I want to welcome you to this call which is about how to do congregational sanctuary, which has been an incredibly important tool for keeping people safe and making it that they are not getting deported and interrupting that process. It’s also a really important tool in changing the conversation and dialogue about immigrant rights in the country which is at this moment an incredibly crucial one. It’s been crucial for a while but especially right now it’s really important, and we really appreciate all of those who have already taken people into sanctuary or have worked in coalitions to do that and are interested in this as a tool for interrupting injustice. I want to mention that we have a number of presenters, I’ll be introducing them as we go through.

And I want to mention briefly a tool that exists for congregations to do this sort of thing in a sustainable, spirit-guided way, and that’s the Quaker Social Change Ministry module which is our model, which is a way to do small groups that support one another spiritually and learn intentionally how to accompany the immigrant community in doing this work. It’s really a lot about putting their voices and the leadership of migrants at the center of our work and it takes time and consciousness in order to learn that. And so there’s - we’ll actually be starting with calls to support the congregations that use that model again in September, and you can get this 50-page manual that teaches that whole model at afsc.org/qscm. It teaches both how to do this in a sustainable spirit-guided way and also how to really intentionally be accompanying the people that you’re trying to support. I just wanted to mention that.

Again, welcome. Our first presenter is Myrna Orozco, she’s the Sanctuary Community and Organizing Associate for Church World Service in Houston, Texas and she’s going to provide an overview of the sanctuary movement and a little bit about the national landscape and how many congregations are interested right now. So, why don’t Myrna you go ahead.

Hi everyone, thank you so much for being on tonight’s call. As mentioned, my name is Myrna Orozco with Church World Service. And Church World Service is an organization that has helped coordinate the national sanctuary movement for a while now, helped bring together different sanctuary coalitions to do sanctuary work. The Sanctuary movement has been around for some time, since about the ‘80s, but over the last three years, the sanctuary movement has gained the most traction, having had over 29 public cases of which there are currently 12 active cases in the United States. Many of you have probably heard of cases in Colorado, in North Carolina, Denver, Albuquerque and Phoenix where people are currently in physical sanctuary and we have ten right now so the sanctuary movement has been
helping countless families with legal assistance, family reunification, and protection from... through... 

There is a broad network of congregations sheltering and assisting undocumented people all over the country. Since the election the sanctuary movement has actually grown. Before we had about 400 congregations interested and engaged, and after the election because of the current immigration landscape that number has skyrocketed to over 800.

We are currently gathering and getting more congregations every day that are interested in joining and we collect these positions and support them at sanctuarynotdeportation.org where we encourage them to sign up to pledge to resist so that we can continue keeping track of how many organizations are acting to provide solidarity. So that’s kinda where we are right now.

Again, this is a movement that has been around for a long time and we’re seeing rapid growth with the current unfortunately immigrant landscape in the country so I’m really glad that y’all are wanting to learn more about how you can get involved in this growing movement to protect and support our brothers and sisters so that’s a little bit about the movement, you’re welcome to ask any questions that you have afterwards but I’ll hand it off to the next couple of presentations.

Lucy Duncan (5:24-6:27): Thanks, Myrna. And again if you have a question, we’re not going to open the line for questions because there are so many people being on this call but you can send them to questions@afsc.org. Next we have Jeanette Vizguerra, who is a community leader and an immigrant leader in the immigrant community in the Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition and she’s also lived in sanctuary and for this part of the call Jeanette’s going to speak in Spanish and Jean Piper is going to translate for her as we go forward. So Jeanette and Piper, go ahead. And I want to just say, if it’s important to stay muted so we don’t have background noise. You can do that on your computer by turning off the little mic that’s there making it mute or you can press *6 on your phone. Thanks very much. Go ahead Jeanette and Piper.

Jeanette Vizguerra, Community Leader, Former Sanctuary Resident, Denver, Colorado (through an interpreter)
Hello, my name is Jeanette Vizguerra and I’ve been a community organizer for 20 years. I entered into deportation proceedings in 2009 and since then, and even before then, I’ve enjoyed looking for new ways to protect and defend my community and resist deportation and the system we have.

So in 2013 I was again facing the end of my stay of deportation and I began to think seriously about how to create sanctuary as a movement in Denver because for my own family and for my own community but also because it is a very effective way to challenge the system that we have. Because sanctuary for me is an option that allows the immigrant who’s impacted to be safe, to continue their fight and to continue resisting. And in my case, part of my work now when I’m in my community is to really talk with people about all of their
options and to include sanctuary as one of those options so they can decide if it’s the right option for them or not.

So I also think this is a key moment because there is more interest, not only from the immigrant community but also from so many faith communities who want to become involved because of the terrible policies of this administration and to want to move forward and on top of that there are also many organizations that have not been as involved with sanctuary or who have not been that involved with immigrant rights who are now interested in supporting our resistance.

One very important thing to clarify and to keep in mind is that the person or the individual or the family that claimed sanctuary, the people who choose that as the option for them are very strong people who want to continue their fight, who want to resist this system at some level, and that we are the ones who are most capable and most qualified to make the decisions in our case and how to fight our case from sanctuary, not necessarily those who are providing us that faith and that platform to resist and to continue to fight our cases.

