

**Lutheran Church of the Incarnation Council Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2019, 6:30 pm**

Council Member Roster: Carol Huegeli (2020), David Hartley (2022), Paul Kolarik (2021), Becky Linvill (2022), Pr. Dan Smith, Lori Martin Bodhiprasart (2021), Craig Copelan (2021), Jeff de Ropp (2020), Karl Larson (2022),

Absent: David Kukis (2020) due to work demands

A. Introduction- Carol Huegeli 10 min.

I Welcome – President Huegeli

II Devotion- Pastors Report – Dan shared a nice update with special attention to upcoming worship services and changes that will be implemented after the first of the year with Rooted services being held during second service on the second and 4th Sundays.

Christmas info:

- o 12/22, 10:30am – Rooted (w/ children's program)
- o 12/22 – Smith Holiday Open House (w/ 50th anniversary celebration for my parents)
- o 12/24 – Christmas Eve Worship at 5:00pm and 7:00pm
- o 12/29 – Lessons & Carols; Vern Holmes preaching – **worship is at 9:30am on 12/29!!!**

Dan also noted that a new members program that will be oriented toward those seeking to find out more about Christianity. The program called Luminaria will begin in February on Sunday mornings and tentatively follow this timeline.

Luminaria at LCI

Date Small Group Topic/Activity Notes

Feb. 2 Inquirer's Class

Feb. 9 Inquirer's Class

Feb. 16 Inquirer's Class ch. 1 – *Baptized we Live (BWL)*, chapter 1 – A New Way of Seeing

Feb. 23 (Transfiguration Sunday)

Rite of Welcome – during 10:30 service

Mar. 1 Teaching (in small groups): *BWL* chapter 2 – A Way of Hearing

Mar. 8 Teaching: *BWL*, ch. 2 – a Way of Teaching

Mar. 15 Teaching: *BWL*, ch. 3 – a Way of Following

Mar. 22 **Rite of Enrollment – 10:30 service**

Mar. 22 Teaching: Holy Baptism

Mar. 29 Teaching: Holy Communion

April 5 Palm Sunday – no class

April 11 – Easter Vigil

Baptism/Affirmation of Baptism at Easter Vigil (7:00pm)

Easter 12 Easter Sunday – no class

April 19 Spiritual gifts

April 26 Ministry in daily life

May 3 **Affirmation of Christian Vocation – 10:30 service**

Dan noted that he and Paul Kolarik attended the Conference Gathering on Nov. 17 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Sacramento. They "preselected" nominees for Bishop for at next year's election based on criteria of what kind of a bishop we need. Those people will be encouraged to fill out paperwork making themselves available for election as Bishop. The candidates included David Vasquez-Levy, President of Pacific School of Religion; Mark Price, Pastor of St. Paul's, Lodi; Kathryn Gulbranson and Katy Grindberg, both Assistants to the Bishop and Cindy Beck, Interim Pastor at Bethel, Sacramento. The Synod Assembly to elect a new bishop **May 1-3, 2020 in Fresno**. Pastor Dan noted that we will need one lay male and one lay female representative to attend and that we should consider whether you'd like to go.

There was some discussion of this topic and a question regarding whether the council could review the proposed candidates and select a candidate that met the needs of the church. Dan noted that the selection by tradition was the choice of the attendees.

III Weather Reports

B. Approval of November meeting minutes- Craig 5 min.

- Attachment: Brainstorming Task Force Definition information item discussed Nov 12
 - Approval of minutes October 22, budget discussion with council
 - Approval of minutes Annual Congregational meeting November 24, 2019
- Action required Motion to approve minutes

Motion #2019/20-019 Copelan/deRopp M/S/C

C. Improving Cong. Health - Review of Congregational input Carol, Paul 30 minutes – see attached list of congregational suggestions in the Annual meeting minutes.

The council chose three of the suggestions relating to Applegate and working cooperatively with other churches within the community to create more effective ministries. The Applegate topic will be incorporated into the discussions surrounding the renewal of the Applegate lease during 2020. Council members who were interested in working on this included Dan, Jeff, Paul and Lori. The work on these topics was prioritized as being appropriate for the next year.

D. Treasurers Report – Dave Kukis 10 min – Dave was not able to participate this evening so the December Treasurers report will be advanced to the January meeting and included with the January report.

