

Faith Statement Concerning Raids in Ellensburg

As faith leaders in the state of Washington, we express our deep concern and dismay over the recent raids that took place in Ellensburg. The separation of parents from young children, the handcuffing of teenagers, the detention of sixteen people more than 100 miles from Ellensburg, the arrest of a church pastor, the detaining of a pregnant woman and the fear sown in an entire community after the raid of three mobile home parks, lead us to challenge the necessity of ICE and Homeland Security's actions and to denounce the strategies employed to address alleged violations. Indeed, the stated reasons for the raid, the presumed development of counterfeit identity documents, do not justify the aggressive approach made toward those families affected: guns drawn, helicopters flying overhead, household members not being told of the whereabouts of their loved ones days after the raid. Several children went home to empty houses as their parents had been taken. We call upon immigration authorities to deal humanely with families, especially those arrested, and to cease these disruptive and divisive tactics that tear at our social fabric and violate the common good. There is every reason to believe that these hard-working, faith-filled and family-oriented people have contributed much to the Ellensburg community and should be left to live in peace while they seek to put food on the table to support their children. Without the alternative of a comprehensive immigration reform that keeps families together, respects civil rights and allows for pathways to residency and permanent status, this is no time to reinstate the practice of raids in housing complexes that diminish the trust given to law enforcement and so lead to the community as a whole being less protected.

We support the Episcopal, United Methodist, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Unitarian Universalist and other faith communities that have stepped forward to sustain and attempt to reunite the families impacted by this raid and we thank the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project for its legal assistance whenever possible. We also commend the many members of the Ellensburg community who are calling for accountability from law enforcement officials, and are standing together as immigrant and non immigrant to assure all human beings are treated with dignity. We call upon people of faith and good will to ask for an end to these raids and for the creation of policies that go beyond enforcement only toward practices that afford all families – immigrant and non-immigrant alike - the opportunity to achieve a “sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all” in reflection of the true spirit of our nation.

The Rev. Paul Benz
Director
Lutheran Public Policy Office

Janine Larsen
District Executive
Unitarian Universalist Association of
Congregations, Pacific Northwest

The Rev. Michael Denton
Conference Minister
Pacific Northwest Conference of
The United Church of Christ

Rev. Weldon Nisly
Lead Pastor
Seattle Mennonite Church

Bishop Grant Hagiya
Pacific Northwest Conference
United Methodist Church

Michael Ramos
Executive Director
Church Council of Greater Seattle

The Rt. Rev. Gregory H. Rickel
Bishop of Olympia
The Episcopal Church in Western
Washington

Rabbi Jonathan Singer
Senior Rabbi
Temple Beth Am

Alice Woldt
Executive Director
Washington Association of Churches

Washington New Sanctuary Movement