



**Report of the Sanctuary Task Force  
of the Diocese of El Camino Real  
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Merciful God, we pray for all whose desperation leads them to undertake perilous voyages, often following dangerous journeys over land and sea: those escaping brutal wars, those fleeing religious persecution, those escaping climate disasters and economic ruin, those looking for hope in a hopeless situation. May we look beyond our own fears and concerns to the needs of those who have nothing, risk everything and depend on the kindness of strangers. May our hearts be opened, our leaders be challenged and our self-interest be called out, in the name of the one whose family fled as refugees to Egypt. Amen.

(Source: adapted from Christian Aid UK)

## SUMMARY

The 37th Convention of the Diocese of El Camino passed Resolution D, which calls for “the creation of a task force, appointed by the Partnership Commission, to develop a specific set of resources and partnerships and to facilitate discussions about what would be involved in the Diocese of El Camino Real becoming a Sanctuary Diocese, and to report the results back to the 38th Meeting of Convention.” This is the detailed report of that task force.

This document contains a history of the sanctuary movement and description of areas of concern. Companion documents will provide more detailed lists of resources.

A sanctuary is a place of refuge or safety. This report explores what it would mean for the Diocese of El Camino Real to become a “Sanctuary Diocese.” The Dream Faith Network resolution that led to the formation of this task force was responding to threats to the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program, the elimination of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and other anti-immigrant actions. By becoming a Sanctuary Diocese, the Diocese of El Camino Real would be taking a step to help those affected by these changes.

Other dioceses have already declared themselves to be sanctuary dioceses. Their work has helped us understand what this means. There is no single, precise definition. Each diocese and each congregation must decide if and how they want to engage the sanctuary movement. In July, the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church passed Resolution 2018-C009, “Becoming a Sanctuary Church.” While not declaring the Episcopal Church as a sanctuary church, the resolution urges members of the church to challenge unjust immigration laws and calls on congregations to become places of welcome, refuge, healing and provide other forms of material and pastoral support.

In general, becoming a sanctuary diocese involves encouraging and providing resources for churches to become sanctuary churches. Becoming a sanctuary church is a process involving several steps. First, congregations need resources to become better informed about the issues facing immigrants to the United States and the theological basis for churches to become involved. The diocese can make these resources available, and that is what this task force has tried to do. Second, congregations can take a stand as a group to be active in the Sanctuary Movement. Effective advocacy requires people work together for the desired changes.

Third, congregations can partner with other organizations, both faith-based and secular, and become part of the Sanctuary Movement. And finally, congregations can provide assistance to those in need through legal information and assistance, accompaniment to court, and assistance navigating the US legal system.

## PREFACE

The 37th Convention of the Diocese of El Camino passed Resolution D, which calls for “the creation of a task force, appointed by the Partnership Commission, to develop a specific set of resources and partnerships and to facilitate discussions about what would be involved in the Diocese of El Camino Real becoming a Sanctuary Diocese, and to report the results back to the 38th Meeting of Convention.” This is the report of that task force.

## INTRODUCTION

A sanctuary is a place of refuge or safety. This report explores what it would mean for the Diocese of El Camino Real to become a “Sanctuary Diocese.” Exploring sanctuary actions is timely because of recent changes in the way immigration laws and asylum laws are being interpreted and enforced in the United States.

For undocumented immigrants, there are legal limits to consider when providing sanctuary. Officials with a warrant can arrest undocumented immigrants regardless of whether they are at a house of worship like a church, synagogue or mosque according to Stephen Yale-Loehr, who teaches immigration law at Cornell Law School. The immigration and Nationality Act prohibits anyone from knowingly harboring an undocumented immigrant in any place. Those convicted of doing so are committing a crime and, if convicted, could be fined and go to prison for years.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, law enforcement is reluctant to go into places of worship in order to avoid negative publicity. Pastors are not generally arrested, but the law does not protect them. Still, many congregations have joined the Sanctuary Movement.

## THE SANCTUARY MOVEMENT

From a recent Sanctuary Movement report,

“As of January 2018, there are more than 1,110 congregations in the Sanctuary Movement, showing the faith resistance continues to grow against harsh and inhumane immigration policies.”<sup>2</sup> These congregations have taken a pledge to resist deportation and discrimination through sanctuary:

"As people of faith and people of conscience, we pledge to resist the newly elected administration's policy proposals to target and deport millions of undocumented

