

Immigrant Housing Project

FAQ

Immigration Overview

Terminology

People come to the United States from other countries for a variety of reasons and may be allowed to remain in this country based on their immigration status.

Refugees are people who have fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution there. They seek safety outside their country because their own government cannot or will not protect them from those dangers. Refugees have a right to international protection.*

Asylum-seekers are people who have left their country because they have been subjected to persecution and serious human rights violations. They have applied for refugee status in another country and await a decision from immigration court. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.*

Some people who come to the United States cannot be classified as *refugees* or *asylum-seekers*, either because their requests for such status have not yet been adjudicated or because their cases do not satisfy the legal criteria. They are generally referred to as **migrants**. Because they may be in danger if they return home, they are entitled to have their human rights protected in this country.*

For the purposes of this document, we use the term *immigrant* to include any persons who have come to the United States, regardless of their immigration status.

* Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>

Minnesota's Immigrant Population

Minnesota is a state of immigrants! Minnesota's first large groups of immigrants arrived from Europe, primarily Norway, Sweden, Ireland, and Germany. Today, the largest groups of immigrants are from Mexico, Somalia, Cambodia, Laos, Ethiopia, China, Vietnam, Thailand (include Hmong), Korea, Liberia, and Kenya.

- Minnesota's immigrants include citizens, non-citizen, students, workers, refugees, and undocumented individuals who have fled their homes due to violence, abuse and unsafe living conditions in their home countries.
- In the last three decades, Minnesota has welcomed more than 100,000 refugees from over 100 countries.
- Among the refugee population, Hmong refugees began arriving in Minnesota in the mid-1970s, when the country of Laos was taken over by communist powers. Somali refugees began arriving in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Somali government resulted in extreme violence.

As of 2019, Minnesota has the largest Somali population in the United States and the second largest Hmong population (next to California).

Minnesota's **newest** immigrant community comes from Burma. More than 17,000 Karen people live in Minnesota, making it the largest Karen community in the country. Minnesota is also home to more than 2,000 refugees from other ethnic groups in Burma, including Karenni and Mon.

While the majority of Minnesota's immigrants have called the Twin Cities their home, we are seeing a trend of immigrants re-locating to greater Minnesota.

Sources: Minnesota COMPASS; Karen Organization of Minnesota (KOM)

Questions

Describe the project the Immigrant Support Team is proposing.

We propose converting Room 99, which is off the short hallway leading to the gym, into an apartment that would serve the temporary housing needs of newcomers to our community while they seek a permanent home.

What is the overall objective of taking on this immigrant housing project?

The Immigrant Support Team hopes to provide opportunities for the entire Gloria Dei community to be engaged in living out our mission of welcome and our commitment to compassion, advocacy and service, and justice. Our objective is expressed in three areas: the renovated space, engagement, and impact.

Space In response to the biblical call for hospitality, the IST proposes repurposing an underutilized room at the church as a self-contained apartment that offers welcome, safety, and stability for immigrants seeking a better life. Many of the guests we hope to serve have experienced trauma, and their journey to Minnesota has been long and difficult. The renovation will allow them privacy and security while being a place of welcome. The 425-square-foot apartment will include areas for relaxing, studying, and sleeping, as well as a kitchen, bathroom with shower, and laundry facilities to meet a guest's daily living needs.

Engagement In the spirit of accompaniment, we recognize the mutuality of being in relationship with newcomers and learning from each other. Providing temporary housing for immigrants offers Gloria Dei multiple ways for members to be engaged. Volunteers will set up the apartment, welcome guests, offer social connections, and help connect guests to area resources and services (such as legal assistance, health care, groceries, and transportation). The IST will also provide ongoing communications and educational and advocacy opportunities around immigration justice, state and national policies impacting newcomers, the immigrant experience, and ways members can participate.

Impact The Room 99 project will galvanize Gloria Dei’s human, financial, and physical resources around a growing community need. We can be a model for other faith communities and support the broader efforts of the Lutheran church. Equal to the scale of this undertaking is the transformative power this effort promises—for the guests who experience true hospitality; for the members whose faith will be deepened by the relationships; and for our congregation taking this bold step together, trusting in God’s abiding love as we build a more just world.

