

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS 2025

SANCTUARY AT THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF MANCHESTER

Are you willing to help support a person living in Sanctuary at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Manchester (669 Union St.) by staying in the church for four hours on a regular basis, or even possibly staying overnight? And/or are you willing to provide financial, logistical, or other forms of support? If you are interested enough to want to learn more about what this would entail, please read on.

What does “living in Sanctuary” mean? A person living in Sanctuary is a person whom ICE wants to deport. Yet typically that person would be in grave danger if they were forcibly returned to the country from which they emigrated. Typically, an attorney has determined that they have a potentially winnable case if they only had more time to develop it. To gain that time they are living in a church and are supported 24 /7 by volunteers living in that church with them. Providing Sanctuary is technically illegal. For a church to provide Sanctuary is a form of civil disobedience.

Why a church? Can't ICE simply seize them there? Legally yes. But ICE has determined that doing that would make them, ICE, look very bad. So they have called churches a “sensitive” location and held off. In fact, churches have served as places of Sanctuary for hundreds of years.

Is “Living in Sanctuary” the same as “Living in Asylum”? No. Asylum is a legal status in which an immigrant is waiting for a hearing to determine if they may remain in the country permanently.

Why UU Manchester? Why now? Because the church’s congregation has voted formally to take the big step of supporting a resident in Sanctuary. With considerable financial assistance the church has made the physical changes—such as adding a shower—to make the church livable. Two immigrants seeking Asylum have already lived in the church on a long-time basis. No one has yet lived there in Sanctuary, but recent political changes make the need for Sanctuary seem very real. So, the Sanctuary/Asylum Committee is getting ready by putting out this call.

What is the Sanctuary/Asylum Committee? It is an interfaith committee that is now gearing up for Sanctuary by putting on Orientation and Training sessions for those who will periodically stay in the church during Sanctuary and/or who will support the Sanctuary program in other ways.

Why do people need to be in the church 24/7 when someone is in Sanctuary? Because ICE could come to the door at any time, and the person living in Sanctuary would risk being seized if they went to the door. Furthermore, it is not a good idea for an immigrant living in Sanctuary to be alone.

Why a training program? Couldn't I just walk into the church cold and serve a shift? That wouldn't be a good idea—there is too much to learn, such as what to do if ICE comes to the door. The training program will take no more than two hours of your time.

OK I'm interested. How can I learn more about what is involved? You can call Curt Smith at 603-361-6687 or Liz Alcauskas at 703-447-5701 or email them at blueskies3@comcast.net or lizalcauskas@gmail.com to let them know you are ready to attend a training program or if you have any questions. Our Orientation and training sessions are at the UU Church in Manchester, 669 Union St. We will be scheduling another session in the spring.