

A Statement from the First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills in Support of the Undocumented

“You know what it’s like to be a stranger; you were strangers in Egypt.

--Exodus 23:9 (The Message)

“We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

--Elie Wiesel

Our faith is a faith of wanderers. Abraham and Sarah were nomads, yet God blessed them and made of them a great nation. Mary and Joseph were homeless tourists who no one would take in, and later were refugees in Egypt, a strange land where no one spoke their language or worshipped their God. Yet, through them, the Light entered the world. Even Jesus himself spent most of his life without a home to call his own, lamenting that “foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lie down and rest,” (Matthew 8:20), and living off the compassion of his friends.

With this history behind us, and with our present congregation’s own deep joy in community built out of many languages and many cultures, the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills feels compelled to declare our solidarity with, and our commitment to, those who fled to this country seeking refuge, not unlike Mary and Joseph thousands of years before. We make this stand now because recent government actions have created a climate of fear, exposing all immigrants—both documented and undocumented, and even those who were born here to immigrant parents—to systemic marginalization, deportation, and random acts of hatred and violence.

As a diverse community in one of the most diverse places in the world—Queens, NY—we pledge to offer solace and comfort to our undocumented neighbors in the form of tangible services, such as referrals to legal assistance or long-term sanctuary options; and identifying those who can offer this advice to them in their own language. We also commit to pray for all those in this city and this country for whom the current climate has become so hostile and fearful, and stand with those who challenge the current status quo. Lastly, as a congregation, we will thoughtfully and prayerfully remain open to other ways of supporting our neighbors, confident that as God calls on us to do more, the Spirit will make a way to do so.

--The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills

adopted March 21, 2017

Teaching Elder Jack Lohr, Pastor Ruling Elder Nadina Grants, Clerk