

MUUSAN SanctUUary Summit, August 18, 2018
Summary of Maine UU Congregational involvement with Immigrant Justice
36 Responses from 20 Congregations *(as of 8.13.18)*

Is your congregation involved with immigrant justice issues?

Eleven report YES: Allen Avenue/Portland, Auburn, Augusta, Bangor, Brunswick, Castine, Damariscotta, Ellsworth, Kennebunk, First Parish Portland, Yarmouth

Nine NO: Belfast, Dexter, Norway, Pittsfield, Rockland, Saco and Biddeford, Sanford, Sangerville, Waterville

If so, please describe how, when and where you reach out. Who are your partners?

Allen Avenue, Portland: Directly housing and feeding homeless immigrant families through Family Promise; supplying English tutors for Portland Adult Ed.; financially supporting ILAP (Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project), Friends of Portland Adult Ed., Furniture Friends, Supporting Immigrant Tenants, Greater Portland Family Promise and other immigrant groups through our Share the Plate contributions; sending volunteers (including youth) to deliver furniture through Furniture Friends; showing up faithfully at rallies called to support immigrants and refugees in Maine; sometimes providing clergy support at those rallies.

Yarmouth: Compassionate Housing Initiative in Yarmouth (partner with Episcopal and Mormon congregations); previously hosted English conversation circle (partner Opportunity Alliance) through which some members assumed mentor roles for immigrants; recently provided weekend shelter for 35 immigrants when Portland's overflow shelter was closed (partner Family Shelter); multiple half plate donations

Auburn: Our UU theater group recently staged a play about current immigrant and refugee issues at Community Little theatre. Many church members are part of # RESIST Central Maine, also take part in many local protests. Many of us work individually with various groups including the Immigrant Resource Center and Maine Community Integration but we do not do so collectively.

Augusta: Rev. Carie consistently supports, organizes and participates in State House rallies, prayer vigils, and legislative advocacy. We have a Family Mentor who have been helping a local New Mainer family of several 16-20 yr olds, a mom, and a 9 year old. Our team help drive, plan, mentor, coach, educate and connect them to services. We have a Capital Area New Mariners Project; Host congregation for Tea and talk, women's time for casual conversation in English; Interfaith ministry with Iraqi community; Various interfaith events with Capital Area Multi-faith Association and Winthrop Area Ministerial association; Various members engaged with events at state house, rallies, testimony, speakers.

Sangerville and Dover-Foxcroft: One member had two Muslim exchange students from Tunisia & Tanzania who came about 2x month to service. We had a service with a speaker come from the Peace Center in Bangor.

Waterville: I said no because as a church we have not specifically selected immigrant justice as an area for action. Individuals in our church are involved in immigrant justice work and keep us informed of our actions. We (I'm one of the "involved" people) I occasionally make an appeal for specific items like furnishings for a refugee family home or to write letters for the pardon of a specific person from our community who was deported.

Bangor: Members participate in regular Tuesday civic actions at US senators offices on variety of issues including immigration. Sponsored recent informational forum with PICA members who recently returned from a Sister City delegation to El Salvador about forced migration. One of our members is chair of the Education Committee for the Maine Multicultural Center. One of our members is an active member of Dignity for All that educates people about the plight of Asylum Seekers in Central America, specifically Bangor's Sister City in El Salvador. We are members of Faith Linking in Action, an area group that supports the issues of "the other" in the greater Bangor area.

Damariscotta: Our Fellowship is a member of an interfaith local group called People United Against Racism that holds a weekly vigil every Monday. The focus is racism, and Immigrant Justice issues are sometimes highlighted.

First Parish in Portland: First Parish is a member of the Maine Immigrant's Rights Coalition and the Welcoming Immigrant Network. Rev. Christina regularly advocates on behalf of immigrant issues. In addition, the Friends of Safe Harbor Subcommittee of the Faith in Action Committee has ongoing projects that support and bridge the divide with immigrants in downtown Portland. We have held numerous fundraisers, paid legal fees for immigrants filing asylum, held clothing drives and hosted an Arabic school. Most recently, we partnered with a group of African women from In Her Presence to provide a cooking and nutrition class during 8 months. The congregation supported this effort with various collections of food, clothing, toiletries and cleaning supplies.

Castine: We are part of a fledgling interfaith effort in Castine to reach out to families in detention on our southern border.

Brunswick: Our Working for Justice Steering Group initiated a community wide conversation about the need for temporary housing for asylum seekers waiting for shelter beds in Portland in Fall 2016 out of which grew the Midcoast New Mainers Support Group (MNMSG), an interfaith (seven congregations represented plus unaffiliated individuals) group working to welcome and settle new Mainers in Midcoast Maine. Partnering with Opportunity Alliance in Portland and Bath General Assistance, MNMSG has initiated and overseen the settlement in permanent housing of a Burkina-Faso family in Bath and provides ongoing support of children in camp; transportation needs; mother in school, etc. We have joined with others to find housing and support three additional asylum seeker families settling in Topsham/Bath area. Members of our group worked with a local movement to get the Brunswick Town Council to declare Brunswick a "welcoming city".

Ellsworth: We organize three resource "fairs" for Haitian blueberry rakers in August of each summer. We solicit donations from many other churches, groups and people, supply warm clothing, bedding, toiletries and groceries for the rakers, who often arrive empty-handed and do not get paid for a while after they arrive. Last year, our Peace and Social Action Committee donated \$50 to this cause; this year we had a plate split for the rakers' fairs that yielded over \$400. We have also been working with a number of other churches in the Ellsworth area to sponsor a refugee family; however, Catholic Charities told us last fall that it was highly unlikely a refugee family would be located in our area.

Kennebunk: There are some individuals who work with immigrant families in Biddeford, but not with a particular group. The focus of our congregation has been on racism and on food security, though there is plenty of caring and interest in immigrant justice.

All respondents (UNANIMOUS YES) see value in establishing a UU Statewide immigrant justice movement; are interested in learning more about what other UUs and immigrant justice organizations are doing to address the immigrant and refugee crisis; are interested in identifying direct response actions to educate and inspire their congregation and/or individual UUs about critical immigrant and refugee needs in Maine.