Resolution on Providing Aid and Support to People at Risk of Deportation from the United States Mount Zion Temple, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 2017

We are called to action by our shared Jewish values

The Holiness Code instructs us to treat the strangers in our midst with justice and compassion: "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall do him no wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33). This teaching permeates Jewish tradition and is repeated an additional 35 times in the Torah - the most of any commandment.[1] We are reminded that we are all made in the image of God: "So God created the human beings in the divine image, creating them in the image of God, creating them male and female." (Genesis 1:27). We are also commanded, "*Tzedek tzedek tirdof* – Justice, justice you shall pursue, that you may live, and inherit the land which the Lord your God gave you" (Deuteronomy 16:18).

Throughout our history, Reform Movement congregations have acted as safe-havens for those seeking refuge from persecution and deportation. In the 1980s, congregations provided temporary shelter (also known as sanctuary) primarily to Central Americans at risk of deportation. Judaism affirms the supreme value of human life and the equal dignity of every human being. The prophets of Israel bade us to pursue justice, seek peace, and build a society of loving-kindness among all of God's creatures ("Background").

From its beginning, Mount Zion Temple has been an actor in immigrant justice. In 1878, Mount Zion raised funds to support the Painted Woods Colony, a North Dakota settlement for new immigrants to homestead. In 1897, the Mount Zion Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society led Mount Zion to form Neighborhood House as a settlement house for the numerous Eastern European immigrants living on the West Side of St. Paul. In 1903 Mount Zion ceded Neighbor House leadership to the community, and with significant support from Mount Zion congregants, Neighborhood House continues to serve the immigrant community. In the early 1980s, Mount Zion sponsored four Southeast Asian families as they relocated to the United States. In the late 1990s, Mount Zion supported a family from Bosnia and Herzegovina, including counter-signing their mortgage. For this and other acts of social justice, the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) has awarded Mount Zion the Irving J. Fain Social Justice Award three times in the past 15 years.[2]

In November 2016 Mount Zion committed to be a "Welcoming Congregation" as declared and defined by the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS).[3] In addition, Mount Zion adopted the "B'rit Olam"

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[1] "Background and Jewish Values Regarding the Protection of Undocumented Immigrants Fearing Deportation." Religious Action Center. Web. 4 October 2017.

[2] "History of Tzedek at Mount Zion." Mount Zion Temple. Web. 4 October 2017.

[3] "Welcome Campaign Congregations." HIAS. HIAS.org. Web. 18 October 2017.

proposed by the URJ's Religious Action Center (RAC) in June 2017.[4] This B'rit reaffirmed the work we are doing on social justice and committed us, along with approximately 100 other Reform congregations around the country, to further work on behalf of others in need in our communities.

We are called to action by the events of our times

Today we cannot help but be moved by the needs of the 11 million undocumented immigrants fearing deportation in the United States' immigration system. These people entered the U.S. without documentation or have stayed after their legal entry allowed. While the previous administration was active in deporting undocumented immigrants accused of committing crimes, it also sought to provide relief to the children of undocumented immigrants. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) sought to protect the status for over 800,000 people brought to the U.S. as children.[5] A related executive order, the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents Act (DAPA), was challenged in the courts and was never implemented.

The current administration has made it a priority to build a border wall along the U.S.-Mexico border as well as increasing the threat of deportations, installing new levels of fear into the undocumented immigrant community. In response to this threat, over 200 cities have declared themselves "sanctuary cities" or "welcoming communities." While there is no agreed-upon definition of "sanctuary city," one similarity is that cities limit their cooperation with federal enforcement efforts.

More recently, the U.S. Attorney General's decision to rescind DACA has added to our sense of urgency. It is estimated that there are 6,200 DACA individuals living in Minnesota, while another 6,200 individuals are eligible for DACA status.[6] These individuals face the risk of separation from the only families, communities and country they have ever known. The group we are most concerned with assisting is a small sub-set of this larger group. They are individuals subject to detention who are facing an immigration hearing. It is likely they have not arranged for legal counsel. Once this hearing occurs, deportation becomes increasingly likely.

We are not alone among faith communities seeking to uphold immigrant justice. The URJ's RAC notes that 13 congregations have become "immigrant justice congregations."[7] Locally ISAIAH, a Christian faith-based community organization, is organizing faith congregations around immigrant justice. To date at least 35 congregations have declared themselves to be sanctuary and sanctuary-supporting congregations in Minnesota including two synagogues, Shir Tikvah (sanctuary congregation) and Beth Jacob (sanctuary supporting).

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[4] "B'rit Olam Congregations." Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. RAC.org. 18 October 2017. Web. 18 October 2017.

[5] Cohen, Liz and Rabbi Charles Briskin. "Shelter for All: The Reform Movement Mobilizes Around the DREAM Act." Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. RAC.org. 2 October 2017. Web. 18 October 2017.

[6] Xaykaothoa, Doualy. "Young, Undocumented, and Full of Dreams: 4 Stories." MPRNews. Minnesota Public Radio. Web. 20 September 2017.

[7] "Become an 'Immigrant Justice' Congregation." Religious Action Center. Web. 4 October 2017.

