

HIAS Refugee Shabbat 2026

First, I want to invite you all to the after Kiddush Talk:

Welcome Sayed Ihsan, JFCS East Bay staff member and refugee from Afghanistan

Welcome Veronica Granillo, a member of the board of JFCS East Bay and a member of the Public Policy and Advocacy Council. Veronica is an attorney with the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, where she supports refugees and immigrants going through the asylum process.

She will be in conversation with our own Howard Davis who served as an Immigration Judge from 2022 to the end of 2025.

Rabbi Alan Berkowitz will update us on the work of 'food pods' -- groups of people who commit to a once-a-week provisioning of food for immigrants under attack.

Now, the Drash. I am focusing on Kedoshim:

א וַיִּדְבֹּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר.

ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֶת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם--**קְדוּשִׁים תְּהִיוּ**:

כִּי **קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי** יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: Be kedoshim; for I the LORD your God, am kadosh.

KADASH: Distinctive, set apart, held, cherished, and with the exception of **Hakadosh Baruch Hu** / The Holy One Blessed Be The Holy One, impermanent. Kedushah is what we make of it.

- **Kiddush Hashem** / Sanctification of God's Name
- **Lashon Hakodesh** / The Holy Tongue
- **Kaddish Yatom** / The Mourners' Prayer
 - **Chatzi** Kaddish
 - Kaddish **Shalem**
 - Kaddish **d'Rabbanan**
 - Kaddish - **Titkabal**
- **Kidushin** / Betrothal
- Ruach **Hakodesh** / Holy Spirit
- **Kiddush** / Sanctification over wine

- Chevra **Kadisha** / Burial Society
- Aron **Kodesh** / Holy Ark
- **Kiddush Levana** / Sanctification of the New Moon
- **Kedusha** / Prayer during the repetition of the Amidah
- Beit **HaMikdash** / The Holy Temple

Kehilat Kodesh קהילת קודש / Sacred Community. Bingo.

I grew up in Los Angeles in the embrace of Holocaust survivors and witnesses. They were in my family, my teachers, and the parents of my friends. Right up to and including Ben Stern z”l. I have on occasion married them and all too often buried them.

I have led six educational tours to Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Germany. And through it all I am fascinated by those rare and beautiful human beings, not Jewish, who nevertheless saved Jews and other targets of extreme ethnonationalism, virulent racism, and white supremacist ideology.

And so often they came from **Kehilot Kodesh** קהילות קודש / Sacred Communities, often small, often maligned.

In the Netherlands there were the **Dutch Orthodox Reformed**, they had an important role in the Dutch resistance movement. And non-consensual sect of Protestantism - the **Derbists**.

The Albanian tradition of *Besa*—a sacred pledge of honor—driven by both Muslim and Catholic communities, resulted in the protection of nearly all Jewish citizens and refugees in Albania. The only country to have more Jews after the war than before it: 200 to 1000.

In southern France some five thousand Jews were helped, were sheltered, were escorted to safety by some five thousand Protestant Christians of the area of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon.

Most and indeed virtually all of the people of the area of Le Chambon considered themselves committed Christians and most of them were the descendants of the Huguenots hunted by the Catholic Church and the Kings of France

Pierre Sauvage, but a baby when sheltered in Le Chambon, writes: “As elsewhere, women played a key role in rescue. It was often women who were faced with the first all-important decisions as to whether or not to take a stranger into their kitchens and into

their homes, a stranger whose presence could imperil the lives of their families. Certainly, the women of Le Chambon were the backbone of much of what occurred there.”

This was the opposite of selflessness, in Le Chambon and elsewhere. On the contrary a very secure, very anchored sense of self powers the Kehilot Kodesh. People **without** a strong sense of self can be persuaded to do terrible things.

It is a rare righteous Gentile who believes that there was something remarkable about his or her own courage. No heroes here, they were protecting themselves from losing themselves. There is a difference, it would appear, between saying that one is religious, and being a vital member of a Kehilat Kodesh.