How did this project come about? How does it align with our commitment as a sanctuary-supporting congregation?

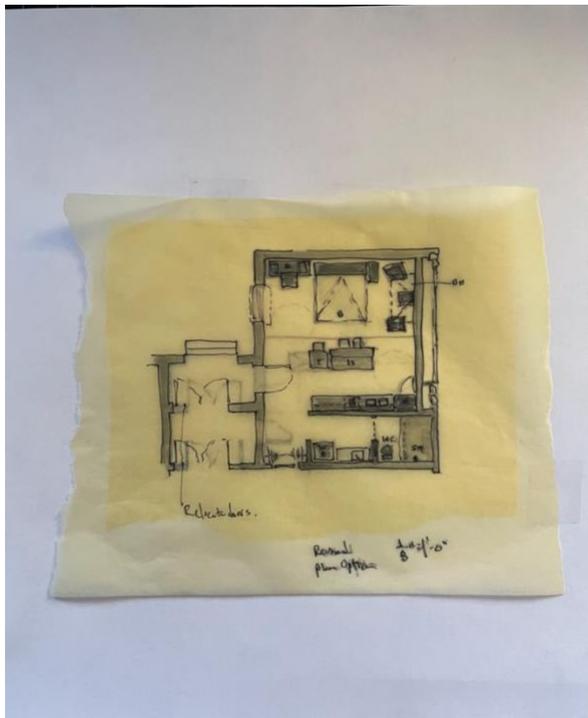
Several factors influenced the idea of creating temporary housing at Gloria Dei.

- Since its inception, the Immigrant Support Team has sought opportunities to be in direct relationship with immigrants coming to Minnesota. From our past experience in resettling families, as well as our global partnerships in Guatemala and Tanzania, we recognize the value of broad participation on the part of the congregation and the rich experience it affords.
- This housing project represents a tangible way for Gloria Dei to live out its mission of welcome and supports the work of the broader church.
 - In 2019, the ELCA became a sanctuary denomination, affirming our intention to be public and vocal about this work.
 - The Saint Paul Area Synod (SPAS) is one of five ELCA sanctuary synods that work with immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The synod has also nurtured robust international partnerships in Guatemala and Tanzania, through which members of synod congregations gain deeper understanding of threats driving migration to the U.S., and Gloria Dei participates in both. In 2020, the synod assembly passed a Resolution to Stand with Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers.
- The project is a direct response to what members expressed at the September 2020 adult forum, namely, a desire to find new, creative ways of using our facility in meeting community needs, and aligns with the core intention of the Rise, O Church! (ROC) Campaign to open our doors to the broader community and extend our welcome to all.
- The recent shift in local and national priorities around racial and immigrant justice has been a call for us as Christians to respond with hospitality.

How has the idea for this project been developed?

Since the Immigrant Support Team first proposed this project to the pastoral staff in the summer of 2020, with their encouragement we have taken further steps. Recognizing alignment with the ROC project, we have formed a team that includes an architect-member who also serves on the ROC project team, the ROC project manager, a member who has offered to be involved in the renovation of the space, a lawyer-member who works with immigrants, and others who have extensive experience with resettling refugee families and volunteer recruitment and coordination.

The architect has prepared a preliminary sketch.



The team has met with Langer, the general contractor for the ROC project, to get a cost estimate and to identify efficiencies with the construction work related to the sanctuary renewal. In December, the team met with the Congregation Council and received support for continuing to develop the idea. We introduced the project at the January 10 forum and invited the congregation to two information sessions, on January 28 and February 9, where the project was presented in greater detail. We created this FAQ and have made it available to the congregation.

What does the Immigrant Support Team do?

As with the ELCA and its predecessor bodies, Gloria Dei has a long commitment of welcoming immigrants as neighbors and members. In the 1950s, the church resettled twenty Hungarian refugees. During Clifford Nelson's tenure as senior pastor at Gloria Dei, the church helped nine refugees—a family of five, a married couple, and two single men. They were housed in a Minneapolis motel until permanent housing was located. The church helped them with food and clothing, find employment, and adjust to life in the U.S. From the 1980s to early 2000s we resettled eight other refugee families, one from Africa and seven from Southeast Asia.

