

# Welcoming Immigrants Toolkit



**Sanctuary-related resources and guidance  
for Virginia faith communities**

Compiled by the  
Virginia Interfaith Center  
For Public Policy  
[www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org](http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org)

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How to we embody



If your church, mosque, temple or synagogue has a sign indicating welcome to the stranger, what are you doing to ensure the safety of those who may come in?

Imagine an undocumented mother has gotten a text message that ICE is at her house looking for her. She sees your sign declaring welcome and hesitates, then bangs insistently on the door. You open it to her scared and desperate eyes, one hand clinging to her small, terrified child. What will you do to embody the welcome you have publicly offered? Do you have a plan? A network? Resources?

Fear hurts our neighbors. It hurts when the administration makes policy based on fear born out of bias. It also hurts when supporters and allies never put more than one toe on the line because of our own fear.

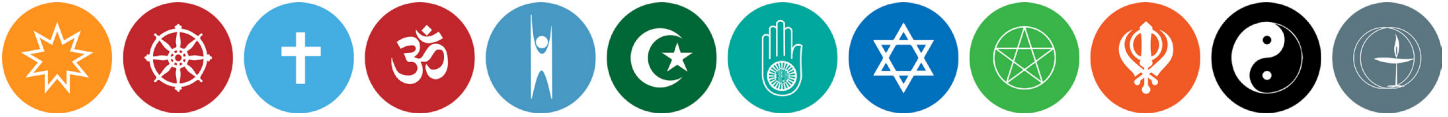
So often we are hurting our neighbors because we draw lines in the sand and say, "I will only walk with you this far." Our traditions tell us that loving our neighbors means walking through every barrier, fire and darkness together. And that is our challenge to people of faith wanting to put your faith into action today. Erase the lines you've drawn and limits you've constructed.

Will you walk with your neighbor toward Welcoming All?

The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy is urging congregations in northern Virginia to connect with the Sanctuary DMV. Congregations in Central Virginia should connect with the Central Virginia Sanctuary Network. Other chapters or congregations around the state are invited to find ways to support immigrants in our Commonwealth.

Please let me know how I and the Virginia Interfaith Center can be of service.

Ms. Lana Heath de Martinez  
Welcoming All Coordinator  
[Lana@virginiainterfaithcenter.org](mailto:Lana@virginiainterfaithcenter.org)



## I. Developing Interfaith Relationships

As faith-based hate crimes increase, it is more important than ever for congregations of every tradition to engage in dialogue and relationship building with people of other faiths. Learning about our neighbors while building meaningful relationships is an essential component of resisting hate and ignorance and advocating together for policies that Welcome All.

### Interfaith Trialogues

Many faith communities are seeking meaningful engagement with neighbors who practice different religious traditions. In Bon Air, St. Edward Catholic Church, Bon Air Presbyterian Church, Bonay Kodesh Congregation, Or Ami Congregation, Bon Air Baptist Church, Huguenot Road Baptist Church, and the Islamic Center of Virginia have worked together for more than ten years in hosting an annual interfaith trialogue (conversations between three religious groups). The aim of the gatherings is to deepen mutual understanding and appreciation between the three Abrahamic religious communities.

### Interfaith Seders

Seders are traditional Jewish rituals performed by multi-generational families or communities. They retell the story of liberation when the Israelites escaped slavery in Egypt. The theme of liberation is important to many diverse communities and provides an essential commonality for moving forward together. Invitations to join the celebration of a particular tradition provide meaningful opportunities to learn about our neighbors who worship differently and find common ground. Use the sample interfaith seder service to build ties between faith groups



[http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Interfaith\\_Seder1.pdf](http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Interfaith_Seder1.pdf)

## Solidarity Postcard Party

Developed by a Muslim VICPP board member and a Latino colleague, solidarity postcard parties encourage members of different communities to learn about their unique struggles, find common ground, and advocate on behalf of one another. Here is a brief guide to hosting your own Solidarity Postcard Party!

The goals of the party are to:

- Build relationships between local activists from different backgrounds
- Learn more about the issues facing different communities
- Strengthen the Circles of Protection network
- Swamp legislators with postcards supporting immigrant/refugee friendly policies and opposing anti-immigrant legislation and travel bans

Anyone can host a Solidarity Postcard Party!

