

**SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION AND RESPONSE  
FROM THE MATTHEW 25 PRESBYTERY OF THE MIAMI VALLEY  
REGARDING THE IMMIGRATION CRISIS  
April 2025**

*<sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.' – Matthew 25: 37-40*

In a season marked by tension, uncertainty, and concern over our collective moral compass, we are reminded of the profound invitation found in Matthew 25. In this powerful passage, Christ teaches that in extending care and compassion to those who are most vulnerable, the hungry, the thirsty, and the stranger, we are, in truth, extending our love directly to him. For our Presbyterian tradition, with its deep roots in Reformed theology and a longstanding commitment to justice and mercy, this call resonates beyond mere sentiment. It is a profound summons to live out our faith in tangible ways, nurturing a community where love transcends boundaries and privilege.

Today, we recommit to a gospel that sees every immigrant not as an outsider, but as a vital thread in the fabric of our shared humanity. In doing so, we embrace our calling as followers of Christ, not merely offering charity but inviting transformation, propelled by a faith that upholds dignity, shuns discrimination, and celebrates the inclusive love of our Creator.

As we grapple with the treatment of immigrants today, we must remember that every stranger is a bearer of God's image, a living testament to divine creativity and grace. Our Reformed heritage requires us to examine our stewardship of God's world, urging us to challenge structures and attitudes that marginalize our neighbors. To this end, we are providing information for the purpose of preparing congregations with the means of responding to the intrusion of potential government agencies in our churches.

We are committed to fulfill our Matthew 25 call to help and advocate for the poor and disenfranchised among us...and, if need be, respond to our Matthew 28 commission ("go and make disciples of all nations") by helping to leverage relationships that can be made to support our deported brothers and sisters that we do not forget them and lose our obligation to their well-being in their own countries that they can be seeds of transformation in their countries of origin.

**An Immigration Issue That Some Churches May Face**

The Trump Administration in January rescinded a Biden-era policy that protected certain areas — including churches, schools, and hospitals — from immigration enforcement. The former policy ensured that immigrants of all types could access basic services and support without fear — but now ICE agents can take enforcement actions in any of these formerly-protected spaces.

Although the Protected Areas Policy has ended, everyone still has Fourth Amendment

rights against unreasonable searches and seizures, and a Fifth Amendment right to remain silent when confronted by law enforcement.

*Positional Statement – We are not all lawyers,  
and this may be out of our realm of expertise,  
but we are all called by God to reach out to the least of these,  
so, we do not condone what has been happening.*

What follows is information we have gathered that might be helpful to churches that need it.

The National Immigration Law Center (NILC) has produced this helpful analysis of the problem now facing churches and recommends certain action that these newly-vulnerable areas can take. See article: [https://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2025-02.25-Protected-Areas-FactSheet-English .pdf](https://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2025-02.25-Protected-Areas-FactSheet-English.pdf)

Among their suggestions are to:

- 1) Develop a written response policy and preparedness plan
- 2) Designate an authorized person to review warrants & subpoenas
- 3) Mark areas that are private with signs and understand the distinction between public and private areas
- 4) Train non-authorized staff and volunteers on how to respond to ICE requests
- 5) Document all interactions with immigration enforcement and communicate to other churches

NILC recommends that churches “Identify non-public spaces. ICE agents may enter public spaces that are open to congregants but cannot enter private areas such as offices and parsonages without a **JUDICIAL** warrant that states the cause and scope of the search (see below for difference of a judicial warrant and an administrative warrant.) and that states they can do so. Places of worship should clearly delineate what areas are private and/or if areas are only open to the public at certain times.”

Sojourners also has a well-regarded article: <https://sojo.net/articles/news/what-do-if-ice-comes-your-church>.

This article notes some key matters:

- 1) A valid **JUDICIAL** warrant should have the location, address, and name of the person they are seeking; the word ‘warrant;’ and the **FEDERAL judge’s** signature.
- 2) Judicial warrants can be confused with administrative warrants, which are signed by an immigration officer rather than a judge and differ. A **JUDICIAL WARRANT** is an official court order signed by a judge or magistrate that authorizes and states directly the search of private property, seizure, or arrest based on probable cause that a crime is being committed or has been committed.

A **judicial warrant** will:

- 1) Specify the specific address to be searched.

