

STATEMENT OF FAITH WHISTLES AGAINST OPPRESSION

The Gospel tells us to protect the vulnerable, welcome the stranger, and hold governing authorities accountable to a higher moral law. Under the pretense of “protecting” our borders, the current administration has put into the field thousands of very recently hired, very poorly trained and fully masked ICE agents dressed as soldiers in full combat battledress who routinely treat non-citizens and citizens alike in violent and dehumanizing ways. In order to meet artificial daily arrest quotas imposed by the White House, federal agents have been stopping without reasonable suspicion and arresting without probable cause our friends and neighbors: people of color, including indigenous people, those heard to speak a foreign language, and those they unjustifiably profile to be potential illegal immigrants. They stop and forcefully drag our neighbors out of the car, often after breaking out their car windows, throw them to the ground and zip-tie them while putting a knee to the victim’s back.

There are abundant references in the bible mandating that people of faith care for the “sojourner” or “stranger” and “refugee” or “foreigner” linking this duty to Israel’s captivity in Egypt and exodus to the promised land (See e.g., Exodus 22:21, Leviticus 19:33-34) and God’s call to love all people (see e.g. Deuteronomy 10:18-19, Matthew 2:13-23; 8:20). Jesus directly identified himself with immigrants: “I was a stranger and you invited me in.” (Matthew 25:35.)

The reign of terror by ICE on immigrants and citizens alike resulted in the brutal deaths of Renee Nicole Good, a mother of three, and Alex Pretti, an ICU Nurse at a Veteran’s Administration hospital, who, at the time of their homicides, were honoring the commandment to look out for the stranger. When President Bush signed the law creating the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, of which ICE is a part, he stated that “[w]e’re showing the resolve of this great nation to defend our freedom, our security and our way of life.” ICE has strayed so very far from that noble mission articulated by President Bush and is destroying our freedom and the way of life the Department of Homeland Security was meant to secure.

We cannot stop Caesar from what Caesar does. Caesar has guns; we have whistles. Recent events demand of us a prophetic, nonviolent response to restore peace and justice. Protest serves as a public witness against systems that treat human beings as disposable, fulfilling the requirement to “do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [our] God.” (Micah 6:8), “Let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24). What we can do is to lift up our voices in protest and in prayer. That is what we, as a faith community, are called to do. That is what the whistles are for. So that everyone, including ICE, can hear our witness to the Gospel.