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<sup>1</sup> “Can churches provide legal sanctuary to undocumented immigrants?” by Jason Hanna, CNN, February 17, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/17/us/immigrants-sanctuary-churches-legality-trnd/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> “SANCTUARY IN THE AGE OF TRUMP,” by Myrna Orozco and the Rev. Noel Andersen, Church Word Service, [https://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/uploads/7/6/9/1/76912017/sanctuary\\_in\\_the\\_age\\_of\\_trump\\_january\\_2018.pdf](https://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/uploads/7/6/9/1/76912017/sanctuary_in_the_age_of_trump_january_2018.pdf)

immigrants and discriminate against marginalized communities. We will open up our congregations and communities as sanctuary spaces for those targeted by hate, and work alongside our friends, families, and neighbors to ensure the dignity and human rights of all people.”<sup>3</sup>

The report goes on to say,

“Sanctuary congregations engage in a spectrum of solidarity actions designed to shield immigrants from deportation and create communities in which we can live together without fear. These actions include transforming congregations into welcoming spaces, advocacy and accompaniment to help stop deportations, assisting with legal clinics, forming rapid response teams to stop raids and deportations, and, if the need arises, physically housing an immigrant in danger of immediate deportation. Each congregation has the opportunity to go through a discernment process of education and dialogue to decide their role in the movement.”<sup>4</sup>

For a discussion of the policies of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, and their implementation under the Trump administration, see the full report from the Sanctuary Movement, “Sanctuary in the Age of Trump.”<sup>5</sup>

## **SANCTUARY DIOCESES**

The Sanctuary Movement report is clear what a sanctuary congregation is, but what is a sanctuary diocese? Since 2016, a number of dioceses in the Episcopal Church, including the Diocese of New Jersey, the Diocese of Newark, and several dioceses in California, have declared themselves sanctuary dioceses. Here is some background on how they have defined this status.

### **The Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles**

The Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles (LA) was the first in California to declare itself a sanctuary diocese at their convention on December 3, 2016<sup>6</sup>. In declaring the Diocese of LA to be a “Sanctuary Diocese,” they resolved to resist U.S. government policy proposals to deport undocumented immigrants and to eliminate DACA. They urged congregations to consider becoming sanctuary congregations, they resolved to partner with other groups with similar objectives to educate, organize, advocate, and take direct action, and the diocese resolved to provide support to congregations, clergy and lay leaders to engage in this work.

The actions to become a sanctuary diocese or sanctuary congregation are similar to the resolution adopted by the diocese of San Diego described below. The diocese has acted on this

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<sup>3</sup> Sanctuary Movement pledge. <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/sign-the-pledge.html>

<sup>4</sup> “SANCTUARY IN THE AGE OF TRUMP,” referenced above

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Resolution regarding Becoming a Sanctuary Diocese, [http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc\\_attachments/public/documents/3231882/Resolution\\_SanctuaryDiocese\\_2016.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc_attachments/public/documents/3231882/Resolution_SanctuaryDiocese_2016.pdf)

resolution by organizing their efforts in a movement called “Sacred Resistance.”<sup>7</sup> This group provides resources for those in need, for others interested in getting involved and for partners in the work to support immigrants. More about Sacred Resistance can be found in the resources document accompanying this report.

## **The Episcopal Dioceses of New Jersey and Newark**

On March 4, 2017, The Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey declared itself a sanctuary diocese via Resolution 2017-2.<sup>8</sup> Resolution 2017-3 called for the diocese to submit a resolution modeled on 2017-2 to the 79th General Convention. See the description under “The 79th General Convention 2018” below. The Diocese of New Jersey has an Immigration Task Force, and they, along with the diocese’s Anti-Racism Commission and the Hispanic Commission maintain lists of resources on the diocesan website.<sup>9</sup>

In January 2017, the neighboring Diocese of Newark (Northern New Jersey) launched their efforts with the issuance of the “Statement on Intent to Study the Sanctuary Church Movement and Engage in Immigrant Justice.”<sup>10</sup>

## **The Episcopal Diocese of California**

The Episcopal Diocese of California declared itself to be a Sanctuary Diocese at its 168th Convention on October 27-28, 2017.<sup>11</sup> It included resolving to support Episcopal Church initiatives, partner with others to educate, organize, advocate, and engage in direct legal action, engage in meaningful reform of U.S. immigration laws and policy, and equip congregations “to engage in such work appropriate to local contexts, capacity, and discernment.”

The Explanation section of the resolution describes what it might mean to be a sanctuary congregation, and identifies a range of actions that Sanctuary Congregations may take, including 1) education and advocacy, 2) accompaniment of immigrant families and youth, 3) networks of protection and rapid response, and 4) physical sanctuary.

The framers of the resolution point out that undocumented immigrants “have legal rights to due process under the U.S. Constitution and federal statute” and stated a hope that “all congregations will find a form of being a Sanctuary Congregation that is appropriate to the local context, and that members of the diocese can agree to support at least the first three types of sanctuary above.”

