

Grounding Theology for Migration Justice



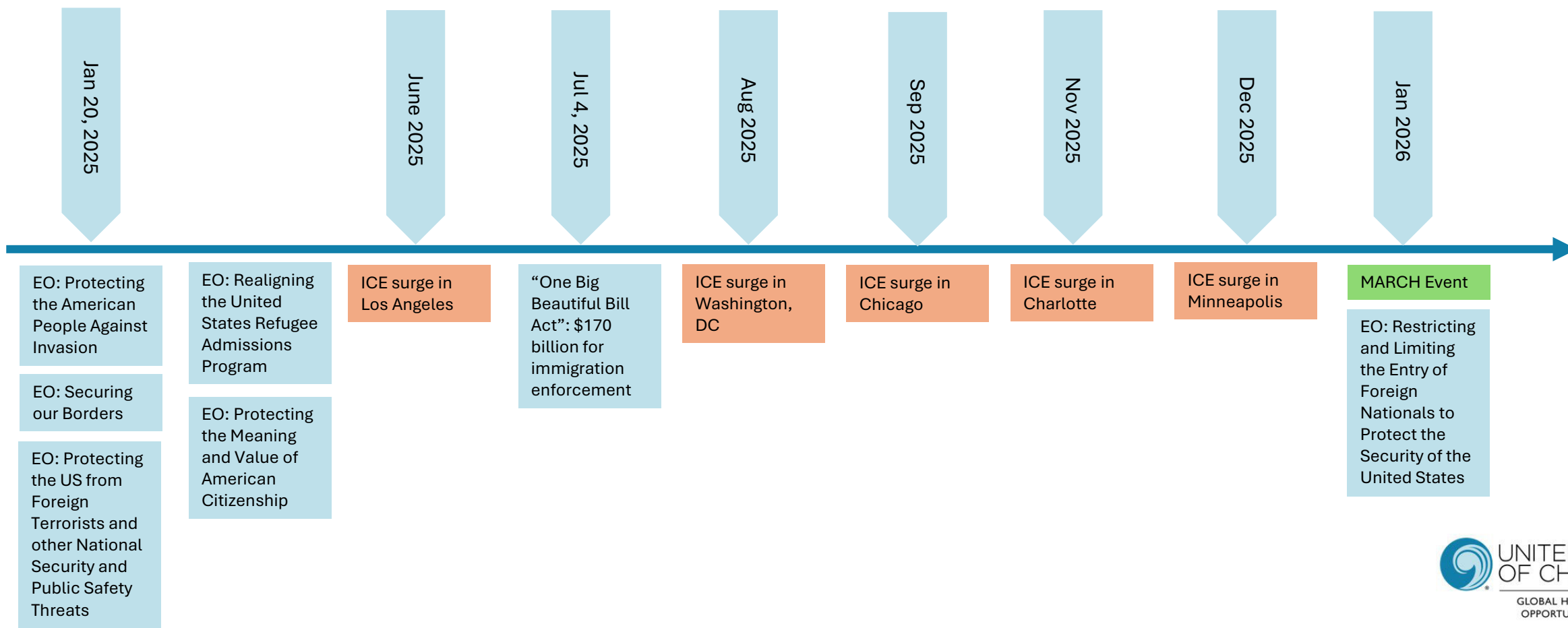
“The stranger and the sojourner always challenge the ethical and moral limits of the human community and the community of faith. The prophetic voice of the Old and New Covenants proclaims that where community shuts out the stranger with city walls, closes up its worship and common life against the strangers, the captives and the poor, the prophetic voice warns of suffering, decay, and alienation that is death. Yet the stranger is not only an obligation or duty. The stranger is God’s dialogue with human history; is the sign of renewal and life. God utilizes the stranger and the wanderer to challenge and replenish the human situation and to proclaim grace and mercy as well as righteousness and life. For it is not only that Jesus was sent as a stranger, but that Jesus came as the stranger who brings us life and more abundant life.”

