

Resources for Congregations
When ICE shows up
October 2025

The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont is committed to protecting the rights of all who come through our doors, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment free of barriers, regardless of a person's immigration status.

Consistent with the rule of law, the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont honors valid judicial warrants. Any request for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or any other agency to come onto the property in search of a person or persons must be accompanied by a legal and valid warrant **signed by a judge** (examples are on pages 4 and 5). Unless someone from immigration law enforcement (ICE and/or Homeland Security) presents a judicial warrant, they may not enter any church buildings. **A DHS/ICE Administrative Warrant is not signed by a judge and as such cannot compel the church to permit entry.**

Without prior authorization from the Chancellor of the Diocese, The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont does not consent to non-local law enforcement accessing church facilities; church personnel may not give consent without such authorization.

The Task Force on Becoming a Sanctuary Diocese recommends that congregations immediately do the following:

1. ➤ Develop a written response policy & preparedness plans in advance.
2. ➤ Make sure leadership knows the following:
If ICE appears on your premises: If ICE comes to your premises, you must call the Chancellor (or another attorney as Chancellor's Designee) to obtain consultation and consent. **Asking agents to wait gives time to evaluate any warrant and to collect thoughts for a difficult situation. Advise the officer that they must wait outside the church buildings and off church property while you obtain guidance from counsel.**
3. ➤ Designate an authorized person to review warrants & subpoenas. (C.f., point 2)
➤ Understand the distinctions between public and private areas. **Take these IMPORTANT STEPS FOR ALL FORMERLY PROTECTED AREAS:**
Identify non-public spaces. ICE agents may enter public spaces that are open to congregants but cannot enter private areas such as offices and rectories. Places of worship should clearly delineate what areas are private and/or if areas are only open to the public at certain times.
➤ Train non-authorized staff & volunteers on how to respond to ICE requests. (C.f., point 2)
4. ➤ **Document all interactions with immigration enforcement.**
5. ➤ **Connect with immigration response networks in your area.**
6. ➤ **If someone needs access to a lawyer who specializes in immigration law, text or call one of the four members of the task force listed below, who can give provide you with a name. NOTE that the congregation will not be the client, only the individual who needs a lawyer.**

The Rev'd Canon Walter Brownridge (802-391-6234)

The Rev'd Canon Lee Alison Crawford (802-279-5164)

Craig Hammond (802-380-4257)

The Rev'd Susan McMillan (802-777-0847)

Most important: Do not promise anyone (i.e., refugees and immigrants without legal status) something that you cannot deliver on. The legal authority of ICE is broad, and it will not be difficult for them to obtain administrative warrants, and only slightly harder to obtain judicial warrants.

RESOURCES

Most everything one needs pertaining to these situations can be found here:

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/immigration-action-toolkit/#knowrights>

For rights cards to print out on stock paper, go to

https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/ilrc-red_card_template-spanish-v2.pdf

Content is as follows:

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.

These cards are available to citizens and non-citizens alike.

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Recent Update on the Sensitive Locations Lawsuit from the President of the House of Deputies, Julia Ayala Harris, 29 September 2025

Dear Fellow Deputies and Beloved Leaders in Christ,

Sacred spaces should never be places of fear. Yet today, our sanctuaries are less safe because of a harmful policy change.

For more than thirty years, the federal government's "sensitive locations" policy protected churches, schools, and hospitals from immigration enforcement, recognizing these as sacred and essential community spaces. That protection was abruptly rescinded in January. Since then, many congregations, including Episcopal churches, have experienced real harm: sharp declines in worship attendance and ministry participation, increased fear among members, immigrant and nonimmigrant alike, and costly security measures that conflict with our call to hospitality.

Earlier this year, The Episcopal Church joined a broad interfaith coalition in filing suit to challenge this rescission. This week, our case has moved forward on appeal with the filing of the opening brief in *Mennonite Church USA v. Department of Homeland Security*. The brief makes clear why restoring protections for houses of worship is essential to religious freedom, public safety, and the integrity of our ministries.