To prepare:

- Order VICPP postcards (or pick up a pack of your favorite postcards)
- Check VICPP's website for policy updates: [www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org](http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org)
- Invite your congregation, neighbors, or friends to join you
- Send VICPP the date, time, location and contact information for your event and we will help publicize
- Offer refreshments to boost attendance

Agenda:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Overview of recent local, state and federal changes in related policy
- Overview of how to write a policy postcard or letter to the editor (review samples)
- Dinner/Networking/Letter Writing
- Upcoming actions/events/meetings
- Conclusion — everyone shares something they learned and commits to future actions

Send us pictures of your event and postcards that you are sending to your representatives or post them on our Facebook page!

*\*Thanks to Ali Faruk, VICPP Board Member, for creating this guide!*



## II. Welcoming Resolutions

### City, Town or County Resolutions



There is a national movement fueled by popular energy to advocate for inclusive policies at the local government level. Some cities call themselves ‘Sanctuaries’; others adopt ‘Inclusive Directives’. For all communities targeted by harmful public policy, the goal of justice work is to make our spaces safe and free.

Resolutions do not change laws, but they do serve a purpose in the work of social justice: Adopting inclusive resolutions and policies sets a tone for the work of local government officials. Inclusive resolutions contribute to cultural movements and shifts in public perception. Depending on content, resolutions may encourage public participation in local government by assuring vulnerable communities that they are safe.

VICPP joins other organizations and grassroots advocates to call for greater accountability, to see that these policies are followed at every level of government, in all government agencies, and in all branches of law enforcement. VICPP thanks the cities of Richmond and Alexandria for stating their commitment to being inclusive and welcoming to all.

Is your locality considering a welcoming resolution? Please share it with us so we can help promote it! Send a copy to Lana Heath de Martinez, Welcoming All Coordinator, at [lanea@virginiainterfaithcenter.org](mailto:lanea@virginiainterfaithcenter.org)

### City of Richmond Mayor’s Directive

I hereby direct the Chief Administrative Officer of the City of Richmond to take all necessary and appropriate measures to ensure that all departments under her supervision observe and adhere to the following policies:

- 1) That our City will protect and promote policies of inclusion for all of its residents, regardless of their national origin, immigration or refugee status, race, color, creed, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation or sexual identity.
- 2) That the Richmond Police Department will not consent to participate with the Immigration Customs Enforcement 287(g) agreements, and in the interest of public safety and protecting communities, will maintain its policy of not inquiring as to the place of birth or immigration status of individuals with whom it comes into contact.
- 3) That in our interactions as representatives of our City, all employees will focus on the needs and safety of our residents, not on their legal status, and will advocate for and promote their wellbeing.

Signed, this day, February 6, 2017,

**LEVAR M. STONEY**

**Mayor, City of Richmond**

## Alexandria City Council's Statement

Alexandria, Virginia, is a city of kindness and compassion. We are a thriving community of engaged residents with strong ideals of peace, community service, and both shared and diverse cultures. Our city declares itself to be a hate-free zone. We are an accepting and embracing community where we treat each other with human dignity and respect. There is no place for intolerance in our community. This is a core value of our city.

In recent times, many of our neighbors, families and children have expressed fear and apprehension, and there has been an increase in hateful and dangerous speech and acts nationwide. Recognizing everyone's First Amendment right to freedom of speech, we are also dedicated to freedom from fear. People of diverse culture, race, color, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and persons with disabilities live and work together in Alexandria and bring pride and prosperity to our community.

On behalf of the City of Alexandria, the Alexandria Human Rights Commission, and the people we serve, we reaffirm our responsibility to ensure that each person within our jurisdiction is accorded equal protection under the law, including the rights enshrined in the Constitution of the United States and the Virginia Constitution, and those set forth in the Alexandria Human Rights Code.

We proclaim that we remain committed to diversity and to fostering an atmosphere of inclusiveness that respects the dignity and worth of every person without regard to race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, national origin, immigration status, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or familial status, and we declare that we denounce hate speech, hate crimes, harassment, racial bias, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-immigrant activity, and harmful bias and discrimination in all forms.

**Mayor Allison Silberberg**

**Vice Mayor Justin Wilson**

**Councilmember Willie F. Bailey Sr.**

**Councilmember John T. Chapman**

**Councilmember Timothy B. Lovaink**

**Councilmember Redella S. "Del" Pepper**

**Councilmember Paul C. Smedberg**

## Organizing for a Resolution

Before taking off on a new initiative, investigate what movement may already be underway in your locality. Supporting existing efforts - particularly those led by impacted community members - is always preferable to beginning a new campaign. Ask how your congregation can support the work being done.

