

Comments from St Michael's Parishioners Concerning Becoming a Sanctuary Church

Comments and opinions, for or against St Michael's providing hospitality for immigrants, can be submitted via email to smaa.sanctuary.discussion@gmail.com or via paper in a mailbox in the narthex/church entry on Sundays. Comments are posted in date order, and identification has been removed. Look for answers to questions in the "Frequently Asked Questions" found at <http://www.all-angels.com/outreach-immigration-sanctuary.html>.

August, 2017

- I am 100% for becoming a Sanctuary Church. It is right! A Gospel imperative.
- My wife and I have been giving a lot of thought to the whole Sanctuary question, and we appreciate that the clergy and Vestry are actively considering whether St Michael's can and should be a sanctuary church. We would like to express our approval of the idea, and we think you would find widespread support from the congregation, if the conversations we have had with friends at church are anything to go by. We are naturally willing to help in any way we can.
- When will we be a Sanctuary?
- A lot of people come here and this is a great idea, so more people can come and enjoy this wonderful church.
- I think it's a really good idea for this church to be a Sanctuary because if I didn't have any family or friends, I would want to come here too.
- People with children should not have to leave them behind.
- I like the idea. Would like to know more details of on-going support we would give beyond Sanctuary.
- Hallelujah! Do it!
- Yes! Yes! Yes!
- When is this going to end? Let us know if we can help!
- Me gustaria tener un santuario St Michael & All Angeles Church es maravillosa idea mucha gente saldriamos beneficiados
- Yes, God's house is the place, and we are the people
- There are times when we must put our concerns aside and take action. Now is such a time.
- St Michael's is a place & people of deep faith, and its discernment process, intentionally deliberate, is, I believe, a deeply grounded & thoughtful process to allow us to fully support the sanctuary call to service & ministry **for the long haul!** +
- How can we sing "all are welcome" and not welcome the immigrant? How can we ask God to make us instruments of His peace, and not use our abundance to help others and work for justice? Isn't it a true moral responsibility for a church to become a sanctuary at this time and in this place? Let's do it now!
- Let's be a Sanctuary church!
- It has always been the mission and work of St Michael & All Angels to reach out into the community to love and care for our neighbors. We now have the opportunity to become a Sanctuary Church and support our immigrant friends and neighbors in a very real and much needed way. This is a call to the deepest passions of our church.
- We should definitely explore and gather more information about becoming a sanctuary, e.g. cost of upgrading the old rectory, and advice from an IMMIGRATION attorney.
- Go for it!!! Providing sanctuary is not only theologically correct and sound Gospel work, but it is a outward and visible sign that we are doing the work we have been given to do. When we do that work it will be proof to non-members that we walk the talk and attractive to those seeking to do likewise.

- I vote in favor of becoming a Sanctuary church. We should offer sanctuary to all. Along those lines, I believe that we should also welcome any person working for ICE and their families. Do you remember how the military was treated during and after the Vietnam War? The spitting and cursing that "welcomed" the troops home? Please God, no more of that for people who are serving their government. I want them to know we may not like their job but we love them. I hope we will also intentionally pray for them, just as we do for those seeking sanctuary.
- As a member of St Michael's I will support Sanctuary.
- Our parish drew strength from being the light in the darkness of prejudice against LGBT people. I believe we are called to be the light in immigration prejudice as well. Yes to sanctuary.
- We have to do this if at all feasible. Things are getting more dangerous for so many of our neighbors. Intolerance is increasing, compassion is in short supply. We are told to welcome the stranger. Jesus didn't add any qualifiers about it being easy or without risk, He just said do it. So either here at SMAA or another church. We need to do it.
- Let's Do It!
- My concern is that there will be a need --- and we won't do it.
- I feel strongly that we should move in the direction of offering sanctuary. Obviously there are many issues that need to be addressed. The day school situation and the parents' feelings about sanctuary need to be taken into account. Also, the food pantry clients need to be advised that this is a consideration and get their thoughts. As far as the parish is concerned, we need to look at the concerns of those that don't agree. Also, it should be a vote with a majority as the determining factor. This could mean that we lose some parishioners and that is also something that should be taken into consideration. Staffing and funding this endeavor is the least of the concerns although also significant. As a religious community we are obligated to offer assistance to our fellow individuals. I would hope that those that attend service do so because of their convictions and not because it is the socially acceptable thing to do. This will be a good opportunity for us all to look into what is in our hearts and act accordingly.

