

## CHURCH TO PROVIDE SANCTUARY

By Laurie Hamame

lhamame@aimmediamidwest.com

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Undocumented immigrants seeking safe haven will soon be able to find it inside the First Church in Oberlin.

Parishioners voted unanimously on Sunday to join more than 1,100 sacred places across the nation in providing sanctuary to those sought by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. That doesn't mean First Church is ready to provide shelter just yet, said Pastor David Hill.

"We do not have things in place to do it today, right now," he said. "We're not ready yet. We would not be ready if someone called us tomorrow but we've committed ourselves to doing that and taking the steps to be ready for it."

The church won't be ready to open its doors until the end of September. In the meantime, there's an embargo on taking anyone into sanctuary for a practical, logistical reason, Hill said. Preparation will begin this summer.

The resolution adopted by First Church members outlines the following steps: An ad hoc sanctuary committee will be appointed by the church's executive council. The committee will form an ecumenical multi-faith community coordinating committee to support the sanctuary program and invitations will be extended to churches and other organizations in Oberlin and Lorain County. **Peace Community Church, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, the Oberlin Friends Meeting, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Christ Episcopal Church, the Oberlin College Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, the Oberlin College Multicultural Center, and the Lorain Ohio Immigrant Rights Association** have already expressed interest in collaboration.

- Officers and team leaders will select a media spokesperson and coordinate food, shopping, laundry, children's activities, medical services, legal services, and companionship.
- A sanctuary fund will be established. Donations will be used to create a space within the church facility where people seeking sanctuary can be comfortably housed.
- The committee will be responsible for identifying people seeking sanctuary and assuring that the process for obtaining U.S. legal status has begun."