Following the 2016 presidential election, the Sanctuary Support Team was formed in response to the new administration's policies on immigrants. The team was charged with studying immigration issues and recommending ways Gloria Dei might support immigrants at risk of detention and deportation. That work led to the vote for Gloria Dei to become a sanctuary-supporting congregation in 2017. We've helped to support an asylum-seeking family housed at St. Paul Reformation Lutheran Church. We've led forums and hosted special events to educate members on current immigration issues, most recently in October 2020. Members of the team participate in several local and ELCA-related groups working on behalf of immigrants. Claire Hoyum, chair of the team, and Lenore Franzen, a member of the team, coordinate a juvenile immigration court observation program for the Minneapolis Area Synod and Saint Paul Area Synod. We are also helping to build a network of welcoming congregations in Minnesota and the Dakotas that support immigrants in their communities. In 2020 we changed our name to Immigrant Support Team, to reflect the broader work we're engaged in.

What is the need for temporary housing for immigrants in our community?

The first and greatest need most immigrants have is for housing—a safe, stable place where they can stay while they seek a permanent home. Many immigrants have left difficult, often dangerous situations. Their journey to Minnesota has likely taken months. Their arrival often represents the beginning of a better life, and stable housing is key to that process. This project will largely focus on serving as a safety net for Minnesota's newest immigrants as their access to resources is the most limited. Immigrants often face barriers in securing safe housing due to a

lack of affordable housing, restrictions on applying for public benefits, immigration status, exploitation by landlords, and discrimination in renting and buying homes.

The Twin Cities has about 20 sanctuary congregations (faith communities who provide temporary housing for immigrants). Six are in St. Paul. When a guest moves on from a sanctuary congregation, that space is quickly filled with another individual or family. Alejandra Chavez, who coordinates ISALAH's Sanctuary Network, doesn't maintain a waiting list because the need for housing is immediate. For example, persons in an immigration detention center can't be released until they can demonstrate that they have a place to live. If temporary housing isn't available or accessible, immigrants must turn to other options, but those options are limited.

Besides sanctuary congregations, there are three group housing options for immigrants in St. Paul:

- Sarah's Oasis houses 32 women from around the world who are homeless, without resources, and healing from trauma; always at capacity
- Jonathan House is the only Twin Cities housing program specifically for asylum seekers; 2 locations (Richfield and St. Paul), with fewer than 10 beds total; always filled
- Casa Guadalupana, in the rectory of St. Matthew's Catholic Church on the west side, serves about 8 immigrants with housing and support services; always at capacity

Note: Provincial House is a proposed Project Home emergency shelter on the campus adjacent to St. Catherine University. The capacity is for 22 to 30 families, with an average stay of 43 days. Families are waitlisted and referred by Ramsey County. The guests we hope to house would not be eligible for government benefits or referral through the county.

How many immigrants need temporary housing in St. Paul?

Immigrants who arrive in the Twin Cities have faced many challenges. Besides the trauma they've experienced, they are fearful of a system and enforcement practices that have criminalized them and threatened to deport them. It is difficult to estimate the number of

immigrants needing temporary housing in St. Paul because when existing housing options are at capacity, immigrants must find other informal options that can't necessarily be tracked. Faith communities represent one of the few safe, stable places to stay. Five sanctuary congregations in St. Paul currently provide temporary housing to about 15 immigrants. (The sixth sanctuary congregation has paused housing immigrants during the pandemic.) The group housing options listed above accommodate about 50 immigrants.

Gloria Dei participates in organizations—through the ELCA, the interfaith community, and the immigrant advocacy community—that publish frequent requests for congregations to host immigrants in immediate need of housing or to develop the capability to do so in the future. While the exact number of immigrants in need of housing at any one time in the Twin Cities is unknown, the need is frequent, usually urgent, and expected to increase under the new presidential administration's less restrictive immigration policies. This proposed apartment project would position Gloria Dei to respond.

Is what we're proposing legal? Are we planning to house immigrants who shouldn't be here?

