



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 30, 2025

Statement on Immigration Enforcement Policy

We recognize that recent political developments in the nation are causing heightened anxiety and fear across many of our communities. The reversal of “protected area” policies relative to immigration enforcement has generated great concern for church and school communities that have historically been respected as sacred and safe spaces for individuals to practice their faith. The disruptive and potentially traumatic impact of immigration enforcement in houses of worship and schools runs afoul of more humane enforcement approaches toward these sensitive areas.

Our values on these matters emerge directly from biblical imperatives to love and support the “stranger” or immigrant (Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:18, 24:14; Psalm 146:9; Jer. 22:3). We, therefore, affirm the sacred responsibility of our institutions to support the vulnerable and uphold the rights of the marginalized in society. Additionally, we value the humanity of all people regardless of their place of origin and categorically reject any effort to broadly describe immigrant communities as sub-human, eating their neighbors’ pets, murderers, rapists, or other xenophobic characterizations.

As we continue to respect the laws of our land, we must safeguard and defend the constitutional rights of immigrant communities. Immigrant families bring great value to our society, pay taxes, help run essential services, and enrich our communities with the beauty of diversity. Therefore, included with this statement is policy guidance for our church and school leaders to assist in navigating this new environment on immigration enforcement.

During this time of uncertainty and fear, our pastors and educational staff stand ready to provide spiritual support and assistance to families negatively impacted by these policy changes. As a faith community, we will continue to be guided by Christ's admonition to "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:39). Indeed, Christ's compassionate mandate that when "I was a stranger you took me in" (Matt. 25:35) reinforces our unwavering commitment to support the least of these. During this challenging time, we recommit to the values of love, compassion, justice, and community as the necessary counterweights to fear. We encourage other people of faith and conscience to join us in this stand.

Signed:

Elder Roger Bernard,

President, Central States Conference/ President, Regional Presidents Council

Dr. Carlton P. Byrd,

President, Southwest Region/ Vice President, Regional Presidents Council

Dr. Trevor Kinlock,

President, Allegheny East

Elder Marvin C. Brown,

President, Allegheny West Conference

Elder Garth Gabriel,

President, Lake Region Conference

Dr. Eldeen King,

President, Northeastern Conference

Elder Calvin B. Preston,

President, South Atlantic Conference

Elder Benjamin Jones, Jr.,

President, South Central Conference

Dr. Michael Owusu,

President, Southeastern Conference

Elder Virgil Childs,

Vice President, Pacific Union

Elder EuGene Lewis,

Vice President, North Pacific Union

Dr. W. T. Cox, Sr.,

Executive Director, Regional Conference Retirement Plan (RCRP)

Elder Dana C. Edmond,

Office for Regional Conference Ministries (ORCM)