If no campaign exists in your locality, connect with local groups and organizations in impacted communities. Ask your neighbors what policy changes their communities need in order to live safe and free. VICPP can help to distill community needs into policy propositions.

Once you have specific policies agreed upon by impacted community members, begin meeting with officials. Depending on the priorities for your locality, you may meet with the Mayor, City Council representatives, School Board members, Superintendent, Police Chief, Sheriff, or other identified decision-maker. In your meetings, elevate the voices of your neighbors who are most impacted by the policy being discussed.

## Tips for meeting with local officials

- Demonstrate a broad base of support. Petitions, phone banking, packing local city council or school board meetings are all effective ways to do this.
- Defer to directly impacted community members. Impacted community members should demonstrate first hand experience of the policy being discussed.
- Express long-term commitment to this Campaign. Allies should demonstrate support for impacted people and a commitment to the campaign's success.
- Meet more than once with officials. Meet with all officials and stakeholders, even those who may not be the ultimate decision-makers. Building relationships could have long-term dividends.
- Insist on accountability. Ensure that all agreements with officials are bound to a mechanism for accountability.

Share your Welcoming All resolutions with VICPP! VICPP will help to promote your campaign to make your city, county or town Welcoming for All.

## Congregational Resolutions

Congregations can issue “welcoming all” resolutions or they can join a local sanctuary network that may also have a pledge to sign. Following are sample congregational resolutions.



### Model 1:

We are Resolved to WELCOME ALL

RESOLUTION BY [congregation] AFFIRMING THE FULL HUMANITY OF ALL WHO ARE IMMIGRANTS, PEOPLE OF COLOR, JEWISH, MUSLIM, AND OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, LGBTQ+ PEOPLE, WOMEN, AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES; AND REAFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION AND TO UPHOLDING THE DIGNITY OF ALL OUR NEIGHBORS THROUGH MAKING OUR SPACE SAFE AND FREE



WHEREAS, we live in a divided society, where minorities rarely feel safe; and,  
WHEREAS, the [congregation] assures our marginalized and vulnerable neighbors that we support them, and will do all we can to maintain and improve their quality of life, and will not tolerate acts of hate, discrimination, bullying, harassment or any type of intimidation; and,  
WHEREAS, the [congregation] wishes to declare that [place of worship] is a safe place for immigrants from all countries, people of color, Jews, Muslims, other religious minorities, LGBTQ+ people, women, and people with disabilities; and,  
WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia has a large immigrant population that contributes to the social fabric and economic growth of Virginia; and the members of [congregation] desire to ensure that our immigrant neighbors participate in civic life and daily activities without fear; and,  
WHEREAS, we recognize that we have often fallen short of embracing and valuing diversity and respecting the civil and human rights of all human beings regardless of their immigration status, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender or ability; and  
WHEREAS, our neighborhoods are made up of diverse individuals, both native born and immigrants, whose collective cultures, religions, backgrounds, orientations, abilities and perspectives join to form a highly pluralistic community which should be a place that welcomes persons and families of all walks of life; and,  
WHEREAS, most residents in Virginia, including the vast majority of immigrants, are law-abiding citizens and are, when crimes occur, themselves the victims of crime, and because [congregation] wishes to foster trust and cooperation between Law Enforcement and our immigrant neighbors, and wishes to encourage victims and witnesses to report crime and speak to the police without fear of being arrested or reported to the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by [Congregation]:

We proclaim that we remain committed to diversity and to fostering an atmosphere of inclusiveness that respects the dignity and worth of every person without regard to race, color, gender, religion, ancestry, national origin, immigration status, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or familial status, and we declare that we denounce hate speech, hate crimes, harassment, racial bias, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-immigrant activity, and harmful bias and discrimination in all forms. We pledge to work without ceasing until our place of worship and greater community are sanctuaries where all people are safe and free.

SECTION 1. The [congregation] calls upon all its members and governing boards to speak out against acts of bullying, discrimination and violence fueled by hate, and to defend those who are targeted for such acts. We will continuously offer a different narrative based on love of neighbor and care for the vulnerable.

SECTION 2. [Congregation] supports the Virginia Public School System and our own denominational schools and calls upon administrators, teachers, and students to unite in ensuring that all campuses are safe and that our respective communities express a shared value for diversity of thought, national origin, culture, faith, gender, and race.