Because what we are looking for as immigrants, as people who are claiming this space is for all of you to walk beside us in this moral and prophetic act that we’re taking alongside us in the sacrifice we’re making by entering into sanctuary and to be very clear that the congregation- if we get in a place where they’re making decisions for us about our lives for us instead of ourselves leading them if can be very damaging. This is important because here in Denver the majority of the faith communities involved are white and citizens and the commitment that they are making is not only to provide that space but also to understand that each family and each case is very different and has its own dynamic and the person who best knows their family and their legal case and their community is the immigrant who’s impacted and so what we’re asking is for folks to walk alongside us and accompany us and to join us and to follow our lead, and as making this challenge, this systemic challenge to the immigration policies that we have.

I want to be clear because if we’re not clear about the roles or the place that each critical person has in this movement it can end up-- the person who’s in sanctuary can end up feeling like the church is doing this as a favor or out of charity or pity and we know that when allies answer the call from communities and from their space to engage in sanctuary it’s because you want to be allies and to fight alongside us and that you understand that the affected community, the immigrant who is taking sanctuary is making a moral act by sacrificing their liberty to fight for justice and to do that with great uncertainty, to not know when the case will be resolved. And so recognizing the capacity and the leadership and the ownership that the person who’s most deeply impacted and who is sacrificing the most is the person entering sanctuary and taking this prophetic act is important for how we move forward together at the local, state and national level.

One thing to keep in mind when someone is in sanctuary, we’re often separated from our families while we’re in sanctuary. We’re not sleeping with them or waking up to them
every morning and I don’t say that out of a sense to ask people to feel sorry for us or to think that we are weak or to do it out of charity but to be aware that even all of the allies that are working so hard go home every night to their families, to their houses and the person who is in sanctuary, it’s like a 24/7 resistance and that we’re doing it because we know in our hearts it’s not only going to change things for our own cases but also for our communities and in the short or the long run it will change the system.

And part of what is so powerful about sanctuary is that when we bring in allies who are citizens who have more privilege, citizenship privilege, who are also maybe white or straight and you have a voice in the community already just by virtue of your privilege and your support brings that voice and that support to our movement and that recognition that we are a part of your community and a key part of your community and putting your voice in the world behind us is what makes us successful and gives us power.

And to also keep in mind that they person who is entering sanctuary is the person who is really confronting and making a challenge to the federal government that is not only about a smaller challenge but we’re challenging this huge structure and that we’re the ones who are marked by that structure and who if sanctuary doesn’t work we’ll be ultimately, you know, separated to our country, our country of origin. And that’s not our home so--.

And finally to close, especially for congregations that haven’t hosted someone yet when someone enters its important to remember that everyone wins and everyone benefits, that the church itself often sees more support from the community, more attenders, it’s an opportunity to really deepen your faith and to live your faith and for us its an opportunity to get in a close relationship with people who want to be our allies and when we work together, when we’re really together as one community and we walk together and we’re aware that we’re all benefiting and that we’re all doing this challenge to ask the system to change together, that’s when transformation will happen.

And so it is super important that we keep those things in mind, that we have a mutual benefit and that there’s mutuality in doing sanctuary together. And also the commitment that we make to each other when we do sanctuary together is a long-term commitment and it doesn’t end when the person leaves sanctuary because this is a long-term fight and a long-term struggle, and it’s important both for the people entering sanctuary and for the people providing this space and the allies that are walking with us to know that we are making a long-term commitment to one another that is not only about offering sanctuary on one time to one person but really being in it for the long haul and getting into being that community that we all envision.

And I think it's important to also recognize that all the people who enter sanctuary, we're not perfect, we're learning every single day as we need all of the congregations and churches and faith communities at the local, state and national level. We're living into something totally new together and we're all making mistakes and we're all learning from them. And we have part of that long term commitment is to learn together and to grow together into that community, that security, that safety for everyone as we do this work together.
Lucy Duncan (27:11-27:40): Thank you both for that, thank you Jeanette and Piper. I really appreciate that. Next on the call we have Reverend Randall Keeney who’s the priest of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Greensboro, North Carolina, and he’s going to talk about the process and discernment for becoming a sanctuary congregation and also talking about how discernment processes are different. So go ahead Reverend Randall, thank you so much.

Reverend Randall Keeney, Vicar of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Greensboro

Well thank you for having me. First, no one is allowed to laugh at my accent, I know I’m from the South. I can’t really talk about the way the discernment process should go, I can only tell you how it went with us at St. Barnabas. For us it sort of grew naturally out of the life of the congregation over the last 20 years. The congregation hosted a fledgling Latino congregation for several years until they grew big enough to go off and begin a different, a separate congregation, and the friendships and relationships that grew out of that time when we were together, when those two congregations were together, I think had a great effect on the church.

