

The Asylum-Seeking Family Living in our Church Building
Frequently Asked Questions
(Email Susan Watson with additional questions you have: susanjanepilates@gmail.com)

What is the Dane Sanctuary Coalition?

Formed in partnership with Voces de la Frontera and Centro Hispano of Madison, The Dane Sanctuary Coalition organizes congregations and organizations to provide physical sanctuary to our immigrant friends and neighbors who are at risk for deportation. We do this as part of the national New Sanctuary Movement. The Coalition was formed on July 7, 2017.

The Dane Sanctuary Coalition has been created in response to immoral immigration policies that threaten families, instill fear in our communities, and violate the most basic ethical standards all our faith traditions teach – that we are all created in the image of God, endowed with inherent worth and dignity, and deserving of a life free of violence and deprivation.

The mission of The Dane Sanctuary Coalition states:

Based on our shared faith commitments to social justice, we will assist vulnerable immigrant and refugee communities. We will do this, under the leadership of Voces de la Frontera and Centro Hispano, by providing and supporting physical sanctuary as needed, and by acting as a conduit for information, education, and training on other immigrant justice actions.

Congregations currently offering sanctuary include First Unitarian Society and Congregation Shaarei Shamayim; Madison Christian Community – Advent Lutheran Church and Community of Hope United Church of Christ; Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ . and Madison Mennonite Congregation. Supporting congregations include First Congregational United Church of Christ; Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, First Baptist Church, James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Lake Edge Lutheran Church, Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society, Temple Beth El, Presbyterian House - UW Madison, Beth Israel Center, Christ Presbyterian Church, Lake Edge United Church of Christ, St. Francis House, The Crossing, Inc., and Midvale Lutheran Church. Many more congregations are in the process of deciding what their place in the Coalition will be.

**What's the difference between asylum-seeker, refugee, and undocumented immigrant:
Who is an asylum-seeker?**

An asylum-seeker is someone who is also seeking international protection from dangers in their home country, but whose claim for refugee status hasn't been determined legally. Asylum-seekers must apply for protection in the country of destination—meaning they must arrive at or cross a border in order to apply. Then, they must be able to prove to authorities there that they meet the criteria to be covered by refugee protections. Not every asylum-seeker will be recognized as a refugee.

Tens of thousands of children and families from Central America have fled extreme danger—murder, kidnapping, violence against women and forced recruitment by gangs. Those arriving at the U.S. border are being depicted as “illegal immigrants,” but in reality, crossing an international border for asylum is not illegal and an asylum seeker's case must be heard, according to U.S. and international law.

The family staying at our church has asylum-seeking status.

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their home because of war, violence or persecution, often without warning. They are unable to return home unless and until conditions in their native lands are safe for them again.

An official entity such as a government or the United Nations Refugee Agency determines whether a person seeking international protection meets the definition of a refugee, based on well-founded fear.

Those who obtain refugee status are given protections under international laws and conventions and lifesaving support from aid agencies, including the International Rescue Committee. Refugees in the U.S. also have the opportunity to become lawful permanent residents and eventually citizens.

Who is an undocumented immigrant?

The term 'undocumented immigrant' refers to foreign nationals residing in the U.S. without legal immigration status. It includes persons who entered the U.S. without inspection and proper permission from the U.S. government, and those who entered with a legal visa that is no longer valid.

How did our church decide to offer emergency housing this family?

The asylum-seeking family was staying in a Madison hotel when our church got word of them. A social worker from the Dane County Department of Immigration Affairs contacted the Dane Sanctuary Coalition asking if one of our member congregations would offer them emergency housing. The Leadership Team met with our pastors and members of our sanctuary mission team to hear about this plea. The family are asylum-seekers. They've been in the U.S. since at least February, living in different parts of the country and in different living situations. A motion was made and seconded to offer this family emergency housing. After discussion the LT voted to adopt this motion. The family moved into our church building on Saturday, September 28, 2019.

How long will this asylum-seeking family be staying with us?

We don't know exactly. The goal for this family is to become independent and able to support themselves in their own home. They have a variety of needs and are being supported by a team of agencies and organizations providing assistance with housing, education and literacy, jobs, health care, and income assistance. The family is also learning basic living and cultural skills necessary for living independently in a new country. Together we are learning how to share space and live comfortably with one another. We assess the family's ongoing need for emergency shelter and our ability to provide that resource on a month-to-month basis.

What are the other agencies involved in supporting this family?

The asylum-seeking family's support team consists of the following agencies:

- Catholic Multicultural Center - assisting the family in finding employment - also providing food pantry, clothing closet, meals programs, language and financial literacy programs, activities for children, etc.
- Dane County Department of Immigration Affairs - handling all legal filings in support of the family's asylum status and obtaining work permits
- The Dane Sanctuary Coalition - assisting with funding for a social worker to provide coordinated case management - assisting with funding for groceries, laundry, and other discretionary purchases. *This coalition is also the umbrella organization under which our*

church provides emergency shelter. Additionally, volunteers working with the coalition are available (as scheduled) to offer transportation and translation services.

- Madison Metropolitan School District - assisting the three children and family with education and connecting the family to family social services like food programs and clothing closets, as well as providing in-school counseling, ESL, and other services
- The Road Home - assisting the family in finding stable housing in our community
- Health Care agencies and community resources – the family is connected to a variety of community resources for accessing health care, including UW Hospital Community Care, ACCESS Community Health Center, and Primary Access for Kids (PAK)
- Local food pantries, clothing closets, personal essentials pantries, and other community supports are also available

What is the role of Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ/Madison Mennonite Congregation?

Within the umbrella of the Dane Sanctuary Coalition, the church is providing temporary emergency shelter for this family, including:

- A safe place to live with 24/7 trained on-site host/volunteers. Many of these volunteers come from other DSC congregations
- Designated bed/living rooms with beds and other furnishings
- Access to bathrooms, showers, and kitchen
- Internet services
- Close proximity to bus routes

Where is the money coming from?

There is no church money specifically budgeted for the support of our asylum-seeking family. In response to the risk of homelessness, we provided a safe place for this family of five to sleep and stay.

The church has set up a segregated special fund to manage costs associated with housing the family. Money for this fund has come from donations received from both individuals and congregations. Initially, these funds paid for the hotel bill where the family stayed prior to moving into Orchard Ridge as well as some of the initial expenses related to moving and set up of the living space.

The Dane Sanctuary Coalition has since sent out a request for donations to all Coalition congregations to provide funds for ongoing support, including groceries, laundry, and other discretionary purchases. Trips to local food pantries help with groceries too. The Dane County Department of Immigration Affairs provides monthly bus passes.

The parents have plans to work; nevertheless, we anticipate continued financial need as this family transitions to independence and life in the U.S.

If individuals, groups, businesses, or churches would like to make donations in support of this family, here are two options:

(1) ***With no tax deduction***- checks can be made out to: Dane Sanctuary Coalition, memo line “asylum-seeking family needs” and sent to: Rev. Leslie Schenk, Plymouth Congregational Church, 2401 Atwood Ave. Madison, WI. 53704

(2) ***With tax deduction-*** checks can be made out to Orchard Ridge UCC, memo line “asylum-seeking family needs” and sent to: Rev. Laura Crow, Orchard Ridge UCC, 1501 Gilbert Road, Madison, WI. 53711

We request that gifts of money and goods not be given directly to the family.