

Faithful Preparedness

Equipping Churches for Witness with
Undocumented Persons

Updated: 1/30/2025



UNITED METHODISTS
OF SUSQUEHANNA & UPPER NEW YORK





CALL TO ACTION

As followers of Jesus Christ and United Methodists, we are called to love and support all people, including undocumented immigrants. The Bible teaches us to welcome the stranger (Matthew 25:35) and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Supporting undocumented immigrants aligns with our United Methodist values of compassion and justice. It reflects our commitment to standing with marginalized communities and advocating for their rights and dignity. By extending our support, we embody the teachings of Christ and contribute to building a more just and compassionate society for all. Your presence can make a difference. By staying calm, documenting actions, and advocating for the dignity and safety of those affected, you can stand as an ally for justice. Together, we can ensure everyone is treated with respect and humanity.

This document is a compilation of materials that seek to resource disciples, servant leaders, and congregations willing and ready to be Christ's hands and feet and make the love of Jesus Christ visible and tangible to undocumented migrants in our communities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The United Methodist Church Position
2. The 5 Most Important Things to Do During a Raid
3. Key Points for Religious Leaders
4. Church Preparations
5. What to Do If ICE Arrives at Your Church
6. Post-Raid Support
7. Pastoral Care & Long-Term Advocacy
8. A Guide for U.S. Citizens - Witnessing an ICE Raid in Public
9. Resources
 - a. UMC Resources
 - b. Crisis Resources
 - c. Religious Resources
 - d. Preparedness Resources
 - e. Know Your Rights Resources
 - f. Finding Legal Help

The United Methodist Church Position

The United Methodist Church upholds the inherent dignity and worth of all people, recognizing them as members of the family of God, regardless of their country of origin. Rooted in a theology of justice, compassion, and hospitality, the Church's position on immigration reflects its commitments to upholding the sanctity of families and advocating for human treatment of immigrants.

As part of this commitment, the UMC strongly opposes immigration policies that separate family members or detain families, particularly children. We believe that such policies cause unnecessary suffering, undermine the foundational role of families in society, and violate principles of human rights and dignity.

Guided by biblical teachings that call for the welcoming of strangers and the pursuit of justice, the United Methodist Church continues to stand in solidarity with immigrant communities, working toward a world where all people can live with dignity, security, and hope.

The Five Most Important Things to Do During a Raid

1. Stay calm and do not run away.
2. You have the right to remain silent. To assert this right, you must state, "I am affirming my right to remain silent." If you do speak, do not lie.
 - a. You are not required to disclose your immigration status or show documents that indicate your country of birth or nationality.
3. Ask to speak with a lawyer.
4. Do NOT sign any documents or answer questions without legal counsel present.
5. Request to see a warrant. ICE agents must provide a warrant signed by a judge to enter private, or non-public, areas.

Key Points for Religious Leaders

- ICE can now enter the public areas of churches without prior approval.
- Churches are no longer considered "sensitive locations."
- Religious leaders should be prepared for potential ICE visits.
- Church leaders can request that ICE agents avoid disrupting religious services, as protected by the First Amendment.
 - "Officer, we respectfully ask that you do not disrupt our religious service, as this is protected under the First Amendment."

- Within 100 miles of any international border, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has the authority to question anyone in a public space, including making traffic stops on public streets, parking lots, or boarding public transit.
 - Individuals are not required to answer any question or consent to a search, but CBP does have the authority to detain someone in order to determine their immigration status if they have a reasonable suspicion that an immigration law has been violated. ***They do not need a warrant to do this.***
 - The 100-mile border zone includes more of New York state as well as a good portion of Pennsylvania. More information and a map of the border zone can be found [here](#).

Church Preparations

1. Post "Know Your Rights" information in multiple languages.
 - a. For posters, infographics, flyers, and more, click [here](#).
 - b. Provide access to "Red Cards" in relevant languages for people to keep on hand and show an officer if needed. Free PDFs for download and printing in 16 languages (including English) are available [here](#).
2. Train staff and volunteers on proper procedures.
 - a. Have key leaders download the *Know Your Rights 4 Immigrants* mobile app. (The app is available only for Apple devices. Click [here](#) for app store link.)
 - b. Designate and train select individuals to serve as contact people if ICE or CBP arrives at the church and requests access to non-public areas.
 - c. Ensure training on the difference between judicial warrants for search or arrest (must be complied with) or administrative warrants for search and arrest (not required to comply with).
 - d. Understand the laws that impact sanctuary congregations: Congregations that choose to designate themselves as "sanctuary congregations" should be aware of potential legal implications, including criminal law against "harboring" of undocumented immigrants, and potential legal protections under the Religious Freedom Reform Act (RFRA).
3. Ensure security cameras are functioning and set to record during the times there are people in the building, if available.
4. Clearly designate private places in the building with clear signage (offices, parsonage) instead of public. Review which areas of a church are open to the public and which are not.
5. Emphasize to all active members, constituents, staff, and volunteers the importance of protecting the identity of undocumented congregants (e.g., not publicly sharing their names or personal details, including social media).
 - a. Sample Announcement: *"If we have undocumented persons in our church, it is important to not share their names or personal details in public ways at this time, including on social media."*

