



# Peace Advocate News

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matthew 5:9*

Peace begins when you make your peace with Jesus, accept Him as Savior, and follow Him as Lord.

Special Issue April 2025

## **We Live In Unprecedented Times When the Words of God in Leviticus & of Jesus In Matthew Still Matter**

*"Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 19:34 Common English Bible)*

*"For I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35)*

**In response to the unprecedented situation in which we find ourselves, the Church of the Brethren joined with other people of faith in an Ash Wednesday Declaration: Defining Refuge. The Declaration says in part:**

*Together in faith and rooted in love, we resolve to continue in the centuries-old practice of Christian communities walking alongside refugees and immigrants in their pursuit of safety and dignity. We pledge to restore and promote hospitality and welcome to those seeking refuge – regardless of where they are from, how they pray or what language they speak.*

*This is a critical moment in the history of our nation and our world. Refugee and immigrant communities in the United States are increasingly the subject of misinformation, cruelty, fearmongering and criminalization, while government policies seek to decimate our nation's long-standing commitment to welcoming and protecting those seeking safety.*

*Amidst an unprecedented wave of human displacement driven by conflict, persecution and the widening impacts of climate change, the federal government now seeks to: ban refugees from entering our country, revoke temporary protected status for immigrants unable to safely return home, undermine the 14th Amendment's right to birthright citizenship, suspend foreign assistance to at-risk families around the world, erode the sanctity of places of worship, and dismantle our national capacity to assist refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants both at home and abroad.*

*Guided by our faith, we stand together against the sweeping measures that are devastating vulnerable families and jeopardizing their futures. These actions not only cause immediate harm but also threaten our country's long-term ability to welcome and support those in need.*

*We grieve for the families who have been torn apart, had years-long reunification plans cancelled, been detained and deported, have been unjustly blocked from accessing asylum protections, and have been left without access to the basic assistance they need to thrive.*

*Our faith communities share a long history of working together to welcome refugees and immigrants into our neighborhoods, our churches, our schools, our workplaces and our lives. Many of our churches first took root in the United States as immigrant churches seeking religious freedom in a new land. Refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants make our communities more vibrant, prosperous, and secure. Newcomers offer our communities the opportunity to learn more about ourselves, our world, and indeed our faith.*

*We stand united in our resolve to love our neighbor as ourselves, to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God*

*(Micah 6:8) in fellowship with the vulnerable, the outcast, the widow, the orphan, the immigrant and all persons in need.*

*We pledge to advocate for the protection of refugees, immigrants and vulnerable people seeking safety. We commit to holding our elected leaders accountable to upholding this country's values of compassion, generosity and welcome. We acknowledge that all nations have the sovereign right to enforce their borders and laws, but that they must also ensure their enforcement is fair and just.*

*We pledge to defend the rights and dignity of refugees and immigrants through prayer and faithful action. We reject attempts to dismantle this country's life-saving refugee resettlement program, to withhold protection to asylum seekers fleeing violence and persecution, to deny immigrants and refugees in our communities access to basic support, and to send families back into danger.*

*We dedicate ourselves to promoting truth, engaging in peaceful dialogue and speaking out against dehumanizing and divisive rhetoric.*

*"Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action" (1 John 3:18). Together, let us protect welcome and restore hope – for we are all truly greater as one.*

*We hereby commit ourselves to protecting and renewing the tradition of welcoming all people — regardless of where they are from, how they pray or what language they speak. As we are reminded by Jesus in Matthew 25:35, "For I was a stranger and you welcomed me." We recognize the face of Christ in each refugee and each immigrant. . .*

**Source:** "Church of the Brethren signs 'Ash Wednesday Ecumenical Declaration: Defending Refuge'", [includes full text] **Church of the Brethren Newswire**. 3-4-2025.

## **A Look At Some History**

America is a nation of immigrants. Everyone who is not of Native American decent is a descendant of immigrants. Attempts to regulate immigration started soon after America became independent. The first American immigration law was the 1790 Naturalization Act which said only free white people who had lived in the country for at least 2 years and were of "good moral character" could become citizens.

In the later 1800s, several restrictions on immigration were enacted – bans on criminals, people with contagious diseases, polygamists, anarchists, beggars and other groups. The first ethnic restrictions were on the Chinese. A couple hundred thousand Chinese (mostly men) came to the west coast 1850 – 1880 as laborers. Chinese women were not allowed in after 1875, and immigration from all of Asia was not allowed after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. It was not repealed until 1943. Even then, only 105 Chinese were allowed in each year. The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act removed race as an exclusion for immigration and naturalization, however immigration from Asia was still very limited.

