

# **Voices: Loving the stranger in a time of fear**

February 4, 2026

The current immigration climate in the United States has created deep fear and instability within immigrant communities, particularly among undocumented immigrants who have no criminal record and who have long contributed to their churches and neighborhoods.

This current situation has deeply hurt many congregations, including my church. This is not a political statement. It is a pastoral cry for help.

As a Christian and a pastor, I believe it is necessary to reflect carefully on how the people of God serve and treat immigrant families with faithfulness, compassion, and practical care, while remaining grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I believe, as a Christ-ambassador, it is more important to be spiritually correct than politically correct. There are times in life when we have to say: "This is not right. This is not of God." In this case, sometimes we have to say it sadly. Sometimes we have to say it clearly and directly. But as followers of Christ, we can't always beat around the bush about the truth.

## **A moral mirror**

Faith-shaped communities can normalize suffering when it happens "nearby" but not directly to them.

Regarding the immigrant community in the United States, evangelical churches can distance ourselves from human pain by calling it policy, legality, or someone else's problem.

Detentions, family separations, fear of deportation, and the silencing effect of uncertainty can become background noise, heard, but quickly drowned out by fear, greed, worship, or political ideologies.

We often know the timing and the sound of suffering, yet choose distraction over engagement. So, I challenge people of conscience, especially faith communities, to ask whether we are using our voices to muffle cries or to advocate for dignity.

History suggests, what haunts future generations is not only what was done, but what was ignored. The question, then, is whether today's response will be remembered as courageous compassion or silence and inaction.

## **A biblical mirror**

Throughout Scripture, God reveals a particular concern for the foreigner, the sojourner, and the displaced. The people of God are repeatedly reminded their own identity is shaped by grace and deliverance, not by power or privilege.

Deuteronomy 10:18-19 commands God's people to love the stranger, grounding this love in Israel's own history of vulnerability. Leviticus 19:34 further instructs the foreigner is to be treated as a native-born resident, emphasizing dignity rather than conditional acceptance.

In the New Testament, Jesus embodies this ethic. He begins his earthly life as a refugee (Matthew 2:13-15), ministers among the marginalized, and teaches welcoming the stranger is an act of faithfulness to himself (Matthew 25:35-40).

These texts do not permit the church to remain neutral when vulnerable people are mistreated. Rather, they compel the church to act in ways that

reflect the compassion and justice of God.

When immigration enforcement results in prolonged detention, family separation, or the dehumanization of people who have committed no criminal offense, the church must respond first as the church.

Acts 5:29 reminds us obedience to God takes precedence when moral convictions are at stake. This posture is not rooted in political defiance but in faithful discipleship shaped by the character of Christ.

## **This affects the church**

Across the evangelical landscape, faithful leaders have responded to the immigration crisis in different ways. Many have chosen to speak publicly, using social platforms to call attention to injustice and to advocate for vulnerable communities. We believe such public witness, when done responsibly, is valuable and necessary.

As a pastor, I have spoken publicly with care. My primary emphasis has been on practical advocacy. We have asked not only how to speak faithfully, but how to act faithfully—how to move from words to embodied expressions of the gospel. As James 2:17 reminds us, faith that remains only in speech, without action, is incomplete.

Over the past year, the immigration crisis has directly affected families within our church. Fear of detention has led to decreased attendance as families avoid public spaces. Several members have been detained during routine traffic stops when local law enforcement contacted Immigration and Customs Enforcement instead of following due process.

Some individuals in my congregation were deported within days, while others remain detained for months despite expressing a willingness to return voluntarily to their home countries. Detained individuals have

reported administrative failures, missed flights, and prolonged uncertainty.

In some cases, older adult congregants with medical needs remain confined without clear timelines for release or deportation. The emotional, spiritual, and financial toll on families has been significant.

I do not view the immigration crisis as a ministry opportunity, but as a gospel obligation. Sharing the gospel includes both proclamation and presence—speaking biblical truth while also meeting real needs in moments of crisis.

The immigration crisis presents the church with a defining moment of witness. I believe the church must respond, not with fear or silence, but with faithful presence, sacrificial love, and theological clarity.

Keep reading to see how my church is responding.

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## **How my church is responding**

### **Emergency support for families**

When primary wage earners are removed without warning, families are left without income, food security, or time to prepare. We established a dedicated emergency fund to assist families facing sudden separation due to detention or deportation. This fund allows the church to respond immediately with compassion and stability during unexpected crises.

### **Partnership with the Mexican Consulate**

Over the last 12 months, we have hosted the Mexican Consulate on our church campus four times and supported more than 2,500 documented and undocumented people who needed to be prepared for the worst, because

the worst is happening.

These events provide families with professional guidance on their immigration status and help them renew passports and other essential documents.

Families travel from across the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and East Texas to these events, reflecting the trust placed in the church as a safe and accessible space.

## **Trauma-informed counseling support**

In partnership with Re-Therapy Counseling Services, we are offering two free counseling sessions to families impacted by the immigration crisis. This initiative provides professional care for children, spouses, and individuals experiencing trauma, anxiety, and depression, affirming the church's commitment to holistic healing.

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We encourage kingdom-minded followers of Christ to engage this moment with courage and compassion, remembering our calling is shaped not by political allegiance, but by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who calls his church to love, not with a political mindset, but with a sacrificial love for the stranger and care for the vulnerable.

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