Providing transitional housing to immigrants is legal. The right to safe and secure housing is a human right. For centuries, churches have served as places of sanctuary to those seeking protection from a variety of threats. The ELCA and its predecessor bodies have been involved in the sanctuary movement for many years, and some of the Twin Cities sanctuary congregations are ELCA churches.

In 2016, in response to the Trump administration's restrictive immigration policies, there was an immediate need for true sanctuary housing for immigrants—housing that offered safety and protection from ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and the threat of deportation. What we're seeing with other sanctuary congregations, and what we believe is a trend that will continue under a new administration, is a sustained need for temporary housing, even after immigrants have been granted documented status. In fact, that need is expected to increase as immigration restrictions are eased under the new administration. Should the need for true sanctuary arise in coming years so that the proposed apartment might be requested as a place of

true sanctuary, steps to address that need would be brought to the congregation for discussion and approval.

Why is Room 99 the best option for creating an apartment within our building?

Several considerations went into our decision to focus on Room 99. Its ground-floor location next to an exterior entrance allows for separate, private access to the apartment, ensuring safety for guests as well as maintaining building security. The existing space already has plumbing, a large closet that can easily convert to a bathroom with shower and laundry, and a north-facing window that brings in natural light. The room's size (425 square feet, comparable to a typical apartment in larger cities) will allow for a space that is welcoming and comfortable, even for a small family. Most recently Room 99 has been used for storage, and we are exploring other space within the building to store those items. There is a small room across the hall just before entering the gym that could serve as additional storage for our guests, should they need it.

Across the hall from Room 99 are two small storage rooms and two single-stall bathrooms. We considered renovating this space to include showers and laundry but felt that a self-contained apartment would provide better privacy and security for the guest and our building.

What are the city housing codes for how churches use their space? What is the maximum number of occupants that can occupy this space?

The team has sought legal counsel to ensure we understand and plan to meet all code requirements. This answer will be updated as we learn more.

What kind of upgrades would be involved? Have you addressed sound proofing, given the space's proximity to the gym?

We would install a door into the existing vestibule area that would provide a private entrance for the guest, separating the apartment from the rest of the church building to ensure security for both guest and host. We would convert the already plumbed closet into a bathroom with shower,* toilet, vanity/sink, and laundry facilities. The existing sink area in the main space would convert to a small kitchen, with efficiency-sized electric appliances, table, and seating. Guests will be responsible for preparing their own meals. We would upgrade HVAC to meet

current code requirements. We would install a king-sized Murphy bed and fold-away bunk beds, and we would equip the rest of the living space with casual seating, a desk, and a bookshelf.

The existing walls are 6” concrete masonry blocks, with a double wall on the hallway side. The closet and bathroom walls will absorb additional sound from outside the apartment. The north wall is an exterior wall (block and brick) and part of the vestibule from the gym, again block. The wood door behind the closet would be the only area of concern for transmitting sound and we will address that as part of the renovation.

*If the apartment is vacant, the entire space, including the shower, would be available for other uses by the church. Project Home guests will have access to showers and laundry in their new location, Provincial House.

Who will stay in the apartment?

The immigrants we hope to house have unique challenges. They have faced disruption and trauma; they may be separated from family; their journey to Minnesota may have been long and difficult. These vulnerabilities make the safety of a welcoming congregation and a secure living space especially helpful—beyond what might be offered in an apartment complex.

Our intention is to respond to the needs of immigrants in our community who seek temporary housing, and would not be able to find housing, but for our service to them. What we’ve learned from our network of organizations and individuals working on behalf of immigrants is that because situations vary, we must be flexible. Some faith communities house single men, some a family. Some guests may work during the day; others may be looking for work and may need help accessing services until they are employed.

Our guest may be a parent with young children who was previously living with relatives, but who, not having been listed on the lease, has been forced to move out with no other housing options available. They face multiple barriers in finding housing because they are ineligible to apply for housing assistance due to their immigration status, they do not speak English, and they cannot navigate the system independently. Or, we may have a new immigrant guest who is

fleeing from violence by their abuser and there is no space for them at a domestic abuse shelter. Due to added housing limitations as a result of the pandemic, they do not have a safe place to call home. If a guest has particular concerns for personal safety, we will consider that carefully to make sure we can meet those needs before we agree to house that person.

