

Pastor sees shift from anti-immigrant views: Changing stances as Latino membership rises

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A United Methodist pastor who has sheltered an illegal Mexican immigrant for over six months says he detects changing stances on immigration by some conservative churches as they see growing membership among Latinos.

Walter Coleman, speaking at the University of Chicago on February 20, said Mormon, evangelical and Catholic churches have seen a push for immigration reform as they receive pressure from their Latino congregants. "It's not exactly how you'd expect them to line up on the issue," the pastor said.

Coleman's Adalberto United Methodist Church, in a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood in Chicago, has provided sanctuary to Elvira Arellano and her eight-year-old son, Saul, since she defied deportation orders last August. Arellano's son is a U.S. citizen; she is an undocumented immigrant.

So far immigration officials have allowed Arellano to remain in the church, though they have said they will come at some point in the future. "They may have to break the door down," Coleman said.

The 100-member church has been a platform for immigration reform advocates. In the past six months, about 7,000 supporters of all faiths have visited the church. - *Religion News Service*