



The Church as a Sanctuary: Sanctuary Church Endorsement Coverage

What You Need to Know

Plan Before You Open Your Doors

Choosing to become a sanctuary church is a big step that requires thought and careful planning. Before you act, take the time to survey your congregation and make sure your church is adequately prepared. Conduct appropriate training for your congregation and volunteers and provide educational materials regarding the use of the church as a sanctuary.

What's Covered

CIC's Sanctuary Church endorsement offers coverage of up to \$100,000 at an annual cost of \$100. It covers:

- Necessary legal defense costs that may arise from operating as a sanctuary church
- Normal and customary Church operations
- Incidental pastoral counseling in support of providing sanctuary

Overview

At The Church Insurance Companies (CIC) we strive to provide broad, comprehensive property and casualty insurance in a financially responsible way while ever focused on addressing the evolving insurance-related needs facing the Episcopal Church.

At the 79th General Convention, [Resolution 2018-C009, *Becoming A Sanctuary Church*](#), was passed to address the issues around creating a sanctuary Church. The Resolution states that the Church recommends that *its institutions and congregations become places of welcome, refuge, healing, and other forms of material and pastoral support for those targeted for deportation due to immigration status or some perceived status of difference.*

To support the Church's work and to help you understand and navigate the process of establishing a sanctuary church for immigrants seeking protection, we offer the following details on our Sanctuary Church endorsement coverage and safety tips your institution can implement when operating a sanctuary church.

"This coverage allows us to fulfill a promise to be with some of our parishioners who are most at risk: those who are undocumented immigrants and in fear for their lives should they be deported. I am thrilled with this coverage, and at only \$100 per year it shows that Church Insurance has our back. Securing this coverage, like extending sanctuary protection to those who might need it, was one of the easiest decisions our vestry has made."

Mother Paula Jackson, Rector
Church of Our Savior/La Iglesia de Nuestro Salvador
Cincinnati, Ohio

Create a Safety Checklist

Be sure to create a checklist and share it with those who care for and have control of your property. Determine in advance who will be responsible for maintaining and cleaning the space being used. You should train staff and volunteers and make educational material available regarding the use of the church as a sanctuary.

It is important to make sure that those staying at the church understand any restrictions or hazards. It is also advised that you make sure that any undocumented immigrants staying at your church recognize that, although it is unusual, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents could enter a sanctuary church.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I obtain coverage?

If you would like to add a Sanctuary Church endorsement to your existing policy, please contact us at CIACService@cpg.org or call (800) 293-3525.

What isn't covered?

Acts that are against the law are not covered by CIC's General Liability policy.

If you would like additional information regarding risk management and safety, please contact us at CIACService@cpg.org or call (800) 293-3525.

What additional resources are available?

There are many resources that churches can use if they decide to take the step to become a sanctuary. For example, sanctuarynotdeportation.org provides information about sanctuary coalitions and individual cases, as well as information about building a coalition and other toolkits and written resources.

Questions to Ask in Advance

All churches should follow basic safety guidelines, but sanctuary churches should make certain that their property is a safe place to house guests. Consider the following questions, among others:

- Does your church wish to simply supply shelter, or other services, such as meals?
- How many people can your facility hold safely?
- How will you provide security?
- How long will your church serve as a sanctuary?
- Which rooms and buildings on your property will guests be able to access?
- If there is a medical emergency, what procedures will you follow?
- Who will act as the communication liaison between those staying at the church and local authorities?
- Do you have an area for the individual or family to use, including a restroom with a shower? Will you need to convert an area of the church for this purpose? Is the area private? Do locks work, and who will have access to the keys?
- If there are children being housed as part of your sanctuary ministry, is the private area sufficiently child-proofed?
- Are all staircases, sidewalks, and handrails in good repair?
- Is the plumbing in good shape and able to handle increased use? Are the hot water and heating/cooling systems operational and set at a safe threshold?