And one of the families that came during that time stayed with us at St. Barnabas and we got to know their story. They were a family from Guatemala that came up and literally walked across the Rio Grande river with mother carrying a six-month-old child and had to run and escape through-- you know, escape being captured and then search for a place where they could be safe in this country and for years and years they struggled but at the end of that, that little baby that was six-months-old being carried across the river became a citizen and the father became a citizen, but the rules were different then. But they’d been part of this congregation for a long time so that experience of the immigrant community has been a part of our congregation, and I think in any congregation, there are people within those congregations that work in the immigrant community, both with documented and undocumented people, who sort of know the fears and the anxieties and the concerns that the people in that community suffer with. Any teacher out there knows what an undocumented child looks like, any school counselor knows, and so, but the more we can encourage our congregations, I believe, to engage that community around us, by doing that we’re preparing ourselves to make a decision about what we can do, not only individually but as congregations or as groups of people, what we can do.

And when I look at the discernment process first I got to remember what discern means. It means trying to figure out what to do. It doesn’t mean doing, you know, making something a foregone conclusion. It means working your way through a process and talking about it. If any congregation that is entertaining the idea of sanctuary, I believe needs to be quite intentional and deliberate in the way that they engage one another and their congregation and any Church authority that they might have. As an Episcopalian, we have a bishop that we have to report to. I as a pastor also have a vestry or a board at my church and then I have the wider congregation and all of those have to be engaged and to try to sum it up, the way it became much more immediate for us was:
I attended a luncheon once with the League of Women Voters and Lori Khamala was there talking about a young man named W. who had come to this country from El Salvador and he was undocumented as was afraid of being deported but he also had a wife and child and we thought about helping W. and thought about, you know, about that but W. decided to do something different. He decided to testify on behalf of his wife and his child at their asylum hearings, he didn’t get one, but he decided to testify for them, and his testimony led to his wife and his child receiving asylum but it also meant that when he finished testifying ICE took him into custody, and he sacrificed his own freedom to protect his wife and his child. He’s now in detention in South Georgia and additionally, they lost a child, a child that was born and lived only three months and that child is buried at my parish and the entire congregation experienced that family and their struggle and each week now when we come in and out of church we see that little grave with those beautiful flowers that his mother brings on a regular basis and we see that and that need of people who live, you know, just afraid of what’s going to happen in the next hour and the next day becomes very guttural for us. But so we struggled with it and talked about it a long time while he was with us and they were with us working through that and it didn’t turn out that he needed or wanted sanctuary. He wanted to do it a different way for his wife and child, but we talked about that as our vestry, as our board and we took that idea to the congregation about two years ago, two and a half years ago.

And then when it didn’t materialize with the young man from El Salvador we kind of unpacked it and continued to talk about it for a little bit and then we just stopped and it sat for about a year or so before Lori Khamala called me on the phone one day and asked me if our congregation was still willing to talk about it and I went and talked to my vestry and after those years of struggle and meeting all those people they were unanimous in saying that yes, they would like to do it. And when we all went to my congregation to talk about whether we should do this or not after having those conversations for the last few years, everyone that spoke at the meeting was supportive of doing it.

I know there were a few people in the room that were doubtful or probably not on board with what we were doing but those folks that have disagreed have in fact been particularly gracious and after Juana has come have been quite helpful. So, you know, I think each discernment process is going to be a little bit different but I think we all need to pay attention to all the stakeholders in this, whether it’s an ecclesiastical authority or a board or our congregations.

We also need to be aware of the legal ramifications so that we know the ground on which we’re about to stand and make sure that the passion we have for this is strong enough to lead us through, you know, whatever difficulties may come up, but, you know, so far with Juana this has been a graceful, loving time and know she struggles on a daily basis not being able to go home but she’s touched a lot of lives and I know a lot of people in North Carolina are finding out about the struggles of undocumented people through her courage and the work that she’s done and the face that she has put on this issue.
Lucy Duncan (36:12-36:46): Great. Thank you, thank you very much Reverend Randall for that testimony and that information. Next we have David Poundstone, who’s a member of Mountain View Friends Meeting in Denver, Colorado and a member of the Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition and he is going to talk about the logistics of becoming a sanctuary congregation and the principles of accompaniment as you do this work to support immigrants in the community. Go ahead, David.

(36:46-48:36) David Poundstone, Member of Mountain View Friends Meeting in Denver, Colorado and the Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition

Can you hear me alright? Again, my name is David Poundstone and I’m a member of the Mountain View Friends Meeting. And thinking about this, I think it’s quite ironic that I’m talking about logistics because I didn’t know anything about this three years ago. But I say this week with a new host congregation in our coalition and how to approach this topic suddenly because quite clear to me as they were wrestling with a lot of things to get organized. And so I would like to break this into two general categories. The first just being the initial outfitting and scoping out of what you have to do.

Obviously you have to have some kind of private bedroom facility. You have to have a bathroom and you have to have a shower. Very few churches probably have an integrated apartment like our congregation had because it was a holdover from years before but, you know, those facilities can be found in the building probably or be made to exist and it can work. And the sleeping room could be small, it could be in the basement but you can compensate for that with access to a larger facility space and other amenities…

But I think one of the questions you should ask as you try to figure out how this is going to work is would you want to live in this space, how would you make it better for yourself and it’s also another big consideration, that it is not just the one person who comes into sanctuary, it’s really the whole family. We hosted a mother and a one-year-old child in our apartment but she had another child who came frequently and her husband and then there’s also the community that comes, and then another aspect of being a host congregation is hosting community fellowship and community building events with the extended family, with the broader community and intentionally living and building our communal relationships.