SECTION 3. [Congregation] is committed to protecting the civil and human rights of all of our neighbors, including immigrant communities regardless of federal immigration status, [and will provide safe harbor to those facing removal]. We call upon [locality] to defend residents from federal immigration enforcement practices that separate families and undermine personal freedom.

SECTION 4. [Congregation] commends Mayor Levar Stoney for his inclusive directive and calls for increased accountability for all elected officials, governing institutions, and all branches of law enforcement. Adapt for local context - if no local resolution, use this section to ask for one.

\*This resolution is based on a welcoming resolution introduced in the 2017 Virginia Legislature by Del. Alfonso Lopez and drafted by Beatriz Amberman, of VACOLAO.

### **Congregational Welcoming All Resolutions Model 2:**

[Name of faith community] pledges to be a congregation that continuously breaks down the barriers that have historically separated us. We affirm the dignity and full humanity of all of our neighbors, regardless of race, national origin, immigration status, gender, orientation, ability or faith tradition. Indeed, our diversity enriches the human experience and allows us to know more of the Divine. While we do the work of making our space safe and free for all people, we will seek the counsel of communities that have been negatively impacted by our divisions, ask forgiveness, and do the perpetual work of repentance and reconciliation to make our relationships right. We promise, at every step, to ask whether our decisions are guided by fear or by love, recognizing that our fear of the unknown, the uncomfortable, and the unprofitable prevents us from loving our neighbors to the fullest extent of the tenets of our faith.

To that end, [Congregation] will take the following steps to become more inclusive:

[relationships to be pursued; e.g. multifaith dialogue/trialogue]

[space modifications; e.g. accessibility]

[accountability mechanism; e.g. advisory council made up of diverse community members]

Simultaneously, we pledge to advocate for our localities and schools to become fully inclusive of all people. We stand with the marginalized in pursuit of liberation, and will lift our collective voice in opposition to intimidation, hate speech, and all false narratives that dehumanize our neighbors.

## **III. Circles of Protection**

All faith traditions share the values of caring for the vulnerable, welcoming the stranger and loving our neighbors. Circles of Protection are formulated to embody these values in the different spheres of our lives. Everyone has an essential role to play and participation in a Circle is one way to put your faith into action. Below are some of the Circles of Protection you may want to organize in your community.

### **Inclusive Schools**

Ensure that your local and denominational schools are actively pursuing environments that support, empower and protect vulnerable communities.

### **Sanctuary for All**

Work with other local advocates to make your locality safe and free for all people, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexuality, ability, and immigration status. (See Part 1: Welcoming All Cities, Counties and Towns)

### Resettling Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers enter the US fleeing circumstances nearly identical to those that drive refugees to seek safe harbor. However, asylum seekers are not provided with any benefits or supports while waiting for the multi-year adjudication process to be completed. Faith communities can provide protection and welcome to our neighbors seeking asylum.

### Fundraising

Creating and promoting community funds to be distributed to families facing deportation, detained individuals in need of bail, and sponsorship of legal fees for the very expensive immigration process for those eligible for relief.

### Transportation

In Virginia, undocumented immigrants and 12 categories of lawfully present immigrants are ineligible for driver's licenses. Set up an alternate transportation network, assist with transportation to regular appointments with federal immigration officers, and provide transportation for families of those living in Sanctuary.

### Communications

When an individual or family takes public Sanctuary in a place of worship, the media campaign is the most essential component in winning the immigration case. The Communications team will plan and produce media events as well as coordinate within the Network. Additionally, the Communications Circle will issue public responses to incidents of hate speech and hate crimes on behalf of the Network.

### Legal Resources

One of the most practical ways you can stand in defense of your neighbors is by providing legal resources. This could look like hosting Know Your Rights clinics, Power of Attorney events, or sponsoring individual legal cases. This is also the Circle for attorneys who are willing to provide pro bono counsel in the event of raids or Sanctuary cases.

### Outreach

The Outreach Circle coordinates with local rapid response groups, sets up trainings for the Network, and recruits congregations to join the local Sanctuary Network.

### Hospitality

In cases of public Sanctuary or the detention/removal of a community member, the Hospitality Circle arranges meals, visitation, entertainment, and counseling.



## IV. Virginia Sanctuary Networks

The #SanctuaryNotDeportation movement is growing, and many faith communities are already participating in local networks. VICPP encourages your congregation to connect with the closest Sanctuary Network. If your region does not have a Sanctuary Network, VICPP will support congregations in building new coalitions.

What is Sanctuary?



