

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS
CENTRAL DIVISION**

**New England Synod, Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America, *et al.*,**

Plaintiffs,

v.

Department of Homeland Security, *et al.*,

Defendants.

Case No. 4:25-cv-40102-FDS

DECLARATION OF J. STERLING MOORE

I, Sterling Moore, state and declare as follows:

1. I am an attorney at Democracy Forward Foundation and counsel to all Plaintiffs in the above-captioned matter. I submit this Declaration in support of Plaintiffs' Notice of Supplemental Facts.

2. A true and correct copy of a declaration signed by Rev. Caleb Crainer, dated November 21, 2025, is attached hereto as **Exhibit 1**.

3. A true and correct copy of a Charlotte Observer article titled "Church members flee as federal agents arrive at east Charlotte place of worship," dated November 17, 2025, is attached hereto as **Exhibit 2**.

4. A true and correct copy of a Christianity Today article titled "DC Churches to Trump: Stay Out of Our Parking Lots," dated Aug. 29, 2025, is attached hereto as **Exhibit 3**.

5. A true and correct copy of a CBS News article titled "ICE agents spotted near Rogers Park church, leaving community members concerned," dated October 12, 2025, is attached hereto as **Exhibit 4**.

6. A true and correct copy of a This Week in Worcester article titled “Exclusive: Trump DHS Plans Immigration Raids on Churches Over Holidays,” dated November 17, 2025, is attached hereto as **Exhibit 5**.

7. A true and correct copy of a Raw Story article titled “Feds plan holiday season raids on Spanish-speaking churches: report,” dated November 18, 2025, is attached hereto as **Exhibit 6**.

8. A true and correct copy of an Esquire article titled “ICE Is Coming to Bust a Church Near You This Holiday Season. Seriously.” dated November 18, 2025, is attached hereto as **Exhibit 7**.

9. A true and correct copy of email correspondence between Plaintiffs’ and Defendants’ counsel, with the most recent message dated November 20, 2025, and with the subject “New England Synod v. DHS (D. Mass.),” is attached hereto as **Exhibit 8**.

10. A true and correct copy of a Religion News Service article titled “Viral warnings of planned ICE raids on churches have pastors worried,” dated November 20, 2025, is attached hereto as **Exhibit 9**.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Executed: Nov. 21, 2025

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sterling Moore", is written over a horizontal line.

J. Sterling Moore

Exhibit 1

Declaration of Rev. Caleb Crainer

I, Rev. Caleb Crainer, hereby declare under penalty of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746 as follows:

1. I am Reverend Caleb Crainer. I am the Presiding Minister at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church ("St. Andrew's") in Los Angeles, California. St. Andrew's is part of the Southwest California Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
2. I began serving at St. Andrew's in 2012. I hold degrees in theology from Valparaiso University (B.A.), The Graduate Theological Union (M.A.), and the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest (M. Div.).
3. I make this declaration based on personal knowledge and information relayed to me in the course of my duties as the Presiding Minister at St. Andrew's.
4. In our Christian tradition, Jesus teaches frequently about our sacred calling to love strangers and neighbors (Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:31, Luke 6:27-28, John 15:12). We take this faith-based calling seriously at St. Andrew's and have a history of welcoming and including people from around the world as members and leaders in our community.
5. In July 2025, St. Andrew's was featured in an NPR article entitled "Los Angeles houses of worship plan for possible ICE raids."¹ I was interviewed for the article and shared how our church had been preparing for the possibility of immigration enforcement following the rescission of the government's policy of not conducting such enforcement at houses of worship. I described how we developed plans in the case of raids and conducted role-playing exercises so that staff and congregants know what to do. Our faith requires us to take these steps to protect the most vulnerable among us.
6. On Friday, October 17, 2025 around 6 a.m., a white van pulled into our church parking lot. The parking lot is clearly attached to the church; it is right next to the sanctuary building and is surrounded by a low barrier.
7. Our church is on private property and, due to security issues we have had in the past, is marked with "No Trespassing" signs.
8. Security camera footage of the church parking lot shows additional unmarked white vans entering the parking lot around 9 a.m., as well as unmarked SUVs.
9. From the vehicles emerged federal agents wearing vests marked "POLICE" and masks covering their faces. They apparently used our church's parking lot as a staging area for some kind of enforcement action. There were around 20 agents in our parking lot.
10. I am aware that there was an immigration enforcement action at a nearby carwash that day; it is possible that our church's parking lot was used as a staging area for that action.
11. In videos of the incident at St. Andrew's, individuals with their hands zip-tied can be seen being escorted by the masked federal agents.
12. Shortly before 10 a.m., a community member arrived for voice lessons she had scheduled at the church and saw the immigration enforcement action taking place. Most of the agents she observed were wearing bulletproof vests and visible firearms. After she parked and exited her car, one of the agents moved toward her, making threatening gestures. She told the agents that they needed to leave the church parking lot. They left.
13. The church did not give the agents permission to use our parking lot for their actions and would not have done so if asked.