Our call to action

BE IT RESOLVED: That Mount Zion Temple actively support immigrant justice in Minnesota and the United States. Specifically, Mount Zion Temple hereby resolves to:

#1. Collaborate with Jewish congregations and organizations, and with other faith communities, to provide material, technical, and moral support to people at risk of deportation. This support may include activities such as:

- Explore how we might effectively collaborate on this Immigrant justice effort with other synagogues and Jewish organizations that have committed to immigrant justice.
- Recruit and establish, in conjunction with other Jewish congregations engaged in immigrant justice , *pro bono* legal teams who could provide legal counsel to congregations considering immigrant justice actions such as serving as sanctuaries for people at risk of deportation;
- Develop educational programming to inform congregants about the status of immigration justice in the United States;
- Confer with both the St. Paul Police Department and the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office regarding their understanding of St. Paul as a "sanctuary city";
- Extend our support to other Reform synagogues who are considering their own status as immigrant justice congregations;
- Add Mount Zion to the list of sanctuary-supporting congregations currently being compiled by ISAIAH, and to the Religious Action Center's list of immigrant justice congregations; and
- Additional activities, or substitute activities, as the Mount Zion Tzedek Committee representatives determine to best serve people at risk of deportation.

With the passage of this resolution, the President and Senior Rabbi will determine when to add Mount Zion's name for support of local or national immigration justice efforts.

#2. Conduct an impact and risk assessment of providing housing sanctuary to people at risk of deportation. To do this Mount Zion will:

- Recruit and assemble a working group to conduct the risk and impact assessment. The working group would be chosen by the President in consultation with the Senior Rabbi, Executive Director, and the Executive Committee and will include Tzedek Committee representation.
- The working group will explore issues such as insurance costs and risks, legal risks, building modification requirements, security implications, especially in the context of the expected usage of temple-supplied housing.

- The President will work with the working group to consider the timing and level of detail of their work. At some future date, the working group will deliver their findings and the President, in consultation with the Executive Committee, will consider whether to bring forward to the Board a resolution on providing sanctuary housing.

Additional Information

Political and Strategic Considerations:

We were the first Jewish congregation in Minnesota. We are the largest Jewish congregation in Ramsey County. Decisions we make reverberate throughout the larger Jewish community. While there is much practical value in this decision, we must not underestimate the ethical, moral, and political value of this decision. This is both a symbolic and strategic gesture of great importance. Whatever we decide to do (or not to do) will be noted by others.

We live among our neighbors, many of whom provided support during the recent bomb threats against the St. Paul Jewish Community Center. Shortly after the St. Paul Jewish Community Center was threatened with a bomb, an imam from a local mosque came to a Mount Zion Friday night service to speak from the *bimah* words of comfort, support, and unity. As our neighbors have supported us, we, in turn, are asked to support our neighbors.

We have been asked if housing is the greatest need. We cannot answer that question with any certainty, and it is worth noting that this is a rapidly changing landscape that may have different needs and challenges tomorrow than it has today. Sanctuary housing is, however, something places of worship are uniquely able to provide. Law firms can provide pro bono legal counsel (but cannot offer sanctuary); some nonprofits can provide services or fundraising. While Mount Zion can certainly contribute to these efforts (and should), places of faith are being asked to consider themselves for sanctuary housing simply because we can.

Clarification of the Resolution of Mount Zion Temple and Immigrant Justice from the 13 February 2018 Board Meeting

RESOLVED: Mount Zion Temple will continue to serve as a supporting congregation to those congregations currently housing individuals at risk of deportation. The Board will furthermore prepare to become a housing congregation, a designation to be triggered should one of the following contingencies be met:

1. The executive order titled Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is permanently revoked, with Congress providing no legislation to protect this group of people resulting in Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) detaining this population; or,

2. Changes to Temporary Protected Status (TPS) result in an increased number of individuals being deported.

The Senior Rabbi, Executive Director, and Temple President will monitor the above-contingencies and determine if the contingencies have occurred such as to commence housing an individual at risk of detention or deportation.

Preparedness

The Board recognizes that Mount Zion must become prepared to house on short notice those individuals affected by the above-mentioned government actions. Thus, the Board resolves to appoint a Task Force to immediately coordinate the following actions:

1. Prepare a living space at Mount Zion for one individual.
2. Organize a short list of volunteers to sustain a two-week period of housing.
3. Organize a short list of food providers to sustain a two-week period of housing.
4. Prepare an execute training for all relevant staff and volunteers.
5. Organize a longer list of volunteers and food providers.

Criteria for Who We House

Ultimately, this resolution is about the need for housing (which is currently low), and we will monitor the need in conjunction with ISAIAH and the Advocates for Human Rights to determine the need.

- The people already doing this work are Rabbi Spilker (senior rabbi), Deborah Moses (Tzedek Committee chair), and Vic Rosenthal (Tzedek Committee member)
- We will work with The Advocates for Human Rights to review of the Advocates' file. People responsible for this include the following:
- Rabbi Spilker (senior rabbi), Susan Robiner (board president), and Larry Solomon (executive director)

We will revisit this matter every year to determine if our higher level of preparedness is warranted. The process for this annual review will begin in the executive committee, who in turn will make a recommendation to the board, where the final decision will be made.

At the April 10, 2018 Board Meeting came this resolution:

Based on current need and the best allocation of resources to help people facing deportation, Mount Zion will not become a housing "sanctuary congregation" at this time. The decision keeps open the possibility that housing may be the right decision in the future. If warranted, the Tzedek Committee chair, in consultation with the Advocates for Human Rights and ISAIAH, can work with the President, Senior Rabbi, and Executive Director to bring a proposal back to the Board for a vote.