

Ad Hoc Committee on Migrant Ministry

Proposal and Details

Rincon Congregational United Church of Christ
March 2019

Introduction

At the last Congregation Meeting of 2018, 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 leaders 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

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

This would involve:

- Our capacity is approximately 10-12 adults and their children 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, office/bodega space, and the play area and tennis/basketball courts at the back of the property.
- We would engage in ongoing assessment of needs and resources.

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

Some other facts to be aware of:

- We have received significant dedicated funding through the generosity of many in this community. 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 objected to it.
- Overall, volunteers stated that their experiences were very positive and indicated a desire to continue.

Please feel free to ask us any questions you may have.

Changes and Additions for Future Programming

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 Pastor. This person would take over the responsibilities of coordinating with ICE, interfacing with volunteers, and ensuring the overall success of the program. The Pastor would continue to 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 variety of ways in which people can contribute to this ministry, 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 UCC Southwest Conference and other churches within the Southwest to address needs.
- 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.
- Work with Stewardship & Finance to coordinate fundraising and budgeting needs.

We invite you to join us in prayer about this proposal and the needs of our community. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Members of the Ad Hoc Committee

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