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/13/nx-s1-5466054/los-angeles-houses-of-worship-plan-ice-raids>

14. The congregation at St. Andrew's is horrified by this unsanctioned use of our space. I am also horrified to think that the broader community might believe that we allowed this raid to occur; in viewing video of the incident taken by a bystander, I heard someone say, "I can't believe the church would let this happen."
15. Though we have taken a number of steps to prepare in the event of a raid, we did not think that agents would come onto our property and use it for their purposes without permission. I now realize that what we had done previously to protect our congregation from immigration enforcement was not sufficient. Clearly, federal agents will force their way onto our property and do whatever they want without respecting our dignity and autonomy.
16. In response to this violation, we have had to take a number of steps to improve our church campus's security. We undertook a \$5,000 overhaul of our security cameras, and may add additional ones – we had been planning an upgrade eventually, but after this, we had to move quickly. We have added additional "No Trespassing" signs. We are going to implement a means of closing off the parking lot at night, which we have never had to do before.
17. This violation has made me think about the church property in a whole new way. Our parking lot was important to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic: it was a place where people would sit outside and meet up, and where kids could ride their bikes safely. It is where we have events like our annual Oktoberfest and trunk-or-treat. Since ICE staged its raid on our property, though, I have realized that we need to take stronger steps to defend our congregation and to think more defensively about the property, which will be at the expense of creating a welcoming and open meeting place for the congregation and community.
18. In the wake of the raid, we have also had to take steps to address what happened with our congregation and the broader community. We have sent a letter to community members and have had numerous conversations with parishioners. We will be doing more trainings about responses to immigration enforcement.
19. I have known something like this could occur ever since the government removed protections from houses of worship. I wish that I did not feel scared, but I am, for my congregants and for my community.

Dated: 11 / 21 / 2025



Rev. Caleb Crainer

Exhibit 2

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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Church members flee as federal agents arrive at east Charlotte place of worship

By Nick Sullivan

Updated November 17, 2025 11:26 AM  Gift Article



A Charlotte pastor said Border Patrol came into his church and made an arrest in front of children on Nov. 15, 2025.
By Khadejeh Nikouyeh

BODEN
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Border Patrol in Charlotte

U.S. Border Patrol began making rounds in Charlotte on Saturday morning.

This follows recent Border Patrol activity in Chicago that made headlines, with some reports alleging agents violated people's rights.

EXPAND ALL

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Congregants of an east Charlotte church scattered into the woods Saturday when masked federal agents arrived and detained one of their members, according to witnesses.

About 15 to 20 church members were doing yard work on the property off Albemarle Road while their children played games and their spouses cooked meals. Agents parked just outside a closed gate leading to the church parking lot and ran into the yard, said the pastor, who did not want to identify himself or his church.

TOP VIDEOS



The agents asked no questions and showed no identification before taking one man away, whose wife and child were inside at the time, the pastor said. They attempted to grab others, too.

Read Next

LOCAL

After 81 arrests in Charlotte, Border Patrol presses on in second day of activity

November 16, 2025 8:08 AM

“Right now, everybody is scared. Everybody,” he said. “One of these guys with immigration, he say he was going to arrest one of the other guys in the church. He pushed him.”

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Inside the church, women and children sobbed as they wondered whether their loved ones had been taken. Some yard workers fled into the surrounding woods when officials arrived, including 15-year-old Miguel Vazquez.

“I thought, ‘Wait, why am I running? I’m a citizen,’” Vazquez said. He was friends with the man who was taken and worries about the family he left behind.



Miguel Vazquez, 15, witnessed U.S. Border Patrol agents arresting a person at a church while he was cleaning outside on Saturday, Nov. 15, 2025. He ran and came back later. KHADEJEH NIKOUYEH knikouyeh@charlotteobserver.com

The church is suspending services and yard work until members feel safe to gather again without the threat of immigration raids, Vazquez said. Church members were aware the U.S. Border Patrol was planning an operation in Charlotte this weekend but didn't think twice about their place of worship.

"We thought church was safe and nothing gonna happen," Vazquez said. "But it did happen."

Observer photojournalist Khadejeh Nikouyeh contributed.

Exhibit 3

NEWS

DC Churches to Trump: Stay Out of Our Parking Lots

HALELUYA HADERO

Ministers protest presence of federal officers scaring people away from houses of worship.



Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) vehicles in Washington DC.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY
AUGUST 29, 2025

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Andrew Leyden / Stringer / Getty

Black and mainline Protestant clergy in Washington, DC, are demanding that immigration officials stop using their church parking lots.

“We want to remind those federal entities that the property of houses of worship is private and therefore should not be used without expressed permission from those worshipping entities,” the coalition wrote in a public letter signed by nearly two dozen religious and community leaders, including some who work with interfaith and social justice organizations.

Immigration arrests have spiked under President Donald Trump, who has made deportations and large-scale roundups a cornerstone of his second term. Shortly after he was inaugurated, Trump reversed a decades-long policy that prevented officials from carrying out enforcement in churches and other religious institutions. Christian and Jewish groups challenged the new policy in court, arguing it has led to more surveillance. But in April, a federal judge sided with the administration.

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In their letter, the DC ministers say that if Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers or other federal officials park on their property, it can make it look as if they support the Trump administration's move to police the city as well as the "disappearance of our neighbors, family members, and friends."

Patricia Fears, the pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church, a predominantly Black congregation in the northwest quadrant of Washington, told CT she has heard from roughly ten Black and Latino churches that said they've seen either ICE vehicles or unknown cars, some of which carried masked men, in their parking lots. ICE did not comment for this story.

