

Sanctuary

*A DISCERNMENT GUIDE
FOR CONGREGATIONS*



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Office of Public Witness
Presbyterian Church (USA)

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Introduction & History

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, including immigrants at risk of deportation.

Rooted in a long tradition of faith communities providing refuge to those fleeing unjust laws, the Sanctuary Movement was officially started 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. Though the immigrants were in grave danger of being killed if they returned to their home countries, the US government refused to recognize them as refugees and deported thousands of asylum seekers. To draw attention to the unjust immigration system and to protect the asylum seekers from deportation, churches partnered with immigrant-led organizations to participate in civil disobedience by openly housing immigrants who were being targeted for deportation. This drew national media and political attention to the civil wars in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador, in which the US government was deeply complicit, as well as the unjust treatment of asylum seekers fleeing violence. Ultimately, due to the power of the multitudes of people coming together to shed light on this injustice, the US government granted Temporary Protected Status to the Central American asylum seekers in 1990, meaning they would not be deportable and could obtain work permits, but were not offered a path to citizenship. In 1997, the asylum seekers were finally allowed to apply to become lawful permanent residents.

Since then, many congregations across denominations have continued to answer

the call to actively love our immigrant neighbors. 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 once again 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](#) and in taxes yearly, to live in fear as second-class citizens. In particular, the network wanted to highlight the need for [comprehensive immigration reform](#) that would offer these immigrants a pathway to citizenship.

With the 2016 election steeped in xenophobic, racist and nativist rhetoric and an administration that has promised to detain and deport millions of immigrants, congregations have further been galvanized to join the National Sanctuary Movement. While it is unclear how [the changes this administration](#) mandates on immigration policy and enforcement will play out, the National Sanctuary Movement will need to morph in strategy and tactic, from what sanctuary looked like in the 1980s and even 2016, to fit the needs of those impacted. It is important for congregations who want to participate in sanctuary work to stay proactively engaged and open-minded, so when the need arises, they can respond to movement.

Sanctuary for All

Sanctuary in this time cannot be narrow and simply for undocumented Central Americans. With the rhetoric of the current administration, virtually all marginalized communities have come under attack in one form or another. [Hate crimes are on the](#)

Sanctuary Movement Pledge

As people of faith and people of conscience, we pledge to resist the newly elected administration's policy proposals to target and deport millions of undocumented immigrants and discriminate against marginalized communities. We will open up our congregations and communities as sanctuary spaces for those targeted by hate, and work alongside our friends, families, and neighbors to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people.

[rise](#), particularly targeting Muslim, Middle Eastern, and South Asian people. All immigrants are facing the effects of xenophobic sentiments, regardless of documentation status. Protections for LGBTQ people have been revoked. Transgender people are discriminated against, sometimes violently, for merely existing. Mass incarceration, police brutality, the militarization of law enforcement and increased surveillance continue to disenfranchise and lead to the deaths of Black people. Furthermore, 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. In these circumstances, we need to be critical and thoughtful about who we are willing to provide sanctuary for, examining how our decisions on who to provide sanctuary to may further marginalize people of a particular religious belief, sexual orientation, gender identity or even criminal status.

As you contemplate how you can practice sanctuary in your daily life and as a congregation, it is important to keep sight of how you can do so holistically. It starts from understanding how the mechanisms of marginalization of various groups are overlapping and connected. For example, [the same policing and surveillance strategies, gang databases and for-profit prison companies that have led to the mass](#)

[incarceration of Black Americans](#) are being used to deport undocumented immigrants and even lawful permanent residents. Thus, to end deportations that continue to tear apart communities, one needs also to work to end mass incarceration. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that on an individual level, people with multiple marginalized identities face challenges that are unique due to the intersections of these identities (i.e. the sum of the parts produces something that is unique to the parts individually). For example, Black immigrants face discrimination distinct from non-Black immigrants and non-immigrant Blacks, and are thus disproportionately represented in immigration detention centers and targeted for removal due to the effects of racial profiling and mass incarceration. LGBTQ immigrants may have heightened stakes in avoiding deportation due to anti-LGBTQ violence in their countries of origin. Avoid the temptation to stick to a "single issue" story, but rather seek to understand how all of these fights are interconnected.

Being in Solidarity

We are called to love our neighbors, regardless of race, sexuality, religion and wealth, with no exceptions. We need to be in solidarity with people in and outside of our congregation who are suffering attacks from our government and society.

To be in solidarity requires an acknowledgement that we are interdependent

Sanctuary Movement Principles

1. *Respect the leadership of directly affected people*
2. *Be steadfast in our adherence to our own faith traditions*
3. *Be relentlessly imaginative and brave*
4. *Pledge our highest allegiance to the mandates of our faith and not to the laws of the land*

Created by the Southern Arizona Sanctuary Coalition

beings – we cannot thrive independently of others. This is illustrated in the Bible in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, describing how we are all individual parts that make up the body of Christ: *"On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it."* (1 Corinthians 12:22-26)

When we look upon another human, we must see them as indispensable to us and see the sacredness of God in them. This is our call to stand with the oppressed – to see them as an essential part of the Body of Christ with whom we are called to suffer and rejoice together.