1840 to 1889 90% of all immigrants came from Europe (mostly northern Europe) (70% from Germany, Ireland, & the UK)

1890 to 1919 90% of immigrants came from Europe (mostly southern & eastern Europe) (60% from Italy, Austria-Hungary, & Russia-Poland)

State and local governments were responsible for immigration and naturalization procedures till the Immigration Act of 1891 created the federal Bureau of Immigration. The following year the Ellis Island inspection station was opened to process incoming immigrants. The Naturalization act of 1906 created the Bureau of Naturalization which standardized naturalization procedures under the federal government. From 1933 to 2003 these two functions were under the Immigration and Naturalization Service. In 2003 the functions were divided again under the Department of Homeland Security.

All laws before 1965 favored Europeans – especially northern and western Europeans. At the same time, there were few restrictions on people from Latin America. Some laws were enacted to intentionally target specific ethnic or religious groups. Examples of this include quotas by country (1920s) and a ruling (1923) that declared people from India were “not white” and so could not be citizens. This ruling also stripped citizenship from Indian Americans who had already been granted citizenship and took away their right to own land. These moves were in response to fears that too many Hindus were coming into the country. The 1924 Immigration Act lowered overall immigration quotas and denied entry to anyone who could not become a citizen (only whites and people of African nativity of descent were eligible). Restrictions on Asians were expanded to specifically include the Japanese.

The end of the Bracero Program in 1964 created the need for many Mexican workers to enter the country without papers to do essential farm work since U.S. farmers continued to rely on them. This program, started in 1942, had been used since World War II to hire millions of necessary temporary agricultural workers. The need for them did not end with the end of the program.

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act ended quotas by country in favor of family reunification and people who were skilled workers. This meant having a U.S. citizen family member or needed work skills, got you in. This actually increased immigration because bringing in family members did not count toward yearly immigration limits. The law imposed the first limits on immigration from the western hemisphere. Even so, since 1965, most immigrants have come from Asia and Latin America not Europe.

Until now, “Every president since World War II has protected immigrant groups facing hardship (even if they did not meet the 1951 U.N. Convention definition of a refugee). Examples include:

- Harry S. Truman used executive authority to allow people displaced by Nazi Germany to qualify for resettlement in the U.S.
- John F. Kennedy protected Cubans who fled to the U.S. during and after the Cuban revolution.
- Ronald Reagan suspended deportation proceedings for Nicaraguans who fled that country’s revolution in 1987.

Reagan’s refusal to do the same for Salvadorans fleeing similar horrendous conditions, caused public and congressional concern that helping refugees was becoming too political and arbitrary. As a result, the Immigration Act of 1990 was passed with bipartisan support. It created Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

TPS protects people fleeing armed conflict, natural disasters, or other extraordinary circumstances from being deported. It applies to people from specific countries based on the conditions there and is granted for set periods of time based on when/if conditions in the home countries improve.

Laws passed in the 1990s and beyond have, for the most part, been to restrict immigration and penalize employers who hire unauthorized immigrants. Controlling the border has become the emphasis in part as a response to fear of terrorism and in

part for political reasons. The Real ID Act of 2005, which affects all Americans, was billed as a security measure, but largely serves to make excluding immigrants and restricting access to the protections of internationally accepted asylum rights easier. There have been exceptions to restrictive measures including the 2012 and 2014 laws to protect people brought to the U.S. without papers as children (DACA). An effort to provide similar help for parents of children who are citizens (DAPA) is on hold due to legal challenges. The current government is trying to “close the border” and end many provisions that allow people to stay in the country or seek asylum because they face persecution at home (which is an internationally accepted right).

#### Sources & Resources:

D’Vera Cohn. “How U.S. immigration laws and rules have changed through history”. *Pew Research Center*. 9-30-2015. [How U.S. immigration laws and rules have changed through history | Pew Research Center](#). This article lists & describes all U.S. immigration laws from the first.