Fears, who organized the letter with an interfaith organization, said officers weren't arresting congregants but using the church lots to stage operations and detain people nearby. The presence of federal officers limits ministry. Some people, including undocumented immigrants, are staying away from the churches, she said.

"It really causes people not to come to a place where they should and could have peace," Fears told CT. Over the weekend, she said, she was asked to go and pray privately with people whose loved ones were arrested, including some who went to work and never came back.



Graylan Hagler, who organized the letter with Fears and serves as a senior adviser to the progressive interfaith organization Fellowship of Reconciliation USA, said in an email that he began hearing reports from local clergy after Trump announced earlier this month that he would put National Guard troops in the district.

The ministers who signed the letter are also calling on other houses of worship not to allow federal law enforcement to use their property “for any means as long as Home-Rule,” which has given DC limited self-governance for decades, “is not respected.”

The Trump administration has argued a federal takeover of the city police department is necessary to quell high crime rates in DC. But critics, including many Democrats, note the district’s violent crime rate is at its lowest level in decades and have accused Trump of using racial tropes about urban crime to justify the takeover. Partisan bickering over DC’s crime data continued this week while the White House also released an executive order that would expand the National Guard’s role in law enforcement across the country. ■

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The Immigration Stories We Do Not See

MYLES WERNITZ

Black Church

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Halleluya Hadero

Immigration

Mainline Protestants

OUR LATEST

Exhibit 4

**CBS NEWS**

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45°

**ICE agents spotted near North Side church**
(02:17)Local News**ICE agents spotted near Rogers Park church, leaving community members concerned**

By Sara Machi

October 12, 2025 / 10:55 PM CDT / CBS Chicago

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Churchgoers were left leery of leaving their parish, and some parents canceled their kids' soccer games Sunday – with concerns spreading after another weekend of federal law enforcement efforts and the federal government vowing there will be more.

"We are deploying additional resources to apprehend rioters and Antifa members engaged in domestic terrorism," Micah Bock, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Strategic Communications for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, said in a new social media video.

In the Sunday post to social media, the Department of Homeland Security leaders vowed, "DHS is increasing operations in Portland, Chicago, and across our nation."

Meanwhile Sunday, rapid response volunteers were organizing outside St. Jerome Catholic Church in Rogers Park hours after an ICE sighting caused morning parishioners to stay inside.

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Ice agents spotted near Rogers Park Church, leaving community members concerned CBS Chicago
A voice heard in a video at the church, warning parishioners that federal agents were seen operating in the area, and offering parishioners escorts to their vehicles.

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00:00

00:00

The sign advertising mass times at the church, at 1709 W. Lunt Ave., is now covered on the front of their building.

"My feeling is in the United States, you have freedom to practice your religion — and part of that is to go there and leave there and go home," said Angie Guinn, Rapid Response volunteer.

Julie, who didn't want to give her last name, lives just yards away and said she took video around 8:30 a.m. Sunday after seeing federal officers outside her window. Another perspective posted online included a federal officer warning someone in a car.

"Yeah. It's scary. It's really scary, and people don't deserve this," said Julie. "They really don't."

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This comes at a time when Chicago Archdiocese leaders are addressing immigration policies.

"We're seeing that so often people are speaking in such a way that uh discounts the human dignity and value of people, maybe because of the way they look or the countries that they, they come from," Cardinal Blase Cupich said.

In Evanston on Sunday, a kids' soccer league canceled games at a local park after U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement sightings. Writing in an email, "We do not want the children to witness inhumane treatment."

It is unclear in the new DHS video what kind of additional resources they are deploying or when.

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Community members demand answers after federal raid in St. Paul

**📺 CBS DETROIT**

Southwest Detroit community dealing with increase in ICE raids, arrest

**📺 CBS BAY AREA**

Oakland community rallies together after ICE agents target man near elementary school



Watch CBS News

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CBS DETROIT

Southwest Detroit community dealing with increase in ICE raids, arrest



CBS BAY AREA

Oakland community rallies together after ICE agents target man near elementary school



Exhibit 5

Exclusive: Trump DHS Plans Immigration Raids on Churches Over Holidays

By John Keough | November 17, 2025

Last Updated: November 17, 2025



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 Email

WORCESTER – Agencies within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) intend to implement a comprehensive plan to target Spanish-speaking churches across the country during the upcoming holiday season between Thanksgiving, Nov. 27, and Christmas, Dec. 25.

Three U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) attorneys, including one assigned to the U.S. Attorney's office in the district of Massachusetts, one to the district of Rhode Island office, and the third posted at an office in New York told This Week in Worcester they received briefings on the plan.

The attorney in the Massachusetts office said that they attend a Baptist church in Massachusetts and is a registered Republican. He said that he does not see how this plan is in line with either American values or Biblical doctrine.

The attorney in the Rhode Island office confirmed both the briefing and internal discussions about the legal issues surrounding arrests at churches over the past three months.

The attorney in the New York office spoke in depth about the plan being recently updated to include mosques and liberal synagogues in the wake of Zohran Mamdani's recent win in the New York City mayor's race.