- From “Report of the Committee on the Pronouncement on Justice in Immigration” (UCC General Synod, 1981)



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Timeline: MIRA (Migration, Immigration, Refugee, Asylee)



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GLOBAL HOPE - HUMANITARIAN:
OPPORTUNITIES, PARTNERSHIPS,
EMPOWERMENT



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CHANGES TO THE REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM & ASYLUM

- **USRAP:** January 20, 2025: President Trump froze the refugee resettlement program, canceling the travel of those who had been approved to relocate.
- Despite legal action such as *Pacito vs. Trump*, resettlement has been, essentially, banned for everyone other than white Afrikaners.
- Over 100,000 refugees, most people who are Black and Brown, have no path to U.S. resettlement or family reunification.
- **Presidential Determination/PD:** The U.S. President sets the cap for the number of refugees to be resettled in the U.S. each year.
- FY 2026: ceiling of 7,500 with priority given to white South Africans.
- **Refugees resettled to the U.S.** in FY 2026 (10/2025-4/2026): **6,066** South Africans and **3** Afghans
- **Asylum** has been dismantled at the U.S.-Mexico border through Executive Order. Judicial response will likely go to Supreme Court.
- U.S. visa applicants are to be denied if they indicate fear or harm related to their country of origin.
- Asylum case rejections continue to increase.
- Increased/new fees for asylum cases; deportation if not paid within 30 days.
- Potential review of past asylum approval



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CHANGES TO U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY

- **Arrests:** Sensitive Locations protections were rescinded in January 2025.
- Immigration enforcement can now conduct operations in churches and other houses of worship, hospitals, and schools.
- Over 32,500 arrests in March (latest available data)
- Reports indicate that ICE has shifted to a less-public but just as intense focus on arrests
- **ICE Detention: over 60,000 currently detained (as of April 2026)**
- More people have been detained by ICE now than ever before in U.S. history.
- Dire, unsafe conditions in detention centers have led to medical neglect and death.
- Huge change: no bond hearings. Courts have responded variously; the matter may go to the Supreme Court.
- 73.6% of those detained have no current criminal charges or history of charges
- More than 200 detention sites. Two largest states for immigration detention: Texas and Louisiana
- According to ICE data, over 90 percent of people are held in privately-run immigrant detention centers.
- It's unclear if/how the administration is still pursuing its warehouse detention center plans
- **ICE Deportations: over 600,000; 1.9 million self-deportations (January 28, 2025-April 4, 2026)**
- Government has contracts with 33 countries to deport migrants to places where they have no history or ties.
- These contracts have facilitated the removal of 17,400 people and cost the U.S. \$44 million so far
- ICE is using long detentions and threat of third country removal to intimidate people into self-deporting





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WHAT'S BEEN DISMANTLED: BENEFITS & PROTECTIONS

- **Benefits:** SNAP benefits discontinued for refugees, asylees, others who have not received green cards
 - Medicaid and CHIP will be cut off this October for most migrants who have not obtained green cards
 - Refugee Medical and Cash Assistance eligibility restricted from 12 months to 4 months
- **Temporary Protected Status (TPS):** has been canceled for most countries
 - Syria, Haiti cases were stayed. Supreme Court decision expected this June/July
 - Judges ordered stays in the TPS of Somalia, Burma, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Yemen
 - TPS canceled: Afghanistan, Cameroon, Nepal, Honduras, Nicaragua
- **Travel Bans:** 40 [travel ban](#) countries
 - Green card applications frozen for travel ban countries
 - Asylum applications through USCIS frozen for travel ban countries
 - Potential reversals of past immigration decisions
 - Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) processing and other immigration services halted for Afghans