Congregations supporting sanctuary have been in solidarity with immigrants in numerous ways, from hosting prayer vigils for those deported and the many lives lost on the perilous journey across the border to writing editorials in the local news in support of immigrants. Solidarity can be as simple as opening up church facilities for use by the local immigrant rights organi-

zation and providing child care for their events, or as complex as coordinating the logistics to house someone at the church who is being targeted for removal.

Regardless of how you or your congregation decide to practice sanctuary, being in

solidarity requires a long-term commitment, dedication of time and resources, and relationship building. Above all, solidarity requires putting the people you aim to be in solidarity with above yourself.

If the foot is ailing, one would not perform a

chest X-ray! In the same way, in the body of Christ, the solutions to the crisis immigrants are experiencing need to be from immigrants themselves who are under attack.

PC(USA) General Assembly & Other Statements

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has supported congregations and Presbyterians participating in the Sanctuary Movement since its inception in the 1980s. In fact, one of the leaders of the '80s movement, the Rev. John Fife of Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona, [said](#) "I was the envy of all my colleagues from different denominations during the 1980s because I was a Presbyterian. The Presbyterian Church has a whole history of policies [and] support for congregations that do sanctuary." The following are the official statements issued by the Office of the General Assembly affirming denominational support.

1984 *On Supporting Those Arrested for Working with Central American Refugees*

"Expresses its firm support and encouragement for these individuals and churches, who, from the base of their Christian convictions or for humanitarian reasons, have risked imprisonment in order to save the lives of refugees from Central America by helping them to avoid being sent back to the countries they have fled."

1985 *On Protesting Clandestine Government Surveillance of Church Meetings*

1986 *In Support of Refugees from Central America and Public Sanctuary*

"Reaffirm the guiding theological and ethical principles contained in the historical review of Presbyterian policy on immigration and refugee issues, and commit to rediscover its identity as a church of the stranger:

1988 *On Dealing With Concerns Regarding the Sanctuary Movement and Refugees*

(1) Christians are obligated by the loving will of God to seek to ensure that the basic needs of persons for food, clothes, shelter, and safety are met (Matt. 25: 35-40).

1999 *Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors*

(2) Christians believe in the intrinsic worth of each human as a person made in the image of God.

2014 *On the Global Crisis for LGBT People and Their Families: A Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Response*

(3) The Christian confession of Jesus Christ as Lord transforms "strangers" into neighbors who are welcomed into our communities.

(4) Churches are called to ministry with refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants, and to public witness on their behalf.

2016 *Resolution Reaffirming the Ministry of Sanctuary by Congregations*

(5) Christians have the responsibility to challenge and to shape government policy regarding refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.

(6) Love of neighbor requires Christians to seek justice for refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.

(7) Faithfulness to Christ means Christians always live in tension with national values and policies.

(8) Christians may affirm certain values in national and international life as consistent with their theological vision of human community."

Is Sanctuary Legal?

If you are thinking about participating in sanctuary, it is worthwhile to consult with an attorney about what is legal and what isn't. Congregations that offer sanctuary can certainly be charged with the crime of [harboring](#), but could they be convicted? The law forbids the act of harboring someone in a building who is known to be remaining in the U.S. in violation of the law. [Some courts have ruled](#) that harboring requires that the person being charged actually hide the person who is in violation of the law. Under this ruling, 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](#). If simple shelter with no concealment is harboring, then all of the churches offering sanctuary and any family member or friend with an undocumented person within their household is in violation of the harboring statute.

For more details about the legality of sanctuary, with jurisdiction-specific analysis, take a look at "[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, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and get in touch with immigration attorneys. While discerning your role in sanctuary in regards to law, it is important to remember 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 with one another, it is a tension we need to sit and grapple with.

Discernment Process

A guide to help you figure how you can practice sanctuary

1. Educate yourself

Learn about, how the history of the [US Immigration System](#) and how it works, the state and [experiences of undocumented immigrants in America today](#), [how people are targeted for deportation and removed](#), and your own family immigration history.

Seek out [different reasons](#) people have argued for why undocumented immigrants should be offered a pathway to citizenship. Follow the [current administration](#) to keep aware of where it stands on immigration policy and reform.

Sanctuary work is always local work. Find out more about the history of immigrants in your own community.

Remember that not all undocumented people are Latinos! There are people of many races and nationalities that become undocumented in the US, including [1 in 7](#) Asian immigrants and 1 in 6 Black immigrants. Black immigrants are [deported at rates higher](#) than other racial groups due to the overcriminalization of Black people. There are also [European undocumented immigrants](#), most of whom are white and experience the undocumented status differently because they are not racially assumed to be an immigrant.