The attorneys spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution. All three said the plan is not regional to New England, but a nationwide strategy.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has fired several U.S. Attorneys and staff members since the beginning of its term in January, including **two forced out this month in Miami**.

Multiple versions of the plan are being reviewed by DOJ staff lawyers. The topic is a regular part of operational discussions between staff at the DOJ and the DHS.

Both attorneys also said that the Trump administration is pushing high-ranking Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) officials for public support of the plan, including Hispanic pastors.

Two Hispanic pastors who lead Southern Baptist churches in New England say that SBC President Clint Pressley and its executive board received briefings on the plan and discussed it with Homeland Security Advisor Stephen Miller and White House Border Czar Tom Homan.

An SBC representative says neither Pressley nor its executive committee received any briefing on the plan.

A Hispanic pastor who leads a Pentecostal denomination in New England told This Week in Worcester that ICE agents visited his church several times and another visit came from an individual who identified themselves as an FBI agent. In all three conversations, agents asked questions about the names of specific congregation members, their home addresses, and the frequency they attended church services.

All three pastors asked that This Week in Worcester not reveal the names of their churches.

Multiple prominent Protestant leaders say that two pastors close to Trump have given their approval of the plan. The first, Paula White-Cain, is a televangelist, long-time spiritual

advisor to Trump and leader of the White House Faith Office.

The other, televangelist Mark Burns, was an early supporter of Trump in 2016 and a board member of Pastors for Trump in 2023. Burns is also co-founder of the NOW Television Network.

The Trump administration has not approached Franklin Graham, a prominent Evangelical minister. Graham is the son of Billy Graham and president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (DGEA) and Samaritan's Purse, a humanitarian organization that does missionary work. Graham has advised Trump on several public policies, and has led several prayer campaigns for Trump.

Several people close to Graham say it would be highly unlikely that he would support such a plan.

Both Southern Baptist pastors told This Week in Worcester that they fear scenes similar to the arrest of Rosanne Ferreira de Oliveira on Eureka Street in Worcester on May 8 unfolding inside their churches. On that day, DHS, CBP, ICE and other federal agents held de Oliveira's children in custody to get her outside her home and to the scene, so they could conduct an arrest without a warrant.

After de Oliveira's arrest, ICE released a statement saying she is in the country illegally and a violent criminal who attacked a pregnant woman.

The court dropped criminal charges against de Oliveira at her next court appearance. As multiple outlets later reported, de Oliveira had authorization for legal presence in the United States with a pending application for asylum. While in custody after her arrest, a judge approved de Oliveira's application for asylum.

The federal government did not appeal that decision, despite having the right to. Instead, they released de Oliveira.

This Week in Worcester contacted the ICE office in Burlington by phone. A spokesperson who declined to identify themselves hung up when asked about the press release.

This Week in Worcester reached out to Dr. Terry Dorsett, Executive Director for the **Baptist Churches of New England**, the largest Baptist organization in New England. The BCNE is an affiliate of the Southern Baptist Convention. No response was received at the time of publication.

This Week in Worcester also found that the United States Concealed Carry Association (USCCA) is conducting multiple free seminars on church protection training in the

Worcester County area. There are events scheduled on Tuesday, Nov. 18, at The Gun Parlor in Worcester, on Friday, Nov. 21, in Lowell, and on Monday, Nov. 14, in Leominster.

Elite Defense Training in Leominster leads those trainings. Elite Defense Training owner Richard Bosivert said the following in response to an inquiry by This Week in Worcester:

"The curriculum and intent remain strictly focused on church safety and emergency preparedness. The subject of ICE, immigration enforcement, or federal agents entering a church has not come up in our trainings. It's not a topic we provide instruction on, as it falls outside both our mission and our area of expertise. We work with a wide range of congregations when invited, but we do not track or categorize churches by ethnicity or demographic makeup. Our role is simply to support any faith community that requests safety training."

One of the attorneys said part of the operational plan involves undercover ICE and FBI agents attending and documenting church security plans. Groups like Elite Defense Training teach volunteer church members how to handle individuals who disrupt church services and to manage scenarios like active-shooters or medical emergencies. Most churches with security plans eventually file those plans with local police and fire departments. Massachusetts state law enables local law enforcement agencies to decline providing support to ICE. This likely leaves these security plans outside the reach of federal agencies.

Federal agencies conducted multiple coordinated operations in **Charlotte, North Carolina**, over three days starting Nov. 14, which led to the arrest of 81 and included **targeting a church**. These operations appear similar to the operations described in the briefings the attorneys attended.

There are **661 registered religious organizations** in Worcester, ranging from Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim congregations. Worcester is also home to 17 Buddhist organizations.

Another prominent part of the plan is the promotion and distribution of the CBP Home Mobile App to Spanish-speaking churches. All three of the pastors received email and mailed correspondence with the CBP app information. The **CBP homepage** says that, "DHS is using the CBP Home Mobile App to incentivize the voluntary self-departure of aliens illegally in the United States."

Exhibit 6

Feds plan holiday season raids on Spanish-speaking churches: report

By Travis Gettys

November 18, 2025 1:01PM ET





Donald Trump and the first lady at the White House for Christmas. USA - December 15, 2018. (Photo credit: Rawpixel.com Shutterstock)

Multiple federal agencies are planning a nationwide crackdown on Spanish-speaking churches during the upcoming holiday season, according to three sources in the U.S. Department of Justice.

