



Missouri Mid-South Conference United Church of Christ

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Uniting Congregations for Ministry and Mission in Missouri, Arkansas, and Memphis, Tennessee

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Testimonies of Immigration Justice Ministries in MMS Churches

I. First Congregational, UCC, Memphis, TN — Rev. Dr. Cheryl Cornish, Pastor

First Congregational UCC in Memphis is providing space and support for the Mariposas Collective. This Collective travels to the Memphis bus station 4 times daily to meet immigrants who are leaving detention in Texas. The immigrants come through Memphis on their way to other destinations, awaiting hearings. They often arrive hungry and thirsty, with dirty clothes and no basic hygiene supplies. Collective workers provide water, food, diapers, health supplies, and guidance for individuals who have little money and need help navigating the bus system to their destination with limited language skills and familiarity with US geography. Approximately 35,000 folks have been served since November.

II. Kirkwood, UCC, Kirkwood, MO — Rev. Betsy Happel, Pastor

KUCC is responding in several ways:

-Supporting Alex Garcia, who is in sanctuary at Christ Church UCC. Most recently, we held a postcard campaign urging Rep Lacy Clay to continue to push "Alex's Law" HR3750.

-KUCC declared itself a Sanctuary Church in May of 2018. No one has asked for sanctuary at KUCC for over a year, so now we are researching sponsorship of asylum-seeker/s. This would involve providing a safe place for asylum-seekers to live while waiting for their court hearing.

-Some of our members, myself included, volunteer for the Interfaith Committee on Latin America (IFCLA) Accompaniment Program, accompanying immigrants to their ICE check-ins each month.

-KUCC has supported organizations providing food & other services to immigrants passing through. We have sent financial support to Annunciation House. Last year we wrote letters of support to the LGBTQ immigrants at Mariposas Sin Fronteras, a safe place for this community seeking refuge from dangerous threats in their home countries.

III. Christ UCC, Maplewood — Rev. Rebecca Turner, Pastor

Christ Church Maplewood made 154 contacts (phone calls, emails, and postcards) to state senators regarding a proposed bill and a proposed resolution. Both would have been harmful to immigrants; neither was passed. Members of our team met with Congressman Lacy Clay, Jr five times, for a total of 25 contacts. A petition to Clay collected over 1,000 signatures. We recently sent over 300 postcards to Rep. Clay to encourage him to get the private bill heard in committee. We have held two vigils with a total of 215 present.

Church members accompanied 39 immigrants to their ICE or ISAP check-ins. A legal clinic was held in our church for 19 immigrant families seeking asylum; 8 church members donated their time; 19 attorneys were present. One member donated 48 hours to offering translations services for Spanish-speaking immigrants at a healthcare center.

Alex Garcia has lived in sanctuary at Christ Church for 2 years. When Alex's wife and five children had been commuting 3 hours one way each weekend to be with him, we provided money for gasoline and food for the weekends, as well as emergency car repair. In March, the family moved to Maplewood to be closer. We assisted with the move, provided a house adjacent to the church, helped with school enrolment, helped with expenses until Carly found a job, paid the utilities, and purchased school

supplies. We helped pay the transportation for Carly to go to DC to advocate for her husband in Congress.

Christ Church Maplewood hosted 2 press conferences, attended an Op-Ed training, held 2 films series on immigration, doubled the size of our immigration justice team, and supported the work of 5 immigrant organization partners.

IV. Samuel, UCC Clayton (St. Louis) Rev. Jeff Groene, Pastor

For the past two weeks, the children's Sunday School classes at Samuel United Church of Christ have been collecting supplies to send to Eagle Pass, Texas via the Relay of Kindness. You may have heard of it, here's the link:

<https://relayofkindness.blogspot.com/p/the-relay.html?m=1>

On our Facebook page you can find pictures of the youth and their families putting together hygiene kits and packing up the boxes for their journey south. <https://m.facebook.com/UCCSamuel/>

We also wrote a couple letters and drew pictures for congress that I am dropping in the mail tomorrow.

Thankful for your work,

*Melissa Harlow
Children, Youth and Family Outreach Minister
Samuel United Church of Christ*