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# The Weekly RAG

*For the United Ministries of the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown and Donaldina Cameron House*

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## Sunday, January 21, 2018

We welcome to the pulpit today our own  
Rene Fong.

## Happy Birthdays

### January

Sabrina Shin  
Clinton Huey  
Sharlene Hall  
Jerrick Woo  
May Ho  
Rene Fong  
Jean Chin  
Richard Jann  
Alisa Ho  
Irene Ng  
Laurene Chan

## Online Giving

Some great news for our congregation. You can now make a gift online to support your church community! Click on the "Give Now" button at the bottom of the PCC home page [www.pccsf.org](http://www.pccsf.org). You select how you would like your gift to be made and which worshipping community you would like it to go toward. You can add a note if you want to dedicate the gift to someone special. For questions about how to give, see Tad Hopp. For questions about your gift, see Dave Soohoo or Winchell Quock.

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## Our Theme & Readings

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### January

21 Jonah 3: 1-5, 10  
Psalm 62: 5-12  
1 Corinthians 7: 29-31  
Mark 1: 14-20  
28 Deuteronomy 18: 15-20  
Psalm 111  
1 Corinthians 8: 1-13  
Mark 1: 21-28

## Tea Time for January/February

The Deacons would like to give special thanks to the following people for taking the time to provide treats for Tea Time for everyone to enjoy.

1/21 Clinton Huey  
1/28 Belinda Hum  
2/4 Sabbath Sunday  
2/11 Jean Chin & Richard Jann  
2/18 Birthday Cake  
2/25 Kathy Tong & Brad Woo

If you're interested in providing treats, please sign up with Mary Wong Leong or on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall. If you'd like to make a monetary donation towards tea time, see Dayton Leong. We also are in need of volunteers to help clean up after Tea Time. If you are available to help, please stay after Tea Time.

## Minute for Mission

Near the end of a long corridor lined with classrooms and elaborate hand-painted murals of biblical scenes sits a small kitchen. The sign on the refrigerator says, "This is Leonor's refrigerator. Please do NOT help yourself to her food." Standing next to the refrigerator in Forest Hill Presbyterian Church, Leonor Garcia proudly shows off a physical manifestation of the outpouring of love and support she has received from the congregation. She is the sole provider for four children (ages 4—19) as she serves out a yet-to-be-determined span of self-incarceration. Forest Hill has granted the undocumented Mexican immigrant sanctuary. Leonor and her five siblings were orphaned at a young age. Her father died suddenly and her mother was forced to move to Mexico City for work. Leonor and her siblings stayed with her grandmother in the Mexican state of Michoacán. Even though her grandmother cared for the children, Leonor struggled without her mother.

When Leonor turned 15, her grandmother asked Leonor's uncle to take care of her in the United States. The move was a positive one for her — she found work that she liked, she fell in love, and she started a family. However, like many undocumented people in the United States, Leonor fell victim to a fraudulent notario who promised she could fix Leonor's immigration status. Instead, the notario filed incorrectly and left Leonor and her husband with deportation orders. With a month-old infant, Leonor and her husband decided to move and eventually landed in Akron, Ohio. As they tried to make a life for themselves, Leonor had two more children, and the young couple purchased a house.

But in the process of purchasing the home, Leonor and her family were found by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Her husband was deported, and Leonor was given a stay of removal to care for her three small children, who, because they were born here, are U.S. citizens. She began reporting to ICE every three months, then every six months, then once a year. But at her appointment in 2017, everything changed. The ICE officer asked her to report again in six months. Leonor dreaded the appointment — for good reason.

At her next appointment, the ICE agent ordered her to return in mid-September with a plane ticket back to Mexico. They placed an ankle bracelet on her. She knew as she left the appointment that ICE was going to send her back to Mexico even though she had built a life in the United States for the past 25 years.

[Forest Hill Church](#) is a committed anchor of its community that sits among the lush, tree-lined streets of Cleveland Heights 10 miles from the busy center of Cleveland. The suburban congregation has a history of missional engagement and outreach. The population of the area is almost equally African-American and Caucasian.

Absent a significant migrant population in the community, the congregation nevertheless heard God's call to migrant welcoming ministries.

With no existing relationships, in early 2017 For-

est Hill explored its call and formed a subcommittee of its Justice and Mission Ministry to look at what it would mean to become a sanctuary church.

As partnerships were formed and the planning continued, a local activist organization introduced the congregation to Leonor — still living in Akron, which has a larger immigrant population.

Leonor's story drove the Forest Hill session to action.

Staff who manage the building and those who would provide for her security and comfort acted quickly. A shower was installed and volunteers organized. With a remarkable effort to make it happen, Leonor settled into an upstairs room — without her children and miles from her Akron home — just days before she was to be deported. Leonor and Forest Hill Church receive support from the local interfaith community. So many congregations and organizations have called the church offices to offer encouragement that the church's pastor, John Lentz, cannot recount them all. Cleveland Heights' mayor, council members and chief of police are among the many local leaders who have contacted the church to voice their support.

Leonor, an established community advocate in Akron, has been deeply involved in advocating for migrant rights and helping migrants connect with services and other organizations. She knew sanctuary was an option to keep her family and other families together. When Leonor ponders life in Mexico, she can't imagine taking her children there — a country her children do not know and she has not seen in 25 years.

Instead, she has chosen to fight to stay with her family and enter sanctuary. Leonor describes her decision as heart-wrenching. As she walked into the church building knowing she could not leave and her family could not live with her there, she said she "felt as if my skin was peeled away."

She's lost so much — caring for and being with her family on a daily basis, helping the Akron community she loves, and her own freedom of movement — but she considers her decision a

form of resistance. Leonor is clear in her belief that U.S. immigration laws and enforcement are unfair, splitting up families, forcing them to live in constant fear and pushing them to the margins. Her choice is about standing up to that system. She asks that others do the same. And Leonor feels the support — from her family, from the church and even from strangers.

Though she cannot know her future, Leonor intends to remain in the U.S. with her family and to maintain the relationships she now has with the members of Forest Hill Church. Needing to remain active in her new church home, she took on the work of regularly cleaning the church sanctuary, saying, “The sanctuary is mine; it is mine to clean. And I have told them that when I leave the church, I will continue to clean and take care of the sanctuary.”

This work of resistance and justice-seeking happens in community. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) stated in the resolution *Reaffirming the Ministry of Sanctuary by Congregations* that the PC(USA) “reaffirms the ethical responsibility of congregations and governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to defend the unity and integrity of families when an immigrant mother or father is threatened with deportation.” Religious people of all backgrounds across the country are offering sanctuary. More than 100 cases are known to exist. Although there is no legal basis for immigration agents to respect sanctuary, a current policy allows it to be an effective witness.

ICE spokesperson Khaalid Walls, states, “[Current ICE policy](#) directs agency personnel to avoid conducting enforcement activities at sensitive locations unless they have prior approval from an appropriate supervisory official or in the event of exigent circumstances. The locations specified in the guidance include schools, places of worship and hospitals.”