

Declaration of Church Sanctuary

Peace United Church of Christ, Rochester, Minnesota

I. Statement of Purpose

Calling upon the ancient traditions of our faith, which recognized houses of worship as a refuge for the runaway slave, the conscientious objector, and the refugees fleeing wars of the past, Sanctuary is once again growing among communities of faith that are standing in solidarity with immigrants and marginalized communities facing immoral and unjust removal and discriminatory policies. As people of faith and people of conscience, we will take civil initiative out of our religious obligation to embody principles of human rights and dignity, and resist any harmful and unjust policy proposals that further undermine fair hearings and lead to racial profiling and discrimination.

I.1. Sacred Texts

- God calls people of faith to remember that they once were strangers in a strange land and they must welcome the stranger as an expression of covenant faithfulness. (Lev. 19:33-34)
- We must “learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow”. (Isaiah 1:17)
- We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Luke 10:27)

As the faith community, we are called to accompany our community members, congregants and neighbors facing removal. By offering sanctuary we can:

- Protect individuals, advocate to stop unjust removals, and make it possible to win deferred action at a case-by-case level to keep families together (Ex. 22:21).
- Amplify the religious and moral imperative to stop deportations by ensuring the prophetic witness of the immigrant taking sanctuary is heard (Matt. 25:35-40).
- Defend fair administrative policies such as Prosecutorial Discretion so that we can still win stays of removal case by case (Num. 39:9-12).
- Work alongside undocumented students to defend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival program or similar policies (Lev. 19:33).
- Support local work to defend against detainer policies and push back against unjust enforcement policies (Deut. 10:19).
- Defend asylum seekers by resisting expedited removal and helping provide critical resources such as legal assistance so they can have a fair hearing (Num. 39:9-12).

I.2. Statement of Faith

The members of Peace United Church of Christ are compelled by our faith to welcome the stranger, love our neighbor and provide care for those in need. We are called to be a safe and inclusive church living God’s radical message. And we live God’s radical message by: embracing all, building community, growing faith and transforming lives. In our Core Values statement, we have committed to providing a vibrant, supportive community of faith, fellowship and fun for all, sharing the word of God and spreading the love of Christ, welcoming diversity of thought,

sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age and religious affiliation, advocating for social justice for all, embracing families in all forms into a new family of faith, and celebrating the authenticity of each individual. We therefore declare to be a Sanctuary Church. This includes providing emergency housing for an immigrant at immediate risk for removal from the country who, with access to a fair hearing, has a reasonable chance of receiving a stay of removal. This also includes advocating for a humane immigration policy in accordance with our faith.

II. Statement of Policy

II.1. Peace United Church of Christ will only provide housing to those who meet the discernment criteria delineated in section III.

II.2. A maximum of one person or family unit may be housed by Peace United Church of Christ at any one time.

II.3. The decision of a person/family being housed by Peace United Church of Christ will rest with the Council, Peace UCC staff and pastors. The decision will be informed by an intake process conducted by ISAIAH-Minnesota and by the discernment criteria found in section III. If new information is presented about a guest that is in violation of section III after housing is initiated, then Peace UCC Council and pastoral staff will evaluate and act on this information in a way that may culminate in the person(s) in sanctuary being asked to leave.

II.4. Persons seeking sanctuary will comply with Family-Congregation Agreements as outlined in section IV. Failure to comply will result in review by the Council, Peace UCC staff and pastors, which may result in the person(s) being asked to leave.

III.5. Persons in compliance with section IV will be permitted to reside in sanctuary at Peace United Church of Christ until such time that a final legal decision has been rendered in their case(s) regarding a stay of removal. At that time, guests will be expected to leave, regardless of outcome. If the person(s) disagrees with dismissal, then the decision to evict the guest will rest with the Council, Peace UCC staff and pastors.

II.6. The United States Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement and local law enforcement officials will be officially notified about the person(s) accepting sanctuary at Peace United Church of Christ.

II.7. The person(s) in sanctuary will not have access to the North wing of the building, which includes the childcare center.

II.8. The person(s) in sanctuary may not be employed by Peace United Church of Christ and may not offer volunteer services.

II.9. Peace United Church of Christ employees or members may not transport those in sanctuary for the purpose of shielding them from law enforcement.