Questions to consider include:

- What countries are the immigrants in your communities from?
- When were the major waves of immigration? What prompted these waves (pull factors from the US or push factors from their countries of origin)?
- What are some institutions (e.g. churches, community centers, restaurants, supermarkets) that are foundations to the immigrant community?
- Are immigrants integrated or segregated from other groups in your community?
- What is the overall perception of immigrants in your community – positive, negative or otherwise?

2. Learn from people at risk for deportation and start building relationships

When engaging in sanctuary, it is necessary for you to learn directly from the people who are at risk for deportation, so you should build relationships with them and hear their stories.

Seek out [stories](#) told by undocumented people. Learn about their [experiences](#) and their perspective for what is going on. Remember that undocumented people's lives are not necessarily defined by their documentation status – there is much power and vibrancy beyond the fear of deportation – and every story is different. Also, many immigrants at risk for deportation actually are documented. For example, people in the US with [Temporary Protected Status](#) are legally allowed to reside in the US. However, the federal government may choose to terminate their TPS status, despite many TPS status holders having built their lives in America.

There are many national groups you can follow that prioritize the voices of people at risk for deportation. There are also many research-oriented or legal organizations to follow for policy briefs, immigration-related tools and research reports.

Start building relationships with your local immigrant-led organizations. See if you have opportunities to attend their meetings and volunteer your time and/or resources. Find [your local immigration legal services/advocacy organizations](#), and branch out to local immigration organizing or community centers.

Watch the film [Journeying in Hope](#), which was produced by the Office of the General Assembly captures the strife felt by families and ministries on the border that are offering witness and support in the midst of this crisis. Learn more about how Presbyterians have been offering [Sanctuary](#).

Grassroots Immigration Networks

[National Day Labor Organizing Network](#) improves the lives of day laborers in the US by protecting and expanding their civil, labor and human rights. See if they have a local partner near you.

[United We DREAM](#) is the largest immigrant youth-led organization in the nation, with 55 affiliate organizations in 26 states, that organizes and advocates for the dignity and fair treatment of immigrant youth and families. See if they have a local partner near you.

[Fair Immigration Reform Movement](#) is a national coalition of grassroots organizations fighting for immigrant rights at the local, state and federal level led by 44 organizations across 32 states.

[Not1more Deportation](#) (#Not1More) is a collaboration that challenges unjust immigration laws by reversing unjust policy, building migrant power and creating just, inclusive immigration policies.

Research, Policy and Resource Centers

[Migration Policy Institute](#) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank dedicated to analyzing the movement of people worldwide.

[American Immigration Council](#) promotes laws, policies, and attitudes that honor immigrants through research and policy analysis, litigation and communications, and international exchange.

[Immigrant Defense Project](#) secures justice for immigrants in by fighting against deportation and detention through litigation, advocacy, providing legal advice, training, and resources.

[Immigration Legal Resource Center](#) works with and educates immigrants, community organizations, and the legal sector to build a democratic society that values the rights of all people.

[National Immigration Law Center](#) is dedicated to advancing the rights of low-income immigrants through impact litigation, policy analysis and advocacy, and strategic communications.

3. Connect with people doing Sanctuary

Connect with the [National Sanctuary Movement](#) and your local sanctuary coalition if one exists. Find a full list and their contact information on this [Google Map](#).

Be persistent and patient with connecting to these coalitions. Most of them do not have full-time staff whose job is to focus on sanctuary, so feel free to follow-up multiple times or engage in multiple ways if you cannot immediately get a response. The best way to get started is to join local coalition meetings to understand the dynamics of these groups.

4. Articulate why you believe sanctuary work is important, and why you believe undocumented people should be allowed in the US

To ensure that you and/or your congregation's involvement in sanctuary is sustainable, it is important to reflect on why you are participating in Sanctuary. Being able to clearly state your motivation to be a part of this work is essential to forming a cohesive team with a similar vision and also will be a foundation you can ground yourself on, as sanctuary can get discouraging, complicated, and messy.

Use this [tool](#) to help you reflect on where you stand.

5. Build a team and start mobilizing your congregation

Are there other people in your congregation who are like-minded? Bring them together and think about how you can move your congregation to take action on this issue. This group will need to be committed to this vision of sanctuary for all marginalized people in your community and needs to be willing to meet frequently, perhaps at least once every two weeks. If possible, include leaders from your church in this planning meeting, so you can maintain open communication with the wider congregation.

At this stage, start planting the seeds in your congregation to consider sanctuary. Preach about justice issues or meet with your pastor to discuss incorporating them into sermons and other teaching. Engage individuals, small groups or the entire congregation in prayer about issues related to immigration, immigration enforcement, deportation and detention. Host an event for people to learn about the struggles of their undocumented brothers and sisters, perhaps by bringing a speaker in from a local immigrant-led or immigration legal services organization or hosting a documentary screening. The goal of this stage is to educate your congregation and gauge where congregation members stand on issues around immigration.

6. Assess the role and capacity of your congregation

Assess the relationship your congregation currently has with immigrants, and envision the relationship that you or your congregation wants to have with immigrants.