Both the Presiding Bishop and I submitted declarations in support of this case, bearing witness to the harm faced by our communities when sacred spaces are no longer safe. In my declaration, I spoke not only from my role as President of the House of Deputies, but also from lived experience as a first-generation American and the daughter of an undocumented Mexican immigrant.

You can read the *Mennonite Church USA v. DHS – Opening Brief* in the link below.

As deputies and leaders in this church, I encourage you to study this case closely. The outcome of this litigation will shape not only the legal landscape, but also the spiritual terrain in which future generations will practice their faith. May our advocacy be grounded not in political positioning, but in our deepest theological convictions: that every person bears the image of God, that our churches must remain spaces of sanctuary and welcome, and that religious freedom means the freedom to practice our faith fully, including our call to love the stranger.

Let us continue to hold this work in prayer, trusting that even in these challenging times, the Spirit continues to move, calling us toward a more expansive vision of beloved community.

Your sister in Christ,

Julia Ayala Harris

President, House of Deputies

<https://www.law.georgetown.edu/.../Mennonite-Church-USA-v...>

Appendix A: Sample Judicial Warrant – AO 95 (Rev. 11/15) Search and Seizure Warrant

AO 95 (Rev. 11/15) Search and Seizure Warrant

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

In the Matter of the Search of)
(briefly describe the property to be searched)
or identify the person by name and address)) Case No.
)
)
)

SEARCH AND SEIZURE WARRANT

To: Any authorized law enforcement officer

An application by a federal law enforcement officer or an attorney for the government requests the search of the following person or property located in the District of
(Identify the person or describe the property to be searched and give its location):

I find that the affidavit(s), or any recorded testimony, establish probable cause to search and seize the person or property described above, and that such search will reveal (Identify the person or describe the property to be seized):

YOU ARE COMMANDED to execute this warrant on or before (not to exceed 14 days)
in the daytime (6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) at any time in the day or night because good cause has been established.

Unless delayed notice is authorized below, you must give a copy of the warrant and a receipt for the property taken to the person from whom, or from whose premises, the property was taken, or leave the copy and receipt at the place where the property was taken.

The officer executing this warrant, or an officer present during the execution of the warrant, must prepare an inventory as required by law and promptly return this warrant and inventory to (United States Magistrate Judge)

Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3103a(b), I find that immediate notification may have an adverse result listed in 18 U.S.C. § 2705 (except for delay of trial), and authorize the officer executing this warrant to delay notice to the person who, or whose property, will be searched or seized (check the appropriate box)

for days (not to exceed 30) until, the facts justifying, the later specific date of

Date and time issued: Judge's signature

City and state: Printed name and title

Appendix B: Sample Immigration (DHS) Warrant – Form I-200 (Rev. 09/16)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY Warrant for Arrest of Alien

File No. _____

Date: _____

To: Any immigration officer authorized pursuant to sections 236 and 287 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and part 287 of title 8, Code of Federal Regulations, to serve warrants of arrest for immigration violations

I have determined that there is probable cause to believe that _____ is removable from the United States. This determination is based upon:

- the execution of a charging document to initiate removal proceedings against the subject;
- the pendency of ongoing removal proceedings against the subject;
- the failure to establish admissibility subsequent to deferred inspection;
- biometric confirmation of the subject's identity and a records check of Federal databases that affirmatively indicate, by themselves or in addition to other reliable information, that the subject either lacks immigration status or notwithstanding such status is removable under U.S. immigration law; and/or
- statements made voluntarily by the subject to an immigration officer and/or other reliable evidence that affirmatively indicate the subject either lacks immigration status or notwithstanding such status is removable under U.S. immigration law.

YOU ARE COMMANDED to arrest and take into custody for removal proceedings under the Immigration and Nationality Act, the above-named alien.

(Signature of Authorized Immigration Officer)

(Printed Name and Title of Authorized Immigration Officer)

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that the Warrant for Arrest of Alien was served by me at _____
(Location)

on _____ on _____, and the contents of this
(Name of Alien) (Date of Service)

notice were read to him or her in the _____ language.
(Language)

Name and Signature of Officer

Name or Number of Interpreter (if applicable)