Another issue that you might begin to worry about would be the furniture. The same consideration about actually who’s living in sanctuary but might be staying overnight or accompanying the family or the person in sanctuary, so you need to have couches and chairs and maybe extra bedding for overnight stays and we’ve also found that providing a TV with cable and internet access is pretty important for passing time as well and keeping people in touch.

Most congregations will probably have a kitchen, and so access to the kitchen, I would say the biggest consideration that we’ve had in that regard is trying to make sure that the
guest’s foodstuff is clearly separated from what might be used for community work or community fellowship. So separate storage, separate labelings, so that your guest’s food doesn’t disappear.

There was a question I was asked to discuss, and I don’t really have a very good answer to this, is what if there’s another facility in the congregation building like a preschool, and one of the new congregations in our sanctuary coalition does have a preschool in their facility. They did not seem to be very worried about it. I think that it’s adequately handled by having separate access to the facility so that it’s not really shared when the preschool is in action. But there are, as Randall pointed out, issues that you might want to talk about with the parents at the board of the preschool. In this case the preschool was owned by the church so that it was somewhat integrated. So I think those things can be handled, they just raised different issues in terms of licensing and things like that but it can all be addressed, I think.

Another key aspect of your building is having a place for someone to spend an overnight. We have found, it’s part of our practice, to always have someone spend the night in the building. Our apartment was upstairs and so our overnight person slept in the library close to the front door and we just provided a futon and air mattress and everybody brought their own sleeping bag and then rolled it up at night, so the only other thing you might want to consider is bathroom access for that person.

One of the key functions of someone spending the night is to just assure your guest that if it’s an emergency someone is there to help respond. It may happen, especially if you have a child in sanctuary, that you have to make an emergency medical run or something like that, so your guest in sanctuary is not going to have a car there. So those are just things you might have to deal with. It really helps to have someone there, especially in a big, older downtown church, a big building, having someone else in the building is a comfort.

I would emphasize that one has to be very knowledgable about how the building locks up and keep that well in mind. I can’t tell you how many times we found a door was open when it shouldn’t be. And then you also have to have your emergency response procedures posted near the door so if somebody should come people know what to do, who to call, and people spending the night need to be trained in how to deal with that.

The other aspect once you get the facility logistics underway is just the operational organization, and what I observed the other night is that it seems very natural that volunteer teams emerged to deal with various needs of accompanying the person in sanctuary. Some people will volunteer to do the laundry, you probably don’t have a laundry facility in the church. Somebody or a group of people will do grocery shopping on a regular basis once you learn the dietary wishes of your guest, and then having people come in and bring food occasionally and share company over a lunch. In our case Ingrid’s husband came almost every night and so the kitchen was kinda off limits because they were having their family meal. But there also may be other children involved; ferrying people to school, that’s another
activity you might need to organize. And if a child is involved, arranging play dates or just giving respite to the mother or father with the child is important.

Another aspect of the operational organisations is your communications. I think it's very important to have a clear point of contact, someone who everyone knows you can go to to find how to deal with a situation or refer to for a solution, especially if you get a call from the media, if they want to come over for an interview or something like that, having one point of contact trying to deal with that is very important.

So with all these people, and there may be 30 or more people in this period of the course of a couple of weeks involved in doing various volunteer activities, having some kind of list to coordinate the times for these various activities so the people can sign up, and it’s very helpful if people sign up on a regular schedule so that Joe takes Tuesday nights every week or every other week or something like that so that you can comfortably fill out a regular schedule is very helpful.

You also have to think about coordinating your schedule with other building uses. Trying to schedule a social event when someone else is using the building doesn’t work too well. One of the things we didn’t do too well in our congregation is we don’t have any staff in the building so we don’t have anyone to answer the phone and we weren’t very good about responding to calls coming in asking to talk to somebody about her situation so if you have staff that’s probably easier. And the next time we’ll probably figure out a better solution for that. If you have a website, you can use that for sharing information.

Somebody asked me about security of communications, I would say you should presume that everything you put in an email is visible to the world, so be very discreet about what you put in email, and if you are doing planning for some event regarding your guest, that perhaps should not be broadcast to the world, especially on Facebook, until it’s ready to be public. And so, we have also used Signal as a communication tool, there are perhaps others, but I think it’s a safe precaution to think that especially on social media your communications are being monitored.

So I think that’s about everything that I wanted to talk about. Having a phone tree, people who are nearby available to come on short notice if you have an emergency, those are all things that will emerge as you begin to think about how to accompany a person in sanctuary, how to respond to their needs, if somebody doesn’t show up to spend the night someone ought to be willing to take the shift and fill in. It’s very important for safety’s sake, I think, to have that overnight stay. I think I will stop there.

Lucy Duncan (48:36-49:27): Great, thank you David. I want to remind our presenters that this is being simultaneously translated so try to speak as slowly as you can so that that can happen. Next we have Matt Handley who is the director of litigation for the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, and he’s going to give us an overview of the legal implications and the potential risks of being a sanctuary congregation. Matt, welcome to the call.
Thank you for being available for this. Please remember to speak slowly, I also want to remind everyone that the call is being recorded so that others can benefit from it, and keep your phones or computer muted.

