

Proposed Congregational Resolution Becoming a Level 2 Sanctuary Congregation

(to be presented at the May 21st annual congregational meeting)

Intention

We the congregation of First Church Unitarian Universalist in Jamaica Plain believe that just as love knows no borders, our dedication to justice reaches across boundaries and walls. We support all families, regardless of citizenship status, and strive to create welcoming communities and congregations. We organize and advocate for immigration reform, for an end to detentions and deportations, and for a world where hands are extended in peace and care across borders and no one feels forced to leave home or risk death in pursuit of a decent life for their family.

To enact these values, First Church elects to join with the cluster of other progressive local congregations (in Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, West Roxbury and Hyde Park) and become a Level 2 or supporting sanctuary congregation. We seek to provide support to a Level 1 sanctuary church, a congregation which has elected to take the lead and physically offer sanctuary in their church building in certain circumstances.

While we do not know exactly how events may unfold, by this resolution the congregation of First Church Unitarian Universalist in Jamaica Plain empowers the Standing Committee to declare the congregation in support of a specified Level 1 church if they take an undocumented immigrant at risk of deportation into sanctuary.

Process

To support this process, the Social Justice Action Committee has formed a subcommittee called the Immigration Justice Leadership Team (IJLT), comprised of approximately 3-5 people, including at least one member of the Standing Committee. The IJLT shall take the lead in communicating with the Level 1 church on behalf of First Church, clarifying expectations regarding support. Ideally the IJLT will develop a memorandum of understanding with the Level 1 church delineating roles and responsibilities of each church.

At some point in the future, responding to a request from the Level 1 Sanctuary congregations, a vote on a declaration of support would be triggered by a request from the Immigration Justice Leadership Team. In order to act quickly, the Standing Committee shall be empowered to vote by email for the declaration of support. It would require approval from the Standing Committee to enact a declaration of support.

Recognizing the limited resources, the Standing Committee would only be empowered to make a declaration of support for one congregation providing level 1 sanctuary at a time. Supporting more than one sanctuary at a time would require another vote by the entire congregation.

Support

The congregation recognizes that providing support of another congregation that is providing sanctuary to undocumented immigrants at risk of deportation could take many forms depending on the specific situation. At a minimum, a declaration of support from the First Church Jamaica Plain would mean:

First Church would make a public statement of support for the congregation and undocumented immigrant in sanctuary.

The IJLT would look for other opportunities to provide public support, such as by attending rallies or posting a sign or banner on our church building.

The Immigration Justice Leadership team would organize and coordinate members of the congregation who were interested in providing support as requested by the sanctuary congregation, such as providing meals, volunteering to run errands for the person in sanctuary, or spending time with them.

If the sanctuary congregation requests support in the form of food, the Immigration Justice Leadership Team would be responsible for providing prepared meals or ingredients. If appropriate non-perishables are available from the Food Pantry, these may be donated. Otherwise, the IJLT will be responsible for fundraising to cover food costs.

The IJLT would coordinate with volunteers from the congregation and the Level 1 church to determine if training on methods of nonviolent resistance is necessary and if our volunteers are willing to engage in such resistance.

In the spirit of the UUA/UUSC Declaration of Conscience affirmed by this congregation, we answer the call of social justice and love with this commitment.