

Evanston Sanctuary Community Resolution

Whereas, our Jewish history of persecution and forced immigration, from the time of our slavery in Egypt through the Holocaust, and most recently, the campaign to secure the rights of Jews to emigrate from the USSR, connects us to the many contemporary struggles faced by immigrants throughout the world. As Jews, we are required to pursue justice, seek peace, and build a society that is welcoming to all peoples. In the Book of Genesis, we learn about the centrality of hospitality from Abraham and Sarah who welcomed wayfarers into their home. (Genesis 18:1-22) This virtue of welcoming the stranger derives both from our obligation to protect all immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, and our dedication to hospitality and inclusion of all peoples;

Whereas, the Holiness Code (Lev. 19:33) instructs us to welcome the stranger and treat the stranger as our equal, stating: “When a stranger sojourn with you in your land, you shall do him no wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Additionally, Exodus 12:49 commands that “the same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns who sojourns among you”.) These teachings are repeated numerous times in our Torah;

Whereas, Jews in the United States have been victims of restrictive immigration laws adopted after World War I and culminating in the enactment of the National Origins Act of 1924, which intentionally restricted the admission of Jews and other people from Eastern and Southern Europe as well as Asia and Africa and denied many Jews who wanted to flee the Holocaust a home in the United States;

Whereas, our nation was founded by peoples of diverse faiths and backgrounds - many fleeing persecution, some brought forcibly as slaves;

Whereas, beginning on July 1, 1968, and continuing to the present, our nation has adopted severe numerical and other restrictions on legal immigration from the Western Hemisphere, including Mexico and Central America, while simultaneously embracing policies that encourage the immigration and employment of undocumented immigrants;

Whereas, on September 30, 1996, the U.S. Congress enacted the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act (“IIRIRA”), which made it impossible for many U.S. citizens and lawful permanent resident to obtain legal immigration status for their undocumented spouses, children, parents, and siblings;

Whereas, millions of people subject to oppression, persecution and violence have been forced to flee their countries in search of safety and freedom in the United States;

Whereas, the U.S. Congress has failed to enact comprehensive immigration reform to provide legal status and a pathway to U.S. citizenship to undocumented;

Whereas, President Trump has declared his intention to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (“DACA”) program which President Obama in June 2012 to secure the rights of immigrants brought to the United States as children pending the enactment by the U.S. Congress of comprehensive immigration reform, placing approximately 800,000 DACA recipients at risk of deportation;

Whereas, a lawsuit filed by the State of Texas and a number of other states prevented President Obama from implementing his November 2014 Executive Orders expanding DACA to protect additional immigrants who came to the United States as children and implementing Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (“DAPA”), a new program which would have protected from deportation millions of parents of U.S. citizen and lawful permanent residents;

Whereas, since his inauguration, President Trump has implemented a change in our nation’s immigration enforcement policies that is greatly increasing the number of deportations, threatening the stability of millions of families with undocumented family members at risk of deportation, and causing severe hardships and misery to millions of American citizens, lawful permanent residents and the undocumented members of their families;

Whereas, border security can be achieved without breaking up millions of families with undocumented members;

Whereas, many families in Evanston and surrounding communities have undocumented family members who are under threat of deportation and are experiencing the reality or possibility of family separation or the departure of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to live abroad with their undocumented family members and the resultant hardships;

Whereas, the Sanctuary Movement began in the 1980s as a religious and political response to the deportation and asylum denials of hundreds of thousands of Central American refugees fleeing persecution, violence, and civil unrest;

Whereas, in 1985 the Union for Reform Judaism adopted a resolution calling upon Reform Congregation to take actions to protect Central American refugees from deportation;

Whereas, following the URJ’s Resolution, the Board of Beth Emet Synagogue enacted a sanctuary resolution committing the Synagogue to protect Central American refugees and in accordance with that resolution provided such protection to two undocumented indigenous Guatemalan families who ultimately were granted lawful permanent residence in the United States;

Whereas, the Sanctuary Movement has been revitalized in recent years to encourage religious and other communal institutions to provide protection to undocumented immigrants and their families;

Whereas, numerous cities, including Evanston, and other local governments have enacted sanctuary resolutions, and our state has enacted the Illinois Trust Act, in order to protect undocumented immigrants and their families and restrict the involvement of local and state law enforcement authorities in immigration law enforcement;

Whereas, on March 31, 2017, the Union for Reform Judaism enacted a resolution recommending that reform congregations take specific actions to protect the lives and well-being of undocumented immigrants at risk of deportation;

Whereas, in addition to protecting undocumented immigrants and their families, Beth Emet Synagogue remains committed to protecting other vulnerable populations who are particularly at risk of prejudice, discrimination and violence, including African Americans, Muslim Americans, LGBTQ Americans, Native Americans, and women.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that Beth Emet The Free Synagogue declares itself Evanston Sanctuary Community, voted unanimously by the Beth Emet Board of Trustees on October 30, 2017.

LET IT BE RESOLVED that through this declaration, Beth Emet The Free Synagogue commits itself to take actions consistent with the values and resources of our community to oppose xenophobia and to protect undocumented immigrants from deportation and the hardships such deportation will cause them and their families.

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that Beth Emet The Free Synagogue will create its own strategy for engaging in Sanctuary work that best fits the skills and strengths of our community. We also commit to work in partnership with all communities that sign this declaration;

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, in committing our community to protect the undocumented immigrants and their families, we will not overlook the needs of other vulnerable populations facing prejudice, discrimination, and violence, and will seek unite the struggles of undocumented immigrants with the struggles of other vulnerable populations in our country.