one of these categories of the marginalized, their discrimination is more than doubled. We are called to love our neighbors, regardless of race, sexuality, religion and wealth, with no exceptions. Read 1 Cor.12:22-26

### ***Is Sanctuary Legal?***

Some courts have ruled that harboring requires that the person being charged actually hide the person who is in violation of the law. Churches that publicly announce they are providing sanctuary are not in violation because there is no concealment. However, there is also case law that defines harboring as providing shelter. Churches offering sanctuary under this law will be in violation of the harboring statute. See "Welcome and the Law: When offering rides, providing safe-haven, or employment could be prosecuted" published by the Immigration office of the Office of the General Assembly, PCUSA. Remember, though, in your discernment process that as Presbyterians, our greatest allegiance is to the mandates of God, rather than the law of the land. When the two come in conflict, it is a tension we need to sit and grapple with.

### ***How do we learn more?***

1. Educate yourself: Learn about the history of the US Immigration System and how it works.
2. Learn from people at risk for deportation and start building relationships.
3. Connect with people doing Sanctuary (National Sanctuary Movement)
4. Articulate why you believe sanctuary work is important, and why you believe undocumented people should be allowed in the US
5. Build a team and start mobilizing your congregation
6. Assess the role and capacity of your congregation. Use a questionnaire available from the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc
7. Continue in prayerful critical reflection on how your congregation is in solidarity. Listen to the podcast Sanctuary Churches Who Controls the Story? For more explanation see [Sanctuary: A Discernment Guide for Congregations.](https://www.catholiclegalimmigration.com/sanctuary-a-discernment-guide-for-congregations) ([bit.ly/sanctuarydiscernment](https://bit.ly/sanctuarydiscernment))

## **Sanctuary Study Guide for Congregations** ([bit.ly/sanctuarydiscernment](http://bit.ly/sanctuarydiscernment))

### *Biblical Reflection on Loving our (immigrant) Neighbors*

Read Matt. 22:35-40, Mark 12:28-31, Luke 10:25-28 as well as Deut. 6:4-5, Lev. 19:18, 33-34  
Both Hebrew and Greek Testaments call us to love our neighbor and not to oppress the alien.

What does loving our neighbors look like? Read John 13:34-35 and John 15:12-13.

If we claim the immigrant as our neighbor, how are we to treat them? Read Luke 10:30-35

Who in your community is represented by the man stripped, beaten and left half-dead? What are some elements of the radical hospitality of the Samaritan? What are some ways your congregation can identify with some of these justifications for passing by a neighbor in need? How can I elevate the humanity and needs of those to whom I provide sanctuary above my own wants and fears? What are actions we can take or actions we should avoid so that our involvement in sanctuary is rooted in love? Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 as well as 1 Cor. 12:22-26.

*Sanctuary Movement Principles:* (Created by the Southern Arizona Sanctuary Coalition)

- Respect the leadership of directly affected people
- Be steadfast in our adherence to our own faith traditions
- Be relentlessly imaginative and brave
- Pledge our highest allegiance to the mandates of our faith and not to the laws of the land

### *PC(USA) General Assembly & Other Statements*

1988: On Dealing with Concerns Regarding the Sanctuary Movement and Refugees

1999: Transformation of Churches and Society through Encounter with New Neighbors

2016: Resolution Reaffirming the Ministry of Sanctuary by Congregations

For information on the legality of sanctuary, see "Welcome and the Law: When offering rides, providing safe-haven, or employment could be prosecuted," published by the Immigration Office of the Office of the General Assembly PC(USA)

### *Some actions that churches have already taken:*

- Use your resources to invest in immigrant communities, their businesses, legal funds, safe space
- Build relationships with immigrants, partnering with immigrant-led organizations
- Provide direct support with community education, accompanying your neighbors,
- Create a rapid response network,
- Host a "Know your rights" and family preparedness training. Check [ilrc.org](http://ilrc.org).

### *Resources:*

*National Sanctuary Movement Website; Protecting Immigrant Community Toolkit: Municipal Policy to Confront Mass Deportation and Criminalization; Immigrant Defense Project: Train the Trainer Workshop; Family Preparedness Plan; Know your Rights: Financial Safety; Raids Watch*