E. Council Members Action Items 30 min

1. Presidents Report- Huegli
2. Committee, Task Force reports (Information only may be a verbal report)
 - a. Personnel- Jeff
 - Discussion of proposed Safe Church policy
- The council discussed and approved a new Safe Church policy

Motion #2019/20-020 Kolarik/Martin-Bodhiprasart M/S/C

- b. Attachments: Draft Policy, Employee App, Volunteer App
- c. SRTF- Craig

- d. Social Justice Committee- Becky
 - Attachments: SJ Minutes, ORR Op-Ed, Background email
- e. Education Committee- David
- f. Endowment Committee- Paul
- g. Congregational Health - Paul

E. Reminders

- Closers

- o December – Craig, Karl Dec 29
- o January- Karl, Craig January 5
- o February- Jeff
- o March – Lori
- o April- Becky
- o May- Carol
- o June- Beck

Pastor's Report to Council

Lutheran Church of the Incarnation

Pastor Dan Smith

December 11, 2019

Action Items:

- As reported first in June, **Luminaria** is going forward as a program at LCI to welcome new members. I am working with our staff, w/ Learning, Worship & Music and some other lay leaders on this. It will begin in February with an Inquirer's Class, followed by small groups, who will study and pray together to prepare for Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism at an **Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 11 at 7:00pm** (this will be new for us). **The program as a whole supports our missional goals of becoming more prayerful in our life together and of seeking congregational health** by welcoming and growing new disciples of Jesus. So **I am seeking the Council's blessing – and commitment – to take this on.** That means you will be supportive of the process and willing to consider volunteering to help, or to find volunteers to help. I am currently looking for volunteers to fill roles such as program coordinator, small group leaders and sponsors (see below for more info). There needs to be solid lay leadership for this to work. It will start small and hopefully grow into a healthy practice of welcoming – and *growing* disciples, rather than merely worrying about numbers, programs and administration. Let me know if you have questions or are interested in helping with leadership.

Information Items:

- ***Rooted*** has been a success: we have had a little over 70 participants on average, with up to 21 kids (average app. 14) which is very encouraging. We plan to have *Rooted* twice a month starting in January, the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month.
- Christmas info:
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 - 12/29 – Lessons & Carols; Vern Holmes preaching – **worship is at 9:30am on 12/29!!! Please make a note of this!!!**

In the Wider Church:

- Paul Kolarik and I attended the Conference Gathering on Nov. 17 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Sacramento. We "preselected" nominees for Bishop for next year's election based on criteria of what kind of a bishop we need. Those people will be encouraged to fill out paperwork making themselves available for election as Bishop. The candidates included David Vasquez-Levy, President of Pacific School of Religion; Mark Price, Pastor of St. Paul's, Lodi; Kathryn Gulbranson and Katy Grindberg, both Assistants to the Bishop and Cindy Beck, Interim Pastor at Bethel, Sacramento. The Synod Assembly to elect a new bishop **May 1-3, 2020 in Fresno.** We will need one lay male and one lay female; consider whether you'd like to go.

Luminaria – info

DRAFT: Luminaria at LCI

Date	Small Group Topic/Activity	Notes
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Luminaria training

1. Learn *lectio divina*: reading Scripture together in a small group.
 - a. Read with an open mind: *tabula rasa*
 - b. *Listen* to words or phrases that jump out: like *speed bumps* in the text
 - c. How does this text meet you in your life? What is God saying to you *through* the text?
2. Roles in Luminaria
 - a. Team Leader: Organizes and coordinates the whole program
 - b. Companion: What does a companion do?
 - i. Walking alongside the lumen
 - ii. Developing a relationship with the lumen
 - iii. Attending classes and liturgical rites
 - iv. Committing to the process
 - v. Reaching out – if they don't show up, are sick, etc.
 - c. Catechist: Teacher for Luminaria sessions. Can be pastor or lay leader
 - d. Small Group Leaders: lead groups of 4-6 companions and lumens

Changes made to ELCA template:

- 1) “RELOG” replaced by “LCI” throughout document.
- 2) In the section *Response to Sexual Abuse* “an official” is replaced by “the President”, i.e the President of LCI.
- 3) In the section *Sexual Offender at LCI* option 1 from the ELCA template was selected.
- 4) Other changes shown by Word track changes feature.

**CHILD AND YOUTH
ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM
FOR
Lutheran Church of the Incarnation**

Adopted Month/Day/Year

CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR Lutheran Church of the Incarnation

Introduction

To help protect children, Lutheran Church of the Incarnation (LCI) has adopted the following Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program. It is important that all LCI paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent sexual abuse against children. The following includes the Purpose and Definitions for these guidelines, the outlines of Protection and Prevention, and an Acknowledgement to be signed by those people working with children.

