



# SHARING SCRIPTURE

## Discover • Jesus • Together

### New Covenant Sanctuary

**For use:** June 6 - 12

**Texts:** Jeremiah 31:31–34; Matthew 5:17–28; Hosea 2:18–20; Isaiah 56:6, 7; Hebrews 8:7, 8; Hebrews 10:4; Matthew 27:51

On May 27, Mohamed Soumah could once again feel free to make his regular trips for dialysis treatment without having to worry about being snatched up by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for deportation.

ICE ordered Soumah to leave the country in 2018 due to increasingly strict immigration policies, but not having access to the medical facilities he needs in his native Guinea, deportation would have been a death sentence for him. Fortunately for Soumah, help came from the 14 faith communities of the Washtenaw Congregational Sanctuary of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

He has spent the past two and a half years living in the local Quaker church known as the Ann Arbor Friends Meeting House. He risked arrest every time he went to his dialysis treatments, but local faith leaders accompanied him on these trips.

“We knew that driving from point A to point B was the most vulnerable moment in his sanctuary stay,” says Rev. Deborah Dean-Ware of the Church of the Good Shepherd. “And so we thought at that point that it would be important for us to have clergy who could symbolize the protection of sanctuary in the car and at the clinic.”

The current immigration guidelines now allow Soumah, under ICE supervision, to stay in the U.S. for his treatments. After the May 27 meeting with ICE

officials, Soumah wiped tears away as he and his supporters gathered outside the Friends Meeting House, which has been his sanctuary home, for a celebration filled with festive singing, refreshments and freedom to resume life as a productive member of society. [1]

We often think of sanctuary as merely the room where we gather for worship, but the concept of sanctuary encompasses much more than that. Sanctuary is not only a place of safety—it is a sense of well-being and freedom, whether it's in a physical building or being in the presence of safe people. Just as a wildlife sanctuary provides an environment for endangered species to thrive, God's presence in our lives gives us that same environment in which we can grow in God's grace.

The new covenant sanctuary provides us that sense of safety as we experience the freedom we receive in our relationship with Jesus. Jesus is our new covenant sacrifice, a better sacrifice than the old system of animal offerings. Jesus is our new covenant high priest, a better high priest than the old system of fallible human mediators. In Jesus' presence is safety, security, and assurance of our inclusion in the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus is our new covenant sanctuary, a constant refuge in times of trouble. And in Jesus, we too can wipe away happy tears and celebrate the new life we have received.

~ Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2021/06/immigrant-hiding-in-sanctuary-for-over-two-and-a-half-years-thankful-for-new-freedom.html>

## For Reflection

**Connecting:** Where is your safe, happy place? When you daydream, where does your mind take you? Who is there with you? What is it about that setting that gives you such a sense of joy? Be prepared to share, over online connections if not meeting in person, whatever you feel comfortable revealing with your group.

**Sharing:** When you imagine Jesus ministering in the heavenly sanctuary, what do you see?

1. Jesus is standing in front of the Ten Commandment tablets of stone, wearing the Old Testament-style high priestly robes, complete with a turban and the Urim and Thummim breastpiece
2. Every time Jesus addresses one of my sins, a drop of His blood emerges from the wound in His hand to cover my transgression
3. A menacing-looking God is sitting on a massive throne, with Jesus pleading my case
4. The members of the Trinity are hanging out together, enjoying a heavenly beverage and joyfully absolving the guilt of those who boldly approach the throne of grace
5. When Jesus looks up my case on the heavenly database, the word "Forgiven" is stamped over my name
6. Other:

**Applying:** Is your church's sanctuary—your worship center—a safe place for all who enter? Are there some who may feel uncomfortable there? What can

you do to ensure that your church is truly a sanctuary of peace and safety for all?

**Valuing:** Do you feel safe in your current living situation? If so, take a moment and praise the Lord for God's providence in your life. If not, what do you need to change your circumstances? Is there anyone you can turn to for help? Is there something you can do? Pray for wisdom in approaching this situation safely.

## Other Helpful Resources

Creative Ministry's website equips you with friendship evangelism, small group, community outreach, and healing ministry tools right at your fingertips. Our website also features Adventist research conducted by Monte Sahlin, as well as Sharing Scripture archives, ScripShots, and more. And if you're tired of staring at a screen, digital files are available for download as PDFs and to print.

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Three decades ago, we created this resource for small groups and Sabbath school classes, and it continues to bless so many people worldwide. Thank you for your continued interest in these biblical themes and what they mean to your life and those people with whom you share it.

Paul Richardson  
Executive Director

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