September, 2017

- As someone who has embraced the sanctuary movement in Albuquerque since I arrived almost two years ago, I would definitely like to see St. Michaels become a church offering sanctuary to an individual or small family who is in need of sanctuary. I firmly believe that we Americans come from immigrant families, and need to support those who are already here. For too many years the government paid no attention to those who came illegally. Now, our current president wants to SEND THEM AWAY! Most of the current immigrants here have families, are earning and honest living in America, and spending their earnings here. Let's keep them here. They add so much to our Nation.
- This is a good time to reach out to those who need help. I will do my part.
- Do we have a couple of estimates from contractors to make the living quarters up-to-code? (see FAQ question 12 http://www.all-angels.com/uploads/2/1/9/9/21994488/st_michael_faq.pdf)
- If someone in sanctuary becomes ill & requires hospitalization, what happens then? See FAQ Question 27.
- Can we make the Diocesan Center a place of Sanctuary? Seems a perfect place! See Question 21 of the FAQ.
- Would like to hear discussion on how Sanctuary fits in with our over-all goals: Navajo land, Assoc Rector at some point, financial stability - etc. What is the scope of our resources for this? People-wise, financially, etc. See Question 14, 20, and 28.
- How does immigration law interface with the sovereignty of First Nations? Could local pueblos or the Episcopal mission in Navajo Land provide additional support or sanctuary? See Question 25.
- I was reading a study on the parable of the good Samaritan that has prompted one more question for me. In the case of illegal immigrants (who did not come here for political asylum from terror or violence

but mostly to better their lives economically), do you think the supporters of sanctuary at St. Michaels tend to see this as more what the immigrant "deserves" (i.e. justice) or more as a situation primarily calling for mercy? [See Question 3.](#)

- If we want to focus on the whole church community and the kids, why are we so quick to offer up their space? [See Question 19.](#)
- What is Sanctuary? [See Question 2.](#)
- Good Idea!
- Do we as a church have the infrastructure for a housing project such as this? [See Questions 11 & 12.](#)
- Is there a NEED in Albuquerque for more sanctuary spaces? REUTERS' article stated that there are more sanctuary churches than individuals interested in seeking sanctuary. [See Question 2.](#)
- Dear Members of the Vestry, based solely on what I've read – and heard today (9/16/17) at St Michael's – I would say more attention needs to be paid to the emotional, psychological and educational needs of sanctuary guests. It may seem premature to bring this up now, but if St Michael's becomes a sanctuary church, I think meeting those needs should be part of the discussion from the beginning – not a secondary consideration. Even in extreme circumstances, it is not enough to be sheltered and fed. We are social animals, we need to interact with other human beings. We seek autonomy. We need meaning in our lives and I would contend, beauty. First thoughts:
 - Structured ESL or other literacy program for those not yet reading and speaking English at functional levels.
 - Exercise program suitable for small spaces (non-guests could participate).
 - Bring the social juice to the sanctuary – making music with others, playing cards or other games, dancing, book groups (dependent on shared language of course, but language could be Spanish)
 - As much interaction with outdoors as possible: windows, bird feeders, plants. As I understand it, a guest could be seized w/o a warrant if found outside. (Idea: I realize this is not easy or cheap – but is access to flat roof possible?) Emma has not been outside in six months. There are health considerations when one lives without sun, as well as emotional effects.
 - Give sanctuary guest as much control as possible over her/his surroundings: arrangement of furniture, colors in the room, personal photos, preferred art or objects of interest.
 - A way for sanctuary guest to help others to be more than a recipient of others' largesse.

My thanks to you and all the others responsible for the process. It was informative and inspiring to hear the thoughtful questions and observations at Saturday's forum.

- What would keep this civil disobedience from moving into criminal activity? [See Question 5.](#)
- Where will sanctuary be? As a parent, I do not want our children to be moved for this venture. Use the Pavilion. [The Ed building is one of several locations under consideration.](#)
- One of the themes of the 2016 Parish Survey is an interest in intergenerational worship events. Related to this, questions arose related to how we can engage the next generation. At the small meeting I attended last fall at a Vestry member's home last fall, I heard a strong concern for needing to do more to attract families with children as well as youth. Having a dedicated youth building is one HUGE step toward meeting this objective. Plus there has been new excitement created with the J2A group. Why would we want to go backward by having children and youth Sunday school back at shared space in the Day School classrooms? If the youth building is the space that will be used for sanctuary – this would send a message to families and youth that they are not one of our priorities. [Currently, the Ed building is used for one hour a week for Nursery and Godly Play. The Explorers Group and J2A meet in people's homes, including Father Joe's. Having many more families would be great, but we know of one family with young children who recently started attending BECAUSE social justice and living their faith in the world is the message they feel is important for their children. This is without dedicated clergy in that role. As a parish, we are many individuals who take in the world around us, listen for God's call and respond with an open heart as best we can. That has been the consistent message St Michael's sends. Growth in numbers, clear priorities, good planning, going forward or backward, or sending a certain message may not always be measures of parish success.](#)