Purpose

These procedures are designed to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in order to:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.
2. Assist LCI in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth.
3. Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process for paid staff and volunteers.
4. Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of sexual abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.
5. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of sexual abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

Definitions

The following terms used herein and are defined as follows:

1. *Paid Staff*: Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or employee who is paid.
2. *Children/Youth/Minor*: Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
3. *Adult*: Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or as defined by state law.
4. *Volunteer*: Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.

5. *Sexual Abuse*: The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.
6. *Child Emotional Abuse*: Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law.

Protection and Prevention

Volunteer and Employee Screening Procedures

The following screening procedures are to be used with paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All information collected should be maintained in confidence.

1. *Employment Application and Volunteer Application*: Any paid staff and volunteers who will work with a minor must complete the Employment Application and/or the Volunteer Application ([Appendix A](#)). The release statement attached to the Application must be signed by the individual completing the Application to apply for and qualify for service.

Our Employment Application includes questions regarding:

- Current and previous residence addresses.
- Current and previous employment, including addresses, dates, duties, titles, and reasons for leaving.
- Names and addresses of schools attended and degree(s) earned.
- References from previous employers and organizations that serve children.
- ~~Pending criminal charges (where not prohibited by state law).~~
- ~~Criminal history information.~~

Commented [Jd1]: This is prohibited by California state law, but we will access any criminal records via a background search.

Our Volunteer Application includes questions regarding:

- Current address.
- Volunteer experience.
- ~~Criminal history information.~~
- Personal references.

Commented [Jd2]: Will do background check instead.

Applications include a statement, which the applicant should acknowledge in writing, certifying that statements provided in the application are true and complete, and any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of the applicant or for dismissal if he or she is employed. This statement authorizes LCI to contact any individual or organization listed in the application.

2. Review all statements made in the application, paying specific attention to any gaps in time and irregular employment patterns or unexplained absence. Pursue these gaps with employers listed and in a subsequent interview.

3. Conduct interviews, using an interview committee, with qualified applicants.

If detrimental information is uncovered but the applicant remains desirable, discuss this information with the applicant. In the event the applicant is ultimately hired or accepted as a volunteer, document the reasons for overriding the prior information.

~~Whenever possible, LCI will have an associate participate in the interview.~~

4. Contact all listed references for volunteers. Contact each of the volunteer applicant's references and ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. If a response is not received within a reasonable period of time, follow up and keep notes if possible.
5. Contact all listed references and employers for paid staff. Inquire as to the reason the applicant left and ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. If a response is not received within a reasonable period of time, follow up and keep notes if possible.
6. *Criminal Background Check*: LCI will conduct a criminal background check on all paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All criminal background checks will be updated periodically.
7. *Six-Month Rule*: All volunteers will be required to have been a member and active participant at ~~of~~ LCI for six months and have reviewed and signed the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program.

Confidentiality

Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and criminal background check will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above-referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. These materials will be archived.

Supervision Procedures

Unless an extenuating situation exists, LCI:

1. Will have adequate number of screened and trained paid staff or volunteers present at events involving minors. Supervision will increase in proportion to the risk of the activity.
2. Will monitor facilities during activities involving children.
3. Will release minors only to a parent or guardian and utilize sign-in and sign-out sheets, or give a parent the opportunity to sign a waiver at the beginning of each Sunday school year.
4. Will obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, before taking minors on trips and should provide information regarding the trip.
5. Will always have at least three individuals present ~~use two paid staff or volunteers~~ when transporting minors in vehicles.
6. Will require that young children be accompanied to the restroom and the paid staff or volunteer wait outside the facility to escort the child back to the activity. Whenever possible, the escort will be the same sex as the minor.
7. Will encourage minors to use a "buddy system" whenever minors go on trips off of LCI property.
8. Will screen all paid staff and volunteers and approve those individuals in advance for any overnight activities.
9. Will designate a "confidential counselor" to whom any minor can go at any time, without special permission, to discuss any problems he or she is having.

Behavioral Guidelines for LCI's Paid Staff

All volunteers and paid staff will observe the following guidelines:

1. Do not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.
2. To the extent possible, overnight LCI events that are co-educational will have both male and female chaperones.
3. Whenever possible, at least two unrelated paid staff or volunteers will be in the room when minors are present. Doors will be left fully open if one adult needs to leave the room temporarily and during arrival to the class or event before both adults are present. Speaking to a minor or minors one-on-one should be done in public settings where paid staff or volunteers are in sight of other people.
4. Avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.

