

Immigration Ministry & Sanctuary Task Force

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What is a “Sanctuary” Designated Parish?

When a Church declares itself a Sanctuary congregation, it publically states that the congregation is willing to engage in a spectrum of solidarity actions including welcoming undocumented people, advocating to help stop state deportations, assisting with legal clinics, and physically sheltering an immigrant in danger of immediate deportation.

Why Should First Parish Become a “Sanctuary” Designated Parish?

As a community we are called to action to uphold our principles when we see injustice in the world.

Sanctuary is both an ancient tradition and a more contemporary mechanism that allows citizens to combat discrimination, racism, and xenophobia. The Underground Railroad serves as a great example of how concerned citizens took action to protect and aid individuals subjected to discrimination, racism, and inhumane treatment. As the Trump administration threatens to deport millions of people, we, as people of faith, have a moral responsibility to act. Toward this end, sanctuary is a tool to resist efforts to disrupt and endanger the lives of our neighbors who face a deportation order.

We are asking First Parish to become a **Level 2 Sanctuary Parish**
which supports a **Level 1 Sanctuary Parish** (or any faith-based organization)

How does Sanctuary work?

Sanctuary = a house of worship that offers **shelter** inside its building to person(s) facing **deportation** from the U.S. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) agency defines houses of worship as a “**sensitive location**,” and as such has historically not raided them.

Who needs Sanctuary?

Someone who has a **deportation order** from an immigration judge. By declaring sanctuary, they are **not hiding** from ICE but recommended for sanctuary by an immigration agency or legal team. Deportation can have catastrophic and even fatal consequences for themselves and their families:

- Permanent separation from their loved ones;
- Asylum seekers sent back to the same dangerous environment they fled from;
- Recent deportees who become prey for criminal networks because they are perceived as having access to resources.

Deportation can literally lead to death.

Offering sanctuary can save lives.

Level 1 Sanctuary Parish

How does **Level 1** Sanctuary work?

Someone **lives on-site at the parish** until ICE abandons their enforcement effort and administratively closes the case. **Through raising the public visibility of a given case, the public act of providing Sanctuary can convince ICE to do so.** *18 cases of sanctuary have been resolved this way in 9-18 months since 2014!*

How does a **Level 1** Sanctuary find someone who needs sanctuary?

Someone seeking sanctuary is usually working with a **legal team**. The team continues to advocate with ICE directly to drop their deportation order while the individual or family members are in sanctuary. *Someone does NOT usually present themselves to the church directly*; it is more likely that they would first contact a local immigrant rights group, legal group or community organization, such as the Chelsea Collaborative or UU Mass Action. *A Parish is never committed to offering sanctuary to any person who asks for it, or who is referred to them for sanctuary.* It can adopt whatever guidelines the congregation thinks best in terms of assessing the appropriateness of a given case.

What does a Parish need to become a **Level 1** Sanctuary?

A Parish needs

- appropriate living space, one that offers some privacy and is near a bathroom, a shower, and a kitchen area;

- use of the space without impacting other programs or rentals;
- use of the space without impacting congregational and community activities;
- funds to cover space modifications, usually one-time expenses;
- funds to cover living expenses (meals, etc.), or ongoing expenses;
- time to commit (up to 12-18 months);
- VOLUNTEERS, including a *leadership team* responsible for training, coordinating and managing all of the volunteer aspects of the project.

Each **Level 1** Sanctuary has **multiple** Level 2 Sanctuary partners.

Each **Level 2** Sanctuary has its **own** leadership team for its own volunteers.

How do **Level 1 OR Level 2** Volunteers help someone in **Level 1** Sanctuary?

People in sanctuary will make their own best determinations as to when they are willing to leave and what risks they are going to take, but the assumption should be that **they will probably not wish to leave the church for any length of time** until the case against them is closed and they secure relief from deportation, so they cannot work, purchase their own groceries, etc. while they are in sanctuary. *The parish takes responsibility for providing for their daily needs and comfort.*

Volunteers are therefore needed for

- social interaction (like sharing meals, hosting activities, etc.);
- shopping for supplies & providing meals;
- coordinating medical, dental and mental health services;
- monitor who is seeking to enter to building;
- transportation for other family members;
- a media campaign (if the person wishes) to raise awareness of unjust laws & provide a face for those affected by those laws.

Level 2 Sanctuary Parish

How does a **Level 2** Sanctuary support a **Level 1** Sanctuary?

Before agreeing to support a Level 1 sanctuary, a **Level 2** Sanctuary would first assess:

- geographic location (proximity between locations);
- how many volunteers and/or hours of support desired/needed including;

- time slots to be filled;
- desired time commitment for each volunteer;
- how volunteer training will be coordinated;
- total minimum hours of support expected of a Level 2 congregation;
- an estimate of financial contribution and/or ongoing financial support expected by Level 1 congregation.

How much money from a **Level 2** Sanctuary would a **Level 1** Sanctuary expect?

The funding for this project will be **wholly separate** from the First Parish budget.

- Other organizations have committed to help Level 1 & 2 Sanctuaries fundraise through individual donations, grant money, crowd-funding, etc.: UU Mass Action, UU RISE UU immigrant rights organization in California that specifically exists to support UU congregations who are in discernment about sanctuary), Faithify.org fund-raising (which helped First Parish Bedford), and the New Sanctuary Movement (NSM).
- Day to day expenses of offering sanctuary will vary considerably depending on the financial situation of the person or people in sanctuary.

What legal risk could a **Level 2** or **Level 1** Sanctuary expect?

In the whole history of the sanctuary movement to date, NO church, minister, or lay leader *has ever been prosecuted*.

- Sanctuary is not considered the legal definition of “harboring” (concealing someone from the authorities), since each parish sends a form letter to their local ICE regional director saying that they are offering sanctuary and to whom, giving the address of the church, etc.
- There may be risks since providing sanctuary is a form of civil disobedience, pursued in defiance of public authorities. As with all acts of civil disobedience, there may be unanticipated costs and consequences.
- It is also unknown if the Trump administration will revoke a “**sensitive location**” designation for houses of worship.
- A Level 2 Sanctuary congregation *is much less likely* to face any legal issues.