II.10. Peace United Church of Christ employees and congregants have the right to refuse to participate in all sanctuary activities without fear of reprisal.

III. Sanctuary Discernment Policy

III.1. Individuals with serious criminal offenses will not be considered for sanctuary at Peace United Church of Christ:

III.1.1. Any felony (except those exclusively related to immigration law).

III.1.2. Any crime of violence.

III.1.3. Any crime of reckless driving or of driving while intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol or of prohibited substances if such crime involved personal injury to another.

III.2. Person(s) will be considered for sanctuary who have a reasonable legal chance for a stay of removal and a need for a fair hearing, including the following scenarios:

III.2.1. Immigrant has been residing continuously in the United States for at least 10 years, has a US citizen parent, spouse, or child, who would face usually extreme hardship if the immigrant was deported, and the immigrant has no serious criminal convictions.

III.2.2. The immigrant has been the victim of a serious crime (including but not limited to rape, torture, domestic violence, sexual assault, genital mutilation, peonage, involuntary servitude, kidnapping, false imprisonment, blackmail, extortion, manslaughter, felonious assault) that violated the laws of the United States and has suffered substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of this crime.

III.2.3. The immigrant has been abused by his or her current spouse or a spouse from whom they were recently divorced (last two years). The abuser must be a permanent resident or citizen of the United States.

III.2.4. The immigrant has or is a child who was abused by a permanent resident or United States citizen, or the immigrant was abused by his or her son or daughter who is a United States citizen. No criminal report is required but is helpful. The abuse must be serious but may be physical abuse or mental abuse.

III.2.5. The immigrant is a minor (generally no older than 17 ½ year of age) who has been abused, abandoned or neglected in his or her home country or in the United States, is not currently living with the abuser, and whose interests would be better served by remaining in the U.S. than being deported to his or her home country.

III.2.6. The immigrant has been the victim of human trafficking (brought to the United States to engage in forced labor or sexual exploitation).

III.2.7. The immigrant has been persecuted as a result of race, religion, ethnicity, political opinion, or membership in a social group or faces such persecution if returned to his or her country of origin.

III.2.8. The immigrant was ordered deported by an Immigration Judge in absentia (without attending) and was not properly informed of the date and time of the hearing or had an extraordinary incident occur that prevented him or her from attending the removal hearing.

III.2.9. The immigrant is married to a US citizen or green card holder, or has other parent-child relatives who are US citizens or green card holders, and has a petition pending to legalize his or her status or could file such a petition.

IV. Sanctuary Family-Congregation Agreements

Individuals and families who accept sanctuary at Peace United Church of Christ will comply with the following terms:

- IV.1. List of potential visitors will be agreed upon between the guest and the Council, Peace UCC staff and pastors.
- IV.2. Visiting hours are 9:00 am to 9:00 pm.
- IV.3. Individuals and families may use the kitchen from 7:30am – 9am, 11:30am-1:00pm, and 5:00pm-6:30pm if not otherwise in use.
- IV.4. Personal items will remain in designated living quarters.
- IV.5. Pets are not permitted.
- IV.6. Guests are not permitted in the North wing of the building.
- IV.7. The possession, storage or consumption of alcohol or illicit drugs is not permitted.
- IV.8. Smoking is prohibited.
- IV.9. Any appliance rated over 6 amps (700 watts) is prohibited. Additional prohibited appliances include electric heaters, air conditioners, cooking appliances with open heating elements, halogen lamps, fog machines, deep fat fryers, large power tools, and curling irons or hair straightener without automatic shut-off mechanisms and any other appliance deemed by staff to be hazardous.
- IV.10. Guests may not possess any items that may be a fire safety hazard. Such items include, but are not limited to candles, incense, grills (gas or charcoal), flammable liquids, and fireworks.
- IV.11. Fighting or assaulting another person is prohibited.
- IV.12. Stealing or possession of stolen property is prohibited.
- IV.13. Possession, storage and/or use of any type of firearm, explosive, or weapon is not permitted.

Failure to comply with any of the above may result in eviction.

This policy is to be maintained and approved by Peace United Church of Christ Council following declaration of Sanctuary status. 9/24/2017