

The New Sanctuary Movement: How Faith Communities Can Get Involved

For years, our communities and families have been destroyed by an immigration system that does not respect a person's basic humanity. The families scarred by the brutal system of detentions and deportations live all around us.

Howard Facey of Brooklyn, having been married 6 years to his citizen wife Barbara, reported to New York's Federal Plaza to pick up his work authorization papers. He was detained immediately and deported back to Jamaica, based on a 1995 deportation order from Alaska. Barbara now struggles to support her three children alone as she fights to bring Howard back.

In the past decade, over 1.5 million people have been deported from this country. Every week, nearly 300 more are deported from our own Rikers Island jail. As people of faith committed to the hospitality proclaimed in all of our Scriptures, how can we allow this to continue?

Making the Commitment:

The New Sanctuary Movement is a diverse coalition of families and faith communities from various faith traditions. Each faith community will decide through its own processes whether, and in what capacity, it will join the Movement. The decision is guided by love's mandate of radical hospitality and the moral imperative to keep families together.

When a faith community signs the Sanctuary Pledge, its members commit themselves to work towards an immigration system that respects human dignity and family unity.

Concretely, this means to:

- Study and advocate for immigrants' rights;
- Connect with and reveal, through education and advocacy, the actual suffering of specific immigrant workers and families under the laws as they exist or may be proposed;
- Protect immigrants against hate, workplace discrimination, and unjust deportation.

Various resources are available to support faith communities as they decide whether and how to move forward with the New Sanctuary Movement. We can provide written materials, as well as organizers from current Sanctuary faith communities and community groups, to facilitate your discussions. Please let us know what you need.

Faith communities are the community support base for Sanctuary families, and the stronger our commitment (both in numbers and in action), the stronger our support for the families. Therefore, we suggest that faith communities first decide whether or not they want to be Sanctuary faith communities, and then select their level of involvement.

Levels of Involvement:

The NYC Sanctuary Coalition invites faith communities to join at one of three levels – and a faith community can start by joining at the minimal level and, after further study, prayer, and discernment, could increase its participation to a more intense level. The levels are:

Minimal: Sign the Sanctuary Pledge, promising to educate yourselves about immigration, stand up publicly for immigrants' rights, and act as you are able to protect immigrants' rights. Start by agreeing to get acquainted with a particular immigrant's family.

Mid-level: Having signed the Pledge, identify yourselves to the NYC Sanctuary Coalition as willing to partner with other faith communities in supporting an identified Sanctuary family threatened with deportation, short of physically housing them.

Maximum level: Having signed the Pledge, identify yourselves to the NYC Sanctuary Coalition as willing to partner directly with an individual or family facing deportation. You *may* later decide to welcome them into your religious facilities and/or physically try to prevent the government from seizing the person for detention or deportation, even though such actions risk arrest for your leaders and participants.

The New Sanctuary Movement: What Faith Communities Can Do

There are many and varied ways to live out your Sanctuary commitment:

Educate and Be Educated:

- Seek out relationship with a Sanctuary family and/or similar families in your faith community and community (i.e., a family with a member who is under the legal process of deportation, despite having a U.S. citizen spouse and/or children).
- Invite Sanctuary families and/or their faith communities to speak at your faith community.
- Invite an expert or representative from a community organization to inform a conversation at your place of worship.
 - The New York Immigration Coalition sends speakers to faith communities to talk about the human side (the most important side!) of the immigration debate.
 - Contact: Angad Bhalla at 212 477 0351.
- Host a “Know Your Rights” workshop for immigrants in your congregation and community. Contact the Coalition for resources.
- Visit or write letters to detainees at the immigrant detention center in Elizabeth, NJ, through the Riverside Church’s “Sojourners Program.” Call 812 454 2206.
- Incorporate immigrants and the New Sanctuary Movement into your weekly prayer petitions, your religious education curriculum, your bulletin, etc. - in other words, make them part of the life and culture of your faith community!
- Attend a “Deportation 101” workshop to prepare yourself to be a better advocate.
 - Contact: “Families for Freedom” at 646 290 5551, www.familiesforfreedom.org.
- Read the news that directly affects immigrant families in your community. Subscribe to the following informative e-mail list-serves:
 - “Immigration News Briefs,” issued by the Coalition for Human Rights of Immigrants (CHRI) – indicate if you want NYC news (4-5 messages/week), national news (1x/week) or both: e-mail nicaig@panix.com
 - “Immigrant Solidarity Network Daily News:” e-mail isn-subscribe@lists.riseup.net

Advocate:

- Participate in one of the Coalition’s current advocacy campaigns.
 1. Provide Pastoral Care to immigrants in the Varick Street Detention Center.
 - Learn why an estimated 300 people/week are deported from NYC’s jail.
 2. Promote the Child Citizen Protection Act.
 - Educate your faith community, community, and legislators about this important bill to keep families together.
- Write congregational letters of support for sanctuary families, as needed. Encourage your members to participate, and ask us for templates.
- Actively support a faith community in their advocacy efforts with a family.
- Preach about immigration policy and radical hospitality.
- Write an article for your bulletin, religious newspaper, local or mainstream media.