On Friday afternoon, January 16, I received an email from Rabbi Jill Jacobs, the CEO of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. The message, via T'ruah, said: “The interfaith network MARCH (Multifaith Anti Racist Change and Healing), is inviting clergy from all over country to come and witness what is happening in Minnesota on Thursday, January 22, and to stay for the massive day of action on Friday January 23.”

I bought the right clothes, packed and went. Minnesota family collected even more outer-wear (did I mention it was -20?). There is no heroism here: I am retired and I have family in Minneapolis—Saint Paul. I wanted to show up for them. The theology of showing up.

I arrived Wednesday evening the 21st and stayed with family who helped prepare me for the frigid weather. The next day I joined a mass of clergy in winter coats heading for the church. Inside there were hundreds of people registering. Clergy dressed by denominations and faiths. Many kipot, keffiyehs, and Buddhist Rakusus. We took breakfast in a large hall and took it all in. Not one of us at our table had any idea how many people heeded the call. Directed to the massive sanctuary I joined a congregation of 700 clergy for a day of learning and preparation. The man on my left, a Buddhist priest, asked me if I knew any Buddhists in the Bay Area. I replied that I knew only a few non-Buddhists. We landed on Norman Fisher.

Renée Nicole Macklin Good, was murdered by ICE on January 7. She was married to Becca, a poet and friend of the MARCH organizers. MARCH worked for a week, and made the call for this event and we arrived a week after that. The organizers,

mostly women, had worked day and night to prepare to teach, feed, and inspire us. So many clergy wanted to take part, they eventually had to halt applications due to logistical concerns.

There were tables filled with winter outer wear for out-of-towners who might not know how to dress for sub-zero temperatures.

Alanna Simone Tyler, Associate Pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church for Justice and Mission, looked out at the packed sanctuary with tears in her eyes. She told us how we were a remedy for her soul after feeling so alone.

Jim Bear Jacobs, an Indigenous leader said ICE has detained people from his community, ICE accused him of being an illegal immigrant. Since he is part Mohican, he asked ICE, would he be sent back to the Hudson River Valley? ICE officers had no idea what he was talking about. This is who our representatives have hired, armed and let loose on our streets.

Another native leader described the work of volunteers who follow ICE and the recorders who film their activities. He predicted that in the days to come they will kill one of them. He was right. Alex Pretti was killed two days later.

A minister spoke of being detained in a black SUV. He was questioned, "Are you afraid?" He said no. The ICE agents told that since he was white, they would not have "fun" with him. It's all about fear. There are many kinds of fear.

Eviction is terrifying. People of color are staying home, not going to work, and are missing paychecks. Like the Bay Area, many live a paycheck away from eviction.

Getting to school is scary for children. Many are staying home, not allowing ICE to follow them home. They have all seen warrantless break-ins and abductions. Another lost year.

Food insecurity is real in targeted communities, not able to leave home to shop, and hunger is terrorizing.

The Trump administration did not know and does not know what a Kehilot Kodesh looks like. It looks like the Twin Cities. One exasperated Minnesotan said, "Haven't these boys ever shoveled snow for a neighbor?"

What must we do? Be a Kehillat Kodesh. Like the Twin Cities and LeChambon.

What did I learn? Don't wait for elected officials. Don't wait for great leaders. Find something you can do and do it.

The luxury of not working with people or groups that you have a single ideological or philosophical difference is over. Sometimes called the Narcissism of Small Differences, a real problem here in the Bay Area.

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“Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them: Be kedoshim; for I the LORD your God am kadosh.”

T'ruah is calling again. Next Thursday, April 30, we will join a regular, weekly interfaith court vigil. We'll meet at the corner of Sansome and Washington Streets at 9AM and then walk over to ICE Office, 630 Sansome St.

Come to the after Kiddush Talk.