We will be looking for guests who we believe will benefit from an active, inclusive, welcoming congregation like ours, as well as help us grow as a congregation, both spiritually and in our calling to serve.

We aren't aware of any other sanctuary congregation in St. Paul having to ask a guest to leave because the guest has not met commitments to the congregation. If that situation arose, we would ensure that the guest would have a safe place to relocate.

How will guests be selected?

There are several ways in which a prospective guest would be referred to Gloria Dei. In addition to the ISALAH Sanctuary Network, there are interfaith coalitions on immigrant justice in the Twin Cities that represent faith communities providing temporary housing. Global Missions staff at the ELCA churchwide office have strong connections with organizations and individuals working on behalf of immigrants and are also a source of referrals.

Regardless of the referral source, the Immigrant Support Team, in consultation with the pastors, will make the final decision as to who stays in the apartment. One of our members, Monica Dooner Lindgren, is a lawyer who has extensive experience working with Minnesota's low-income immigrant communities. She is developing a screening and intake process that will help us determine if guest and host (Gloria Dei) are a good match. This process will call for key information from the applicant to measure the level of their needs and whether the Gloria Dei apartment and community is the best environment to meet those needs. The screening and intake process will also include consulting with the referral source to gain a deeper understanding of the applicant's situation. The intent is not to duplicate efforts, but to work closely with the referral source to jointly meet the needs of the applicant.

What liabilities and legal obligations will Gloria Dei take on as a host, and how will those issues be addressed?

The team has consulted with an attorney with expertise in landlord-tenant law, who has advised us that the relationship between Gloria Dei and the guest(s) housed in the apartment would not meet Minnesota's criteria for a landlord-tenant relationship and would therefore not subject the congregation to legal requirements for landlords. It is important to note that, regardless of legal requirements to do so, we will establish protocols that protect the safety, privacy, and dignity of our guests.

We have also consulted with Gloria Dei's insurance broker to confirm that our church is sufficiently covered, through our general liability coverage and existing risk management practices, against financial liabilities.

Will we have a formal agreement with our guests that offers the church legal protection?

Yes. In keeping with the intent of this ministry as one of hospitality and welcome, we are calling the agreement a Covenant. Similar to a lease, the covenant will serve as a formal agreement between guest and host. It will spell out the responsibilities and expectations of both guest and host and specify a timeframe for their stay, which we will modify as needed for each guest, based on their particular circumstances. The agreement is modeled after a covenant that other faith communities who provide temporary housing for immigrants have developed.

How long will guests stay?

A guest's stay will vary depending on the circumstances. One guest may be waiting to become eligible to receive a work permit, which requires stable and safe housing for a year or more.

Another guest may have just been released from immigration detention. A family seeking asylum must wait for their final hearing in court, and the scheduling of those hearings has been delayed due to COVID. Because the time period will vary, a covenant with a guest will specify a certain length of stay, with the understanding that the length of stay can be renegotiated if the guest is unable to secure permanent housing at that point or has located permanent housing sooner than expected.

A project such as this will require a lot of volunteers. Explain the various roles, any risks to volunteers, and to what degree they will interact with guests. What if a guest has needs beyond the abilities of member volunteers?

This ministry is intended to be one of hospitality and accompaniment. Volunteers will befriend guests, interact socially with them, and invite their participation in church activities to the degree the guests wish to be involved. Volunteers will also help guests gain access to the community services they need. As part of the intake process for each guest, we will identify their needs and recruit volunteers to help connect the guests with the services available to fulfill those needs. For example, guests who have just entered the country may need to learn English, and we would look to volunteers to help them enroll in available classes; help them learn the public transit system so they can get to class; etc. We do not anticipate that our volunteers will personally meet all the guests' needs.

The intake process and the covenant with each guest will ensure that responsibilities and expectations are clear and agreed. Volunteers in this ministry and guests will be trained in and subject to Gloria Dei's policies and practices regarding respectful treatment and safety. We are working with our insurance broker to ensure the volunteer activities within this ministry will be covered.