- Stand with immigrants in your community in ways they suggest to promote their rights to livelihood, family unity, and physical and emotional security.
- Participate in vigils, demonstrations, prayer services, and press conferences sponsored by the New Sanctuary Movement and our allies.
- Join the Coalition's Media Messaging and Legislative Action Committee.

Provide Material Support:

- Raise funds to support a present or future Sanctuary family.
- Volunteer your time and talents to help the Coalition do its work (share your gifts!).
- Donate resources to the NYC Sanctuary Coalition, to cover mailings, staff, etc.
- Join the Coalition's Fundraising Committee.

Provide Sanctuary:

- Partner with a Sanctuary family; invite them to attend your worship and other congregational events to get acquainted. Provide friendship, concern, and spiritual support for a family going through a difficult period, just as you would for any member of your faith community.
- Work with the family and their lawyer to support the individual's legal case. If the individual does not have a good lawyer, find and provide one.
- Send faith community representative(s) to all hearings and meetings related to the family's case.
- Accompany the individual any time he or she has to check in with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at Federal Plaza.
- If appropriate (check with the lawyer first), your religious leader might communicate directly with ICE regarding the case, and faith community members might write letters to show that the immigrant has community support.
- Provide material support to the family, as necessary. Depending on a family's situation and needs, material support could include childcare, meals, transportation, etc.
- If and when the individual has exhausted all legal avenues and has been ordered to report for deportation, offer a physical space for him or her to reside in your place of worship. Share responsibility for the family's well-being and prevent the individual from being picked up by ICE (ICE is not legally barred from entering a sanctuary to arrest immigrants but their current policy is not to do that). Work with the Coalition to provide spiritual, material, and public support for the family.
- Partner with one or more other faith communities to support a Sanctuary family spiritually, economically, and publicly in all of the above ways.
- Join the Coalition's Family Support Committee.

Outreach:

- Join the Coalition's Faith Community Outreach and Support Committee.
- Publicize the New Sanctuary Movement so that at-risk families in your faith community and larger community know who we are and how to contact us.
- Invite neighbor faith communities to become involved.
- Support new faith communities in their discernment process.

Stay Connected:

- Participate in monthly NYC Sanctuary Coalition meetings.
- Sign up for the "active member list-serve," which will keep you updated on our families, meetings, and new ways to get involved.

Some General Pointers...

Be creative! – This list is only a starting point. Take it wherever you feel called to go. Perhaps a community art project, a prayer service, a movie-discussion night, a fast, a solidarity dinner...the possibilities are endless!

Draw from your faith community's strengths! – For example, if your faith community is known for its music, maybe plan a teach-in concert to draw people together and raise awareness. Or, if your youth group is active, find out what they know and how they want to respond.

Don't do it alone! – Enlist the support of the larger faith community and invite already existing groups to respond. Team up with another local faith community or community group to increase impact and decrease workload.

Reach out for resources! - If you need help brainstorming, trouble-shooting, or finding what you need, please contact a fellow Coalition member or call our office.

For Further Information...

See our website: www.newsanctuarynyc.org

Contact us at #(212) 477-0351, or info@newsanctuarynyc.org

The New York City New Sanctuary Coalition (as of 2/2009)

6 Families and the following Faith Communities:

Manhattan: Church of St. Ignatius Loyola (Catholic) - Broadway United Church of Christ
The Riverside Church - St. Bartholomew's Church (Episcopal) - Judson Memorial Church
St. Paul the Apostle Roman Catholic Church - First Presbyterian Church of NYC
St. Mark's in the Bowery (Episcopal) - St. Ann's Church for the Deaf (Episcopal)
Jan Hus Presbyterian Church. **Bronx:** St. Jerome's Roman Catholic Church
Sisters of Charity of NY - Transfiguration Lutheran Church. **Queens:** Misi6n San Juan Bautista
Victoria Congregational United Church of Christ. **Brooklyn:** Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church - Trinity Lutheran Church - Holy Spirit Lutheran Church.
Long Island: Franciscan Brothers at Little Portion Friary (Episcopal).

Ellenville, NY: Hosanna Assembly of God.

Partner Organizations:

Greater NY Labor-Religion Coalition - House of Peace, Islam - Latino Leadership Circle
Families for Freedom - Metropolitan Association of the United Church of Christ
Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Brooklyn Chapter.