

Talking Points for Sanctuary-Supporting Congregational Votes

Background

The SpringHouse Sanctuary Task Force emerged out of conversations that started in December of 2016 in response to the election. It began meeting formally after representatives from all three churches were appointed to serve on it.

All three congregations' Councils/Boards met to consider the proposal that we, collectively, enter into a discernment process about whether SpringHouse and its member congregations would be sanctuary, sanctuary-supporting or neither. All three Councils/Boards supported this discernment process to last from February 2017 through April/May of 2017 with a vote to be taken on a recommendation from the SpringHouse Sanctuary Task Force by all three congregations at the end of the discernment process

In order to facilitate the discernment process, three educational/listening sessions were scheduled to cover Theological Groundings of Sanctuary, Legal Questions and Ramifications of Sanctuary and Logistical Questions surrounding Sanctuary. In addition, members of the SpringHouse Sanctuary Task Force researched questions of insurance, attended several ISAIAH Sanctuary trainings and meetings, attended Navigate Minnesota's training on ICE intervention/immigrant support, met with members of the Kitchen Committee, shared personal stories from our own experiences with supporting immigrant families and talked with immigrant justice organizations (such as MIRAC, Navigate Minnesota and Mijente) to determine what both the needs from undocumented folks are and what SpringHouse's capacity is.

Based on all the information we gathered from the above, we made the following proposal and included future work and implications:

Proposal

Given this background and discernment, the SpringHouse Sanctuary Task Force recommends that each congregation and SpringHouse vote to become Sanctuary-supporting.

By Sanctuary-supporting we mean that we will provide material, spiritual and emotional support to a partner congregation that has voted to be sanctuary should the need arise. Additionally, this will be a public stance.

Future Work and Implications

The SpringHouse Sanctuary Task Force will continue to meet for 4-6 months and is exploring additional ways for SpringHouse and its member churches to witness to immigrant justice through a solidarity lens. In particular, each congregation is exploring its denomination's "Immigrant Welcoming" processes and other avenues to act in solidarity with immigrants and immigrant families facing the harsh and significant consequences of the current immigration policies in the US.

The below is one example of such solidarity work that might be engaged.

Solidarity Safety Net

A project of MARCH: Multifaith Anti-Racism, Change, & Healing

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. 4 They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. 5 Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. 6 And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. [Isaiah 61:1-6]

Overview

In the current political climate, on both the state and national levels, our most vulnerable communities are facing unprecedented threats to their safety, freedom, and access to the basic resources needed to survive and flourish. We anticipate the continuing escalation of draconian policies targeting people of color, immigrants, refugees, LGBTQIA+ people, the disabled, and others. Additionally, we anticipate an increased backlash against those who resist these policies and laws, including and especially organizers, activists, and leaders of frontline communities.

People of faith and conscience are compelled now, more than ever, to embody an unwavering spiritual practice of resistance and solidarity alongside those who are being most targeted and harmed. Our many and diverse faith traditions all call us, like the Midwives of ancient Egypt, to resist the violence of the state, and stay loyal to the Sacred, which always stands on the side of the marginalized.

Our congregations and faith communities have significant resources to leverage, and together, we can create a kind of “safety net” for organizations and communities who face repression and violence in these times. In addition to the laudable surge in commitment from our congregations to providing physical sanctuary to immigrants and refugees, we must assess the material, financial, and human resources that we can offer to support the organizing and resistance of those most directly targeted. Although we don't know exactly what will be needed in the coming months and years, by creating a network of congregations who have already assessed and committed to offering their resources, together we can be ready to agilely deploy concrete help to our neighbors whenever the need arises.

DRAFT - Please do not circulate

Contact Rev. Ashley Horan (muusja1@gmail.com)
or Arif Mamdani (arif@kaleo.center) for more info

How It Works

- MARCH will help congregations in the Twin Cities area to do an Asset Map of their resources, and discern what they are ready and willing to offer quickly when asked. Congregations will be asked to consider resources such as infrastructure (meeting space, office space, copier use, equipment use, etc.), financial support (special collections, fiscal sponsorship of emerging organizations, grant writing skills, budget line commitments, etc.), and human resources (staff time, administrative support, specialized skills from members offered pro-bono, etc.).
- Simultaneously, MARCH will meet with key community partners and organizers and hear about what frontline communities most anticipate needing in the coming months and years. Our congregational Asset Mapping process will be shaped by the needs of the communities with whom we are in solidarity.
- MARCH will create a resource list of available assets among our Solidarity Safety Net congregations, and make that list available to emerging and existing organizations, and organizers from frontline communities. Over time, as awareness of this resource exists, we anticipate staying in regular communication with congregations and organizations, responding to shifting needs as they arise.

Core Values of the Solidarity Safety Net Project

- We are committed to moving resources as quickly and nimbly as possible, without hoarding or a scarcity mentality, with faith that our communities will continue to respond with abundance as needs arise.
- We believe that communities most directly impacted by structural oppression and violence know best what they need to survive and thrive. We trust frontline communities' assessments of their own experiences, and will not create unnecessary barriers for accessing resources. Likewise, we will try to make as many resources as possible available to a variety of organizations and communities, without showing preference to any one group or constituency.
- We will work to create a structure that allows us to be as quickly responsive as possible, matching needs with resources efficiently and expeditiously.
- We believe that the exchange of material support can also be an important avenue for building relationships and our Movements for justice. We encourage communities--whether receiving or providing resources--to move beyond a transactional relationship toward trust, mutuality, and accountability.

RESOURCES:

Meeting Space

- Kitchen
- Small group
- Large group
- Sanctuary
- Other
- Outdoor

Office Equipment/Supplies

- Copier
- Fax
- Laminator
- Paper folder
- Scanner
- Postage machine
- Projector/screen
- AV Equipment
- Sound equipment (portable)
- Cameras
- Recording equipment/studio
- Wifi
- Paper
- Art supplies
- Computer

Kitchen

- Industrial coffee pots
- Carafes
- Large pots, pans
- Disposable silverware, plates, cups, napkins
- Food service (meals)
- Stove/Oven/Refrigeration

Building

- Mailing address
- Ongoing office space

In-Kind Contributions

- Housing/shelter in congregant houses
 - Short term
 - Long term
- Legal
- Medical
- Social work
- Body work
- Mental health
- Childcare for meetings
- Transportation
- Frequent flyer miles
- Organizational development/consulting
- Typing/admin/database management
- Graphic design
- Social media management
- Video production
- Web development
- Database management/creation
- Vans/trucks/lendable vehicles
- Musicians/music equipment
- Grant writing

Financial

- Special collections
 - Budget line item
 - Pool of cash for rapid response
 - Fiscal sponsorship
 - Fundraising infrastructure
-

Talking Points:

- Across the US, there are only 9 people who have taken sanctuary in a religious community. Sanctuary is not the stated need from the immigrant justice community. Instead, the ask is for other forms of solidarity.
- Being publicly identified as Sanctuary-Supporting is being used as a co-equal status for sanctuary justice by ISAI AH and other immigrant justice efforts.
- We determined that there did not exist the human capacity/time/energy to support someone in sanctuary housed within SpringHouse with any degree of reliability and integrity.