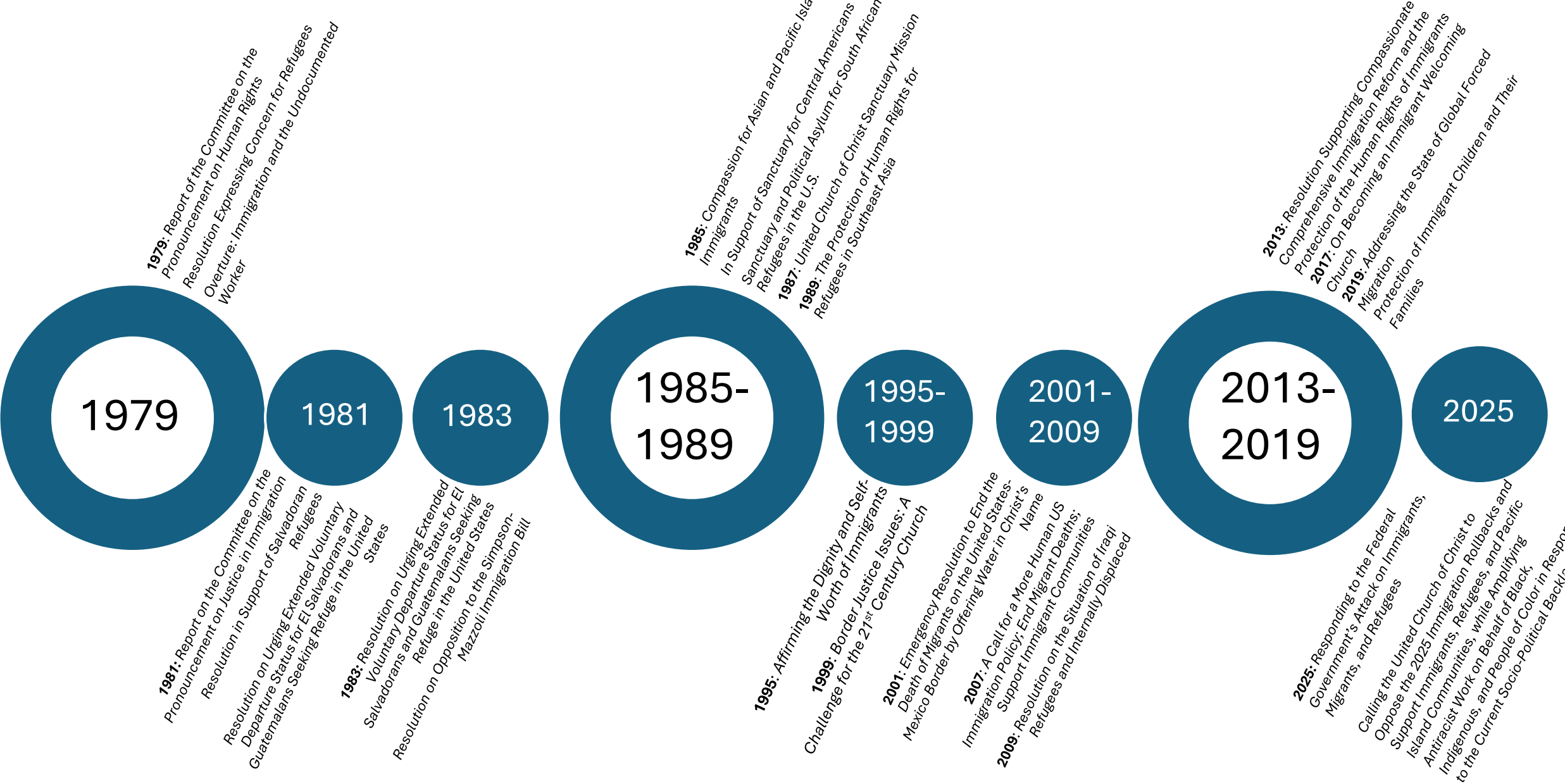


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WHAT'S BEEN DISMANTLED: SYSTEMS & PRECEDENT

- **Immigration court:** Firing of immigration court judges (Over 100 since last January)
- New hires (140) for immigration recruited as “deportation judges”
 - 2/3 have no relevant experience. Training cut from 5-6 weeks to 3.
- Proposed rule change to prevent asylum-seekers from obtaining work authorization
- Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) ordered to deny asylum case appeals as default
 - This rule was blocked by a court decision, but litigation is ongoing
- **Systemic chaos:** New policies are announced or leaked with vague information or no details about implementation
 - Example: re-vetting of resettled refugees
- Birthright citizenship is being relitigated at the Supreme Court
- FBI and USCIS have both had huge numbers of department resources moved to immigration detention
- **Impact on UCC churches:**
 - Churches no longer able to resettle refugees
 - FEMA funding for disaster relief is tied to recipients' immigration status
 - Uncertainty of ICE invasion into churches
 - Result: challenges for congregations to practice their faith and accompany migrants

UCC General Synod Resolutions on Immigration and Refugee Policy and Justice, 1979-2025





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Timeline: LGBTQIA+ Individuals and Communities