(49:27-1:00:10) Matt Handley, Director of Litigation for the Washington Committee on Civil Rights & Urban Affairs

Thanks very much. Good evening, everyone. This is Matt Handley, I’m the legal director at the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. and amongst the areas that we have been focused on particularly since the election is trying to provide some level of advice to not only congregations, but to municipalities and other organizations and institutions, that are considering adopting policies relating to sanctuary.

As I think the discussions before this have made clear, sanctuary spans many different things. Assisting a sanctuary runs the gamut from advocacy, support on behalf of immigrants, trying to change our immigration laws in a positive way, all the way to providing actual physical sanctuary, much like many of the congregations we’ve heard about here are already doing.

And so it’s very difficult or impossible to explain in one conference call what all of the legal risks for every type of sanctuary policy that a congregation may wish to adopt, and I think it’s in every congregations best interest that prior to adopting a sanctuary policy it have a one-on-one conversation with legal professionals who can give them very narrowly tailored advice as to exactly what the risks are for their congregation based on what they intend to do.

But what I would like to do is at least give a broad overview of what some of the larger known potential risks are and encourage anyone who would like to know more to certainly ask questions but to also contact us or to reach out to others in your area to try to get more narrowly tailored advice.

So I typically think of the legal risks to congregations falling into two categories. The first is what is the risk that the current administration and its relevant agencies like ICE and the Department of Justice even attempt to impose some kind of criminal liability on providers of sanctuary, so in other words, what’s the risk that there would even be an attempt by the government to hold a congregation or its members liable. The other type of risk is, if and when the government should decide to impose liability, the risk that a court would actually impose liability, what is the risk that the court would listen to the arguments that the Department of Justice might make as to why liability might be imposed.

The first type of risk, as to whether or not the administration and its agencies may actually attempt to impose liability is a very difficult one to provide a great deal of guidance on. What we really have to look at is what has happened in the past and use that as some indication of what could happen in the future, but as all of us find out with each passing day is that the past is not a terribly good way of figuring out what the administration might do in the future.
That being said, there is still an ICE memo that is still in place and is still being followed sometimes known as the Sensitive Location Memo or the Sensitive Area Memo that has been in place in its current form since 2011 that does limit enforcement in certain sensitive areas including places of worship and that is continued so far to be followed by the administration for the most part. That memo really discourages ICE from doing enforcement actions in sensitive locations like places of worship unless there is an extreme reason to do so, which would include the various heads or supervisors of ICE thinking there is a need to do so or if there’s some major crime that may be going on at the congregation. But for the most part, it is what is discouraged letting many congregations feel secure that there would not be enforcement going on at congregations.

Now keep in mind, that policy memo is not law. It can’t be used as a defense, if ICE were to not follow it, it would not be a defense that congregation could raise to say that ICE should have followed its memo, and it could be changed at any time. The administration could decide that it’s going to abolish it or change it any time but so far it is still in place, and hopefully it will continue to be.

Now, the second type of risk that I mentioned, what if the government does try to impose liability, what risk does a congregation and its members and leaders have, what is the risk that a court might say yes, you have run afoul of our immigration laws, of our harboring statutes or our transportation statutes. And that one is a little easier to assess, given that our courts continue to follow precedent and seem to be, at least currently, a more determinative way to figure out how the law’s actually being followed.

The two main provisions of the statute that comes into play most often when you’re thinking about this are the harboring statute and the transportation statute, which make it a criminal offense to conceal or harbor or to transport an undocumented immigrant if doing so would substantially facilitate the immigrant’s evasion of the law.

What is means to harbor or to transport under the law differs depending on which part of the country you live in. As many of you may know, the federal system here is made up of various circuits and different circuits geographically have interpreted this law in different ways. So it’s yet another reason why, if you’re actually trying to determine how it’s going to be interpreted where you reside, it’s worth having a one-on-one conversation with an attorney to try to determine that.

For the most part, most courts say that the harboring statute means that you have to substantially facilitate the presence of the immigrant being here unlawfully, and that substantially facilitating doesn’t mean merely providing shelter. It normally means actually physically concealing them and hiding them from being found by authorities and depending on what a congregation is wanting to do or who it’s wanting to help, I think one has to ask whether or not you’re trying to be open and notorious about the provision of asylum, like Ms. Vizguerra’s situation who spoke earlier, that was a very open form of asylum where she and the
churches where she stayed were advocating on her behalf. There was no actual attempt to conceal her from the eyes of the authorities. The likelihood that that runs afoul of the law is going to be much smaller than if you’re actually physically concealing and trying to hide someone from the authorities.

Similarly, on the transportation issue, merely transporting someone to a doctor’s appointment or to visit their lawyer or to do something else that is a necessity of life is probably not going to run afoul of the law but transporting them in an effort of evade the authorities is much more likely to be something that would carry with it the risk of liability.

So again, as I mentioned, it does vary from different part of the country to different part of the country. Interestingly enough, the part of the country that has some of the worst law on this right now, or the most unfavorable to sanctuary, is the 9th Circuit, so California and other states in the West, where there have been cases that have said that the mere act of sheltering can run afoul of the harboring statute, whereas most other parts of the country have said that that is not sufficient. It is worth having a very detailed conversation, at least in my opinion, before deciding what exactly is the right fit for your congregation. So I will wrap up there and again encourage anyone to either reach out to us or to others because we would be very happy to try to assist.

