

Press Conference for Maria Portugal and Franco Ferreyra

July 24, 2018

Madison Christian Community

Good afternoon. My name is Rev. Sonja Ingebritsen. On behalf of Madison Christian Community and the Dane Sanctuary Coalition, welcome and thank you for being here.

Dane Sanctuary is a broad coalition of Dane County's interfaith community and other individuals. It began as a conversation among faith leaders and leaders in our local Latinx after the election of a president who expressed open hostility toward immigrants and threatened increased enforcement.

It soon became clear that this administration would follow through on its threats against immigrants. Parents have had to worry about being separated from their children, and children worry that their parents would simply disappear.

Dane Sanctuary Coalition coalesced. Three sanctuary sites were identified last summer. One is here at Madison Christian Community, which is comprised of Advent Lutheran and Community of Hope United Church of Christ. The others are Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ and First Unitarian Society along with their partner congregation Shaarie Shamayim. A fourth site is currently under development at James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation. In addition, several other congregations and individuals in the area have pledged their support.

As the weeks and months have passed since we first imagined the need for sanctuary, all of us have continued to witness the horror of the current administration's treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers.

We, as Dane Sanctuary Coalition, stand in support of our immigrant neighbors. But the truth is, there shouldn't be a need for undocumented immigrants living in Dane County to need Sanctuary. There shouldn't be a need for undocumented immigrants to live in fear that their lives will be torn apart, and even live in fear for their very lives if they are denied visas or asylum and are deported. There shouldn't be a need for those who have contributed to our community and economy, who are doing their best to raise and support families, and who are our friends, neighbors, and relatives to be reduced to pawns in the political game of immigration enforcement that continues to be played out here and around the country.

And yet, this is the reality. We are concerned and outraged by the cruelty and capriciousness of current immigration enforcement policies and practices. It is our country's public disgrace that Maria must stand before these cameras and beg for the right to retain her family while she continues in the legal process for a visa related to domestic violence. It is our country's public shame that Alysha must stand before these cameras and beg for her children to be reunited with their father, who, as a DACA recipient, should have been able to rely on his freedom. We must say "No!" to these and many other abuses of immigration enforcement.

Current political rhetoric, policies, and enforcement practices are increasingly attempting to dehumanize immigrants. We must call this dehumanization a lie and warn of its danger. Immigrants—no matter their status—are beloved children of God. Although we have varied religious traditions, all of them tell us that those who are immigrants and refugees among us are due our special care and concern. But one doesn't need to be part of a religious tradition to recognize that we have a moral responsibility to care for the vulnerable, and our country's immigrants are becoming more and more vulnerable.

We must be willing to speak out against the dehumanization of our immigrant neighbors. If not, we ourselves are increasingly vulnerable to our own dehumanization as a consequence of standing by and not stepping in.

Dane Sanctuary Coalition will *not* stand by. We *will* step in. We will continue to affirm with words and actions the need for humane and just immigration laws and enforcement—for Maria, for Alysha, and for every immigrant in our community. And we will continue to oppose that which is inhumane and unjust. Thank you.