Resolution D94

Concerns about Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

Sponsors
The Rev. Elizabeth Harden, St Luke's, Brockport; Dr. Carolyn Mok, St Thomas', Rochester; The Rev. Columba Salamony, Trinity Place, Geneva; The Rev. Richard Witt, Grace! Lyons

Resolution
Resolved, the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester shares the concerns of other Episcopalians throughout the church, our siblings in other Christian communities, and many others regarding the current actions of the federal government on immigration. We deplore the current actions of ICE including, arresting people without warrants, detaining people without informing families where their loved one will be held, detaining US citizens, using excessive force, wearing masks that provoke fear, arresting people as they are arriving for required court appearances and immigration check-ins and at worksites. These dehumanizing actions promote fear, division and hate, all antithetical to our Christian values.

Resolved, guided by Leviticus 19:33-34 "When immigrants live in your land with you, you must not cheat them. Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God." (Common English Bible) All congregations are invited to post the text in their bulletins and in common places.

Resolved, we will continue to minister to all people, make and post "private spaces" in are buildings as sanctuaries for immigrants, make no record of citizenship, and work to love our neighbors as ourselves, both inside our congregations and in our communities.

Rationale
It is important for our Diocese which is a border state to join with the many voices in The Episcopal Church that resist the current treatment of immigrants within the United States. While the biblical witness clearly supports welcoming the stranger, we often use other language to make our points. While there are some who claim the Christian faith supports or even participates in ICE raids and other suppressions of liberty, it is important that we respond with what Holy Scripture says. The passage from Leviticus ends the same way the Ten Commandments begin: with the name and authority of the Lord our God. Jesus Christ was a political refugee in Egypt, fleeing for his life, and his distant ancestor Ruth was an economic refugee in Judah.

The Most Reverend Sean Rowe, our Presiding Bishop, wrote to the church on June 11, 2025: "What we are witnessing is the kind of distortion that arises when institutions like the military and the State Department are turned on the people they were meant to protect. These mainstays of the federal government, designed to safeguard civil society and promote peace and stability, are now being weaponized for political advantage."

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In a joint letter, the Episcopal bishops in California wrote, ”… people are concerned and fearful about the denial of due process for those detained and the potential for ICE raids targeting beloved community institutions and people working to support their families. People feel angry and threatened that the haven they sought in our communities is no longer safe. U.S. citizens and legal residents feel deep grief at losing beloved friends and family members. Children whose parents are deported face uncertain futures. In our churches, we strive to protect our members who are at risk. Our Baptismal Covenant asks us, “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being (BCP p. 417)?” This question is a direct and ongoing call to us as persons who follow Christ to live out our calling opposed to injustice, to violence of any kind, and to stand up where human beings are not treated as we would treat a child of God.“