Lucy Duncan (1:00:10-1:00:38): Thanks so much, Matt. And last of the presenters we’re going to have Jenn Piper who is our interfaith organizer in Denver and works very closely with Metro Denver Sanctuary Coalition, and she’s going to talk about forming a coalition and deferring to immigrant leaders, really following their lead, and how to get connected with immigrant groups. So go ahead, Piper.

Jennifer Piper, Interfaith Organizing Director, AFSC Denver, Colorado

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for being on this call. I think there’s a couple of main pieces to think about, one is how to really get into, if you’re not already, into some deep relationships and connections with the immigrant community. We have a document from AFSC called Seven Steps for Faith Communities on immigrant rights, and most of them are really about places to look or activities that you can engage in to begin accompanying, if you’re not already, to connect, if there’s not immigrants’ rights groups in your area, with other faith communities who are immigrant based or also with faith communities who are immigrant based.

We know that immigrants make up a much larger percentage of people in the US who identify as people of faith. That’s how my work started in Denver, was a request from the immigrant community to engage the faith community in their struggle and to bring a more moral voice and a spiritual support to their movement. I think it’s a slow process and it’s an ongoing process, so even though many congregations in our coalition have been engaged on immigrants’ rights for almost a decade, we continue to learn, like Jeanette put earlier, from each other and from the immigrant leaders in our coalition.
Why is a coalition important? I think it’s important for a couple of reasons. One of the goals that Jeanette mentioned for the movement is also to create systemic change, to create a situation where we’re changing the narrative and the dialogue, and part of that is a real call for those of us who are citizens and people of faith to engage and educate our own community as well. The more congregations we reach, the more places that enter into this discernment process, the more people really learn about how punitive and how punishing our immigration really is.

The other reason that it’s important to have a coalition is because when someone is living in sanctuary it really takes a lot of pressure and isolation off both that individual and the host congregation. The host congregation is the public face and public voice of providing sanctuary in many cases, so there’s so much generosity and interest that comes from the larger community and from the media to have support congregations who will help with overnights, who will provide not only logistical support but spiritual support for the host congregation and for the person living there, has been really critical to some of the successes we have had, to know that if you’re overwhelmed you can turn to a partner congregation and ask for people to come pray or to answer the door, it creates that community of support and of resistance and of faithfulness to be accountable to one another and know that no one of us has to carry the whole load.

And so in our coalition we have a host congregation role which is really tasked with providing the space, means of logistic for people and volunteers to plug in, to really provide the care and the spiritual and moral support for the person in sanctuary. And then we have support congregations whose commitment is financial and volunteer based, but also really providing the creativity and the kind of feeding of the host congregation and the person in sanctuary’s soul or momentum and being able to name, when maybe we’re tired or when things feel impossible, to help lift one another up.

And then when there’s not someone in sanctuary it’s really an opportunity for us to continue to accompany other folks who are facing deportation to work to prevent them from needing sanctuary, to hopefully intervene earlier in the community and bring our spiritual, financial and organizational resources to these very strong folks who have often been fighting their deportation by themselves, with a lawyer maybe, for years. And so we can come in and provide again a space of saying you don’t have to shoulder all of that alone and we care for you.

We also have tried to stay focused not only on bringing a faith voice to the larger public but keeping spiritual practice as a part of our coalition and to have reflections and prayer every meeting, because in the face of all this uncertainty that’s what keeps us moving forward and really sustains us.

We decided early on to keep our coalition in a smaller geographic area because in order to really be engage and feel a relationship you have to be close enough to one another to actually
touch each other sometimes. But we’ve been supporting other coalitions in their formation in other parts of our state and around the country. I think that’s important too, where it’s not possible to have a coalition, maybe it’s a rural area or an area that’s not ready to join you in that voice, to reach out to other places that are doing it. We’ve all, every single sanctuary congregation whose doing it now, has talked to three, four, five other sanctuary congregations to learn what they’ve learned and maybe make different mistakes or avoid some of the pitfalls that others have learned from and I’ve found everyone to be very generous in sharing and very humble in sharing what they’ve learned, the mistakes they’ve made and sort of their best tips.

So I’ll stop talking because I feel like people probably have a lot of more specific or burning questions and I want to make sure we have time for that, but I also want to offer that the coalitions around the country are open to those conversations in places you might be. So thank you all so much for being on and for being a part of changing and transforming the system.

Lucy Duncan (1:08:40-1:09:04): Thank you, Piper. So we have about twenty, a little less than twenty minutes for your questions and I’m going to turn this over to Lori Khamala who is the director of the North Carolina Immigrant Rights Program for AFSC and the interim coordinator for the Sanctuary Everywhere initiative. So go ahead, Lori. Thanks a lot.

Q&A

Lori Fernald Khamala (1:09:04-1:09:56): Thanks a lot, Lucy. I hope that you can hear me. So I have been receiving questions from various people. We’ve got lots of questions, we’ll see how many we get to. The first question is one I’ve also gotten from many other people. This person writes from Arizona, from Southeast Arizona: “In a rural and isolated area with only four to five people interested in offering sanctuary from the congregation, what do you recommend? Do you think we have enough people to do this, or how should we proceed?” So I think I’m going to ask David or Myrna to respond based on your experiences.