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DOJ attorneys assigned to U.S. attorney's offices in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New York told This Week in Worcester they had received briefings on a plan involving operations at churches between Thanksgiving and Christmas Day carried out by agents from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP).

"The attorney in the Massachusetts office said that they attend a Baptist church in Massachusetts and is a registered Republican," the outlet reported. "He said that he does not see how this plan is in line with either American values or Biblical doctrine. The attorney in the Rhode Island office confirmed both the briefing and internal discussions about the legal issues surrounding arrests at churches over the past three months."

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Donald Trump and the first lady at the White House for Christmas. USA - December 15, 2018. (Photo credit: Rawpixel.com Shutterstock)

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"The attorney in the New York office spoke in depth about the plan being recently updated to include mosques and liberal synagogues in the wake of Zohran Mamdani's recent win in the New York City mayor's race," the report added.

Protestant church leaders told This Week in Worcester that two pastors close to Trump – televangelists Paula White and Mark Burns – have given their approval to the plan, but the Trump administration has not approached Franklin Graham about the operation, and several people close to the evangelical minister say he would not likely endorse it.

"[Two of the] attorneys also said that the Trump administration is pushing high-ranking Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) officials for public support of the plan, including Hispanic pastors," This Week in Worcester reported. "Two Hispanic pastors who lead Southern Baptist churches in New England say that SBC President Clint Pressley and its executive board received briefings on the plan and discussed it with Homeland Security Advisor Stephen Miller and White House Border Czar Tom Homan."

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A third Hispanic pastor who leads a Pentecostal denomination in New England told the outlet that ICE agents and a person who identified themselves as an FBI agent have paid visits to his church asking questions about individual congregants, including how often they attend services.

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Exhibit 7

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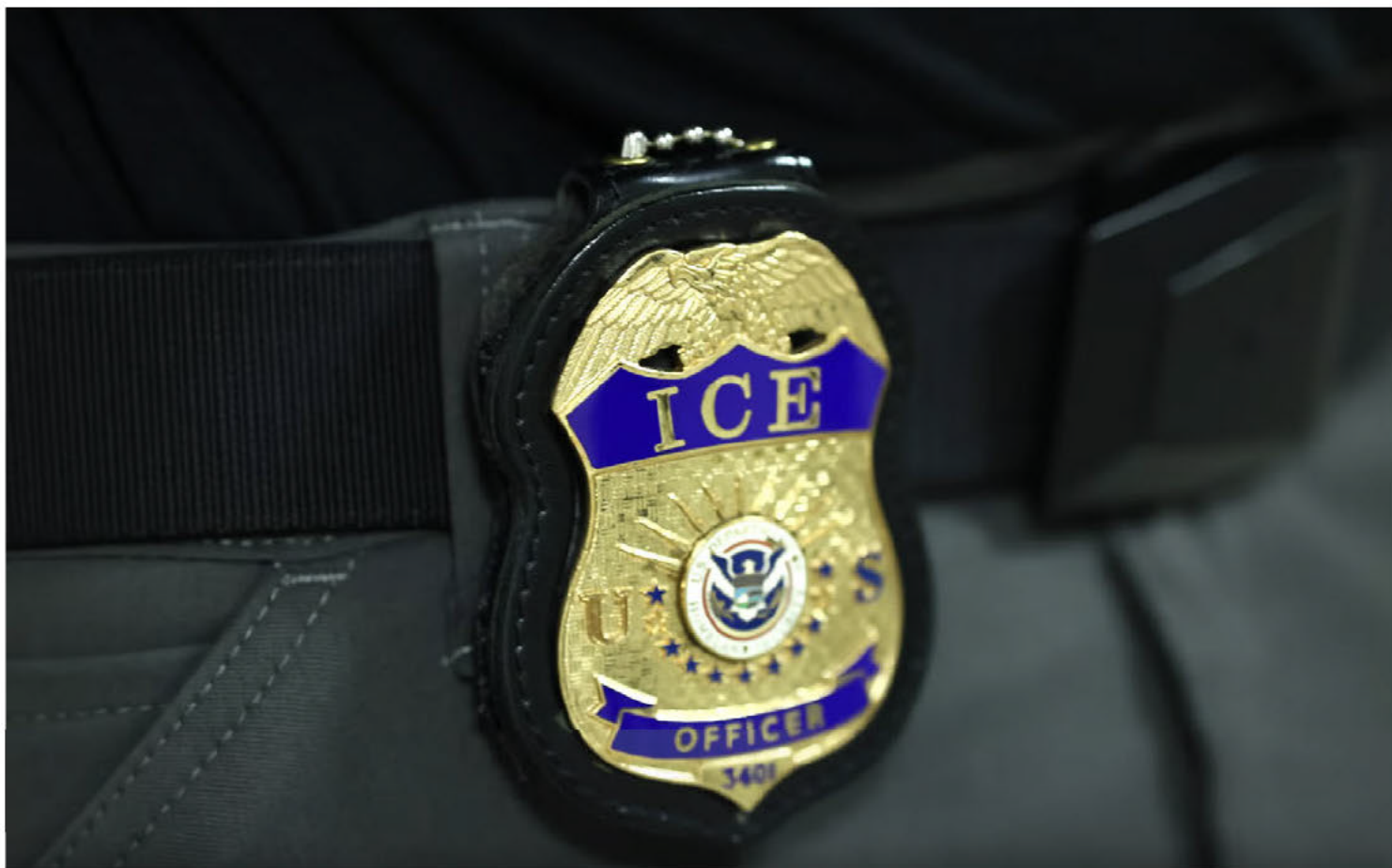
ICE Is Coming to Bust a Church Near You This Holiday Season. Seriously.