5. Never engage in physical discipline of a minor. Volunteers and paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse of any kind.
6. If you recognize an inappropriate relationship developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority.
7. If one-on-one pastoral care is necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments.
8. Anyone who observes abuse of a minor will take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and provide assistance. Report any inappropriate conduct to the proper authorities and officials of LCI for handling.

Disqualification

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:

1. Any offense against minors as defined by state law.
2. A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, or family violence.
3. A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.

Sexual Offender at LCI

LCI will not allow a person known to be a sexual offender to remain or become a member of the congregation.

Response to Sexual Abuse

LCI will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of sexual abuse. All accusations of sexual abuse will be taken seriously. It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege sexual abuse and those who have been accused of sexual abuse.

When an allegation is made involving sexual abuse, the person reporting the complaint is to be told about the guidelines and the procedures to be followed. The President of LCI or an

appointed person will begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants. If the President is the individual accused of sexual abuse, then the Vice-President of LCI will conduct the investigation. The investigation will be conducted as follows:

1. Report the incident to appropriate authorities in accordance with the state mandatory reporting laws.
2. Report the matter to LCI's insurance carrier.
3. Cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
4. LCI may suspend (with pay for paid staff) the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.
5. The President of LCI (and legal counsel or other consultants) will then meet with the Council of LCI and present a report on their investigation, which will include findings and recommendations of actions.
6. The President of LCI will meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
7. The President of LCI will meet with the alleged victim, along with his/her parents or guardians, and notify them of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
8. During the investigation, the President shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or legal guardian, and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing.
9. The President of LCI (and legal counsel or other consultants) may meet with the alleged perpetrator, the alleged victim, and any others with knowledge of relevant facts.
10. Communicate with criminal and civil legal counsel of LCI.
11. Communicate with those affected by the ministry of the alleged perpetrator.
12. Hire a consultant or assign a spokesperson to respond to media or prepare a statement for the media if the need shall arise, subject to the approval of LCI's attorney.

Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program Acknowledgment

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with minors. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment. LCI reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this program and to implement those changes with or without notice.

The terms defined herein are defined for the purposes of the program and do not suppose or establish a legal relationship. These terms are not defined for the purposes of creating a legal relationship with the LCI or any related or associated entity and instead are to be used with this document.

I have received a copy of the LCI's Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program. I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the information contained herein. I understand that these policies are the property of ~~the~~ LCI.

Print Name

Signature

Date

**LCI EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION
FOR EMPLOYEES WORKING WITH MINORS**

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

Middle Name: _____

Other Last Names: _____

Date of Birth: _____(month/day/year)

Social Security # _____

Drivers License # _____

State Issued: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Previous Address:

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Current and previous employment

Name of organization: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Dates of employment: _____

Job title: _____

Job duties: _____

Reasons for leaving: _____

Name of organization: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Dates of employment: _____

Job title: _____

Job duties: _____

Reasons for leaving: _____

Name of organization: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Dates of employment: _____

Job title: _____

Job duties: _____

Reasons for leaving: _____

Education

Name of school/college: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Degree earned & date: _____

Name of school/college: _____

Street Address & date: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Degree earned & date: _____

Name of school/college: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Degree earned & date: _____

References from previous organizations and/or schools

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Nature of relationship: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Nature of relationship: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Nature of relationship: _____

I certify that all the above information is accurate and true.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

**LCI VOLUNTEER APPLICATION
FOR THOSE WORKING WITH MINORS**

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

Middle Name: _____

Other Last Names: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Previous volunteer experience

Name of organization: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Beginning and ending dates: _____

Duties: _____

Reasons for leaving: _____

Name of organization: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Beginning and ending dates: _____

Duties: _____

Reasons for leaving: _____

Name of organization: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Beginning and ending dates: _____

Duties: _____

Reasons for leaving: _____

References from previous organizations

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Nature of relationship: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Nature of relationship: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Nature of relationship: _____

I certify that all the above information is accurate and true.

Signature:

Date: _____

Social Justice Committee Minutes

11/19/19 - revised

Attendance: Ellen Kolarik, Lynn Evert, Karen

Hamilton Information Only:

Congregational Budget Meeting: council has confirmed that SJ can make a brief statement regarding our committee's mission and goal with a request for new members. Ellen will speak

Advocacy Resources: Becky Linvil (in absentia) presented the ELCA website which has resources for advocacy. See attachment.

