

RESOLUTION ON FIRST CHURCH BECOMING A “SANCTUARY CHURCH”

WHEREAS, the Outreach and Service Committee has planned and carried out a program of inquiry, discussion and discernment over a six-week period, throughout which we have learned from the experience of our First Church forebears and sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and

WHEREAS, we have been led in our discernment process by the words of Matthew 25 regarding service to those in need; and

WHEREAS, the delegates to the 2017 General Synod of the United Church of Christ overwhelmingly declared the UCC to be an “Immigrant Welcoming Community” and called on all settings of the UCC to do the same, underscoring the love of neighbor and affirming that “no human is illegal”; and

WHEREAS, the Oberlin City Council reaffirmed in a resolution on March 6, 2017, “its strong support for fundamental Constitutional rights as well as its ‘opposition to federal measures that infringe on civil liberties; and reaffirms its strong support for the rights of non-citizen and citizen immigrants... and opposes measures that single out individuals for legal scrutiny or enforcement activity based on their country of origin’”; and

WHEREAS, at this time the Committee has contacted at least five UCC, Presbyterian and Episcopal churches in the greater Cleveland area that are currently functioning as “sanctuary churches”; and

WHEREAS, at this time we have acknowledgement of support from the community, college and, ecumenically, from neighboring churches as we seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit in responding to the needs of our nation at this time in our congregation’s history; and

WHEREAS, we have received the approval of the First Church Executive Council to move forward toward declaring the First Church in Oberlin a “Sanctuary Church”; and

WHEREAS, the Outreach and Service Committee now needs the affirmation of congregational support before taking the next steps in this process,

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the First Church in Oberlin (UCC) that the following steps will be taken with the goal of becoming a “Sanctuary Church”:

1. An Ad Hoc Sanctuary Committee will be appointed by the Executive Council;
2. The Ad Hoc Committee will initiate the formation of an Ecumenical Multi-faith Community Coordinating Committee (EMCCC) to support the sanctuary program at First Church, with invitations to be extended to churches and other organizations in Oberlin and Lorain County, including those that have already expressed interest – First Church (UCC), Peace Community Church, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, the Oberlin Friends Meeting, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Christ Episcopal Church, the Oberlin College Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, the Oberlin College Multicultural Center, and the Lorain Ohio Immigrant Rights Association (LOIRA).
3. Officers and team leaders drawn from the EMCCC will coordinate such areas as media spokesperson, food, shopping, laundry, children’s activities, medical services, legal services, and companionship;
4. First Church will establish a Sanctuary Fund to which EMCCC organizations and others will be invited to contribute;
5. The Sanctuary Fund and/or other funds will be used to create a space, including a shower, within the First Church facility where a person or persons seeking sanctuary can be comfortably housed;

6. The Ad Hoc Committee will have responsibility for identifying a person or persons seeking sanctuary, assuring that the process for obtaining U.S. legal status has been begun by such person/s, and initiating the sanctuary process.

7. A final review of the sanctuary plan will be presented to the First Church congregation before September 30, 2018, and no person/s will be accepted for sanctuary prior to that presentation.

[As passed unanimously by the First Church UCC congregation on April 22, 2018]