

Toolkit for Starting a Matthew 25 Movement Network in Your Community

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.¹⁸ He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. ¹⁹And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. Deuteronomy 10:18

Matthew 25 Movement Pledge:
I pledge to protect and defend the vulnerable in the name of Jesus.

Who Might Need our Protection and Defense?

- Dreamers (young people brought to this country as children) whose protective status may be stripped by a Trump administration
- Families facing the potential of separation through deportation because of a minor infraction
- African-American and Hispanic youth, and others, who face discriminatory law enforcement and may have less recourse to defense under a Trump administration
- Muslims suffering persecution on the basis of their religion.

How can we protect and defend them?

The following section covers protections and defense for immigrants who are facing the potential for sudden detention and deportation:

Allies:

- Communicate with the New Sanctuary Movement to find out if there is already a sanctuary coalition in your community. (sanctuarynotdeportation.org, nandersen@cws.org)
- If there is not a coalition in your community, start by building relationships with immigration lawyers and immigrant rights' associations. You can work with these organizations to build a protection network.
- Identify other churches that will work with you. The most effective coalitions have immigrant and non-immigrant churches working together. Different churches can provide different resources and kinds of support.

Tools for Protection:

- **Learn to use Prosecutorial Discretion (PD).** Every Field Office Director of the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office has had the right for over 30 years to give specific individual cases a stay of deportation. In 2010, the Morton Memo standardized that policy to create a set of priorities for detention and deportation. Churches can advocate successfully on the basis of that set of priorities for a particular family to be able to live for up to one year (renewable

on an annual basis) in this country without fear of deportation. They can also, on their discretion, provide work permits. (See the attached document for a list of criteria for deferred deportation and sample packet.). Dreamers (young people brought to this country as children) currently have access to this status through the DACA program (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) as a group. Even if they lose that right under the Trump administration (as he has threatened), we can still advocate for them case by case. Using prosecutorial discretion involves the following steps:

- ✓ Working with the family to compile documents that show that they should be a low priority for detention and deportation, including multiple letters of support and character references
- ✓ Accompanying them to the ICE office to submit their petition.
- ✓ Advocating with ICE on their behalf
- ✓ Praying for the family and providing pastoral support through the process

You do not have to work with a lawyer in order to utilize prosecutorial discretion but it helps!

- **Explore legal remedies.** For example, refugees recently arrived from Central America lack one of the criteria for prosecutorial discretion but if they apply for asylum, they can often informally delay the detention and deportation process for several years.
- **Provide immediate safety until the prosecutorial discretion and/or asylum application can be filed:** (These activities can be jointly carried out by a protection network involving a broader coalition)
 - ✓ If an individual or family receives a final deportation order in the mail, you may offer that family a place to stay in the church while their application is being prepared and submitted. Churches are “sensitive zones” under current ICE policy. **No church has ever been prosecuted for ministering to immigrants in this way.** While there are laws prohibiting “harboring”, the interpretation of those laws has not ever included churches who are openly providing shelter with the intent of helping someone to legally resolve their case. The legal doctrine of the separation of church and state has been used to justify ministering to undocumented people in a variety of forms. The only prohibitions affected ministry with undocumented people are providing transportation (except in the case of a medical emergency) and paid employment. It is also illegal of course to physically block law enforcement officers from carrying out their work. Churches who provide temporary shelter to individuals or families are often called host churches. Supporting churches are then needed for prayer, pastoral care and sometimes financial donations. The sanctuary toolkit (sanctuarynotdeportation.org) has useful information for networks exploring this possibility.
 - ✓ If an individual or family is in their place of residence or workplace and ICE comes to detain them, if they know their rights and refuse to open the door, you can at that point come to pray and film any interaction. Through openly praying in that place, you may be able to claim it as a sensitive zone or otherwise delay detention. If detention occurs, you may be

able to bring publicity to the case, strengthening the potential for support and the successful achievement of deferred deportation.

- ✓ Sanctuary coalitions have also carried out “cyber-sanctuary” which allows a group of congregations to send a letter to ICE stating that an individual or family is in sanctuary with them. If that person is then picked up by ICE, they have been able to go down to the detention center and successfully apply pressure through prayer vigils and other actions for that person’s release pending their deferred deportation or asylum application.

Policy Advocacy:

- The deferred deportation and sensitive zones policies may be at risk. Our advocacy could prevent that from occurring:
 - ✓ **Local Advocacy:** Meet with your local Field Office Director and advocate for the continuance of these policies on a local level (through letters and other advocacy activities). They have wide discretion for establishing their own local responses.
 - ✓ **Federal Advocacy:** Organizations/institutions/churches can make a commitment to join the Matthew 25 Movement Network. You will then be advised of opportunities for broader federal advocacy to maintain these and other protections.

Underground Railroad-like Activities:

- There may be areas where the local Field Office Director ends the deferred deportation and sensitive zone policies, and where local police enforce immigration law. There will also be areas where the local Office upholds these policies and the municipality does not allow the local police to enforce immigration law. Different responses may be needed in each case:
 - ✓ **Sending Cities:** If you are in a city where Dreamers and other immigrants are in danger of sudden deportation without any other recourse, you may want to host these immigrants for a short time period and then send them to a more welcoming city. This has historically been called an Underground Railroad. Transporting undocumented immigrants is illegal under the laws of the land; it may be legal under a higher law.
 - ✓ **Receiving Cities:** If you are in a city which is standing with immigrants, you may want to choose to welcome immigrants arriving on the Underground Railroad and help to resettle them. This comes under the heading of ministry and is not illegal. We have time-honored mechanisms for refugee resettlement by churches which can be used in this way.

What else must we do?

- Prayer and Education are necessary ingredients in the process of preparing a church to respond. (Educational Resources at sanctuarynotdeportation.org and evangelicalimmigrationtable.com.) It also helps to provide opportunities for individuals in the church to pledge or provide support by simply placing the pledge on the ministry website and maintaining a database of signatories.