Ask yourself:

- Are there currently immigrants in your congregations? Are they in leadership roles? Is that part of the vision of your church?
- Do you have any services or programs in a language other than English?
- Do you have any outreach programs that involve immigrants or partner with immigrant-led groups?

More questions are available in this [questionnaire](#) from the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc to gauge where your congregation is with engaging the immigrant community. For all the of questions that you answer "no" for, do you envision your congregation shifting to a place where you can answer "yes" in the future? What steps would your congregation have to take to get to that goal?

Not all congregations are called to providing physical sanctuary. There are a lot of ways to support your immigrant brothers and sisters. You can find a list of ways you can get involved on the following page.

7. Continue in prayerful critical reflection on how your congregation is in solidarity

Making a commitment to stand with your immigrant neighbors is a serious one — one that requires constant reflection so you don't lose sight of why you are doing this in the first place. It is easy for this work to become more about the logistics of the operation than about the people that people you are supporting.

Listen to the podcast [Sanctuary Churches Who Controls the Story?](#) to hear an example of how churches providing sanctuary have made missteps in taking control of the narrative.

Jeanette Vizguerra, who is currently in Sanctuary in Colorado shares in the podcast that either churches "don't understand it or they don't fully grasp [that I should have control over my own story]. For example, every Sunday there is a meeting of the church's immigration committee, and a lot of the times they would ignore my decisions. They would want the coalition coordinator to be present before deciding on something. And so I have to say, 'Hey, you need to understand that the coordinator is just that — a coordinator. So she's the liaison between all of you and all of us. But we are affected. We make the decision — and no one else — not even you.' And so it kinda falls on me to speak up for myself, but also for people who are newer at this, yes they are doing us a favor by giving us a safe place to stay, but we still get to make our own decisions."

She shares her experience is not unique, saying, "We have calls every week [with the other nine people who are in sanctuary at churches]. A lot of times, we talk about these sorts of things — about the frustrations we have because sometimes our churches are privileged people who want to make decisions about our cases or about how to manage our campaigns. It's a learning process for all of us."

As you do this sanctuary work, whether it's through contributing resources, advocacy, accompaniment or physically hosting someone at your church, it is important to hear out voices of those like Jeanette and to give those directly impacted as much agency as possible about how they want to be supported.

Defining Sanctuary Broadly

Not all congregations are called to provide physical sanctuary, meaning hosting a person at risk for deportation within the church facility indefinitely and providing for all of their food, meals, and clothing. There are many ways to be in solidarity with immigrants in your community and to work together to create a community that is safer for everyone.

The following are ideas and examples of some actions that churches have already taken.

Use your resources to invest in immigrant communities

- **Support immigrant-owned businesses.** Identify and support immigrant-owned businesses and those that pay immigrant employees fair wages.
- **Offer free space for community education events.** Finding safe spaces for immigrants to meet and organize can often be difficult. You can partner with immigrant organizations by offering up your space for their events for free. Make sure to take precautions to not put immigrants more at risk – do not publicly advertise that groups of undocumented immigrants will be at an event or publicly expose the identity of an undocumented person.
- **Provide financial support.** Fighting your immigration case can be expensive, on top of the overall cost of living. Fund-raise to cover the costs of legal filing fees, provide microloans or otherwise support vulnerable immigrant and refugee families.

Use your voice to fight for pro-immigrant policies

- **Speak out – change the narrative.** It is important for non-immigrants to be invested in helping others understand why they should support immigrants. Express support immigrants and refugees via social media or write an op-ed or letter to the editor for the local newspaper or magazine. Be sure to not disclose identifiable information about undocumented people or groups.
- **Advocate for pro-immigrant policy.** Federal, state and local policy all affect immigrants. Hold a phone bank, rally, or respond to a specific piece of legislation affecting immigrants or refugees. Set up a meeting with a representative and share with them why you believe immigrants should be protected in your community and what your church is doing to support immigrants.

Build relationships with immigrants

- **Partner with immigrant-led organizations.** These organizations look different depending on where you are. Some may be service provider nonprofits, while others may be community centers. Some may be religious institutions, while others may be activist groups. You will need to make an active effort and really listen to get a pulse of which groups immigrants trust and rely on. The local immigration legal services agency is a good place to start your search.
- **Offer services in languages other than English.** Linguistic barriers can be significant for immigrants to come to your congregation. Invest in translation sets for non-English speakers. Read excerpts of the sermon in other languages and engage in musical worship in other languages. Make sure to consult native speakers to ensure that you are providing language services most effectively.

Provide direct support to immigrants

- **Offer community education.** Immigrants often come to the US without the social and cultural knowledge that native-born US citizens take for granted. Partner with immigrant-led organizations to determine the needs of the community in your area. Some churches have offered English classes, registered people to vote, and encouraged civic engagement.
- **Host legal clinics.** Undocumented immigrants are not guaranteed legal services in the US, and getting access to the services is often very expensive. There are also many scams that prey on the fear of undocumented people. Partner with local immigration clinics to host free legal clinics.
- **Accompany your Neighbors.** Put pressure on Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and immigration court judges by accompanying your undocumented neighbors to their ICE check-ins and court hearings. Even if you have no legal expertise, simply showing up to show your support can put pressure on immigration enforcement officials. If you

know of undocumented people who are detained and need support, visit them at their detention centers and keep track of their cases to hold ICE accountable.