- I have read that there would be a cost of approximately \$3000.00 in renovations to the Youth building to make it “suitable” for housing a person in sanctuary. In reading what the \$3000.00 dollars would cover, I am, frankly, quite shocked! Do we really want to provide what I would consider substandard living space to someone who is basically be under house arrest for months on end while in sanctuary? A hot plate to prepare meals, really???? Not having a fully functional bathroom with a shower, really???? I feel the arrangement that is currently being planned/discussed is very disrespectful to a human being – especially one who is our guest. Our guests deserve the best we can provide. Until funds are raised to be able to truly provide a comfortable and well equipped living space, I would suggest that the decision to provide sanctuary be postponed. I would also suggest creating a sanctuary ministry to begin raising funds much like other ministries in the church are required do in order to provide services. Please see Question 12 of the FAQ. The \$3K estimate would include a small kitchenette and a functioning bathroom with a shower. Providing a decent living space is certainly the intent. However, attendees to a recent national conference on sanctuary report hearing from people under threat of deportation and from people who had spent time in sanctuary that they would much rather have access to the sanctuary option with minimal facilities (sponge bath even) than be forced to return to violent and untenable situations. Regarding funding, individual parishioners have already offered funds that would more than pay for the upgrades under consideration. And again, the Ed building is one of *several* options being considered.
- What about other related costs for providing sanctuary – utilities, maintenance, janitorial services, increased liability insurance, food and other living expenses? Where will these funds come from? Please see Question 14 of the FAQ. Talking with other Sanctuary churches, we estimate they would be incrementally small over what we currently spend on utilities, maintenance, janitorial services.
- I attended one of the information sessions conducted by Marian Bock. Since that meeting, I have received updates from Marian. Several of the email messages have been a frequent plea for trained volunteers to cover open shifts at the Friends house and/or the 1st Congregational Church. If there are problems in securing a large enough pool of volunteers for the two current locations that are already providing sanctuary, how will this play out with the need for additional trained volunteers at our sanctuary location? Perhaps there is not yet a big enough commitment by the larger community to ensure coverage 24/7 for three sanctuary locations. Volunteer emergencies do occur normally. When email calls go out, they are usually quickly filled. When we had a problem with a shift we were responsible for, the shift was filled within 7 minutes after the email call went out. Marian feels there is enough coverage available and trained people who are willing to serve. The Friends continue to provide accompaniment training and are seeing the numbers of session attendees continually high.
- From my perspective, it seems like we are flitting from one initiative to another. A couple years ago, I heard about the need to provide services to LGBT youth in the larger community because of the high percentage being homeless. To my knowledge, no further discussion or decisions have been made regarding this important need. There had been a lot of interest in our partnership with the Navaho nation. Now I hardly hear anything about that ministry. Then there was lots of discussion about paying off the mortgage. That discussion has dwindled. Now the “big thing” is providing sanctuary. Providing sanctuary seems all consuming while other initiatives/ministries are put on “the back burner” or have fallen into a black hole. I personally feel like providing sanctuary is being shoved down my throat. Is there truly a need for St. Michael’s and All Angels Church to provide sanctuary? In the meetings I have attended and the information I have read – I am not certain there is a need. Clear priorities are helpful to many, but it’s not always how ministries evolve. St Michael’s has always had and will likely continue to have multiple ministries going in many directions. As with any other ministry, some people will feel called to participate and others will not. You may not feel called to support immigrant issues. But many people do feel called to support it. Other people will have to speak about the other ministries you mention (although we know that CasaQ is functioning and Chuck Jones is on the board, Navajo Land activities continue, the mortgage has been paid down \$300K in three years and the Vestry has announced the intention to have the ~\$340K debt retired in two years.) The discernment for sanctuary

is not to make you want the parish to do it, or to make you participate in accompaniment. Discernment addresses the intentions, issues, costs, risks, the desires to help, and the fears about helping. Discernment should give the confidence that, should the decision be made to offer sanctuary AND should we be requested to provide sanctuary, we can say yes and handle or solve problems that may arise. This is why we have worked hard to make the discernment process very open, why we are working with other churches and organizations on the issue, and why we sincerely appreciate yours and *all* the opinions that have been voiced.