Jeffrey S. Passel, Jens Manuel Krogstad & Mohamad Moslimani. “How the origins of America’s immigrants have changed since 1850”. *Pew Research Center*. 7-22-2024. [Where immigrants to the US come from, 1850 to today | Pew Research Center](#). This article includes a timeline graphic that shows how the dominant immigrant group in each state has changed between 1850 & 2022. “A look at the history of U.S. immigration policies that led to today’s complex.” *PBS News* [A look at the history of U.S. immigration policies that led to today’s complex system | PBS News](#)

“History of laws concerning immigration & naturalization in the United States”. *Wikipedia*.

LLF. “Some Immigration History”. *Peace Advocate News*. Vol. 12:1, Fall 2018.

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#### Some Definitions:


These terms are used to describe people who are on the move. They have left their countries and crossed borders. Especially the terms “migrant” and “refugee” are often used interchangeably but it is important to distinguish between them because there is a legal difference. Also note: the term “illegal immigrant” is a media invention. It is used by some media and politicians to capitalize on fear by getting Americans to believe refugees coming into the country are dangerous criminals who want to hurt America. In fact, the states like California with the most immigrants, are benefiting economically from their presence.

- **NEWCOMERS:** an inclusive term for all displaced people including refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and other who are displaced.
- **IMMIGRANT:** a person coming into a country where they were not born, with the intention of settling there. The person started as a non-citizen in the country where they live now and made a conscious decision to leave their home to settle in the country they are in now. *The country where they have chosen to live sees them as an immigrant.*
- **EMIGRANT:** a person who leaves the country where they were born and moves to a different country intending to settle there. The country they left considers them to be emigrants.
- **REFUGEE:** a person who has fled their own country because their life is at risk if they do not. The risks to their safety are so great that they felt they had no choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country. Most refugees do not travel far from their country because they want to go home but cannot until conditions in their country change. International law says refugees have a right to international protection.
- **ASYLUM-SEEKER:** a person who left their home country for another country where they are seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations they face at home. They have not yet been legally recognized as a refugee and are waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is considered a human right which means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.



- **MIGRANT:** There is no internationally accepted legal definition of a migrant, but generally migrants are considered to be people staying outside their country of origin, who are not asylum-seekers or refugees. Migrants often leave their home temporarily and plan to return. Some will move more than once, and some will plan to settle in a new place. Some migrants are seeking work, study or to join family. Some feel they must leave because of poverty, political unrest, gang violence, the effects of climate change, natural disasters or other serious circumstances. Some may not qualify as a refugee but are still in danger if they return home. Like all newcomers, migrants are entitled to have their human rights protected in the country in which they now reside.
- **DACA RECIPIENT:** DACA stands for “deferred action for childhood arrivals”. It is intended to protect certain undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children, under the age of 16, from removal proceedings. DACA recipients have lived in the US for most of their lives and have no memory of or ties to any other home.

**Sources:** Immigration Basic Forum. A PowerPoint presentation to the Mission & Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren. Used with permission.

UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency. [Refugee Data Finder - Definition](#)  


### Why Do People Flee Their Home?

First, people who feel safe and live in conditions that allow them to survive and thrive do not flee their homes. Why people do flee is a complex question. A primary reason for many is because their lives are threatened. People from many parts of the world live under the threat of violence. Fleeing their homes is not a choice, it is often their only option if they want to survive. Most who flee try to reach the closest place where they hope for safety because they plan to return home when it is safe, but for many that day will never come. For others, the violence they face is crushing poverty and a system that cannot or will not assure them that their basic survival needs will be met. These people want to work and support their families but are not able to do so for reasons beyond their control in their home countries.

The issues involved in solving the problems that led to violence that cause people to flee their homes are complex with deep roots. Most refugees, asylum seekers, and many other newcomers are fleeing, their own leaders or disgruntled factions in their home countries who are willing to use their own people as pawns to get power, control, or revenge. In most places, the policies or decisions made by outsiders—be it neighbor nations, former ‘colonial powers,’ or current world leaders – have contributed to the problems involved. Some of the decisions that led to current problems were made decades ago. . .

For many, their race or ethnicity is a factor in that they are minority groups in their countries and are being blamed for whatever problems the country may be having. Longstanding feuds between ethnic groups play a role. In several Central American countries, violence – be it from drug related ‘wars’, civil power struggles if not actual civil war, or gang violence on a scale we cannot imagine, is causing many people to flee their homes in search of life and safety. For others, years of inept or corrupt local governments have been a major factor in creating economic situations in which survival is barely possible. It is all too often true that their home countries will not be able to make the needed changes, that will allow people to return home safely, quickly or without help from the world community because of the role outside interests continue to play in their circumstances.

