

Media TPs for religious figures on sensitive locations protected areas rescission

Background: On January 22, The Department of Homeland Security [revoked previous guidance](#) to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) regarding enforcement actions at or near sensitive locations, including places of worship, schools, and hospitals. The “[sensitive location](#)” policy was initially established in 2011 for ICE, then in 2021, the “[protected grounds](#)” memo clarified what ICE and CBP should do in areas of special protection. While ICE activity has always been permissible with a warrant and in exigent circumstances, the removal of all guidance is cause for concern.

1. The threat of immigration enforcement at places of worship may prevent people from attending religious services and going to places of worship. It creates a chilling effect for our congregations--citizen and immigrant alike. It goes against the principles of freedom of religion that our country was founded on.
2. Our sacred text guides us to love the neighbor, protect the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner. Specifically, the Gospel of Matthew encourages us to extend loving hands: “[For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me](#)”. Interpreted through the Lutheran tradition, our ministry as bishops is to love and serve our neighbor in the whole of our community and invite them to gladly know the word of God.
3. To conduct immigration enforcement actions in a house of worship goes against our faith.
4. I respect the right of our country to secure the country and its borders, and greatly appreciate the work of law enforcement, however, these new changes are disturbing many families and could end up not making us safer but could separate families or make them not show up to church, or school or the hospital when they need assistance. That is not in the best interest of our country.
5. The Bible commands us to “[Love your neighbor as yourself](#)”. Our noncitizen neighbors are valuable members of our community. We understand that natural disasters, hunger, conflict, and violence sometimes obligate someone to make the difficult choice to leave their home country. This decision is not made lightly. Immigrants share their histories, traditions, cultures, languages and experiences enriching us all. The ELCA was once an immigrant church, so this experience deeply resonates with many of us.
6. It is this country’s obligation to provide everyone with due process. Regardless of someone’s status, they deserve to be treated with respect, and their God-given dignity upheld.
7. Jesus Christ sought out and loved the poor and outcast, providing them with comfort and treating them with dignity. It is because of this that Christians are called to follow in Christ’s example by caring for those in need and loving the marginalized and vulnerable.
8. DHS should consider reinstating this policy.