

SANCTUARY STORIES

Southside Presbyterian Church, Tucson, AZ

Southside Presbyterian Church was one of the original bases of the sanctuary movement in the 1980s. The following report by pastor Alison Harrington is from Rick Ufford-Chase, ed., *Faithful Resistance* (2016):

“On May 12, 2014 . . . local father, Daniel Neyoy-Ruiz entered sanctuary at Southside. When he left sanctuary after 28 days with a stay of deportation in his hand we were overjoyed that our prayers had been answered and we assumed our work was done. Then we met Rosa.

“Rosa Robles Loreto and her husband, Gerardo, began living in the U.S. in 1999. An accountant from Hermosillo, she knew that working as a housecleaner in the U.S. would provide a better quality of life than working as an accountant in Mexico. When she and Gerardo discovered they were pregnant, they returned to Mexico believing that it was the right thing to do. After the second child was born, they decided to return to the U.S. in 2006. Now back in the U.S. they settled into life, attending the local Catholic Church, working, and, perhaps most importantly, cheering at their boys’ little league games. But as happy as their life was, there was always the fear of deportation hanging over them. In 2010, on her way to work, this nightmare became a reality when Rosa was pulled over for a minor traffic violation and the police officer called the border patrol. After 61 days in detention, her family paid her bond and she began to fight her deportation order. When Rosa showed up at the Keep Tucson Together legal clinic that meets at Southside, she had three options: leave her family behind and return to Mexico, try to evade deportation by moving to another address, or enter into sanctuary and fight for her right to be with her family. On August 7th, Rosa entered into sanctuary and began to fight.

“With both Daniel and Rosa’s case, we saw our sanctuary work moving along three trajectories. The first was our short term goal of providing Rosa and her family hospitality. We prepared a room for Rosa and set up a second room, which we affectionately called the ‘solidarity suite,’ for the dozens of volunteers who accompanied Rosa in rotating shifts. And then there were the prayer vigils; every night at 7 pm we gathered to pray because we knew if we didn’t ground ourselves in the daily practice of prayer we would lose heart.

“The second trajectory was the campaign work itself as we mobilized the community to call for Rosa to be granted a stay of deportation. We collected letters of support, advocated for the City Council and the Board of Supervisors to pass resolutions in support of Rosa, and knocked on doors across Tucson to ask people to put out ‘We Stand with Rosa’ yard signs.

“The third trajectory was helping to build a grassroots faith movement to stop deportations. We learned from and shared with other sanctuary congregations; we met with hundreds of people who came in groups to learn about our work; and we did everything we could to support the sixteen other sanctuary cases that have occurred since our declaration in May, 2014.

“After 461 days of prayer and organizing, Rosa safely left sanctuary after we reached an agreement with the government. And we rejoiced!”

University Church (UCC), Chicago, IL

Like Southside Presbyterian, University Church has roots in the sanctuary movement going back to the 1980s. The following report on a current sanctuary case was issued by the Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN):

“Jose Juan Federico Moreno, a father of 5 United States citizen children, is currently in sanctuary from deportation in University Church, a member and Immigrant Welcoming Congregation of CRLN, on Chicago’s South Side.

“Jose Juan had been given until Friday, April 15, 2016 to leave the country and ‘self-deport.’ When in front of a judge, he received a ruling from the court determining that his removal would constitute hardship on his children. However, ultimately, the court denied his appeal, because he could not provide a ten-year old pay stub or other proof of residence that dated back more than nine years.

“Jose Juan came to the attention of ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] in 2009 after he was pulled over and charged with an ‘aggravated’ DUI while driving home from work—‘aggravated’ only because he did not have a license, something unavailable to undocumented immigrants at the time. Despite giving discretionary relief in similar cases, ICE is using the ‘aggravated’ charge to insinuate that the incident was much more serious than it was and to justify his deportation. The Chicago ICE office denied the request to postpone separation from his family using prosecutorial discretion, leaving him no option but to take sanctuary in University Church.

“Before going into sanctuary, Jose Juan said, ‘Leaving my children behind is not a choice I can make. That’s why I’ve asked for sanctuary in this church. I’ve lived here for 15 years. I have built a life here. My children are all citizens, and my wife could qualify for DAPA [Deferred Action for Parents of Americans]. All I am asking for is a chance to see my children grow and support my family.’

“. . . University Church held a Prayer Vigil with Jose Juan. 180 community members, religious leaders, and members of the faith community stood with Jose Juan, filling the Sanctuary!”

On-line petition in support of Jose Juan:

<https://action.groundswell-mvmt.org/petitions/tell-chicago-ice-don-t-deport-jose-juan-father-of-5>

First Unitarian Society, Denver, CO

The First Unitarian Society in Denver is currently providing sanctuary to Jeanette Vizguerra, whose case was the focus of the “Moment for Mission” presented by Sarah Rogerson at PNECC on April 9. This case has been followed in a series of stories by the *New York Times*, including an OpEd piece by Ms. Vizguerra. You can access the stories online by entering “Jeanette Vizguerra” in the search box at the *New York Times* website: www.nytimes.com .

On-line petition in support of Jeanette:

<https://action.groundswell-mvmt.org/petitions/jeanette-s-family-needs-her?bucket&source=facebook-share-button&time=1487278959>