Action Item:

Letter to Support Undocumented Juveniles

LCI added its support to an open letter presented to the Yolo County Board of supervisors and printed in local papers. The letter urges the Yolo county Board of Supervisors to remain faithful to its promise to advocate for a humane placement of the youth at the Woodland Juvenile Detention center after its anticipated closure in January of 2020. The letter also pressures the Office of Refugee Resettlement to shift the money previously spent on detention into mental health service. See attachments

Monthly Ministry Partners

A 2nd revised draft of MMP for 2020 was created. The draft will be finalized after conferring with potential liaison and confirming their availability for the assigned months.

Next Meeting 12/17/19 at 6:00 at the LCI Library

ORR op-ed

From: Kathy Robertson (robertsonkt@sbcglobal.net)

To: stefh2002@yahoo.com

Cc: revbethbanks@gmail.com; p_moore_pickett@yahoo.com; smburns@ieee.org; sharonhale62@gmail.com; karenfriis7354@gmail.com; jeannettehoganx@gmail.com; jvtorres@ucdavis.edu; mesperl@hotmail.com; francesca.wright@gmail.com; desflores5@gmail.com; dlich2263@icloud.com; carina@omsoft.com; alisonmp@gmail.com; pesko@sbcglobal.net; mariagrij@gmail.com; dcervantes@ucdavis.edu; pamela@churchofstmartin.org; sdpadgett@sbcglobal.net; ngtw@cal.net

Date: Wednesday, November 6, 2019, 10:53 AM PST

Good morning,

Attached is the final op-ed and list of signatories sent to local papers this morning. Hopefully it will run Sunday or another day in the next week.

Stefan Harvey, chair of the Immigration Justice Team at the UU Church of Davis, presented a copy to Yolo County supervisors Tuesday during the open comment portion of the meeting.

She urged supervisors to pressure ORR to provide "soft landings" for ORR still jailed in Woodland as the program unwinds — and stressed that money should be spent on mental health services instead of incarceration.

Many thanks to all of you who offered support for this position and for your continued caring for immigrant refugee youth.

Kathy Robertson
Member, Immigration Justice Team, UUCD



Yolo Op-ed.docx
13.8kB

Urge ORR to fund mental health services instead of detention

The 10 signatories listed below urge the Yolo County Board of Supervisors to stick to their promise to advocate for a “soft landing” for immigrant youth detained at juvenile hall before the program closes at the end of January 2020 — and to pressure the Office of Refugee Resettlement to put money spent on detention into mental health services instead.

Supervisors voted Oct. 8 to end the controversial 11-year-old federal program to jail unaccompanied immigrant minors who have been charged or convicted of a crime or are deemed a danger to themselves or others. There were 11 ORR youth at Yolo County Juvenile Hall in mid-October.

Traumatized by violence in their native country — much of it caused by U.S. economics and intervention — the ORR population changed in recent years. Unaccompanied minors in detention today are more likely to suffer from significant mental illness.

The vote for closure occurred after months of debate over how to cope with a more challenging group of children. More money from ORR — upping the budget to \$6.7 million for the year ending Jan. 31, 2020 — helped add staff, bolster training and increase services, but challenges continue. Studies show that detention triggers stress and does further harm.

“I don’t know (that) we are the ideal place for them,” county probation chief Dan Fruchtenicht told supervisors Oct. 8. “I believe the federal government needs to invest in therapeutic facilities. At the end of the day, we are a detention facility.”

When he asked staff whether the program should continue, not a single person recommended it, although they all fear for their jobs, Fruchtenicht said.

As the program unwinds, we urge the Board of Supervisors and the probation chief to pressure ORR to reunite youth with family or sponsors whenever possible, place others in less-restrictive facilities, and avoid any transfers to the only similar program in the country, Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center.

Many members of the signature organizations have volunteered at Juvenile Hall and know the needs of these children. This knowledge propels us to call on local officials to step up and do what is right. As longtime stewards of this ORR program, we call on Yolo County to assume this responsibility.

Finally, given more than a decade of local experience, we urge local supervisors to call on members of Congress who control ORR's purse strings to demand ORR rethink detention for youth with significant mental health issues and allocate increased funding for adequate mental health services in settings other than jails.

We invite the public to reinforce this message by dropping into Rep. John Garamendi's office at 416 G Street in Davis to make the same request.

Immigration Justice Team, Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis
Yolo Interfaith Immigration Network
Yolo County Chapter, ACLU
Yolo People Power
Latino Information and Resource Center
Youth Empowerment Program
Social Justice and Outreach Committee at St. Martin's Episcopal Church
Service and Justice Ministry of Davis United Methodist Church
Lutheran Church of the Incarnation
Desiree Rojas, president, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, AFL-CIO