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<sup>7</sup> “About Sacred Resistance: Heeding the Call to Resist.” <http://www.lasacredresistance.org/about.html>

<sup>8</sup> Available online from a subscription service

<sup>9</sup> <http://dioceseofnj.org/sanctuary/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://dioceseofnewark.org/convention/statement-intent-study-sanctuary-church-movement-and-engage-immigrant-justice>

<sup>11</sup> Episcopal Diocese of California Sanctuary Resolution <http://diocal.org/blogs/convention-resolutions/resolution-3-becoming-sanctuary-diocese>

## The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

The Diocese of San Diego declared itself a Sanctuary Diocese in November 2017. The full text of the resolution is [here](#).<sup>12</sup>

The resolution states “that the Diocese of San Diego, as people of faith and people of conscience, pledges to resist efforts to target and deport millions of undocumented immigrants, and to eliminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that has granted temporary relief for thousands of young people in our communities and families” and that congregations consider becoming Sanctuary Congregations. Sanctuary Congregations serve as places of refuge, healing, and providers of material and pastoral support. They also connect with other local institutions working for immigrants’ rights.

There was significant debate and discussion of what sanctuary means both generally and specifically in the context of the resolution passed by the San Diego Convention. Their website clarifies this by saying:

“The word, sanctuary, has many definitions, which, from Webster’s and other sources include: ‘a place of refuge or safety, a harbor, an oasis, a sacred place, a place of protection, a place where one can be free from the stress of daily life.’ The term, sanctuary, has deep roots in Christian history and tradition; indeed, our place of worship is deemed a sanctuary.

“The term has also taken on a political meaning, particularly over the past ten months, as various state and municipal entities, as well as colleges and universities have declared themselves sanctuaries. These institutions have variously defined the term for their own purposes, some, but not all, including statements of non-cooperation with certain federal law enforcement agencies charged with controlling and enforcing our immigration laws and directives. None, however, advocate violation of law.

“In the context of Resolution 17-05, a fairly narrow definition was urged by its proponents. This communique is intended to recite that narrow definition and make clear the position of the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego as to the intended meaning and use of the term, “Sanctuary Diocese” or “Sanctuary Congregation.” It should be understood to mean that the Episcopal Church in San Diego holds itself out to be a place where persons residing or working in this diocese or their families, regardless of legal status, can find comfort, assistance and loving support as they negotiate the difficulties of being an alien in a foreign land.

“Such comfort, assistance and support could take many forms, including spiritual guidance, prayer, financial and/or legal assistance, food or temporary shelter. It could

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<sup>12</sup> “Resolution 17-05: A Sanctuary Diocese” from the November 15, 2017 Convention of the Diocese of San Diego. <http://edsd.org/resolution-17-05-a-sanctuary-diocese/>

also include an educational component, both for the benefit of the immigrants and the larger community as well.

“It should be clear that the providing of sanctuary as that term is used here, does not include concealing, harboring or shielding from detection any person being sought for legal detention or arrest by any law enforcement agency. It does not include any actions in violation of the law.”<sup>13</sup>

See references in the footnotes for a more complete discussion of the resolution.

## The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin

The Diocese of San Joaquin started to explore what it means to be a Sanctuary Diocese in the summer of 2017. While they did not declare themselves to be a sanctuary diocese, they passed Resolution R-01-17 at the 58th Convention on October 27, 2017.<sup>14</sup> This created an Immigration Task Force. Even before the resolution was passed, they began a series of online posts covering the theological basis for providing sanctuary and moving through the following types of resources: general education, “Know Your Rights” workshops, how to join a rapid response team, how to provide physical support and advocacy for immigrants, and suggestions of ways to help immigrants on the path to citizenship. An online index is not available, but examples have covered such topics as “The Episcopal Church and Immigration Advocacy”<sup>15</sup> and “Sanctuary Option 12: Give public declaration of physical, spiritual, moral, and financial support.”<sup>16</sup>

Additional links to posts can be found in the resource documents accompanying this report.

