

On Living Out Partnership
The Rev. Dr. Bebb Stone, with Gail Golden, Rockland Immigrant Coalition

In response to growing concerns about what the radically changing political climate means for our immigrant neighbors, both documented and undocumented, a Community Immigration Forum was held on February 6th at Nauraushaun Presbyterian Church in Pearl River. The Forum was co-sponsored by a collaborative of the Rockland Immigrant Coalition, Helping Hands of Rockland County, Palisades Presbyterian Church and Nauraushaun Presbyterian Church, and supported by a grant from the Hudson River Presbytery.

One hundred forty-seven Rockland residents gathered to learn about the New Sanctuary Movement, a nationwide initiative through which support and accompaniment are provided for families who are threatened with separation through deportation. Sanctuary is not merely the action of a single congregation, but the work of a community. During the Forum, two expert panels led discussions about the history and practice of sanctuary as well as the importance of knowing the constitutional rights of persons within the United States.

The attendees were Muslim and Jew, Christian and secular, of every age and race. They learned from an attorney, a staff person from the New York Immigration Coalition, a Sanctuary practitioner, a rabbi and a Presbyterian Minister. All were encouraged, as people of conscience, by the crowd who showed up on the Monday morning after the Super Bowl, as well as by the depth of their concern.

Since the Forum, there have been raids all over the country, including one in Hudson, N.Y., where four people were detained. The urgency of this situation is not something that our communities can overlook. Rockland County is organizing to respond.

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