

## How to Build a Sanctuary Coalition

### Are you called to Sanctuary?

The Sanctuary Movement is growing stronger in the current political reality. People of faith from many traditions are recognizing the increased need for Sanctuary as the harsh anti-immigrant, anti-refugee and anti-Muslim practices and rhetoric continue to escalate. This rhetoric could translate to policies of mass deportation and increased civil rights abuses under the Trump administration. Each congregation must discern their role in working to protect vulnerable communities under attack. See toolkit for joining the sanctuary movement [here](#).

*Resources:*

[Pledge to resist deportations and discrimination through Sanctuary Sanctuary 101](#)  
[4 Ways Your Faith Community Can Prepare for Sanctuary](#)

### Building on a strong foundation

All this work begins by educating yourself and your congregation around immigration and social justice. Connect with impacted communities, immigrants' rights groups and legal clinics in your area. Make sure immigrants and refugees are given space to lift up their voice and tell their stories and give input on strategy. Set up a leadership structure that ensures impacted leaders are part of the decision-making process. Find new ways to educate one another by talking to faith leaders who have already opened their church to offer Sanctuary and organizers who have helped start a coalition. Organize a training in your city on how to be part of the Sanctuary Movement.

*Resources:*

[Immigrant Rights' Coalitions Nationwide](#) and [National Day Laborer affiliates](#)  
United Church of Christ [Immigrant Welcoming Congregation](#)  
Chicago Religious Leadership Network [Immigrant Welcoming Congregation](#)  
New York NSM [Immigration Clinic](#)

### Create Teams in Your Congregation

No one can build a movement by themselves. It is important to create teams (education, advocacy, organizing) within your congregation of those who can sustain action on immigrant and refugee rights. Identify and cultivate the leaders who are most passionate about this issue and together form a team by setting one to one meetings with key leaders followed by a convening meeting.

*Resources:*

New Sanctuary Movement Philadelphia- [How We Organize Sanctuary Action Team](#) at Shadow Rock United Church of Christ

### Bring congregations together around common goals

Gather congregations that have been engaging on the issue of immigration, refugees and/or social justice to discuss how to take action together. Map the congregations that would be willing to become part of a Sanctuary coalition in your region, try to reach out to diverse congregations from multiple traditions. It can be helpful to first hold one to one meetings with the faith leader or active lay leader. Call a meeting of key leaders to identify common values and the

need to take action in an organized way. Consider drafting a common statement or pledge of support for the Sanctuary Movement or for the case of someone in your community who needs relief from deportation. Once you have developed the statement or pledge you can ask congregations to sign on.

*Resources:*

[Milwaukee Congregational Pledge](#)

[Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition Statement](#)

[New Mexico Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice Mission and Vision](#)

[National Pledge to Resist Discrimination and Deportation Through Sanctuary](#)

### **Public Launch of Sanctuary Movement in your city**

Once you have brought a group of congregations together who are ready to make a pledge or sign onto a common statement you can bring together your new coalition for a public launch. This usually consists of a press conference and joint statement to publicize your pledge and dedication to accompany immigrants in working to stop deportations or create safe space for those whose civil rights are being violated.

[Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition Launch](#)

[Minnesota 13 Congregations Commit to Sanctuary](#)

### **Launching a Sanctuary case to stop deportation**

To form a Sanctuary Coalition you only need one congregation willing to actually offer Sanctuary, and the rest of the congregations can help support that effort. Some congregations will have better facilities on their property to actually offer physical sanctuary. There will always be the need for support in advocacy, logistics, vigils, food and more. It's important to show as broad public support from local congregations as possible. Once someone comes forward with the need to take sanctuary in a congregation, it will be important for the coalition to work together. Generally, the coalition will launch a campaign to stop a deportation with a press conferences and a petition to gain more public support. This is also a great opportunity to recruit more congregations to join the movement (See Sanctuary Toolkit for more details).

\*Note: Sanctuary work will likely undergo shifts in order to adjust to future politics and policies of the new administration.

*Resources:*

[We stand with Rosa Campaign Launch and Press Conference](#) Southside Presbyterian Church, Tucson

[Jose Juan Seeks Sanctuary in University Church Chicago](#)

[Jeanette Vizguerra First Unitarian Society of Denver](#)

Find more resources at <http://sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>