- **Create a rapid response network.** To fight against ICE raids, people have been forming networks that mobilize every time a raid is reported. People will show up at the site of the raid to hold a prayer vigil, film the raid on camera to make sure no rights are violated and be a presence to support the family. ([step-by-step guide](#))
- **Host Know Your Rights and Family Emergency Preparedness Trainings.** What should someone do if ICE shows up at their door? What rights are offered to undocumented immigrants? If a family member is detained by ICE, what is the plan to make sure the rest of the family is taken care of? The more knowledge undocumented people have about how to respond in these intense situations, the safer your community will be. Partner with legal and advocacy organizations to offer these workshops. ([step-by-step guide for KYR](#) and [Family Preparedness](#))

Offer or support physical sanctuary

- **Offer physical sanctuary.** This means you are agreeing to house, clothe, and feed a person or an entire family for an indefinite amount of time. It is a serious commitment that may have legal ramifications. If you are interested, make sure you have the legal counsel and resources necessary. Make sure the person seeking sanctuary has a full understanding of what is involved, and that you have their consent in every step of the process. Some churches offer sanctuary publicly, hoping that the public scrutiny will lead to a more favorable outcome, while others offer a place to stay privately. This needs to be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- **Support physical sanctuary.** While your congregation may not have the capacity to house someone, you can contribute resources like time, meal and clothing to support people in sanctuary.

Biblical Reflection

Loving our (immigrant) neighbors.

This is a discussion guide for you, your Bible study, Sunday school, congregation, or any other group of Christian people who are considering or are in the process of taking on sanctuary. The guide goes through Scriptures that compel us to love our neighbors (particularly those who are immigrants), illustrate what that call looks like in practice, and ask questions for you to reflect upon as you discern your calling to sanctuary work.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all recount a story in which a learned Jewish leader poses a question to Jesus – “‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:35–40, Mark 12:28–31, Luke 10:25–28).

These ideas weren’t radical to the Jewish audience – both commandments are found verbatim in the Jewish Torah, with the first commandment being found in Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and the second being found in Leviticus 19:18. In the same chapter of Leviticus, Moses reiterates the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself with more specificity. Leviticus 19:33–34 reads, “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

It is our call to love the immigrants living in our communities, but what does loving your neighbors actually look like?

Jesus doesn’t just leave us with the iterations of Old Testament commandments. In fact, he gives us a new commandment. In the Gospel of John, after Jesus washes his disciples’ feet at the last supper before his death on the cross, he imparts this onto his

disciples. He says, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35). He reiterates this call later the same evening, adding some illustration. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:12–13).

This is the gospel that Christ brings – that we have a new commandment now of living out a sacrificial love for each other, comparable to the unconditional love of Christ that propelled him to die for us on the cross. This, Jesus says, should be what Christians are known for.

What does living out this sacrificial love look like for us, particularly as we claim our immigrant neighbors our friends?

Jesus illustrates this love for us in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Though this is a well-known story, I invite you to read this parable again with fresh eyes, thinking about how this may apply to your own community, undocumented immigrants and the Sanctuary Movement.

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he

came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend’” (Luke 10:30–35).

Who in your community is represented by the man stripped, beaten and left half-dead?

Who in your community are the priests? The Levites? The Samaritan?

What are some elements of the radical hospitality of the Samaritan?

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. references this parable in his last sermon before he was assassinated, animating it for our modern-day context. He says, “Now, you know, we use our imagination a great deal to try to determine why the priest and the Levite didn’t stop. At times we say they were busy going to a church meeting, an ecclesiastical gathering, and they had to get on down to Jerusalem so they wouldn’t be late for their meeting. At other times we would speculate that there was a religious law that one who was engaged in religious ceremonies was not to touch a human body 24 hours before the ceremony. And every now and then we begin to wonder whether maybe they were not going down to Jerusalem, or down to Jericho, rather, to organize a Jericho Road Improvement Association. That’s a possi-

bility. Maybe they felt it was better to deal with the problem from the causal root, rather than to get bogged down with an individual effect.”

What are some ways you or your congregation can identify with some of these justifications for passing by a neighbor in need, and instead being focused on religious meetings, rule of law or even root causes?

King adds his own take on the parable, saying, “But I’m going to tell you what my imagination tells me. It’s possible that those men were afraid. You see, the Jericho Road is a dangerous road. ... It’s a winding, meandering road. It’s really conducive for ambushing. ... In the days of Jesus it came to be known as the ‘Bloody Pass.’ And you know, it’s possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. Or it’s possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking, and he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy seizure. And so the first question that the priest asked, the first question that the Levite asked was, ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’

“But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’ That’s the question before you tonight. Not, ‘If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to my job?’ Not, ‘If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to all of the hours that I usually spend in my office every day and every week as a pastor?’ The question is not, ‘If I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me?’ The question is, ‘If I do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them?’ That’s the question.”