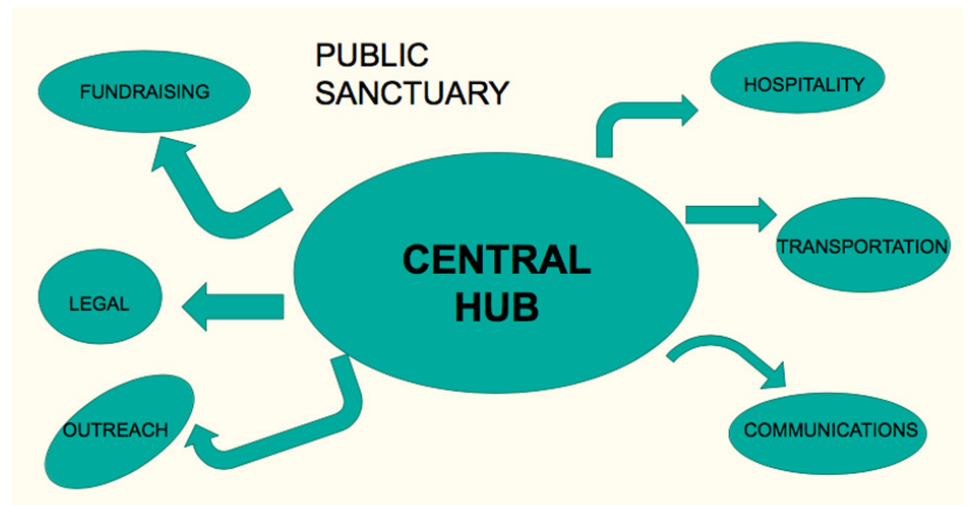
Each community defines Sanctuary differently, but at VICPP we use the standards of “safe” and “free.” Becoming a Sanctuary Congregation means pledging to engage in the work of making our communities places where all people are safe and free. The goal of building a Sanctuary network is not to harbor those who face deportation, but to do this work of cultural change and political advocacy.

Congregations become “sanctuaries” when all other options have been exhausted for essential members of our communities. People of faith have the unique opportunity to provide safe haven for those facing final orders of removal. The Sensitive Locations policy designates places of worship (and schools) as locations where federal immigration laws should not be enforced.

There are really two main forms of sanctuary. First is public sanctuary. This is when one or a few congregations provide “public” sanctuary for one or a few families and a network of congregations support them. Many congregations will not be hosting a family but will be supporting the public sanctuary. Individuals and families who decide to go into sanctuary commit themselves to being public spokespersons on the issue. It is difficult for individuals to choose public sanctuary and can be challenging for congregations to make the decision to host someone. Sometimes the challenges are logistical, such as where will the family eat and shower. Other challenges are around how the congregation feels about playing this public advocacy role. Somewhere between 600 and 800 congregations in the U.S. are currently providing public sanctuary and thousands of congregations are helping support these hosting congregations.

Even though public sanctuary may sound legally challenging, to date no congregation has had any legal challenges in offering public sanctuary. When a congregation is “public,” it is not harboring anyone. In fact, it is very public about where the person or family is living. In addition, to date (meaning this could change), the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has not entered a congregation.

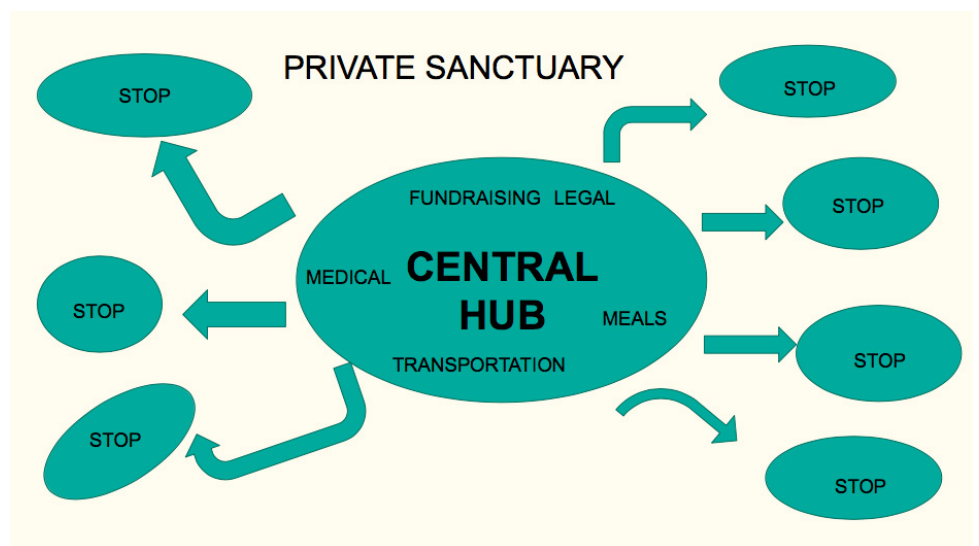
It has stood outside a congregation and taken people coming out of a shelter in Northern Virginia.





