



Policy Location:	GSSJ - 5	Created: 4/18/2018
Title:	Sanctuary Church	Revised: 1/25/2025
Policy Owner:	Social Justice Shared Ministry Team	
Associated Documents:	GSSJ – 1 Social Justice Team Policy; GSSM – 3 Sanctuary Steering Committee; GSFS – 12 Immigration Fund	
Last Reviewed:		

Policy

Philosophy:

Consistent with Unitarian Universalist values, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester, Minnesota (First UU), has voted to assist in providing sanctuary, support, and refuge to otherwise law-abiding undocumented immigrants in cooperation with other area Sanctuary faith institutions in Rochester and elsewhere in Minnesota.

First UU recognizes that the persons who seek sanctuary in our church do so under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. It is our hope that the space and time we provide will improve our guests' chances of remaining in our community legally. During their stay with us, we will strive to provide hospitality that includes not only food, shelter, and assistance in gaining access to the legal and other services our guests may need, but also comfortable accommodations, compassion, and company.

I. Statement of Policy

1. First UU will provide housing only to those who meet the screening criteria delineated in section II.
2. A maximum of one person or family may be housed by First UU at any one time.
3. The decision to house a person/family at First UU will rest with a Sanctuary Steering Committee appointed by the Board. The decision will be approved by the Board.
4. Persons seeking sanctuary at First UU do so only at the invitation of the church and will comply with Guest-Congregation Agreement as outlined in section III.
5. At such time that a final legal decision (including exhausting legal remedies against deportation) has been rendered in their case(s) regarding a stay of removal, guests will be expected to leave sanctuary, regardless of outcome.
6. The United States Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement and local law enforcement officials will be officially notified about the person(s) accepting sanctuary at First UU.
7. The person(s) in sanctuary may not be employed by First UU in paid or unpaid work.



8. First UU employees may not transport those in sanctuary for the purpose of shielding them from law enforcement. Any member providing transportation for such purposes does so without authorization of First UU.
9. With the exception of the Minister, employees of First UU shall not be expected or asked to participate in sanctuary activities within the Church.
10. Although First UU will strive to provide a safe living environment, the guest assumes all risks and accepts the accommodations in an “as is” condition.

II. Sanctuary Screening Policy

1. Individuals with serious criminal offenses will not be considered for sanctuary at First UU:
 - 1.1. Any felony or gross misdemeanor (except those exclusively related to immigration law).
 - 1.2. Other misdemeanors within the past five years involving violation of controlled substances laws or driving under the influence.
2. Person(s) will be considered for sanctuary who have a reasonable legal chance for a stay of removal and who need a fair hearing, including but not limited to the following illustrative scenarios:
 - 2.1. The immigrant has been residing continuously in the United States for at least 10 years, has a US citizen parent, spouse, or child, who would face unusually extreme hardship if the immigrant was deported.
 - 2.2. The immigrant has been the victim of a serious crime (including but not limited to rape, torture, domestic violence, sexual assault, genital mutilation, peonage, involuntary servitude, kidnapping, false imprisonment, blackmail, extortion, manslaughter, felonious assault) that violated the laws of the United States and has suffered substantial physical or mental harm as a result of this crime.
 - 2.3. The immigrant has been recently (last two years) abused (physically or mentally) by their current spouse or a spouse from whom they were divorced. The abuser must be a permanent resident or citizen of the United States.
 - 2.4. The immigrant has or is a child who was abused by a permanent resident or United States citizen, or the immigrant was abused by their son or daughter who is a United States citizen. No criminal report is required but is helpful.
 - 2.5. The immigrant is a minor who has been abused, abandoned or neglected in their home country or in the United States, is not currently living with the abuser, and whose interests would be better served by remaining in the U.S. than being deported to their home country.
 - 2.6. The immigrant has been the victim of human trafficking.
 - 2.7. The immigrant has been persecuted as a result of race, religion, ethnicity, political opinion, or membership in a social group or faces such persecution if returned to their country of origin.
 - 2.8. The immigrant was ordered deported by an Immigration Judge in absentia (without attending) and was not properly informed of the date and time of the hearing or had an extraordinary incident occur that prevented them from attending the removal hearing.
 - 2.9. The immigrant is married to a US citizen or green card holder or has other parent-child relatives who are US citizens or green card holders, and has a petition pending to legalize their status or could file such a petition.
3. Except as described in items 2.4 and 2.5 above, minors must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.



4. Guests should be capable of performing all activities of daily living such as feeding themselves, bathing, dressing, grooming, etc., or should be accompanied by a family member capable of providing all necessary assistance.

III. Guest-Congregation Agreements

1. Expectations on the part of Guests:

- 1.1. Guests will provide the Sanctuary volunteers two-hour advance notice (or, for visits before 10 am, previous-day notice) of visitors. In addition, guests will provide First UU with a list of all anticipated visitors at the beginning of their stay. Visitors are expected to abide by the policies that apply to guests.
- 1.2. Visiting hours are 7:00 am to 9:00 pm.
- 1.3. Personal items will remain in designated living quarters.
- 1.4. Pets and emotional support animals will require prior approval from the Sanctuary Steering committee. Service animals will be allowed.
- 1.5. The possession, storage or consumption of illicit drugs is not permitted.
- 1.6. Smoking within the building is not permitted.
- 1.7. Other than hair dryers and other personal care appliances, all appliances require prior approval by First UU.
- 1.8. Medications must be kept in a secured area at all times.
- 1.9. Guests may not possess any items that may be a fire safety hazard. Such items include, but are not limited to candles, incense, grills (gas or charcoal), flammable liquids, and fireworks.
- 1.10. Storage and/or use of any type of firearm, explosive, or weapon is not permitted.
- 1.11. Guests assume liability for damage to the guest room and its furnishings.
- 1.12. Guests are welcome to participate in worship and religious education activities on Sunday; if they choose not to participate, they are expected to remain in the guest room.
- 1.13. Guests will live in respectful relationship with the church; its facility, staff, and any individual participating in the life of the congregation.

2. Expectations on the part of First UU:

- 2.1 First UU and/or its collaborating faith communities will provide two trained Sanctuary volunteers during overnight hours and one trained Sanctuary volunteer during daytime hours to provide support as needed and to respond to police, ICE, or other law enforcement inquiries.
- 2.2 First UU will provide a microwave oven and a small refrigerator in the room to be occupied by the guest. Between the hours of 7 am and 7 pm, guests will also be allowed to use the kitchen when it is not reserved or already in use.
- 2.3 First UU will provide food, dishes, cookware, kitchen utensils, flatware, and dish cleaning supplies for use by the guest.
- 2.4 First UU will provide bedding and linens and will provide for laundering of clothes and linens at least once a week.
- 2.5 First UU will ensure that Sanctuary volunteers have been trained and have had background checks qualifying them to work in the presence of children.
- 2.6 First UU will equip the room with a carbon monoxide detector, smoke alarm, and fire extinguisher.
- 2.7 First UU may provide a radio, TV and internet access for use by the guests.

IV. Terminating the Agreement

First UU may terminate the Guest/Congregation Agreement under any of the following circumstances:



MANUAL OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES, & GUIDELINES

1. Exhausting legal remedies against deportation
2. Discovery that the Guest supplied false information material to the decision to initiate sanctuary.
3. Failure on the part of the guest to comply with the Guest/Congregation Agreement.
4. If First UU concludes that continued residence is inconsistent with its mission.
5. Recognizing that terminating the agreement may result in detention and deportation, which may not be proportional to the nature of the violation of the Agreement, First UU will terminate the Agreement only after due deliberation and discussion between the Sanctuary Steering Committee and the Guest.