

## CHURCHES LAUNCH 'NEW SANCTUARY' MOVEMENT FOR IMMIGRANTS

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CHICAGO A coalition of faith-based groups on Wednesday (May 9) launched a "New Sanctuary Movement" to provide shelter for illegal immigrants and boost support for immigration reform.

By connecting immigrants who are facing deportation orders with host sanctuaries, the movement aims to provide a broad range of support for these families. Unlike their counterparts in the original 1980s Sanctuary Movement, many of today's immigrants have a physical shelter but still need financial, legal and spiritual support.

Immigration activists and faith leaders celebrated the launch with events in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, San Diego and Seattle.

The movement is uniting Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim traditions. Rabbi Laurie Coskey, an organizer and executive director of the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice in San Diego, said that immigration reform has a key appeal with faith-based groups. "Every tradition has the message about how we treat human beings because the spark of God lives in every person," Coskey said in an interview.

She added that the cause especially resonates with Jews, explaining that the Judaism "really clearly states the command for Jews to interact with the world in an activist way because of our experience of being strangers."

The movement currently includes two families in New York City, two in Los Angeles and one in San Diego that have been connected with "sanctuary churches." Churches in 28 cities nationwide are in the process of being linked with illegal immigrant families, Coskey said.

The movement was partly inspired by illegal immigrant Elvira Arellano, who has emerged as the poster child for immigration reform activists. Arellano has sought refuge in the Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago with her son Saul since August 2006, when she was ordered to report for deportation.

Officials from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency have pledged to deport Arellano at some point in the future. Coskey said that it would be up to individual churches whether to bar the door if immigration officials came to deport immigrants harbored within a sanctuary.