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<sup>13</sup> “On Resolution 17-05: Being a Sanctuary Diocese” by Jim Stiven. [edsd.org/resolution-17-05-on-sanctuary/](https://edsd.org/resolution-17-05-on-sanctuary/)

<sup>14</sup> Not available online

<sup>15</sup> <https://diosanjoaquin.org/episcopal-church-immigration-advocacy/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://diosanjoaquin.org/sanctuary-option-12-give-public-declaration-physical-spiritual-moral-financial-support-2>

## The 79th GENERAL CONVENTION 2018 Becoming a Sanctuary Church

The 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church was held in Austin, Texas, in July 2018. Immigration policies in the United States were a hot issue, but the delegates and bishops showed unanimity in their support for three resolutions on immigration.<sup>17</sup>

1.) Immigration Resolution 2018-C009, “Becoming a Sanctuary Church,” was passed by both houses. Although 2018-C009 does not explicitly declare The Episcopal Church to be a “Sanctuary Church,” 2018-C009 was otherwise modeled upon and calls for the same actions as Resolution 2017-2 from the Diocese of New Jersey.<sup>18</sup>

Summary of Resolution 2018-C009<sup>19</sup>:

- Reaffirms 2015-D057 (see 78th Convention below)
- Urges members of the church to challenge unjust immigration laws
- Calls on congregations to become places of welcome, refuge, healing and other forms of material and pastoral support
- Calls on members of the church to connect with local and national sanctuary communities and organizations to engage in education, organizing, advocacy, direct action, and other methods deemed appropriate to secure safety, security and due process for immigrants
- Reaffirms The Episcopal Church’s support for congressional action for comprehensive and just reform of the U.S. immigration system as called for in GC resolution 2009-B006

2.) The title of Resolution 2018-A178 indicates the intent of the resolution: “Halt the Intensification and Implementation of Immigration Policies and Practices that are Harmful to Migrant Women, Parents and Children.” It goes on to urge all Episcopalians and Episcopal Church-related agencies and organizations to support ministries in states that provide vulnerable migrants with basic needs, legal support, and advocacy.<sup>20</sup>

3.) Resolution 2018-C033<sup>21</sup> puts the church on record as respecting the dignity of immigrants and outlines how public policy should reflect that belief.

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<sup>17</sup> Immigration at the 79th General Convention in Austin (July 2018):

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/article/general-convention-unites-behind-immigrants-prayer-action-legislation>

<sup>18</sup> Available online from a subscription service

<sup>19</sup> 79th General Convention Resolution C009 Becoming A Sanctuary Church

<https://www.vbinder.net/resolutions/C009?house=hd&lang=en>

<sup>20</sup> 79th General Convention Resolution A178 Halt the Intensification and Implementation of Immigration Policies and Practices that are Harmful to Migrant Women, Parents and Children.

<https://www.vbinder.net/resolutions/A178?house=hd&lang=en>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.vbinder.net/resolutions/C033?house=hb&lang=en>

## Previous General Conventions

Resolution 2015-D057 passed by the 78th General Convention, and referenced in 2018-C009, calls for congregations to be centers of information, services and accompaniment for immigrants, unaccompanied minors, families and communities, and to support families facing separation.<sup>22</sup>

Resolution 2009-B006 passed by the 76th General Convention, and referenced in 2018-C009, calls for many reforms, including moratoriums on ICE raids; comprehensive immigration reform by the U.S. Congress; improvement of the conditions in detention centers; termination of funding that enables local enforcement agencies to enforce immigration law and the return of enforcement to federal agencies; and support of the provisional legal status of undocumented youth who arrived in the United States as infants and/or children (who would come to be called “DACA” recipients after the Executive Order called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).<sup>23</sup>

## ACTIONS THE DIOCESE AND CONGREGATIONS MAY TAKE

In this section we describe a few of these ways to get educated and/or involved.

Many organizations are working within the Sanctuary Movement, and many, many resources are available to individuals and congregations interested in getting involved. Here are just a few examples taken from our resources document:

- A coalition of organizations that includes the Colorado Council of Churches, American Friends Service Committee, and others have developed a curriculum, “Who is My Neighbor: A Faith Conversation on Immigration.”
- The Sanctuary Movement has assembled a Rapid Response Toolkit to help groups get organized and prepare to act when action is needed.
- On their “Sacred Resistance” webpage, the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles has a broad array of resources for Those in Need, for Allies in the faith-based sanctuary movement, and for those looking for more background (context) behind the sanctuary movement.

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<sup>22</sup> 79th General Convention Resolution 2015-D057 Recommit to Giving Sanctuary to Immigrants  
[https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=2015-D057](https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=2015-D057)

<sup>23</sup> [https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution.pl?resolution=2009-B006](https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2009-B006)

More information can be found in the resource documents accompanying this report. The resources correspond to the following opportunities for education and action:

### **For the Diocese of El Camino Real**

Actions that the diocese will take to address these concerns include:

- **Provide information** on what it means to be a sanctuary church/diocese/congregation (this report.)
- **Provide resources** to congregations that are discerning if they should become Sanctuary Congregations or engage in other actions, or get general training on Immigrant and Refugee issues (resource documents accompanying this report).
- **Facilitate discussions** as called for in Resolution D passed at the 37th Diocesan Convention in 2017.