Nothing screams "Christmas cheer" like an immigration raid.

By [Charles P. Pierce](#) PUBLISHED: NOV 18, 2025 5:24 PM EST



30



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N Agencies within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), intend to implement a comprehensive plan to target Spanish-speaking churches across the country during the upcoming holiday season between Thanksgiving, November 27, and Christmas, December 25.

Three U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) attorneys, including one assigned to the U.S. Attorney's office in the district of Massachusetts, one to the district of Rhode Island office, and the third posted at an office in New York told *This Week in Worcester* they received briefings on the plan.

The attorney in the Massachusetts office said that they attend a Baptist church in Massachusetts and is a registered Republican. He said that he does not see how this plan is in line with either American values or Biblical doctrine. The attorney in the Rhode Island office confirmed both the briefing and internal discussions about the legal issues surrounding arrests at churches over the past three months.

Oh, this should provide us with some happy holiday videos. Even if they just roust people in the parking lot before or after the services, local TV news is going to love the pictures. Folks thrown down and zip tied in front of Nativity scenes. Oh come, let us adore them. The report also says that the administration is trolling for support among some of the more prominent pastors, who are undoubtedly shining up their thuribles to anoint the policy.

And just as a reminder: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

That's just crazy talk.

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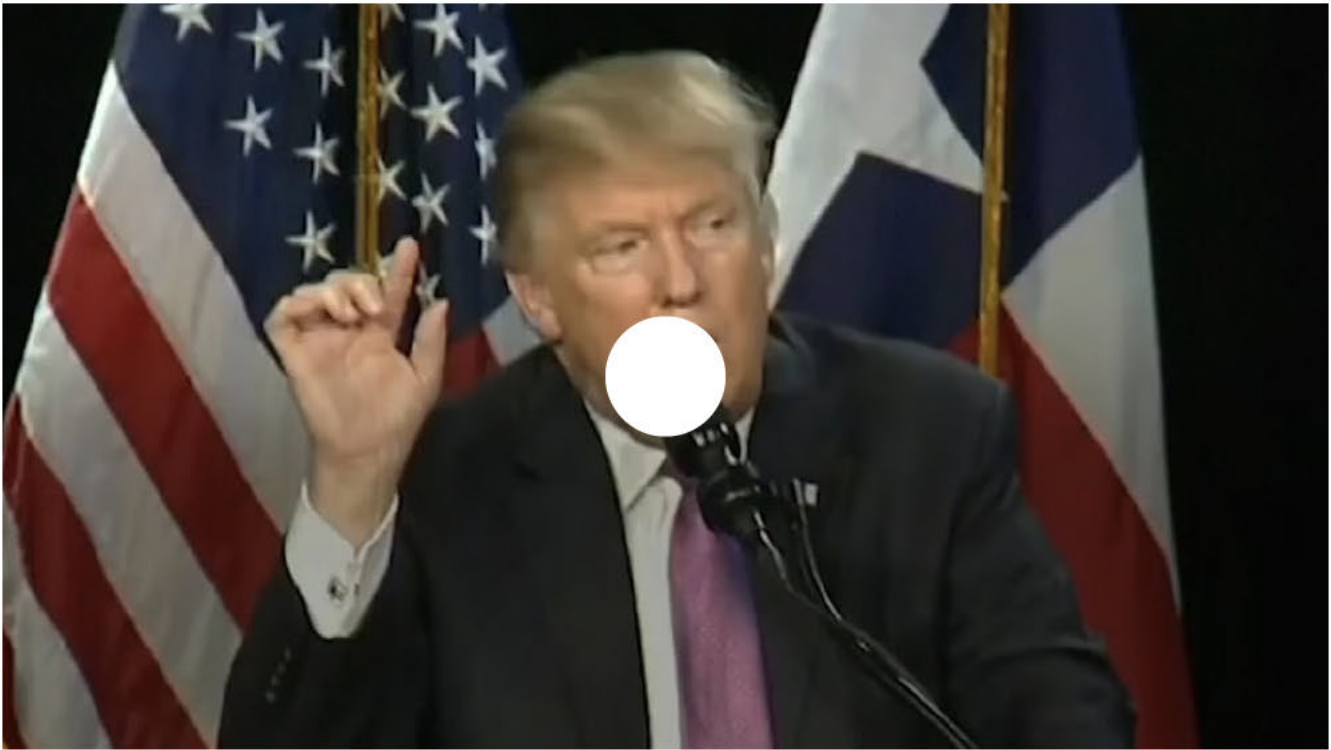
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Exhibit 8



Kevin Friedl <kfriedl@democracyforward.org>

New England Synod v. DHS (D. Mass.)

