

Parish Immigration Forum—September 16, 2017

Panel: Father Joe Britton, David McGuire (Vestry), Tina Kachele (Friends Meeting House), Erin Hulse (Friends Meeting House)

Moderator: Don Noack (Vestry)

Note Takers: Carol Raish and Bill Everett (Immigration Committee)

Father Joe opened the meeting with a prayer and told some personal stories about his experiences with immigration issues. David introduced the panel and discussed some of the terms and topics around offering Sanctuary. He presented some history of the Sanctuary movement and suggested that people read the Sanctuary FAQs on the SMAA website.

Don Noack opened the floor for questions, concerns, and discussion from the Parish.

Parish Questions and Concerns:

Question and Statement: In the new age of sanctuary with a current focus on undocumented immigrants living in this country for many years, how complicit are we as Americans since we hire them to meet our needs. We need due process and new legislation.

Question for David: David, you would be able to run a program that would not engage in civil disobedience (an illegal action, see Sanctuary FAQs, ACLU). What if other people pushed the program into civil disobedience?

Response: Ministry in community has a way of balancing out the extremes. We will decide our actions as a community as we decide about other aspects of ministry such as the Food Pantry and Navajoland. “David” will not be in charge.

Are recent developments between the Administration and the Democrats changing the environment?

Response: The legal situation is in flux—has been changing for years. We need to keep our eyes and ears open and keep ourselves informed.

How do you physically provide for the sanctuary seeker and the family with respect to many needs.

Response: Space--The Meeting House has what Emma needs. She is downstairs and the door to the downstairs is closed for her privacy. Transport--Emma's husband is a US citizen, and he comes and goes. Emma does not leave the Meeting House. Doctors and dentists treat her at the Meeting House. Food--congregations are providing food on a weekly or monthly basis. Kadhim came into sanctuary for safety--he went to NMFC for help. His wife is a US citizen and she comes and goes. The family provides their own groceries and the wife cooks. Kadhim does not leave the sanctuary facility now.

Activities--People come in to visit. With Emma, people have brought in activities and she is learning to paint and is becoming quite accomplished. Kadhim, though a Muslim, joins congregation on a Sunday morning. Comment from Tina and Erin--the situations of Emma and Kadhim are not as rigid as one might think but not as flexible as we might want them to be. Must have 24/7 presence of an accompanier. This is the biggest investment of time and effort. Comment from Erin--Support has come from all over town. Accompaniers are there to witness not engage in civil disobedience. They make sure that all legal paperwork is in order. The more churches that step in, the more support there is. There is a clear protocol for accompaniers that is addressed in the Sanctuary FAQs--from Father Joe.

Value of private space with a shower, etc. Vital over the long haul but a person desperate to avoid deportation would choose "no shower" to stay out of detention and have access to family.

Discuss liability for the church, the members, day school, etc.

Response (from David): Day School--Met with the Director and the Board. The Director is supportive, no hesitation. Will keep them in the loop. Liability--Prosecution under criminal law applies to individuals. The entire church would not be locked up. The people at risk are those making the decisions. The Vestry and the Rector are more susceptible. Day School--ICE usually comes in the early morning and generally do not come in large groups to arrest one person in a church.

The church will need a lawyer if decide to do sanctuary.

Are the Friend's facilities being surveilled by ICE?

Response (from Erin): We don't think so. There have been police cars in the parking lot. ICE and APD will say they are not working in conjunction but "have heard stories." We at the Friends go about our business. Maybe ICE doing the job so well we don't know if they are watching. We are just going on with our lives.

How does the Friends community feel about it (providing sanctuary)?

Response: We have no choice. We must listen to Christ's Way.

Comment from the questioner--If the Vestry and the Rector go to jail, I'll come too.

Response (from Tina): Try to hold the meeting and listen to the community--is a spiritual mission. She was not convinced that it (the decision for sanctuary) would happen. Alerted all the Albuquerque Friends in the area. The Friends had a 4-hour meeting. They took the step very quickly. There were fears, concerns and anxieties but the movement was there. Later, they went through a called meeting in July to discuss concerns, had a reaffirmation to the mission. Fears came out that hadn't come out before--but still reaffirmed the mission. They have many newcomers, one officer resigned his position but has not left the community.

Erin commented that providing sanctuary has had an impact. They are stressed with the length of time the sanctuary has lasted. They are dealing with how to sustain the commitment--trying to fit it all together. The Friends have renewed their commitment in a meeting this summer.

What financial resources would be involved? Building would have someone living in it. Is it up to city code? Does that put us in more liability? No answer to that questions currently. Resources to get started. How will that affect other ministries? People give to the food pantry. How would sanctuary affect that?

Response: We will need to look at code issues and decide what to do. The Sanctuary FAQs has researched answers for some of these questions. Building upgrade costs are discussed in the FAQs. The initial costs are not huge. Ongoing costs are also discussed in the FAQs.

Impact on other ministries--People do a ministry because they want to be part of that ministry.

Some may leave, others may come in.

We should talk with the Faith Coalition about establishing a network of churches to help.

Response (from Tina): No one has called them on the building Code--thought one unfriendly neighbor might, but it has not happened. They monitor how many people are present in the building because of the fire code. If law enforcement would come into the building (to check), they can let ICE in.