Lucy Duncan: And please remember to unmute yourselves, folks, as you answer.

Lori Fernald Khamala: Thanks for the reminder.

Myrna Orozco (1:10:10-1:11:22): This is Myrna. I can take that question if David isn’t on anymore. So thank you so much for asking it. I think local groups, it doesn’t really matter where you are, that are interested or congregations that are interested to get started, it’s always helpful and the act of wanting to do so is really important. And so there’s a lot of tools that folks can use that are available, whether it’s providing physical sanctuary, to showing up with people at their courts, offering accompaniment, there’s an array of things people can do depending on where they’re at and there’s a toolkit on sanctuarynotdeportation.org, and I know others have it as well, that shows how to build a coalition, how to provide sanctuary, what things faith leaders can do to build a coalition, who want to support. That’s on the website available for you under the Resources tab and
options you can take at whatever stage of the process you might be in to help or provide solidarity.

Lori Fernald Khamala (1:11:22-1:11:57): Great, thanks a lot, Myrna. Another question I will bring from Davis, California: “Do all the facilities for the person or family in sanctuary have to be in one building? Can the people in sanctuary move from building to building on church property?” And the second part of that question is: “If there is no shower, can a church host a person or a family in sanctuary?”. And I’m wondering if David, if you’d like to take this question if you’re still on.

David Poundstone (1:11:57-1:13:15): What I’ve understood is that church property is enough but I think it has to be on the same campus. I thought there was a case in Southern California in the Los Angeles area where somebody stayed in a house that was behind the church, but that was all on the same property. I don’t know how - the shower thing is I think going to be the minimal hygiene tool. I don’t know how well you could do anything without some kind of bath facility. I think it would be pretty inconvenient but I think it can - if you find enough volunteers you can probably install some small shower in a bathroom area. One new host congregation looking to come on board was going to convert the second stall in the bathroom to a shower. So you can get creative about it I think.

Lori Fernald Khamala (1:13:15-1:14:05): Thanks, David. I wonder if you want to speak to that as well, Randall, and share what happened at St. Barnabas and what you all are doing about the premises question. Randall, if you are on, please unmute yourself so we can hear you… Ok, well, since we can’t hear Randall, I know that St. Barnabas did have to install a shower at the congregation and my understanding is also that they are treating the - and actually, Matt, if you could speak to that regarding the premises, if people can move around from building to building.

Matthew Handley (1:14:05-1:15:28): So again, there’s probably no one - it’s hard to answer with some certainty but there is, as David mentioned, I think best practices for sort of maintaining that you’re providing sanctuary and that’s all within what is termed a sensitive area or sensitive location, that it should be fully within the church’s premises or the place of worship’s premises, because keep in mind that a sensitive location, yes it’s something that ICE has said it will not provide enforcement actions, but it’s also a place that it knows all it has to do is stay just outside of it and potentially they’ll be able to very easily locate and find people as the come and go out of the sensitive location, so if where they’re staying is not very definitively within the place of worship’s premises, I think the risk of the sanctuary not actually being effective goes up.

Lori Fernald Khamala (1:15:28-1:16:11): Thank you, that’s very useful Matt. We have some other questions here, mostly related to logistical issues. So one congregation is working on a monthly budget to support their sanctuary guests. This is a congregation that is moving towards becoming a sanctuary congregation: “What expenses should be budget for in addition to food, clothing, laundry, internet and cable? Have you had unexpected expenses?”. I think maybe we’ll ask that to David again.
David Poundstone (1:16:11-1:18:49): Well, some of our unexpected expenses had to do with fixing plumbing leaks, it wasn’t anything extraordinary. We recently budgeted about $2000 a year to help support people buying groceries. I mean people are very generous about contributing out of their own pockets but we didn’t want that to be a constraint. Our budget also includes a line item just for the Sanctuary Coalition. What we found, speaking for the Sanctuary Coalition, is that the situation could vary depending on your sanctuary guest’s case. If that person entering sanctuary was the breadwinner for the family, the financial risks and the exposure of the family are significantly higher and so the Sanctuary Coalition, not necessarily the congregation itself, needs to be prepared to help the family meet costs to cover their rent or things like that and cover their other living expenses. And if the person is not the breadwinner of the family, then the costs are not quite as great to the family, the breadwinner is making money and contributing to the other costs, so you have those varying situations.

Another big area of cost to consider, and again this is a coalition point of view, is helping to support the legal costs. There is a tremendous amount of legal expense that goes into fighting a case, I’m just astounded at the numbers. Our coalition has made it a policy not to try to cover all those costs but to help the person in sanctuary develop their own fundraising plans but in order to contribute to helping support those costs. I can’t speak to it any more in much more detail because I don’t know them but that’s kind of the framework that we followed.