Instead of renovating space within our building, why don't we rent an apartment for immigrants who need temporary housing, or support other similar efforts in the area?

Developing an apartment within Gloria Dei's building will allow us as a congregation to be in more direct relationship with the guests we host. Offering hospitality through temporary housing within our building offers safety and personal support to guests while bringing the needs of immigrants into our facility, where our members can be more intimately aware of them and engaged in addressing them.

What liabilities will Gloria Dei take on as a host and how will those issues be addressed?

The team has sought legal counsel to ensure we understand what those liabilities are and have protocols in place to address them. We have also consulted with Gloria Dei's insurance broker to

confirm that our church is sufficiently covered against any liabilities. This answer will be updated as we learn more.

Who will provide oversight for the project and ongoing needs?

The Immigrant Support Team. We have a network of organizations, services, and individuals that we can draw on, as well as a pool of member volunteers interested in supporting immigrants. The IST will provide regular, ongoing communication with the pastors, Council, and congregation.

What will it cost to convert Room 99 into an apartment? Are we seeking funding as part of the 2021 budget?

Langer, the general contractor for ROC, is developing an estimate for renovation costs. Member Teresa Sterns, project manager for ROC, has indicated there would be cost efficiencies if we used the same construction company and did the work at the same time. Preliminary numbers indicate the renovation of the space would cost around \$60,000. This would include asbestos removal, heat-recovery, a through-wall split system, plumbing, two egress doors, electrical modifications, and a kitchen. An additional \$30,000 would furnish and equip the space. This includes bathroom fixtures, kitchen appliances, furniture, and lighting.

Based on other faith communities' experience, we estimate ongoing expenses of about \$1,000 a month, which would cover a phone, clothing and shoes, groceries, public transportation, social/recreation, legal assistance (if not *pro bono*), remittances, and health care beyond what free clinics provide.

There are currently no funds in the proposed 2021 budget earmarked for this project.

How will we pay for this project?

Gloria Dei's 2021 budget shows a \$114,000 operations fund surplus, and it designates 45 percent of that surplus to support investments in outreach and congregational ministry. There are also capital funds carried over from 2020. The IST plans to submit a request for funds to cover the renovation. We will have a fundraiser for the remaining \$30,000 needed to finish and furnish the

space. We've already received \$10,000 in pledges. We also plan to work with suppliers of fixtures and furniture to identify any opportunities for *pro bono* or discounted services.

This project represents a significant investment, given that the apartment would serve one individual or family at a time. What does the team expect the benefits of this investment to be for the community and for Gloria Dei?

Every capital investment requires a large initial investment that, over time, pays off in service and hospitality. Here is a link to a powerful example of the impact providing housing to immigrants had on one congregation: https://broadview.org/windermere-united-refugee-sanctuary/?fbclid=IwAR2xLpb_u20XHUsCijOgK2lP6k3-71T7vR9TDG-V5vG0af-chepWY6ZOLaE

The benefits to Gloria and the community include:

- deepening our engagement as a welcoming church
- responding to the biblical call for hospitality
- being good stewards of the church building
- galvanizing our human and financial resources for the greater good
- growing in our faith
- responding to community need
- being transformed by the relationships we have with newcomers to our community (similar to our experience with our global partners in Guatemala and Tanzania)
- being public about our stand on social and immigration justice issues
- expanding our ecumenical partnerships with other faith communities providing housing for immigrants as we do God's work together and build a more just world

What does temporary housing look like at other faith communities, and has that guided the team's plans for Room 99?

The temporary housing other faith communities provide varies. One church had an existing two-bedroom apartment as part of the facility that now houses an asylum-seeking family. One is using part of a rectory. A few have modified classrooms as sleeping areas and given guests access to the church kitchen and a common bathroom. Some have added a shower. Not all offer

laundry facilities but use volunteers to cover that need. Guests come and go at their discretion. They value the privacy and safety of being housed within a church and haven't expressed a need for green space beyond outdoor space that anyone can access.

What models and resources around immigrant housing already exist that the Immigrant Support Team is using for this project?

