

Board of Trustees 22 December 2015 (special meeting)
Approved Minutes

Present: Joseph Gress, Don Marti, Fern Hamlin, Chuck Leone, Chip Roush, Tama Crisovan, Sharon Kniss, Gary Metzler, Gail deSomer

Visitors: Dale Gibson, Darlene Catello

Joseph called the meeting to order at 5.30pm.

Chalice lighting.

Covenant between board and minister.

Agenda—Joseph. Explained Ibrahim Parlak's situation (possible imminent deportation) and petition for special congregational meeting "to consider the proposition that the church may be used as a safe refuge for Ibrahim Parlak."

What do we know about Ibrahim Parlak's situation. Background by Dale who has known him since 2004, the time of Parlak's first arrest. Midnight tomorrow night ends the safe period provided by Homeland Security. Joseph has been in contact with a UUA Social Witness staff member, who is not aware of any breaches of 'sanctuary' in any churches. Also shared was an Oct 2014 UUA and UCC press release re-committing to the sanctuary movement for immigrant families facing deportation.

Do we want to get involved. Chuck noted that this is a question for the congregation, as it is something so potentially large that it would become a mission of this church. The immediacy of the problem doesn't allow much time to consider it. There are many parts to this question. Offering sanctuary would redefine the church. Sharon wondered if there is something the church or individuals could do to help with the immediate situation, until the congregation can consider the issue.

What are our options. Joseph noted that there are UU congregations who are declared sanctuary churches. Dale noted that the petition is asking for sanctuary only for Parlak, not for the church to become a sanctuary for all. Tama thought contact should be made with the 17 declared sanctuary UU churches, and that this was too big an issue to commit the church to without congregational consideration. If Parlak took sanctuary elsewhere, we could then have the congregational meeting and the congregation could decide. Joseph summarized the options:

1. Board authorizes temporary sanctuary, followed by a congregational meeting.
2. Explore other sanctuary churches for temporary sanction.
3. Help Parlak with money, moral support, publicity.

What are the risks. Joseph: according to the UUA staff member he was in contact with, since the 1980s hundreds of people have taken sanctuary in dozens of churches, and none of the churches have faced fines or arrests or the authorities coming into the buildings to arrest those in sanctuary.

- Chuck: what was the nature of the issues for those who have taken sanctuary?
- Joseph understood that they were mostly undocumented immigrants.
- Chuck discussed the nature of Parlak's case and the connection with terrorist groups. In the current political state, the authorities react by making examples.
- Sharon agreed with Chuck but thought that the authorities usually go for easier targets, those without significant community support.
- Joseph noted that one risk is, whatever the board decides, some in the congregation will disagree.
- Sharon: Homeland Security can and has gone after people and organizations who try to help.
- Tama said she was not ready, as a board member, to make this kind of decision for the congregation, but that we should have the congregational meeting to discuss and decide.

Sharon moved, and Chuck seconded, that we should schedule a special congregational meeting, as requested by the petition, for 10 January 2016, 12noon, to discuss safe refuge for Parlak and the concept of our congregation offering sanctuary. Motion carried.

Does the board want to do anything between now and the congregational meeting. After discussion, Sharon suggested that we formalize what is to be done:

- Chip will call the Kansas UU sanctuary church.
- Joseph will make contact with the UUA staff member.
- Sharon will help make other phone calls.
- Dale and Darlene will check with the Berrien Springs UU Fellowship.

Don moved, and Gary seconded, that we offer temporary sanctuary to Ibrahim Parlak until the January 10, 2016, congregational meeting. Motion carried with 5 in favor and 3 opposed. Dale and Darlene will need building access code; they will coordinate practical needs. Chip noted that we will need an email at the ready to notify the congregation as soon as we know that Parlak is coming. Sharon commented on the importance of face-to-face discussion. Gail said that the congregation needs to know before the Christmas Eve service if sanctuary is being taken by then.

Tama moved, and Gail seconded, that we offer temporary sanctuary to Ibrahim Parlak until the January 10, 2016, congregational meeting, and that we inform Parlak of a sanctuary church willing to host him immediately if one is found. Motion carried with 5 in favor, 2 opposed, and 1 abstaining.

Meeting was adjourned at 8.20pm.
Fern Hamlin, Board secretary