

The statement below was prepared by the bishops of Region 1 of the ELCA -- the Alaska Synod, the Northwest Washington Synod, the Southwestern Washington Synod, the Oregon Synod, the Northwest Intermountain Synod, and the Montana Synod. It reflects how the teachings of the Bible and the Lutheran tradition can inform how we think about immigration and the individuals who are immigrants. If you would like to talk with me about these issues, please contact me.

Peace,
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**Region 1 of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.

A Statement on Immigration

As Lutherans, we are called to live out the teachings of Jesus Christ, who welcomed strangers and emphasized love, mercy, and justice for all people. We believe that every human being, regardless of their country of origin or legal status, is created in the image of God and has inherent dignity and worth. This foundational truth compels us to approach the issue of immigration with compassion and a commitment to the common good.

Scripture repeatedly instructs us to love our neighbor and show the stranger hospitality. God commands the people of Israel, "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself" (Leviticus 19:34). Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) shows us that caring for people in need is central to who we are as Christians. The parable also challenges us to acknowledge the goodness in all people because the "foreigner" in the story is the one who acts in the most Christlike way. In light of these teachings, we advocate for an immigration policy that reflects Christ's love, recognizing that all people deserve respect and protection.

The Lutheran tradition emphasizes both mercy and justice. Justice requires everyone, including immigrants, to be treated fairly and equitably. While upholding the rule of law is important, it must not be done in ways that dehumanize or exploit vulnerable people. We are especially concerned about the possibility that places of worship, hospitals, and schools could be the target of deportation raids. A policy that allowed such raids would increase the suffering not only of undocumented people but also of many people who would fear being unjustly targeted and thus avoid those places. Denying people the opportunity to attend worship, be educated, or receive medical treatment violates individuals' fundamental rights. We urge those in government and law enforcement who are responsible for the detention or deportation of undocumented persons to consider how their actions might be seen in the eyes of God.

We are all members of the same human family. Therefore, we approach immigration not merely as a political or legal issue but as a matter of human solidarity. The health and prosperity of the United States are intertwined with the contributions and lives of immigrants. Immigrants bring diverse gifts and play an essential role in our communities and economies. Our immigration policies should reflect a commitment to the welfare of all, especially the most vulnerable.

As people who have received God's mercy and grace, we are called to extend that same mercy and grace to others. This means offering opportunities for new beginnings, particularly for those already present in the United States without legal documentation. A just immigration policy would provide pathways to citizenship for those who have lived in the U.S. for years, contributing to the country and integrating into our communities. It should also

guarantee protection for those fleeing violence or persecution, ensure that immigrant families remain united, and make sure that children are not punished for their parents' actions.

We are called, as individuals and as a society, to remember that the immigrants among us are not intruders or enemies but bearers of the image of God, deserving of our care, respect, and advocacy.

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