What we learn is that the Samaritan wasn’t just loving his neighbor as himself through charity. The Samaritan doesn’t even fulfill the commandment through his hospitality, though that’s important and necessary.

Rather, the Samaritan fulfills the commandment by elevating the neighbor above himself. This is the radical new commandment Jesus talks about in John.

When I participate in the Sanctuary Movement, how can I elevate the humanity and needs of those I am providing sanctuary for above my own wants, desires or even fears?

When I participate in sanctuary, am I asking, “If I stop to help undocumented people, what will happen to me?” or “If I don’t stop to help undocumented people, what will happen to them?”

An analysis of this parable would be incomplete without recognizing the tension between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus’ context. Jesus told this parable to a Jewish audience, in response to the query of a Jewish scribe. In his time, Jewish people held Samaritans in contempt, as they deemed that Samaritans were not part of God’s chosen people.

However, in this story, two Jewish leaders passed by the opportunity to love their neighbors, and it is the Samaritan, the lower on the social, or perhaps even racial, hierarchy that fulfills the commandments of Jesus. Jesus says there is much to learn from the conduct of the Samaritan, and much to be unlearned about Jewish traditions of religious purity, righteousness or even safety.

Who in your community does mainstream society embrace, due to race, class, immigration status, gender, etc.? Who is looked down upon?

When you participate in sanctuary work, who do you think the “hero” of your story is – a “Jew” or a “Samaritan”?

What are things you may need to unlearn to fully love your immigrant neighbors and participate in sanctuary work?

In a letter to the early church of Corinth, Paul gives us good food for thought about this love to which we are called. His statement begins by reminding us of what love is not.

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of

angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

What are actions we can take or actions we should avoid so that our involvement in sanctuary is rooted in love and:

- not only speech saying that “we welcome immigrants”?
- not only gaining knowledge about the issue?
- not only faith that “it will work out”?
- not only charity or hardship that redirects the attention on ourselves?

Rather, this is what love is: “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

What are actions we can take or actions we should avoid so that our involvement in sanctuary is rooted in:

- love that is patient and not focused on efficiency or process?
- love that is kind and not focused on results?
- love that doesn’t insist on our own way and sideline the ones we are loving?
- love that endures and is hopeful, even when circumstances are not as desired?

It is often easy to forget why we are called to love our neighbor, and the radical vision of love we are called to. Continue to meditate on these questions regularly so we can ensure our work in sanctuary is focused on fully embracing the people we are called to love rather than ourselves.

Narrative

The stories of people in Sanctuary

Jeanette Vizguerra *Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition*

Jeanette Vizguerra is a leader with We Belong Together, a group that campaigns on immigration policy. This excerpt is from an [op-ed](#) published in The New York Times on February 24, 2017.

This year is my 20th in Denver, but I may have to spend it in the basement of the First Unitarian Church instead of my own home. When I wake up in the room set up for me here, my first thought every day is who will pick up my children from school.

Last week, Immigration and Customs Enforcement refused to extend my stay of deportation. I sought sanctuary in the church because, like that of millions of other immigrants, my future in this country was thrown into doubt. Thanks to President Trump's new policy, every undocumented person is a priority for eviction from this country.

In my years here, I have witnessed many injustices and have been involved in community organizing against them, including as a co-host of a [radio show](#) here. After paying taxes for two decades, spending thousands of dollars on my immigration case and fighting my deportation for eight years, I am not giving up now.

In 2009, I [was stopped](#) by a police officer, and that changed everything. The inspection sticker on my car had expired, and I had been unable to renew it. Before the officer asked for my license, he said, "Are you legal or illegal in this country?" I knew my rights and answered, "I am not going to answer that question." He arrested me, and while searching my bag found documents that bore my real name and date of birth but a made-up Social Security number. I needed these to apply for a third job — on top of the two, as a house cleaner and a janitor, I was already doing. I pleaded guilty to a third-degree misdemeanor for attempted possession of a forged instrument.

To many, this sounds like a serious charge, but what some might call criminal is a question of survival for most of the people who build your homes and keep them clean. You accept our labor but won't provide the

piece of paper that recognizes our equal humanity.

I decided not to hide my battle against deportation but to fight publicly to draw attention to the unfairness of the system. I wanted to inspire my community to step out of the shadows and raise its voices. In 2011, a judge denied my application for cancellation of removal, saying that my family's suffering if I was deported would be neither extreme nor unusual. I appealed the ruling.



My three younger children, aged 6, 10 and 12, are all citizens (I also have an adult daughter who has Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status); my husband is a noncitizen. What would become of them if I was deported? What I see is that when my children are with me they feel safe, and their grades and self-esteem improve. But because of the fear of separation, they have also received treatment for depression and anxiety. There are millions of children like them in the United States.