- 2) Specify the time period in which the search must take place.
- 3) Particularly describe the place or person, or both, to be searched and things to be seized.
- 4) Be issued by a court and signed by a Judge or magistrate.

An **ICE administrative warrant** is a document, issued by a federal agency such as Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), purporting to document their authority to arrest a person suspected of violating immigration laws. These administrative documents are not signed by a neutral magistrate or judge but rather an immigration officer like an ICE agent or immigration judge.

**An ICE administrative warrant is NOT a judicial warrant. ICE administrative warrants do not give ICE officials authority to enter a place where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, without consent.**

Churches and individuals can tell ICE they do not have permission to enter the premises if they only have an administrative warrant, but ICE has the right to enter and search if they have a **JUDICIAL WARRANT**. If this happens—state clearly that you do not consent to them entering but do not physically resist.

If ICE officials without a **JUDICIAL WARRANT** have already entered, you can ask them to not disrupt our right to religious assembly and expression and state that you do not consent to a search.

- 3) Harboring: The National Immigration Law Center urges churches to be aware of federal law that makes “harboring” undocumented immigrants a crime if a person knew or should have known an immigrant was in the U.S. without authorization.

What exactly “harboring” means can vary between courts. If something is being hidden from detection that can be considered as “harboring.” For example, courts have said the following: the attempt to warn undocumented individuals of the presence of law enforcement authorities, and the intentional conduct that is knowingly to unlawfully conceal a present immigrant.

Finally, please know that:

- 1) ICE are NOT police and have different (and lesser) rights than police in terms of search and seizure, etc.
- 2) Use the right to remain silent and ask for an attorney.
- 3) ICE does not have the right to enter "private" spaces," without a **JUDICIAL WARRANT** but can enter "public" spaces." Offices and classrooms = private. Parking lots and breezeways = public. Sanctuary = private if the doors are closed but public if the doors are open, so it is important to train your ushers.
- 4) Harboring is against the law, so we do not want to lead them to the safe space that has been identified. It is recommended that we not lead our church attendees to the safe space, so not to be thought of harboring.
- 5) ICE can enter protected spaces if they have a valid **JUDICIAL WARRANT**.
- 6) It's okay to call local law enforcement to check the warrant status and ask ICE officers to wait while the warrant status is being checked. Need to identify persons who can look at

the warrant and make a decision as to what kind of warrant it is; and then need to train ushers to get the person who is able to identify what kind of the warrant this is.

Suggestions for all formally protected areas:

- 1) Develop a written response policy and a Rapid Response Task Force that has been trained in preparedness plans in advance.
- 2) Designate an authorized person to review warrants and subpoenas.
- 3) Understand the distinctions between public and private areas.
- 4) Train non-authorized staff and volunteers on how to respond to ICE requests.
- 5) Document all interactions with immigration enforcement.
- 6) Connect with immigration response networks in your area.
- 7) If ICE comes to your church report the visit to other churches so they can be made aware of the visit and what happened.

*Information provided here is not legal advice  
covering specific situations that might arise.  
Please contact an immigration attorney for such advice.*

Other helpful items:

<https://immigration.ablelaw.org/know-your-rights/>

The Advocate for Basic Legal Equality “Preparing your family for immigration enforcement” post:  
[https://immigration.ablelaw.org/media/ewcldc0g/kyr-immigration-enforcement-final.pdf?fbclid=IwY2xjawIFC6VleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHWI5P7Qmiiy\\_AtNasC5xc9HjvItXnAd6owNJVZcUNiaAgtsPJ63SJ86WPg\\_aem\\_K0JBUqfpSl2V5KVv7h3M4g](https://immigration.ablelaw.org/media/ewcldc0g/kyr-immigration-enforcement-final.pdf?fbclid=IwY2xjawIFC6VleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHWI5P7Qmiiy_AtNasC5xc9HjvItXnAd6owNJVZcUNiaAgtsPJ63SJ86WPg_aem_K0JBUqfpSl2V5KVv7h3M4g)

<https://www.legalaidline.org/media/utvd2vv3/kyr-immigration-enforcement-v8.pdf>

<https://www.legalaidline.org/media/z5foa5zi/kyr-immigration-enforcement-spanish-v5.pdf>