**Source:** Brian J. Hoffman, “Refugees At Our Border: What’s Going On.” An ACN sponsored presentation at Ashland University February 16, 2016.

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## Laws Governing the Treatment of Newcomers

Regardless of how or why people arrive in a country, they have the same rights as everyone else. There are also special or specific protections for them under international law including:

- The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (Article 14), which states that everyone has the right to seek & enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries
- The 1951 [UN Refugee Convention](#) (& its 1967 Protocol), which protects refugees from being returned to countries where they risk being persecuted
- The [1990 Migrant Workers Convention](#), which protects migrants & their families
- Regional Refugee law instruments (including 1969 OAU Convention, 1984 Cartagena Declaration, Common European Asylum System & Dublin Regulation)

All people have rights under the U.S. constitution regardless of their immigration status. It is important that people know their rights, particularly in this time when there is a lot of misinformation floating around and “in the face of the hate speech dominating many national conversations around immigration.” All people are entitled to due process. However, several things make assuring that immigrant’s rights are protected difficult. One is that immigration and deportation proceedings are civil court not criminal court matters. Criminal courts are required to provide legal representation for people brought before the court, but civil courts are not. This means most people will have to face immigration proceedings without a lawyer because there are not enough nonprofit legal services available, and most cannot afford a private attorney. The situation is compounded by the fact that many people in these circumstances do not understand English and/or do not understand the legal proceedings they are caught up in. People without legal representation are far less likely to be granted asylum or receive other legal status or protections their situation qualifies them for.

### Immigrants Should Know:

There are steps immigrants can take to decrease their chances of detection, to protect themselves in the event of contact with ICE, and to prepare if a loved one is placed in removal (deportation) proceedings. People need to know their rights.

- Get an immigration “check-up” with a good immigration attorney so you know your options.
- Have a family plan in the event of ice contact that includes childcare provisions if a parent is detained, and an accessible file containing important documents.
- Make sure children have passports. Consider registering the births of children born in the U.S. with the parent’s home country. This may confer certain benefits to the children should they have to relocate to their parents’ home country.
- Know what documents to carry. People should carry a valid green card or work permit, if they have one. If not, it is generally advisable to carry a state or municipal id, or state driver’s license, if it was issued in the United States and contains no information about a person’s immigration status or country of origin. People should not carry any documentation about their country of origin, should not carry any false identity or false immigration documents, and should not carry documents that are not theirs. Everyone can carry a red card. (see below)
- If you are a lawful permanent resident, apply for citizenship. Check with a credible immigration attorney to make sure there are no issues with your case. Citizenship should protect you from deportation and will put you in a better position to help family members without immigration status. <http://newamericanscampaign.org/> can help with naturalization information.

Churches can help with that education. Congregations are also helping people with legal representation, plans for caring for children if parents are taken, and other matters.

The following basic information should be available to everyone. It is available on a card (usually red) that will fit in your wallet. *Churches and districts can make their own copies of the Immigrant Legal Resource Center's (ILRC) "Red Cards" for distribution. These cards help people assert their rights and defend themselves in many situations, such as when ICE agents go to a home. Information about the cards and masters to print them can be downloaded from [www.ilrc.org/red-cards-tarjetas-rojas](http://www.ilrc.org/red-cards-tarjetas-rojas).*

### Here is the text from the ILRC Red Cards:

#### You have constitutional rights:

- DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR if an immigration agent is knocking on the door.
- DO NOT ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS from an immigration agent if they try to talk to you. You have the right to remain silent.
- DO NOT SIGN ANYTHING without first speaking to a lawyer. You have the right to speak with a lawyer.
- If you are outside of your home, ask the agent if you are free to leave and if they say yes, leave calmly.
- GIVE THIS CARD TO THE AGENT. If you are inside of your home, show the card through the window or slide it under the door.

I do not wish to speak with you, answer your questions, or sign, or hand you any documents based on my 5th Amendment rights under the United States Constitution.

I do not give you permission to enter my home based on my 4th Amendment rights under the United States Constitution unless you have a warrant to enter, signed by a judge or magistrate with my name on it that you slide under the door.

I do not give you permission to search any of my belongings based on my 4th Amendment rights.