What to Do if ICE Arrives at Your Church

Remember, while churches are no longer officially "protected," many still consider them sacred spaces. Prepare your congregation but avoid creating unnecessary panic. Always prioritize the safety and well-being of all individuals in your care.

1. If possible, do not open doors immediately. ICE needs a judicial warrant to enter non-public areas.
2. Designate an informed and non-anxious person to be the person to interact with ICE agents and review any documents presented.
3. Do not offer ICE extra information that is not requested.
4. Leaders should not physically obstruct ICE agents or break laws, as this could endanger themselves and their congregation.
5. Ask to see credentials and a judicial warrant. A judicial warrant is a court document signed by a judge. Verify the scope and any limitations and that the warrant is signed by a valid authority.
6. If there is no valid warrant, you can refuse entry and say,
 - a. *"As a house of worship, we do not consent to entry without a valid judicial warrant signed by a judge, and we respectfully decline at this time."*
7. If safe, have people record interactions with ICE agents.
8. Document all details of ICE visits or actions.
 - a. Request and note names and badge numbers of all agents present. Confirm whether they are from ICE or another agency.
 - i. Example: *"Officer, please give me your name and badge number and provide me with any warrant you have with you today. And are you with the police or ICE?"*

Post-Raid Support for Churches

- Report the raid to regional advocacy organizations and the episcopal office at
 - Upper New York: 📞 (315) 898-2020
 - Susquehanna: 📞 (717) 766-7441
- Reach out to families impacted for follow-up care.
- Provide access to legal resources and community support.

Pastoral Care and Long-Term Advocacy

1. Some people may be fearful of using public transportation or being in public at this time. Congregations can support by picking up groceries, etc.
2. Support vulnerable church members by offering Virtual Worship, Virtual Small Group, etc.
3. Encourage U.S. citizens to attend ethnic churches in addition to their own.
 - a. Have two to four U.S. citizens attend worship at ethnic churches who can provide visible support and serve as grounded intermediators if ICE arrives. These individuals should be trained in best practices and familiar with proper procedures in the event of a raid.
 - b. **DO THIS ONLY WITH PERMISSION AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE CONGREGATION'S LEADERSHIP.** We do not want to elevate the concern of an ethnic church with unknown faces in their midst.

A Guide for U.S. Citizens - Witnessing an ICE Raid in Public

As a U.S. citizen, you have a unique opportunity to use your privilege to protect the dignity and safety of others during an ICE raid. Follow these steps to ensure you respond effectively and compassionately.

What You Should Do

1. Stay Calm and Observant

- a. Take a deep breath and remain composed. Your calm presence can help de-escalate the tension.

2. Document the Incident (If Safe)

- a. Use your phone to record videos or take notes about what is happening.
 - i. Capture
 1. The time, date, and location.
 2. The behavior of ICE or CBP agents (e.g., tone, use of force, etc.)
 3. If visible, the badge number, agents' names, and vehicle license plates.
 - ii. Focus your documentation on the actions of ICE agents, not on vulnerable individuals.

3. Maintain Physical Boundaries

- a. Interfering physically can escalate the situation or put others in danger. Instead:
 - i. Remain present as a witness and advocate.

4. Inform Affected Individuals of Their Rights

- a. If safe, approach people and calmly say:

- i. “You have the right to remain silent.”
- ii. “Do not sign anything without speaking to a lawyer.”
- iii. “You can refuse to answer questions about your immigration status.”
- b. If you do not speak the affected individual’s first language, consider using phone apps like Google Translate or Apple Translate to assist.
 - i. Use the “speak aloud” functions
 - ii. Consider preloading the English phrase above to prepare for situations.
 - iii. Consider having Red Cards on-hand.

