

UU Congregation at Montclair joins New Sanctuary Movement

At the UU Congregation at Montclair (NJ), we're taking a stand for those at the margins of our society who lack the power to make their voices heard. Our congregation has voted to become part of the [New Sanctuary Movement](#), an ecumenical, religious response to the crisis facing our society today around immigrants and immigration.

I supported our decision to become part of this nationwide movement on behalf of immigrant rights because I want to change the tone of the debate about immigration from a harsh, racist legalistic harangue to a dialogue that takes into account the real lives of the most vulnerable members of our society.

I want my children to grow up in a world that appreciates different cultures, that celebrates different religions, and that shows respect to everyone they might meet on the street. How can they do that when we consign an entire segment of our society as "illegal," encourage walls instead of dialogue, and use the debate about immigration to reinforce harmful racial stereotypes?

What's a person to do? What's a congregation to do? What's our society to do?

We've chosen to publically advocate on behalf of immigrants and immigrants rights, and open our congregation to a family fighting deportation. We will support that family in any way we can, witnessing and documenting interactions with the immigration system, providing necessary financial, legal, or other support, and by welcoming them to our congregation. We will join with other congregations in speaking out about the abuses of immigrants by our government and we will encourage reform.

If not for us, the churches, synagogues, societies or other religious organizations, who else will speak out for these friends, family members, community members who face the loss of family, job, housing, and way of life? In ten years, when my son and daughter are teenagers, I want to be able to look them in the eye when they ask, "What did you do to stop this tragedy in our own country?"

We've been excited by the response of our congregation and of friends in the community – new people are getting involved, and it's helping to build our congregation. We stand to gain at least as much from our involvement in the New Sanctuary Movement as we hope others will gain from our support.

– Submitted by David Sailer, member of the UU Congregation at Montclair