While I was waiting for my appeal proceedings, in September 2012 I received news that my mother was gravely ill. After so many years, I had to say goodbye or something inside me would die. Leaving my children with their father, I made the journey to

Mexico.

My mother died while I was on the plane. I made it just for her funeral. In April 2013, I returned to the United States, walking across mountains and desert until my feet were destroyed. I was detained by Border Patrol in Texas. While I was held there, I called my family and activist friends to tell them what had happened. Thanks to my community and my lawyer, I was released with a stay of removal and an order of supervision. That stay was renewed five times.

My sixth stay of removal expired this month. On Feb. 15, I had a check-in scheduled with I.C.E. officials. But, after seeing how, in Arizona, [I.C.E. had arrested](#) and immediately deported another mother the week before, I followed my intuition and sought sanctuary. When my lawyer and the pastor at the First Unitarian Church went to the appointment in my place, I.C.E. agents were waiting, ready to arrest me.

Now that President Trump has unveiled his plan to criminalize us and make us live in

fear, entire communities are under threat. My people here in Denver are keeping their heads held high. The nation saw this spirit in the [Day Without Immigrants](#) actions, and we have allies countrywide, in schools and faith communities, on farm fields and in restaurants.

Their example inspires me to [continue the fight](#) until we are all able to walk the street freely. But it is not easy to be so public, and — grateful as I am for the support of the [Sanctuary Coalition](#) — it is hard to live in a church instead of my home. Perhaps you've seen the hashtag [#JeanetteBelongsHere](#). The United States is the country of my children. I will stay here because it is my home. I will not leave.

Angela Navarro

*New Sanctuary Movement
of Philadelphia*

"I'm taking sanctuary for my own life, my family, and the entire immigrant community. I have lived in fear for over 10 years and I can't continue living this way." After living in Sanctuary for 58 days, Angela Navarro stopped her final deportation order! To commemorate the occasion, Angela wrote a community prayer to end deportations and support those in Sanctuary.



Damos gracias a Dios porque ganamos la campana de Angela. We thank God because we won Angela's campaign.

Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!
[We'll keep fighting, justice for all!]

Por todos los que se unieron a luchar por mi campana.

[For everyone who united in my campaign]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Porque la campana fue un éxito.

[Because the campaign was a success.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por vivir tanto tiempo en una desobediencia civil sin poder salir de la iglesia.

[For living so long in civil disobedience without leaving the church.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Para todos en Santuario.

[For everyone in Sanctuary.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por Rosa en Santuario en Tucson.

[For Rosa in Sanctuary in Tucson.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por Misael en Santuario en Phoenix.

[For Misael in Sanctuary in Phoenix.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por Arturo en Santuario en Denver.

[For Arturo in Sanctuary in Denver.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por vivir 11 años en las sombras por su orden de deportación.

[For living 11 years in the shadows because of a deportation order.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por todos que todavía no son libres por tener una orden de deportación.
[For all who are not free because of a deportation order.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Para que Inmigración cancele todas las deportación.
[So that Immigration cancels all deportations.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por el sufrimiento de las familias.
[For the suffering of families.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por los niños que son afectados por la deportación de sus padres.
[For the children affected by the deportation of their parents.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por los niños que siguen cruzando la frontera.
[For the kids who continue to cross the border.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por los que mueren tratando de cruzar la frontera.
[For those who die trying to cross the desert.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Para los niños que no tienen oportunidad.
[For the children that don't have any opportunities.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Para terminar con la violencia en Philadelphia, Honduras y todo el mundo.
[To end violence in Philadelphia, Honduras, and throughout the world.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Para que haya paz y tranquilidad.
[So that there's peace and tranquility.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Para que nos traten igual.
[So that we're all treated equally.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Para que haya leyes justas.
[So that there are just laws.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Para que todo mundo se una a la lucha.
[So that everyone joins in the struggle]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por la solidaridad de los hermanos.
[For solidarity as brothers and sisters.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Por la fe que nos une.
[For the faith that unites us.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Para crear comunidades mas sanas.
[To create healthier communities.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

En los pasos de Dr. Martin Luther King y todos los líderes que luchan por los derechos civiles.
[In the footsteps of Dr. Martin Luther King and all leaders for civil rights.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Porque todos somos hijos de Dios y merecemos mejores oportunidades.
[Because we're all children of God and deserve better opportunities.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Nos mantendremos luchando hasta que ganemos igualdad, paz, y no más deportaciones.
[We will keep fighting until we achieve equality, peace, and an end to deportations.]
Seguimos luchando, justicia para todos!

Read about her campaign [here](#).

Education & Resources

What are some resources other churches in sanctuary have utilized?

Find resources on the [National Sanctuary Movement website](#). They are in the process of updating them, so the most updated versions will be there. Make sure to take a look at the “Inter-faith Sanctuary Toolkit” that gives you an overview of what the process of physical sanctuary looks like and the “Vigil Liturgy resource” that contains bilingual prayers, songs, Scriptures, and sermon/bible study guides about immigration and sanctuary

Watch this [webinar](#) produced by the Synod of the Northeast and the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.