5. Show Support

- a. Stand nearby to show solidarity with the affected individuals.
- b. Be a calming presence and provide emotional reassurance to families or others nearby.

What You Should NOT Do

-  Do **not** assume the role of law enforcement or physically block ICE agents.
-  Do **not** draw unnecessary attention to the individuals being targeted.
-  Do **not** share videos or photos publicly ***without obscuring faces*** to protect vulnerable individuals.

Post-Raid Steps

1. File a Report

- a. Contact local immigrant advocacy organizations or legal aid services to report the details of the raid.
 - i. **Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center:** 📞 (717) 600-8099
 - ii. New York State Immigration Hotline: 📞 1 (800) 566-7636
 - iii. New York/New Jersey Rapid Response Network: 📞 1 (800) 308-0878
 - iv. ACLU of New York Regional Offices
 - v. ACLU of Pennsylvania Chapters
 - vi. Contact the Episcopal Office to report the details of the raid.
 - 1. Upper New York: 📞 (315) 898-2020
 - 2. Susquehanna: 📞 (717) 766-7441

2. Share Your Documentation

- a. Provide your video or notes to trusted legal organizations or immigration advocates.
- b. Avoid posting unverified or sensationalized content on social media.
- c. Avoid posting the photos or names of individuals affected without consent to avoid possible retaliation or online abuse.

3. Follow Up

- a. Support local immigrant rights organizations.
- b. Advocate for fair treatment and just immigration policies in your community.
- c. Support affected family and community members.

I'm a U.S. Citizen. What Should I Do if ICE Questions, Detains, or Arrests Me?

For most U.S. citizens, you are not required to carry proof of citizenship. However, it may be wise to carry a copy of proof of citizenship to quickly end any interaction with immigration enforcement. Carrying original documents such as a birth certificate is not necessary. Instead, holding a passport card, state-issued REAL ID, or having a digital copy of your birth certificate or passport ID page may be a safer and more practical option.

- State clearly: *"I am a U.S. citizen. You do not have the authority to detain or arrest me."*
 - ICE agents have deportation authority over non-citizens only. ICE agents violate the law if they question, detain, or arrest U.S. citizens based solely on a citizen's race.
- Ask for the ICE agent's name and badge number and save that information.
- If you are detained, ask to speak to your lawyer. You have the right to speak to your lawyer.



Resources

UMC Resources

- UMC Know Your Rights (PDFs)
 - [English Version](#)
 - [Spanish Version](#)
- [Church and Society Opposes Mass Deportation](#)
- [Migrant Accompaniment: A Guide to Supporting Migrants and Immigrants Globally](#)
- [Faith & Facts: Immigration in the United States](#)

Crisis Resources

- Find Legal Help: www.aialawyer.org
- Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center: ☎ (717) 600-8099
- New York State Immigration Hotline: ☎ 1 (800) 566-7636
- New York/New Jersey Rapid Response Network: ☎ 1 (800) 308-0878
- Immigrant Defense Project Hotline: ☎ (212) 725-6422
- National Immigration Law Center: www.nilc.org
- Carry a “Know Your Rights” Card and show it if an immigration officer stops you.
 - The card explains that you will remain silent and that you wish to speak with an attorney. You can use the cards found [here](#).

Additional Religious Resources

- [A Guide to Engaging in Respectful Conversations about Immigration](#)
- [Church Advocacy Methods by Matthew 25 SoCal](#)
- [10 Actions You Can Take to Accompany Undocumented Immigrants](#)

Preparedness Resources for Immigrants

- [Family Preparedness Plan](#)
- Immigrant Preparedness Toolkit (PDFs)
 - [English Version](#)
 - [Spanish Version](#)

Know Your Rights Resources

- [What to Do if Immigration Comes to Your Workplace](#)
- ACLU Know Your Rights PDFs (Multiple Languages)
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - [French](#)
 - [Korean](#)

- Penn State Law - Know Your Rights
- CASA - Know Your Rights
- AILA Know Your Rights PDFs
 - In Home
 - In Public
- ACLU of PA – Know Your Rights (Photos & Videos)
- National Immigration Law Center Know Your Rights
- National Immigration Justice Center Know Your Rights

Finding Legal Help

- Immigration Advocates Network
- Immigration Law Help
- IMMI
- American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)
- National Immigration Project
- Informed Immigrant
- Immigration Legal Resource Center Community Resources:
<https://www.ilrc.org/community-resources>
- Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center (PIRC)
- Church World Service Lancaster
- Church World Service (Harrisburg)
- International Resource Center (ISC)