Wolfe, Kristina (CIV) <Kristina.Wolfe@usdoj.gov>
To: "kfriedl@democracyforward.org" <kfriedl@democracyforward.org>

Thu, Nov 20, 2025 at 6:09 PM

Hi Kevin,

Alex and Diane forwarded your inquiry in me. I've conferred with DHS and DHS has no comment on the article you sent.

Best regards,

Kristina

Kristina A. Wolfe

Senior Trial Counsel, U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Division, Federal Programs Branch

P.O. Box 883, Ben Franklin Station | Washington, DC 20044

p 202-353-4519 | f 202-616-8470

From: Kevin Friedl <kfriedl@democracyforward.org>

Sent: Wednesday, November 19, 2025 2:53 PM

To: Haas, Alex (CIV) <Alex.Haas@usdoj.gov>; Kelleher, Diane (CIV) <Diane.Kelleher@usdoj.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: New England Synod v. DHS (D. Mass.)

Hi Alex and Diane,

I'm writing you per Cody Giles's out-of-office response, regarding case no. 4:25-cv-40102 (D. Mass.). Can you please connect us with the DOJ attorney who will be handling this case in Cody's absence and/or yourselves provide a response to the below inquiry?

Thank you very much,

Kevin

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kevin Friedl** <kfriedl@democracyforward.org>
Date: Wed, Nov 19, 2025 at 2:48 PM
Subject: New England Synod v. DHS (D. Mass.)
To: Giles, Richard C (CIV) <Richard.C.Giles@usdoj.gov>

Hi, Cody,

I hope [REDACTED]

I'm writing with regard to some very disturbing reporting that appeared earlier this week describing a plan by DHS to target Spanish-speaking churches during the upcoming holiday season:

<https://thisweekinworchester.com/exclusive-trump-ice-raids-churches-holiday/>

As you can imagine, we are extremely concerned about any such campaign being directed against our clients and their members, as well as by the predictable effects it would have on our clients and their members even if any such raids were limited to other churches. We think that any such planned campaign would be highly relevant to this case and to our pending motion for preliminary relief.

Are you in a position to shed any light on this reporting or the planned campaign it describes? We would appreciate your response by the end of the day tomorrow so that we can weigh appropriate next steps.

Thank you,

Kevin

Kevin Friedl

Senior Counsel

Democracy Forward

☐ (202) 894-6035

☐ kfriedl@democracyforward.org

☐ democracyforward.org

[Quoted text hidden]

Exhibit 9

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NEWS

Viral warnings of planned ICE raids on churches have pastors worried

(RNS) — Rumors and viral reports about potential ICE raids have immigrant church leaders worried about their congregations. DHS says it doesn't have plans to raid churches — but won't rule it out.

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NEWS

Methodist pastors ma

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OPINION

Why clergy should risk

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NEWS

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Federal law enforcement officers with Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Enforcement and Removal Operations conduct a traffic stop and detain people, Nov. 17, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

By Bob Smietana, Aleja Hertzler-McCain and Jack Jenkins
November 20, 2025

(RNS) — On Tuesday (Nov. 18), the pastor of an 80-person Latino Pentecostal church got a concerning WhatsApp audio message. The message, allegedly created by an unidentified pastor, circulating among Atlanta-area evangelical faith leaders, claimed massive immigration raids would occur there on Thursday and Friday.

Soon, church members were sending him messages asking what they should do about the potential raids. By that evening at their teaching and prayer service, he had to address the rumor with his congregation.

“Stay calm,” he told them in Spanish, but “take care of yourselves. Don’t go out if you don’t need to go out.”

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The pastor, who requested anonymity to protect his congregation, said he’d evaluate the situation on Thursday and make a decision about whether to cancel that day’s service three hours before its scheduled start.

Viral warnings of planned
By Bob Smietana, Aleja Hertzler

Muslim civil rights group s
By Ulaa Kuziez

Catholic clergy, nuns sue
By Jack Jenkins

By Thursday afternoon, he decided to go on with his service, having seen a video from Luis Estrada, a Telemundo Atlanta anchor, saying the viral message was unreliable because of lack of evidence. The anchor noted the Trump administration's pattern of targeting Democratic-led states, which if consistent, would exclude Georgia. But other pastors canceled their services, and Estrada said in the video he received over 100 messages asking about the mysterious audio.

Faith leaders in other parts of the country were also worried this week, after a local news site in Massachusetts published a story warning of potential U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids on churches over the upcoming holidays went viral. The story was shared through social media channels and messaging apps before leaders could sort out whether the reports were true or not.



Downtown Worcester, Mass. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia/Creative Commons)

ICE and other Department of Homeland Security officials have yet to raid a church building. But immigration agents have arrested immigrants on or near church property in at least a dozen instances so far this year, after the Trump administration rescinded an internal government policy discouraging raids on sensitive places like houses of worship. And fear of further escalation remains at the forefront in the minds of many worshippers at immigrant-heavy and Spanish-speaking churches, where attendance is down in many congregations.

RELATED: As ICE descends on Charlotte, faith leaders draw on other cities' actions to aid immigrants

Viral stories like the one from New England only magnify those concerns, faith leaders say. Published on a local news website called This Week in Worcester, the story cites unnamed Department of Justice sources in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New York who claimed that DHS plans to raid Spanish-language churches and other houses of worship over the holidays.

