



February 23, 2018

### 1st UU is a Full Sanctuary Church!

At the Board of Directors meeting on February 21, we approved a motion to move from a Sanctuary-Supporting Church to a Full-Sanctuary Church. This decision has followed 5 months of careful deliberation and information gathering. Following the Congregational Resolution in support of Immigration Rights and Sanctuary, the Board had a number of questions that we needed to answer before committing our congregation to provide Sanctuary for immigrants seeking time to resolve their legal status. These questions involved finances, space considerations, remodeling implications, available volunteer support, legal liability, and the actual need for this Sanctuary space. Each month we have tried to update you on this discernment process and have invited your comments and questions. Most of these questions have been addressed if not fully resolved:

1. A Sanctuary Steering Committee has been established to manage supporting sanctuary. The Committee estimates a maximum annual operating cost of \$7,220 for hosting a guest (food, toiletries...). That cost assumes occupancy for 365 days. In addition, these operational costs will likely be offset by material donations from our members and the 6 other sanctuary-supporting faith communities in SE MN.
2. The remodeling costs for an energy efficient egress window, fire door with lock, and smoke and CO detectors are small (\$3,600), and these changes will be useful in the presence or absence of a sanctuary guest. There will also be costs for furnishing the guest room. The Board has established a Sanctuary Support Fund (separate from the budget line item) to allow cash donations from members and supporting Churches and individuals. [This Fund will be used for 1-time costs such as remodeling, furnishings, and support for other Sanctuary Churches and organizations that support this movement.]
3. The Steering Committee has already enrolled 36 congregants as volunteers. [Sign-up sheets are available Sundays in the Commons.]
4. The Racial Justice Task Group and PAC Team have written a Sanctuary Policy to guide the church and guest regarding responsibilities and expectations. The Steering Committee meets monthly with other Sanctuary and Sanctuary Support faith groups for communication and to develop relationships throughout the community. A number of other churches look to 1st UU for information about the Sanctuary movement and process and are looking to become Sanctuary-Support Churches and to support us in this work.
5. There is a legal opinion about the general risks from the Dorsey law firm, and we have been connected by Legal Corps to 2 pro bono attorneys who are writing a memorandum on our particular liabilities and how to reduce risk.
6. The use of the Conference Room as a sanctuary guest room may reduce our space flexibility for meetings and Religious Education. We hope that the juxtaposition of this inconvenience compared to the life challenges facing immigrants is a good lesson about privilege for ourselves and our children.

We know that we do not have consensus amongst our congregation or the Board about being a Full-Sanctuary Church. We hope, however, that we will all see the moral imperative of these actions, the careful discernment that has occurred, and the democratic process that we use. We are grateful for our Church's witnessing and advocacy and are excited to be in a position to be a Sanctuary Church.

In the spirit and practice of justice,

Jerry Katzmann, President  
Gail Bishop, Vice President  
Ann Hutton, Secretary  
Garth Nelson, Treasurer

Charyssa Cobb, Director  
Randy Crawford, Director  
Katie Thompson-Jewell,  
Director

Greg Turosak, Director  
Chris Wendt, Director

Dear friends,

As our church moves into becoming a full Sanctuary Church, I'm reminded of these words shared in services in October, excerpted from Judith Terzi:

Jesús and María, step out of the shadows,  
crawl out of the caverns that nurture despair.  
The skies are clearing, relinquish your fear, at least for now.

Becoming a Sanctuary Church does not fix an unjust immigration system. It does not release the fear that some feel in our country because of their ethnic heritage or the color of their skin. But it does offer some clearing sky, at least for now, for those who simply need to know there is solidarity and compassion alive in a world that is too often filled with the opposite.

For individuals seeking Sanctuary, or to those who might consider it were they not so terrified by the public rhetoric, and for the wider public, the growing coalition of congregations and other communities proclaiming that they will use their space and leverage their resources to help tip the scale of injustice, ever so slightly, says the system is broken. It says our religious and ethical perspectives call us to compassionate solidarity, to be mindful of the institutional privilege we have, and to wield it in whatever ways possible to open up our doors to our neighbors, and let our love lead us beyond our borders.

I know this decision was not reached lightly. I know that there are various opinions within this church. And I know that there are some questions that can't, with any certainty, be answered.

And any justice work often calls us into the unknown. We don't have all the answers - that is not only a theological perspective in our tradition, but also in our work for a more just and equitable world. Ours is a tradition whose core has always leaned toward justice. Even the street our church is on - Walden Lane, which gives imagery of the tranquil pond near Concord, Massachusetts, and the writings of Henry David Thoreau, is anchored in a history of intentionally opposing unjust laws, and working to change them.

I believe that our church is strong enough for this -  
strong enough to hold the questions and the uncertainty,  
strong enough to expand our hearts and schedules to hold the work,  
strong enough to hold each other, to learn as we go, and remember  
it's not just about us.

This, like anything our church does, is rooted in our values: hospitality, compassion, spiritual growth, and practicing justice. And this commitment requires and calls us into every one of those values. It takes all of us to hold our doors, and our hearts, open wide. And may our commitment release a little fear for someone - at least for now.

In faith,

Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer, Minister