



**WITNESS
FOR JUSTICE**

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Immigration Agents Are Terrorizing Our Cities—Faith Communities Are Pushing Back

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As I gathered with faith leaders alongside Clergy Laity United for Economic Justice at a rally to stop the raids in Los Angeles, we didn't know what we would face when the National Guard approached us. But we marched together with collars and stoles knowing that as faith communities, we had to take a stand. Los Angeles Police created a line. We went peacefully to pray, sing songs, and provide testimony to stop family separation, an image that ended up on CNN. I spoke with several clergy who earlier that week had been shot by rubber bullets or tear gassed as this new reality in our country took shape.

The escalation of force against immigrants from the Border Patrol, Immigration Customs and Enforcement, and the National Guard is the greatest we've seen in modern history. The horrific scenes of masked agents violently throwing people to the ground, breaking car windows, and abducting people from church parking lots in order to separate families have now become daily occurrences.

From Los Angeles to Washington, DC to Chicago and now Charlotte, faith communities are responding with a sense of moral responsibility to take prophetic action to denounce hateful rhetoric and protect their immigrant neighbors at risk of detention, deportation, and family separation. This necessitates a commitment to making houses of worship welcoming places for all people, and feeding, clothing, and providing shelter to our neighbors who may be in danger of deportation.



Last summer at the 2025 UCC General Synod, two resolutions were passed condemning the racist and xenophobic policies fueling this family separation. In one [resolution of witness](#), the committee even condemned the presence of masked ICE agents in our communities as a form of “domestic terrorism,” making national news.

UCC faith communities have joined rapid response networks, assisted with Know Your Rights resources, conducted ICE verification, held vigils, and peacefully and non-violently confronted agents. Recently, Pastor of College Heights Church, a UCC church in San Mateo, California, Rev. Jorge Bautista, was shot with chemical projectiles at a protest against ICE’s presence in Alameda, CA. The ecumenical and interfaith community has shown up to offer pastoral services at Broadview Detention Center in Chicago. Rev. David Black of First Presbyterian Church in Chicago threw his hands out in prayer, and was [shot in the head with a pepper ball](#) by an ICE agent. Weeks later, Rev. Michael Woolf of Lake Street Church of Evanston was arrested with six other faith leaders. While he was being held down on the ground and arrested, he testified, “This is wrong, I’m here because there is torture in that facility, it’s a concentration camp and because my conscience calls me to do this.” As federal agents tried to keep faith leaders from conducting religious ceremonies such as communion outside the detention facility, many UCC faith leaders signed on to a letter calling for humane conditions. On November 12, the [US Catholic bishops approved a “special pastoral message on immigration,”](#) reminding the public of the importance of welcoming our neighbors. Now, as Border Patrol brings their model of terror to Charlotte, faith communities are joining protests and attending training on rapid response.

As the focus on deportations continues, the Trump administration is attacking legal immigration as well, cancelling people’s humanitarian parole and Temporary Protected Status. The refugee resettlement program, which has a decades long history of bipartisan support, is now indefinitely suspended, a policy that has brought

litigation from UCC partner Church World Service [in the Ninth Circuit Court](#). In the latest Presidential Determination for the refugee admissions goal in Fiscal Year 2026, the administration upholds the ban on refugees, but wants to make space for nearly [7,000 White South Africans](#), which will constitute the majority of admissions. This can only be seen as part of a broader White Supremacist agenda.

Last month, [22 UCC conference ministers showed up in DC to offer prayer and take action](#) as part of a campaign called [Love Knows No Borders](#). The Conference Ministers called on an end to these raids and deportations. They asked members of Congress to [pass legislation that would protect houses of worship](#), hospitals, schools, and sensitive locations from such actions. We must continue to follow the lead of people like Rev. Bautista, Rev. Black, and Rev. Woolf, to let our collective moral conscience resound and call upon the community to show up to take prophetic action.

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