The second form of sanctuary is private. This is where families offer private sanctuary to these needing places to stay. Sometimes this is coordinated through congregations and sometimes it is just coordinated through individuals.

Private sanctuary is offering homes as safe harbors for targeted immigrants who do not wish to make their cases public. The legal risks are different when offering private sanctuary. Please see the resources in Part 4: Section d to learn more about these risks. Offering private sanctuary carries the risk of a felony conviction of harboring. Legal interpretations disagree on the amount of risk involved.



On the one hand, private Sanctuary is private and ICE cannot enter a private residence without a warrant signed by a federal judge. On the other hand, in the 1980's there were cases in which those offering private sanctuary were convicted and faced harsh penalties of 8-10 years in federal prison. As people of faith, our values often challenge us to reconsider how we live within the laws of our nation. If you discern a call to offer private sanctuary, here is one model of how it might look within the greater Sanctuary network.

## Sanctuary Networks in Virginia

Two Sanctuary Networks currently exist in Virginia. Learn more about the network closest to you and get connected!

**Sanctuary DMV:** [www.sanctuarydmv.org](http://www.sanctuarydmv.org)

"Sanctuary DMV is dedicated to protecting immigrants and targeted communities in the DMV (DC, Maryland, and Virginia) areas. Sanctuary DMV is a solidarity group that pledges to resist policy proposals to target and deport millions of undocumented immigrants and discriminate against marginalized communities including those who are black, indigenous, Muslim, latinx, and LGBTQ+."

The Sanctuary DMV network currently has 58 congregations committed to the work described above, spanning over a dozen faith traditions that include African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Hindu, Jewish, Mennonite, Muslim, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Quakers, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, and Unitarian Universalists.

For a full list of participating congregations, see: <http://sanctuarydmv.org/congregation-network/dmv-sanctuary-network-members/>

**Central VA Sanctuary Network:** [www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/welcomingall](http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/welcomingall)

Volunteers, with the support of The Virginia Interfaith Center, are organizing a new Sanctuary network in Central Virginia. More than 30 congregations (Christian, Jewish and Muslim) are discerning their roles, with about a dozen ready to commit to the network. Though this network has not yet officially launched, connected congregations are already making a difference through Circles of Protection.

During the coming weeks and months, volunteers and VICPP staff will continue to meet with discerning congregations, clergy and governing boards to answer questions and provide information. Expect the official network launch in Summer 2017!

## V. Additional Resources

The **Interfaith Immigration Coalition** has great faith-based resources. Visit [www.interfaithimmigration.org](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org).

The **National Sanctuary Coalition** also has lots of great resources available for congregations and faith-based advocates including a Sanctuary Not Deportation Toolkit, a Bilingual Guide for Vigils and a Rapid Response Toolkit. Visit [www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org](http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org).

The **American Civil Liberties Union** has great legal resources on what immigrants can and cannot do. One document of particular interest is the ACLU's "Sanctuary Congregations and Harboring FAQ." Visit [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org).

The **Legal Aid Justice Center in Virginia** has a great immigrant advocacy project with lots of legal resources. Visit [www.justice4all.org](http://www.justice4all.org).

**United We Dream** has been one of the leading immigrant rights organizations and has lots of good resources. Visit [www.unitedwedream.org](http://www.unitedwedream.org)

The **Migration Policy Institute** is one of the most respected policy think tanks on immigration policy and why our current policies are failing the nation. To learn more about failed immigration policy, visit [www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

The **Pew Research Center** has great documents on the history of immigration and analysis of current immigration policies. Visit [www.pewhispanic.org](http://www.pewhispanic.org).

The **Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis**, Virginia's economic thinktank, issued a great document looking at immigrants contribution to Virginia's economy, called "Virginia Immigrants in the Economy" and "Immigrant Demographic and Economic Indicators for Select Legislative Districts in Virginia." Visit [www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org](http://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org).