I choose to exercise my constitutional rights.

Another card that may be helpful, especially for people with limited English skills, is about the right to remain silent. It reads:

#### I AM EXERCISING MY RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT

Please be informed that I am choosing to exercise my right to remain silent. I am also exercising my right to refuse to sign anything until my attorney reviews it. If I am detained, I request to contact my attorney immediately. My attorney's contact information is: [a place for the lawyer's name and contact information]

#### I know that...

- ① I have rights. I have dignity. I am not alone.
- ② I have the right to speak to my attorney.
- ③ I have the right to refuse to sign anything before my attorney reviews it.
- ④ Anything I say can be used against me.
- ⑤ I have the right to remain silent in ANY situation.
- ⑥ I can show officials this card or say out loud that I am remaining silent.

#### Congregations Should Know:

US churches (along with schools, hospitals, medical clinics, and domestic violence shelters) have historically been off-limits to immigration authorities because of their legal designation of "sensitive" status within communities. This is currently no longer the case, and these institutions now face the prospect of federal agents entering their premises to search for and arrest newcomers. While a lawsuit to stop this change is before the courts, immigration and customs enforcement ICE agents can now enter public areas of churches, and other sensitive locations—without permission. Areas open to the public include lobbies, waiting areas, or parking lots. However, ICE does not have the authority to stop, question, or arrest people without a warrant or

probable cause in these public spaces. All arrests still require a warrant or probable cause. Probable cause can be established through questioning of individuals who disclose their immigration status or documentation that indicates they are noncitizens. People have the right not to answer questions.

While ICE agents are now free to enter public spaces within your church, they can be prohibited from entering private areas of your church building, unless they have a judicial warrant or express permission.

The fourth amendment protects areas where people have a "reasonable expectation of privacy." The definition of a private area can differ depending on the institution, but it essentially means a space is not freely accessible to the public. This could include interiors or areas marked with a private sign. For example, most K-12 schools are generally considered private areas since they have restrictions around who has access to the building and require visitors to check in at a front office for security reasons before entering the building. Many congregations, similarly, have private areas like children's ministry spaces, bathrooms, and other areas that are off-limits to the public.

In such private areas, congregations can require ICE agents to show a judicial warrant to enter this portion of the building.

If an ICE officer shows up at your church, ask if they have a judicial warrant (meaning a warrant signed by a judge, and not another ICE officer). If they do not, feel free to turn them away from private areas within the church building.

If they do come, communicate with them, informing them that they will need to speak with the senior pastor and your legal counsel (if you have one) before proceeding inside.

#### To be ready for an ICE encounter and to best protect people:

1. Develop a written response policy & preparedness plans in advance.
2. Designate an authorized person to review warrants & subpoenas. [Someone who understands the different types]\*
3. Understand the distinction between public and private areas.
4. Train non-authorized staff & volunteers on how to respond to ICE requests.
5. Document all interactions with immigration enforcement.
6. Connect with immigration response networks in your area.

#### Congregations Should Consider:

Given new government policy changes, congregations may want to develop new security protocols for entering certain portions of the sanctuary to adhere to the law. If you are interested in designating private spaces within your church building:

- Use signage such as "private – staff only" or "private – registered members only."
- Secure doors with locks or keycard systems if possible.
- Maintain written policies restricting access to sensitive areas.

**Sources:** Immigration Basic Forum. A PowerPoint presentation to the Mission & Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren. Used with permission.

\*National Immigration Law Center. "Warrants & Subpoenas: What to Look Out for & How to Respond" Fact Sheet. 1-28-2025. <https://www.nilc.org/resources/warrants-and-supoenas-facts/>

Founa A. Badet. "Intercultural Ministries Advisory Committee Encourages Churches To Help Members Know Their Rights". Church of the Brethren Newsline 1-16-2025.

This article contains information on the Red "Know Your Rights" cards. There are also links to resources on legal rights including the National Immigration Law Center. Church of the Brethren Immigration Resources. In response to concerns raised by congregations in their districts related to potential detention & deportation among members of the Church of the Brethren, a group of church districts is working cooperatively to provide resourcing & support to affected congregations & to the whole church. If you or your congregation has a special interest in this work or needs assistance, Contact Beth Sollenberger at [atlanticsoutheastcob@gmail.com](mailto:atlanticsoutheastcob@gmail.com) as the point of contact to access support or to contribute to this work.