

Response to the DHS “Operation Catch of the Day”
A Pastoral Message and helpful information from our Conference Minister

Beloved Laity and Ministers, friends and members of the Maine Conference,

Many of you are aware that what Governor Mills predicted last week has come to pass this week. ICE has increased presence in the Portland and Lewiston areas, as well as in Biddeford and other areas in Cumberland and York Counties. We do not know if their “operation” will extend to other parts of Maine in the coming days and weeks. Although ICE has been present in Maine for some time, this increase is alarming and devastating for our immigrants whom we serve and protect. Some news cycles have reported that ICE is now entering private homes even without a judicial warrant, a clear violation of federal law. What is going on in our country and our state is unprecedented and has left us reeling with questions about how do we respond? How do we protect?

Above all, please remain calm in peaceful and nonviolent protest and do not attempt to stop ICE officials. Please do not put yourselves in harm’s way. Getting hurt or killed will not further the cause for peace or justice for anyone.

If you are in the presence of ICE detaining someone and wish to videotape, learn how to safely document. This is a helpful, short video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnazGTC7H5o>.

Here are some suggestions of what we can do:

Stay informed by ILAP on latest updates: [Law and Policy Updates](#) - January 12th When attempting to discern information rushing in at us from social media about ICE presence, resist the temptation to re-post until the information is fact-checked by the statewide verifier training program hotline: 207-544-9989 run by Presente! (and tied to the MIRC hotline).

Sign the “Prophetic Witness” statement that you received from me and Social Action. Our legislators need to hear voices from people of faith. The link is here: <https://forms.gle/76etCxrPH1L6CFzL8>

There is a gathering of faith leaders from across the state at a solidarity rally planned for this Saturday in Lewiston. Here is a link where folks can sign up.. https://actionnetwork.org/events/faith-leader-attendance-at-ice-them-out-protecting-our-neighbors-across-maine-solidarity-rally?source=direct_link&

There are local/regional groups of clergy organizing for mutual aid, etc. Encourage faith leaders to connect to the one in their area. The one in Portland has been up and running the longest. UCC clergy who are very active in it include Christine Dyke and Bryan Breault. Jodi Hayashida is organizing one in Lewiston-Auburn.

There is also an opportunity for people of faith--clergy and lay--to bear prayerful moral witness every Wednesday at the Cumberland County Jail ICE Detention Facility in Portland. This is not a protest. It is a prayer vigil with silence, prayers, and songs. Signs must be nonviolent, not vulgar, and nonpartisan.

For members of the white community (and that is most of us), please keep in mind that we need to listen carefully to people of color regarding what they need from us and how they wish for us to respond. Rushing in is no less analogous to claiming our white privilege that “knows best.” Please follow the lead of our immigrant neighbors and immigrant-led organizations when deciding on taking any actions.

Beloved, right now it appears that there is less and less we can do to change policy or to protect legally. I pray that will change. For now, let us gather together in solidarity, peaceful protest, offer our immigrant friends as much support and protection as we can, pray fervently, love fearlessly with extravagance.

I am with each and all of you with love and partnership, support and solidarity. Please contact me with ideas or for conversation anytime. mlaviola@maineucc.org

Marisa