Read a [guide](#) to setting up a rapid response network to respond to ICE raids in your community. Read more about this approach [in action](#) with the New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia.

How can you or your church take part in defending your community from unjust immigration enforcement?

[Learn, Share, Fight Back: The Short Immigration Guide to How Arrests & Convictions Separate Families](#)

Immigrant Defense Project, 2014, 10 pages

Many of us know family members and friends who have been detained and deported because of arrests and convictions. Learn about what changes need to be made to our immigration laws to fight back and keep our families together.

[Defend Against ICE Raids and Community Arrests: A Toolkit to Prepare and Protect Our Communities](#)

Immigrant Defense Project, Center for Constitutional Rights, 2017, Entire Toolkit: 212 pages, Without Appendices: 44 pages

Drawing on wisdom gained from the Bush and Obama eras, this is the first comprehensive guide and organizing resource to fight back against the Trump administration’s efforts to criminalize communities and deport millions of people. It’s a very comprehensive explanation of how ICE is structured and operates, what people at risk for deportation can do to be prepared, and what communities can do to defend from and respond to ICE raids. Appendices include sources, summaries of reports of ICE arrests reported to the Immigrant Defense Project, and narratives of specific people targeted for deportation that had mass media coverage.

[Mijente: Community Defense Zone Guide](#)

Mijente, February 2017, 30 pages

This document lays out a roadmap for setting up Community Defense Zone campaigns in local communities. The templates are meant to be adaptable for small towns and big cities, relevant to red states and blue states, and meant to get us beyond our usual circles. This guide is best paired with other “Know Your Rights” materials.

[Protecting Immigrant Community Toolkit: Municipal Policy to Confront Mass Deportation and Criminalization](#)

Center for Popular Democracy, March 2017, 72 pages

This is a comprehensive, up-to-date guide to what it means to be a “Sanctuary City” and details mechanisms by which ICE can collaborate with local law enforcement. This guide also explains how mass incarceration is a driver of deportation.

[A Brief Guide for Sharing Reports of Raids on Social Media](#)

Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), February 2017, 1 page

Misinformation is harmful to communities, amplifies fear, and strains limited resources. This one-page guide covers how to responsibly verify, share, and report information about immigration raids so we can be organized and help communities best protect themselves.

What are some resources to help myself and people in our community know our rights?

[Immigrant Defense Project: Train the Trainer Workshop](#)

Immigrant Defense Project, March 2017, [two-hour video](#), [144 slides](#)

This workshop answers questions such as: What rights do individuals have during an ICE raid, when questioned or searched at the airport, or during an interaction with immigration or law enforcement at home or in public? How can you help your clients, community members and others invoke their rights and remain safe? What are the tactics that immigration and federal law enforcement use during an arrest, investigation or encounter and how can individuals protect themselves?

[Know Your Rights: When Stopped by Police, Immigration Agents, or FBI](#)

American Civil Liberties Union, 2017, 1 page, Video, Multilingual

[Raids Watch: Know Your Rights](#)

American Civil Liberties Union, 2017, 1 page, Video, Multilingual

[Asian Americans Advancing Justice: Know Your Rights Resources](#)

AAAJ, 2017, 1 page, Videos, Cards, Multilingual (Asian Languages)

What are some ways a person who is at risk for deportation can do to prepare in case anything happens (Family & Financial Preparedness)?

[Family Preparedness Plan](#)

Immigrant Legal Resource Center, March 2017, 14 pages

Every family should have a Family Preparedness Plan to help reduce the stress of the unexpected. This packet helps everyone create such a plan, regardless of immigration status. However,

because of the additional challenges immigrant and mixed status families face, there is additional advice for immigrants.

Know Your Rights: Financial Safety

National Council of La Raza, March 2017, 5 pages

This checklist is designed to help you prepare if you are concerned that you may have to leave the country without warning. It includes a list of your financial rights and steps to take for your financial security.

How can you support people who are detained or have deportation proceedings?

Detainee Support Program

Black Alliance for Justice Immigration, February 2017, 8 pages

This toolkit helps engage and educate Black Immigrant Network members, directly impacted people and allies with information needed to navigate visits to immigrant detention centers in the United States, and to help Black-led organizations start visitation program. It is also a helpful guide more generally on how to navigate the immigration detention system.

Deportation Defense: A Guide for Members of Congress and Other Elected Officials

United We Dream, June 2014, 55 pages

This manual helps to inform members of Congress and other elected officials about the role that they can play in stopping the deportation of their constituents and other community members. The manual provides a step-by-step process on how to successfully intervene in these situations. Members of Congress and other elected officials have successfully advocated for individuals in removal proceedings for years and continue to employ this process to help immigrant communities even today. This is also a useful resource for community advocates and people in deportation proceedings seeking support from their elected officials.