Lori Fernald Khamala (1:18:49-1:19:47): Thanks, David. I think that’s a great answer and more questions are coming in so I want to keep it moving. Let’s see, this is a great question here that just came in: “If the people visiting the sanctuary guests are also undocumented, is there a danger that ICE will easily find them?” I think Matt spoke to that a little bit but, Piper, I’m wondering if you want to speak to that any more in your experience. Piper, if you could unmute yourself if you are not muted - ok, so we’re going to go on and Myrna, is that a question that you could answer, if you had experience of that? If people visiting the sanctuary guests are also undocumented, have people felt at risk, or how has that worked?

Myrna Orozco (1:19:47-1:20:33): Well, I haven’t had too much experience with that. We do know that family members have visited and as long as they’re inside of the church that’s usually ok, I mean it’s the same protection about the safe locations policy that ICE usually follows. However, it’s definitely up to the individual and their level of risk because if this is a highly publicized case or if ICE is taking active enforcement or wanting to wait for this person to come out of sanctuary, that’s definitely a risk that the person needs to know about. However, once inside the congregation it would be the same kind of protection as the person in sanctuary would be taking.

Lori Fernald Khamala (1:20:33-): Good, thanks a lot. And I’m going to take a question for Jeanette, if Jeanette you’re still on. I’m wondering what was the most helpful thing for you while you were in sanctuary that community members could offer? What was the most helpful? … Ok,
we’ll see if we can get Jeanette back on and we’ll just keep moving right now since we’re rapidly running out of time. Next question concerns --

Jeanette Vizguerra: Can you hear me?

Lori Fernald Khamala: Oh, yes, Jeanette, go ahead. Would you like to speak in English or in Spanish?

Jeanette Vizguerra: In Spanish.

Lori Fernald Khamala: Ok, that’s fine. I can interpret since Piper’s having some trouble getting back on. Go right ahead.

Jeanette Vizguerra (interpreted by Lori) (1:21:39-1:25:09): While I was in sanctuary we were working with various committees who were helping out of the security plan and the different committees and that was really helpful. One of the things that was very helpful to me were all of the people who served on various committees like the people who stayed overnight, the people who brought food, the people who picked up my kids from school. I was working constantly, all the time and people were there beside me, whether it was- sometimes I was staying up till two AM or eleven PM still working on various things are there were always people there supporting me, beside me.

It was also really helpful to have a group of allies that was not necessarily connected just with the sanctuary part but who were connected with the rapid response network outside of the church. So it was really wonderful for me, I felt very safe. It was almost like I was inside this crystal ball where I felt very loved and cared for. It was really a commitment that we all are a part of and to create community. I continued to work the entire time, I was raising funds for my own case, I was raising funds for the coalition, there was all of these different funds we had to do and raise money for, and so there was a lot of work but it was also a safe space.

Lori Fernald Khamala (1:25:09-1:25:57): So thank you so much, Jeanette. I think we’ll go on. Jeanette is on her way to another meeting, so she’s going to go ahead and go. So I think we’ll try to do one more question and then close it up. Let’s see, the last question I think we can ask is- I think this question will be for either David or Myrna: “In your experience have you ever had a situation where police or ICE have come onto the premise?”

David Poundstone (1:25:57-1:26:42): The simple answer I tried to say was no, we never saw ICE anywhere near our building. We had people keeping an eye out, some people were very nervous that, you know we have a lot of public parking in the area, so we finally got used to the fact that nobody was surveilling us. That may be different in a downtown situation, which it was. It was an urban, metropolitan location with a lot more traffic that presents different security issues. People coming into the building, you would see they employed a team of people to just answer the door so that the staff was not always troubled by the doorbell.
Lori Fernald Khamala (1:26:42-1:26:54): Thanks, David, thank you so much for that. And Myrna, I will just ask you if you have any example of a success story that you want to share to take us out.

Myrna Orozco (1:26:54-1:28:02): I think there’s various success stories that have come out of the sanctuary movement, as I mentioned earlier, out of the cases that we’ve had in sanctuary before there’s definitely been many of them that have gotten relief from deportation. A lot of them have come out from Colorado. Jeanette’s story is one, Ingrid’s story is another where they’ve been in sanctuary and thankfully have received reprieves from deportation. So it’s definitely possible and I think the more people get involved, the more we’re likely to win any situation. So we continue to see it and we continue to encourage people to take this as a step if they see necessary but Jeanette’s story who was on earlier is one clear example of a success and of what can happen when people in sanctuary have a supportive congregation and community behind them and that it is possible to win.

Lori Fernald Khamala: Thank you to all of our speakers and I guess Lucy, do you want to close us out?

Lucy Duncan (1:28:13-1:29:23): Sure. Thank you to everybody, thank you to all of you joining the call and being interested and obviously there’s a lot of work to do so to support the immigrant community in this way and to change the conversation about policy. And I’m grateful for you being on the call. Thank you to all of our presenters, it was really valuable and important information. This call was recorded and it will be posted very soon on our website. We’ll send an email to anybody registered and let you know so that you can share it with others. We are available with resources and information if you need support as you further consider this with your congregation. You can find a lot of information on our website at afsc.org/sanctuaryeverywhere and again I really really want to thank you all for being on the call and to all of our fabulous presenters and to the people who did translation for the Spanish version of this call, thank you so much, and to Lori for doing the questions moderation, thank you very much for joining us and good night.