The story also cited an unnamed Hispanic pastor who said government agents had already been to his church to ask about the names and addresses of church members, as well as several pastors who said they received advertisements for the CBP Home app, which DHS uses to encourage people to self-deport. It said evangelical leaders such as the Rev. Clint Pressley, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, were briefed on the plan.

As ICE descends on Charlotte
By Jack Jenkins

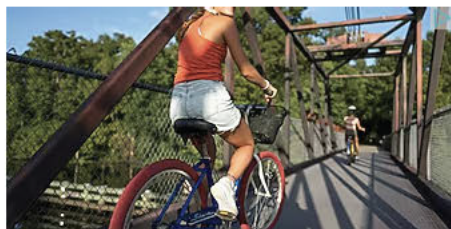
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DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin denied the report of church raids in a statement to RNS.

“Stop with the smears,” the statement read. “ICE does not raid churches — regardless of if it is Holiday season or not. This is just another false narrative to try and demonize our brave ICE law enforcement who are facing a 1000% increase in assaults against them and a 8000% increase in death threats.”

However, McLaughlin did not rule out a raid on a church, saying in the statement, “If a dangerous illegal alien felon were to flee into a church, or a child sex offender was working as an employee, there may be a situation where an arrest is made to protect public safety.”

Southern Baptist leaders said they have had no discussion with the DHS about any raids on churches.

“Neither the SBC President nor the Executive Committee has participated in briefings or been in any discussions with governmental officials about these immigration enforcement operations,” Brandon Porter, the SBC Executive Committee’s vice president for communications, told RNS in an email.

Pressley, who is pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, told RNS he’d had no contact with DHS.

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“It’s completely fabricated. All false,” Pressley told RNS in a text.

Pressley said that if he had been asked about raids on churches, he would have opposed them.

“Law and order should prevail and can prevail without raiding churches,” he said.



Even so, the Rev. Dave Woessner, an Episcopal priest who lives in Worcester and works for the Massachusetts Council of Churches, said the article caught local church leaders by surprise. The website in question generally covers local news and is not known for investigative journalism. At first, the story caused alarm as it began to spread through social media.

Woessner said local church leaders are concerned but in a holding pattern, waiting to see if a larger news outlet might confirm the story.

“We didn’t want to panic,” he said, adding that church leaders are preparing for the worst, in case the story turns out to be true.



John Keough. (Courtesy photo)

John Keough, a 43-year-old local reporter, media consultant and former staffer for the Baptist Churches of New England, stood by his reporting in an interview with RNS, saying he wrote the story to warn churches. He said the issue is personal to him: A Hispanic congregation had taken him in when he got out of prison after being convicted on charges related to a home invasion in his 20s. It helped him reintegrate into society, and he said he still has close ties to local Spanish-speaking churches. He got to know some DOJ officials while reporting on an investigation into the Worcester Police Department.

Keough said one of those officials, a fellow Christian, told him about the possible raids, and that led him to look into the story. He’d already

been concerned about ICE activity in Worcester, especially after a 16-year-old girl was arrested in May.

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”That doesn’t line up for me with America,” he said.

Keough said he’d already seen that Spanish-speaking worshippers were staying away from churches out of fear of ICE, and he feared things could get worse. Then, he heard that ICE had conducted an immigration enforcement action on the grounds of a church in Charlotte last weekend, which pushed him to publish the story.

“I hope the administration will back off on the plan a little bit and maybe think twice,” he said. “Maybe we shouldn’t be doing this in America.”

DOJ officials in Massachusetts and Rhode Island did not respond to a request for comment.

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The Rev. Laura Everett, executive director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, has been fielding calls and emails from pastors and other church leaders who read the story and are worried about possible raids. She and other staffers have been trying to sort out whether the stories about raids are true and helping churches prepare to protect parishioners.

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“At a minimum, what we need to be doing is ensuring the safety of all of God’s people,” she said.

Everett said churches have been worried about potential raids ever since the Trump administration ended the restriction on raids at sensitive locations. The Massachusetts Council of Churches is one of a number of religious groups suing the Trump administration over the policy change. The latest rumors have only made things worse, she said.

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In Atlanta, the Pentecostal pastor said most of his congregation has some type of legal documents, but even for them, “the fear comes because of the separation of their families, children, wives, husbands.” With the whispers of massive raids, the “uncertainty of what will happen, will they come? Will they not come?” looms large, he said

Church members felt reassured early on in Trump’s second term that immigration enforcement would target criminals, and the pastor encouraged members to pay any fines and get right with the law. But, by now, they’ve seen news reports of immigration enforcement outside churches and cases where immigration authorities don’t appear to respect someone’s documents.

The congregation has drastically rolled back its street evangelization ministry for fear of being out in public too long. Yet despite lingering anxiety, the pastor said he did not want to cancel Thursday worship if it was not necessary.

As of Thursday, increased immigration enforcement activity had not been reported in Atlanta, and the pastor said he hadn’t seen anything notable.

“The Bible demands that we pray for people in positions of authority, and our only desire is to serve God freely without any fear,” the pastor said.

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