

## Ad Hoc Committee on Migrant Ministry

### Proposal and Details

Rincon Congregational United Church of Christ  
January 2019

#### Introduction

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At the last Congregation Meeting, we collectively affirmed a desire “to go forth with the Migrant Shelter.” The Ad Hoc Committee was charged “to explore the details of creating the Shelter with attention to the current urgent need.” The committee has engaged in careful and deliberate study of the migrant shelter ministry of Rincon UCC, including looking at the effects of the shelter on the church and considering how we might have the most positive impact on the humanitarian needs of migrants in Southern Arizona. We deeply appreciate the support we’ve received from leadership and members of the congregation as we have gathered data and made plans.

We are certain of and rely on God’s presence with us on this journey—both our spiritual journeys as individuals and a congregation and the literal journeys of our guests. We recognize and affirm that some of us are called to serve directly in this ministry, while others serve God and the community in other ways and at other times. God’s love for all of us remains constant throughout.

We propose the following:

#### Motion to the Annual Meeting

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The Justice & Witness Migrant Shelter Ad hoc Committee moves that Rincon Congregational Church United Church of Christ become a scaled down and regularized Migrant Shelter with dedicated staff.

#### Details and Rationale

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This would involve:

- Creating a shelter to serve approximately 6 parent/child pairs (12 people) at a time.
- This ministry would be ongoing.
- We would hire a staff person for 20 hours per week to administer this program (a proposed job description is available).
- The shelter would utilize Rooms 3-4, the Stedman Room, the Staff Office/Bodega, and the play area and tennis/basketball courts at the back of the property.
- We would reassess current needs every 6 months.

The advantages of this plan include:

- The opportunity to offer more comfortable space and dedicated time for each migrant family.
- The shelter could be housed in existing underused space while allowing all church and rental programs to continue with very minimal room changes.

- The smaller number of people means that we would need fewer volunteers per shift for transportation, cooking, etc. and—based on past experiences—could definitely be met.
- We currently have enough dedicated funding for this program in the bank to allow us to purchase necessary supplies, make some needed modifications, and fund a staff position for six months.
- Regularizing this ministry means that we would no longer be operating on an emergency/all-hands-on-deck mode but would instead incorporate this program as one of many that Rincon operates in service to God and our community.
- This ministry provides deeply meaningful opportunities for both Rincon members and those in the wider community to volunteer. We can continue to build the significant relationships we are developing with other communities of faith as well as those who are volunteering with us and do not currently have a church home.
- We can overlap some responsibilities between the shelter ministry and our hospitality program (particularly overnight stays), while also recognizing their different goals and needs.
- We would have the flexibility to respond to emergency needs if we determine that is needed.

#### Additional Information

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Some other facts to be aware of:

- We were able to begin this ministry thanks to the initiative and contacts of our Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Delle McCormick. We deeply appreciate her commitment to justice in the borderlands and the skills she brought to enable us to begin this ministry.
- We have received significant dedicated funding through the generosity of many in this community. Pastor Delle was able to activate a wide network beyond our congregation to support this ministry. Approximately one third of the monetary donations have come from Rincon members; the rest is from the wider community, including our denomination, social justice organizations, and individuals. Our analysis shows that we achieved this without impacting Rincon's regular giving during the time the shelter was open.
- There is a balance of more than \$21,000 in that account to use for this ministry in the future; this money can *only* be spent for migrant ministries.
- We have also experienced tremendous generosity in gifts-in-kind of food, clothing and other needs.
- In the feedback we received from the congregation, significantly more people expressed a strong desire for this ministry to continue than those who objected to it.
- Overall, volunteers stated that their experiences were very positive and indicated a desire to continue.

Detailed written information about our study process and findings will be available at worship beginning this Sunday. Please feel free to ask us any questions you may have.

#### Changes and Additions for Future Programming

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As we move towards a regular ministry, instead of an emergency shelter, we propose the following changes. We will:

- Hire an additional staff person to oversee the program, who would report to the Senior Pastor. This person would take over the responsibilities of coordinating with ICE, interfacing with volunteers, and ensuring the overall success of the program. The Senior Pastor would continue to offer spiritual care to our guests and supervise all paid staff.
- Create greater clarity about responsibilities. Job descriptions have been written for all coordinator positions, with responsibilities more widely distributed. We have also created additional policies to safeguard the wellbeing of our guests and volunteers.
- Distribute more information to our guests about their human and civil rights.
- Have clearer information for volunteers, including worksheets with Spanish, English and pictograph information to assist in communication.
- Continue to work diligently so that volunteers have a positive and meaningful experience at Rincon UCC.
- Communicate more clearly the ways in which people can contribute to this ministry in a variety of ways, including those with limited time, income and/or mobility, if they wish to. We would continue a separate e-newsletter with information about this ministry.
- Develop a new fundraising plan to build on our previous success in reaching beyond our congregation for continued support. This includes assisting members who would like to reach out to other churches, family and friends in other parts of the country.
- Coordinate with the new staff member (beginning Jan. 14, 2019) working on Migrant Hospitality through the UCC Southwest Conference.
- Work with Justice & Witness to identify opportunities for political advocacy to address the underlying issues that create the need for the shelter. This may include meeting with elected officials, writing letters, etc.
- Work with Faith Development to identify opportunities for additional learning about immigration issues and migrants.

We invite you to join us in prayer about this proposal and the needs of our community. We will be available in Fellowship Hall between worship services on January 13 and January 20 to answer any questions you may have.

Members of the Ad Hoc Committee

Dean Hokel  
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