Response (from Erin): The Faith Coalition gets contributions which can be turned over to the hosting church. Medical and dental services have been provided from their community without cost. Have helped both Emma and Kadhim.

With reference to DACA I believe--they came as children, are adults now, still children for sanctuary purposes--should we differentiate among them?

Response (from David): Better to have that question answered by an attorney, should we get there.

Statement: Great process, great questions. Back to impact on the spiritual community for the Quakers. Emma came up to talk with him, she was lonesome. They talked in Spanish. It gets boring for her down in the basement. She comes up and watches the hummingbird. Having someone in sanctuary is like having Christ in your midst--an experience not to be missed.

Sanctuary at the UCC (with Kadhim) has been divisive. We (SMAA) should come to consensus. Should not be hasty, but clearly a calling.

There are many ways go get involved--don't only focus on taking someone in. What would happen to the Meeting House and UCC if we (SMAA) took someone in?

Response (from David): Back to question on stretched resources if SMAA also took someone in. Marian Bock who is doing training for the Sanctuary Accompaniers--there is an increasing number of people who are taking the training--an increasing number of accompaniers.

Do you notify ICE when you take someone into sanctuary?

Response: Yes, sent a letter to ICE. The lawyers for the sanctuary seekers delivered a letter to ICE when they did not go to their appointments with ICE.

Statement: We are hypocrites in many ways. Many people have needs. We employ them. They are not taking away jobs that anyone wants.

Question of our decision--Some say our decision is a "done deal".

Response: No, that is why we are having these sessions--so people will come forward with questions.

Question of costs. There is a cost estimate of \$3000.00. What does that support?

Breakdown on costs. Also, would want to know background of people we would accept (in sanctuary). Background and facilities for overnight accompaniers?

Response (from David): On the question of costs--discussed with James and Oleta and James made the estimate. Would need to deal with (other) questions as they come up. We won't go into it with all the answers. (Missed quotation concerning Jesus and Peter in the boat.)

How many illegals (guests in sanctuary) have lawyers?

Response: Our two guests have attorneys working "pro bono". There are a number of legal support networks. The New Mexico Immigrant Law Center (NMILC) also does legal work as does the Faith Coalition.

Statement: We are called to step out of fear into faith. Many volunteers to do accompaniment are stepping up (Tina).

Statement: Spiritual growth in the Quaker Community after the March 5 meeting decision to offer sanctuary in the face of immediate need--came from the spirit within. Discussion from Erin--I am blessed to have lots of privileged experiences--the color of my skin, my education--just got the Ph.D. I am aware of what I have. The Quakers are like me with the same background and privileges. For us to make choices for others about their survival--recognize what we have and open that door. We have the privilege to figure it out later. We must address these immediate needs.

Difficult to say "I'm not sure about doing this." Not convinced this is the best way to help people--helping one person. There are many undocumented people at the Food Pantry. What about risk to them? Will sanctuary stretch our community by putting so many hours into accompanying one person. Feel very bad about saying this. I worry about putting all our eggs into this basket, which has a lot of appeal.

Response (from Father Joe): Dilemma investing so much in one person. Not just about that person--effect on the whole community, opens up to other people. Catalyst for many other questions. Being a sanctuary has a way of changing the nature of the congregation and its role in the community. "I can't save you because so many others are in need. Pattern of Jesus in helping one person. Always starts with an individual encounter and then radiates out.

Do we only have 2 or 3 choices? Do we have to have a person in sanctuary? Can we opt to do this another way?

Response (from David): There are lots of ways to support--Multiple choices.

Statement: Decisions have not been made, need to get this out. Difference between hope and trust--hope for much, must trust that what I feel is enough for me. The Parish is an incredible place of community. Don't want to take away from that. Devil is always in the details (from Deacon Jan).

(?) Is the Faith Coalition deciding on those who are selected for sanctuary--in response to needs or to the unique story that they have?

Response: I did not get a response down on this question.

Statement: If I do not do this who will?

Statement: He who saves one person saves the whole world.

Statement: Jesus blessed me with this church which goes all out for people. I have been involved in immigration. I taught people who were immigrants and whose parents were immigrants. How this will affect the people here should not be the main concern. Worked with Kadhim the first night at the Meeting House--there were tears in his eyes because he would be yanked away from his family. Faith in taking the next step even if we can't see the staircase.

Statement: Benefitted so much from being a part of this community--shaped by sermons, scriptures and each other. There are rebels in this congregation--just do it! Pastoral care for every opinion. Perfect love casts out fears.

Statement: Trust of process and respect for the time it takes to do the process. I thought the decision had already been made. So powerful this meeting. We need to have more to get thoughts out.

Response (from Father Joe): The process needs to continue and will continue at the upcoming Vestry Retreat.

Father Joe closed the meeting with comments from Rowan Williams--"How do we know what is God's will? Well, we don't" We try in community or individually to find the right direction and go with it. If determine the direction is wrong, have the wisdom to change.

From the movie Dunkirk, as the pilot decides whether to save himself and turn back for England before he runs out of fuel or stay in the fight and risk death. He stays in the fight.

Urgency about our Parish decision. Maybe we are called for something more disciple-like than we would like. If I feel uncomfortable, I have probably done the right thing.