Additional actions that the diocese may opt take to address these concerns include:

- Make a formal, explicit **declaration** that the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real is a sanctuary diocese.
- Identify a person or group that can serve as a **central contact** for congregations within the diocese who are supporting at-risk immigrants, so that they can share experiences and best practices. This person or group would be expected to stay informed about actions individual congregations are engaged in, so that leaders in diverse congregations can network and share learnings and/or resources.

### **For congregations and individuals**

- **Learn about Immigration** and the challenges that at-risk immigrants and refugees face. Examples: Focused bible study, Lenten or Epiphany study series, forums with guest speakers. More ideas can be found in resources document.
- **Commit** by making a declaration or completing a Sanctuary Pledge, signed by the parish vestry or bishop's committee, and optionally by parishioners who support at-risk immigrants, that defines the actions that the parish will undertake in support of immigrants. More than 1000 congregations in various faith traditions have signed such pledges. Links to examples can be found in our resources document.
- **Raise money** to help individuals and organizations. For example, a congregation can contribute to an immigrant's bond fund for those in detention, or help fund legal counsel. Such actions have helped increase the probability that individuals will win their cases.
- **Actively engage** by partnering with organizations that advocate for and defend immigrants. See more below under "For those in need."

### For those in need

While needs of immigrants and refugees are many, some primary areas of concern expressed by this community are:

- **Legal assistance.** This includes a wide variety of services, such as obtaining visas and green cards and other documents required for employment and the citizenship process, deportation defense, access to housing and help with discriminatory housing practices, access to public benefits, seeking resolution for victims of domestic violence and other crimes, defending civil rights, and assistance with any other issues that are challenging for an immigrant.
- **Accompaniment.** This includes responding to an individual or family in need with pastoral care/support, and/or practical and financial support and/or accompaniment to ICE meetings and court hearings so no one stands alone. Congregations can also accompany immigrants by writing letters and cards.
- **Employment rights.** This falls under legal assistance but is a specialized area of concern. Undocumented workers have rights with regards to working conditions, fair wages and overtime pay, work hours, rights to rest and meal breaks, and other rights afforded to all employees.

### About Physical Sanctuary

Some congregations may choose to provide sanctuary in the historical sense of the term, where the Sanctuary/Refuge/Hosting congregation may provide refugees a place to sleep, bathe, have privacy, have visitors, prepare/heat food, exercise, etc. However, as described in the Introduction of this report, this type of sanctuary doesn't have historical legal protections. For more information, see "Can churches provide legal sanctuary to undocumented immigrants?" a CNN article.<sup>24</sup> The ACLU<sup>25</sup> also provides an information sheet describing some of the legal ramifications of providing sanctuary. Neither of these documents replace consultation with an attorney before taking action. Congregations and individuals should seek qualified legal counsel and should also consult with the Chancellor of the Diocese.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Can churches provide legal sanctuary to undocumented immigrants?" by Jason Hanna, CNN, February 17, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/17/us/immigrants-sanctuary-churches-legality-trnd/index.html>

<sup>25</sup> ACLU Sanctuary Congregations and Harboring FAQ. <http://edsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Sanctuary-Congregations-ACLU.pdf> or <https://www.aclu.org/other/sanctuary-congregations-and-harboring-faq>

<sup>26</sup> Email: [chancellor@realepiscopal.org](mailto:chancellor@realepiscopal.org)

## Next Steps

This task force was formed to provide resources and facilitate discussions about becoming a sanctuary diocese. You have the resources. Please study these resources and discuss whether you want the Diocese of El Camino Real to be a sanctuary diocese and whether you want your congregation to become a sanctuary congregation.

### **Parish Conversations**

If you would like to have civil discussions of sanctuary, we recommend hosting Living Room Conversations. Guidelines for hosting can be found on the Living Room Conversation website.<sup>27</sup>

### **Parish events**

If you would like someone to come to your church to talk with parishioners about sanctuary, we will help you connect with local people in the sanctuary movement who would be willing to speak to you.

### **Online forum**

If you would like to discuss these decisions across the diocese in an online forum, contact a member of the task force. We will work with you to create the forum.

There are many ways to get involved if you decide to act.

## Resources

We have provided a few key resources on sanctuary in the footnotes of this document. For a more complete list of resources including local professionals working in your area to help immigrants, see the Sanctuary Task Force Resources document on the EDECR website, [www.realepiscopal.org](http://www.realepiscopal.org).

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.livingroomconversations.org/topics/immigration/>