The Twin Cities has a number of organizations serving immigrants. Since our inception in 2017, we've been building a network of connections and resources that have been particularly helpful as we consider this housing project. The network includes:

- Advocates for Human Rights works to change systems and conditions that cause human rights abuses. They provide *pro bono* legal assistance for immigrants, and tap into Gloria Dei and other faith communities to provide short-term housing for out-state immigrants coming for their hearing at the Federal courthouse in Bloomington
- St. Paul Interfaith Coalition on Immigrant Justice (representatives from sanctuary congregations, with links to other similar coalitions around the Twin Cities; building a resource list of immigrant-related organizations and services)—very rich, substantive conversations around ongoing housing needs for newcomers to our community.
- AMMPARO (Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities) Leadership Team (local group of an ELCA initiative around immigrant support; Guardian Angels court observation program, which Claire Hoyum and Lenore Franzen coordinate for both synods; developing and equipping roster of welcoming congregations in 3-state area)
- ICOM (work with immigrants in detention; monthly vigils at Federal courthouse/Zoom; education and advocacy) Daniel Romero, who leads ICOM, offered two forums at Gloria Dei in 2019.
- Church World Services Toolkit for Congregations Faithfully Accompanying People Seeking Asylum
https://pda.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/toolkit_for_congregations_faithfully_accompanying_people_seeking_asylum.pdf

Can Gloria Dei invite a representative from one of the existing sanctuary congregations who would share their experience housing immigrants as to what's worked and what challenges they've encountered?

As planning continues, the Immigration Support Team expects to host additional informational sessions. We will invite representatives from other congregations to participate in an upcoming session and share their experiences.

What are the next steps? How long will the project take?

In the coming weeks we will be identifying city code requirements; drafting a covenant; creating a screening/intake process; and identifying volunteer roles and members interested in filling those roles, as well as finding storage for items currently in Room 99. We will give an update on the project to Council on March 16. We will continue to update the FAQ document as needed.

At the May congregational meeting, we will ask for a vote to approve the project. If it passes, we will continue to put structures in place that will equip us as hosts. The proposed renovation would take about 30 days and would begin in the fall, when it is COVID safe and when construction on the sanctuary begins.

If, in the future, the need for such housing changes, how else can this renovated space be used?

With a kitchen, as well as a shower and laundry within the unit, this space could be used for small group meetings (Gloria Dei and external), daylong retreats, Project Home families and other visiting guests, as well as an additional classroom.

Why is Gloria Dei considering a housing project now when we're already planning a major renovation of the sanctuary?

Two clear messages came out of last September's forum, when we gathered as a congregation to gauge interest in resuming the ROC campaign. The first was a resounding yes to proceed with the sanctuary renewal project. The second message was a desire for a stronger, more direct outreach component to the ROC campaign, in light of the pandemic and racial issues our country was, and still is, reckoning with. As one member said, "We are living in a new world, and things

should change to reflect these differences—around economic and racial justice, around being a church and a country of immigrants, around outreach to our neighbors and living out the Gospel of love.” This housing project, while independent of ROC, is closely aligned with the core intention of ROC to open our doors to the broader community and extend our welcome to all.

Will there be other opportunities for the congregation to discuss the project?

The IST provided two information sessions for the congregation, on January 28 and February 9, at which the housing project was explained in detail and the team responded to questions. This FAQ document is posted on the Gloria Dei website and will be updated as needed. As noted above, we expect to host additional information sessions as the planning proceeds.

If there are questions or concerns that weren’t addressed during those sessions or aren’t reflected in this FAQ document, please direct them to Claire Hoyum (clairehoyum@comcast.net) or Lenore Franzen (lfranz18@gmail.com).

Here is a link to a story detailing one church’s experience: https://broadview.org/windermere-united-refugee-sanctuary/?fbclid=IwAR2xLpb_u20XHUsCijOgK2IP6k3-71T7vR9TDG-V5vG0af-chepWY6ZOLaE

Note: A few questions raised during the information sessions are beyond the scope of the Immigrant Support Team and this proposal (namely, the process for funding projects like this and addressing the church’s current debt load) and should be directed to the Council.