



***For Immediate Release***

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# **SAINT PETER'S CHURCH DECLARES ITSELF A SANCTUARY CONGREGATION**

**New York, NY** – On Sunday, June 11, 2017 the congregation of Saint Peter's Church, a member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, declared Saint Peter's Church a Sanctuary Congregation ready to help protect refugees and undocumented people from arrest and deportation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers (ICE) in partnership with organizations like Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, The New Sanctuary Coalition, The New York Immigration Coalition, New York Legal Aid Society, the ELCA's AMMPARO program, & Sion Iglesia Luterana.

The specific measures to be taken by the people of Saint Peter's Church are as follows:

- To provide short term respite sanctuary during immediate crisis;
- To train in and participate in accompaniment programs;
- To host immigration consultations with legal professionals for immigrants;
- To encourage participation in Jericho Walks around Federal Plaza;
- To reach out to nearby immigrant congregations and communities;
- To create and distribute "Know Your Rights Cards" to undocumented persons;
- To network with other Sanctuary Congregations to share support and information;
- To participate in the ELCA's AAMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunity) program for unaccompanied minors.

The declaration of Sanctuary is an ancient custom of the church which calls for the church to be a safe place for those escaping persecution. During World War II, one in six Lutherans in the world were refugees or displaced persons. In the United States, Lutherans, and the Lutheran Church, through the participation of 6,000 congregations, resettled 57,000 people. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, Lutheran congregations sponsored over 50,000 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Scripture is very clear on the subject of sanctuary. See Leviticus 19:33-34: "When the alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."