

Resolution Concerning the Provision of Short-Term Sanctuary

WHEREAS, there exists a long tradition of religious houses of worship offering sanctuary to those in need. Historically, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has had an informal policy of not entering houses of worship in pursuit of persons sought in connection with deportation proceedings. ICE formalized this policy in a memorandum dated October 24, 2011 entitled “Enforcement Actions at or Focused on Sensitive Locations.”

WHEREAS, as a Unitarian Universalist congregation, the Fourth Universalist Society in the City of New York (“4thU”), covenants to affirm and promote “the inherent worth and dignity of every person,” as well as “justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.” Moreover, 4thU is uniquely positioned to offer sanctuary given our prominent location and building’s physical attributes. Further, the offering of sanctuary is aligned with 4thU’s Mission of being “a diverse, welcoming congregation.”

WHEREAS, in anticipation of increased ICE enforcement actions following the election of Donald J. Trump to the Office of President, 4thU’s Board of Trustees (“the Board”) passed a resolution at its December 20, 2016 meeting “commit[ing] to pursuing the possibility of becoming a Sanctuary Congregation for undocumented individuals at risk of deportation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)” (“the Resolution”).

WHEREAS, 4thU’s Senior Minister, Board President, and Director of Administration have been working in partnership with Faith in New York to carry out the Resolution. Faith in New York is an interfaith organization whose mission is to “build the Beloved City here in New York City by bringing together a multi-faith, multi-issue, multi-neighborhood base of members who ensure that New York City remains a place of sanctuary for all, regardless of race, age, or other identity.”

WHEREAS, on Friday, February 3, 2017, the Senior Minister received an urgent request from Faith in New York’s Immigration Organizer, Greg Halzen, for 4thU to commit to offering short-term (also known as temporary) sanctuary. Mr. Halzen referenced increased fears in the New York City immigrant community following the issuance of Executive Orders by President Trump that have unjustly targeted individuals on the basis of their immigration status, country of origin, and/or religious affiliation.

WHEREAS, short-term sanctuary is commonly understood to consist of providing individuals access to a house of worship for a period of a few hours. Often, short-term sanctuary is sought during times when ICE raids are thought to be in progress. Short-term sanctuary provides individuals a safe space to calm down, connect with resources, and make informed decisions on what to do next.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the members of 4thU hereby commit to live into our values by answering the call to work in partnership with Faith in New York in building the Beloved Community by providing short-term sanctuary on an as needed basis.

AND, be it further resolved that 4thU’s Senior Minister, its Board, and its Director of Administration will work collaboratively to address the logistical aspects of providing such short-term sanctuary.

Dated: February 5, 2017