



faithful witness

FREEDOM & DIGNITY:

DIGNITY CANNOT BE DETAINED

toolbox



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** CAMPAIGN FRAME
- 4** CORE CAMPAIGN MESSAGE
CAMPAIGN GOAL
- 5** THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS
- 7** ISSUE STRATEGY
- 8** POTENTIAL ISSUE CUTS
- 11** START WITH LISTENING
LOCAL DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS
- 12** SHARED CAMPAIGN ACTIONS
- 17** NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ALIGNMENT
- 18** SHARED PUBLIC ASK



CAMPAIGN FRAME

Every person is created in the image of God and carries inherent dignity and sacred worth. Yet across our immigration system, people are experiencing policies and practices that separate families, restrict religious freedom, disrupt churches and communities, and treat immigrant neighbors as less than fully human.

This campaign calls Christians to faithful witness wherever the dignity and freedom of immigrant neighbors are threatened.

- We believe immigrants should be free to worship, pray, access Scripture, and receive pastoral care - God's care and concern for people are not limited by legal status.
- We believe families should be protected and children should not bear the cost of immigration enforcement.
- We believe immigrants should not be subjected to unnecessary shackling, surveillance, family separation, mass dockets, or other dehumanizing treatment.
- And we believe churches must be free to care for, accompany, and stand with immigrant members of their congregations and communities.

This is not simply a political issue. It is a question of Christian discipleship: How will the Church respond when members of the Body of Christ are detained, deported, separated from their families, prevented from worshiping, or treated without dignity?

Freedom & Dignity invites Christians to move from concern to faithful action by listening to what is happening locally, organizing with others, standing alongside affected families, engaging public leaders, and advocating for policies and practices that honor the image of God in every person.

CORE CAMPAIGN MESSAGE

EVERY  PERSON
BEARS THE IMAGE
OF GOD.    

Dignity does not disappear because of immigration status. As Christians, we are called to protect the freedom of people to worship, remain connected to family and community, and be treated with dignity throughout our immigration system.

CAMPAIGN GOAL

Mobilize Christians and churches across the country to identify how immigration enforcement is affecting people of faith, families, and congregations in their communities and take coordinated public action to protect religious freedom, family unity, and human dignity. The campaign will connect locally rooted action to a shared national Christian witness.



THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Imago Dei

The truth that all people are made in the image of God, the imago Dei, is at the root of our human story (**Genesis 1:26–27**). Yet the reality that humanity will consistently fail to recognize and value one another as image bearers is found there too. In the first human family, Cain murders his brother Abel, consumed by jealousy over his relationship with God (**Genesis 4:3–8**). It doesn't take long before Scripture describes a world so marked by violence and wickedness that God grieves over having made humanity (**Genesis 6:5–8**). Noah, however, found favor with God, and God made a way toward restoration rather than destruction. As God establishes a covenant with Noah, he reaffirms the sacredness of the image of God:

“Whoever sheds human blood,
by humans shall their blood be shed;
for in the image of God
has God made mankind.” -**Genesis 9:6**

God takes seriously the truth that all people are made in his image, and we must as well. As believers, we treat all people with dignity because every person we encounter is an image bearer. That dignity does not change based on immigration status or country of origin. Throughout Scripture, we see repeated commands to care particularly for those who are vulnerable, including the foreigner and stranger among us.

In Exodus, God specifically warns the Israelites against oppressing the foreigner because they themselves knew what it was like to live as foreigners (**Exodus 23:9**). Later, in Leviticus, God commands the Israelites to treat the foreigner living among them as one of their own and to “love them as yourself” (**Leviticus 19:33–34**).

Jesus takes this teaching even further. In **Matthew 25**, Jesus identifies himself with the stranger, teaching that when we welcome and care for those who are vulnerable, we are welcoming and caring for Jesus himself; when we turn them away, we turn him away (**Matthew 25:31-46**).

Do not oppress the foreigner.

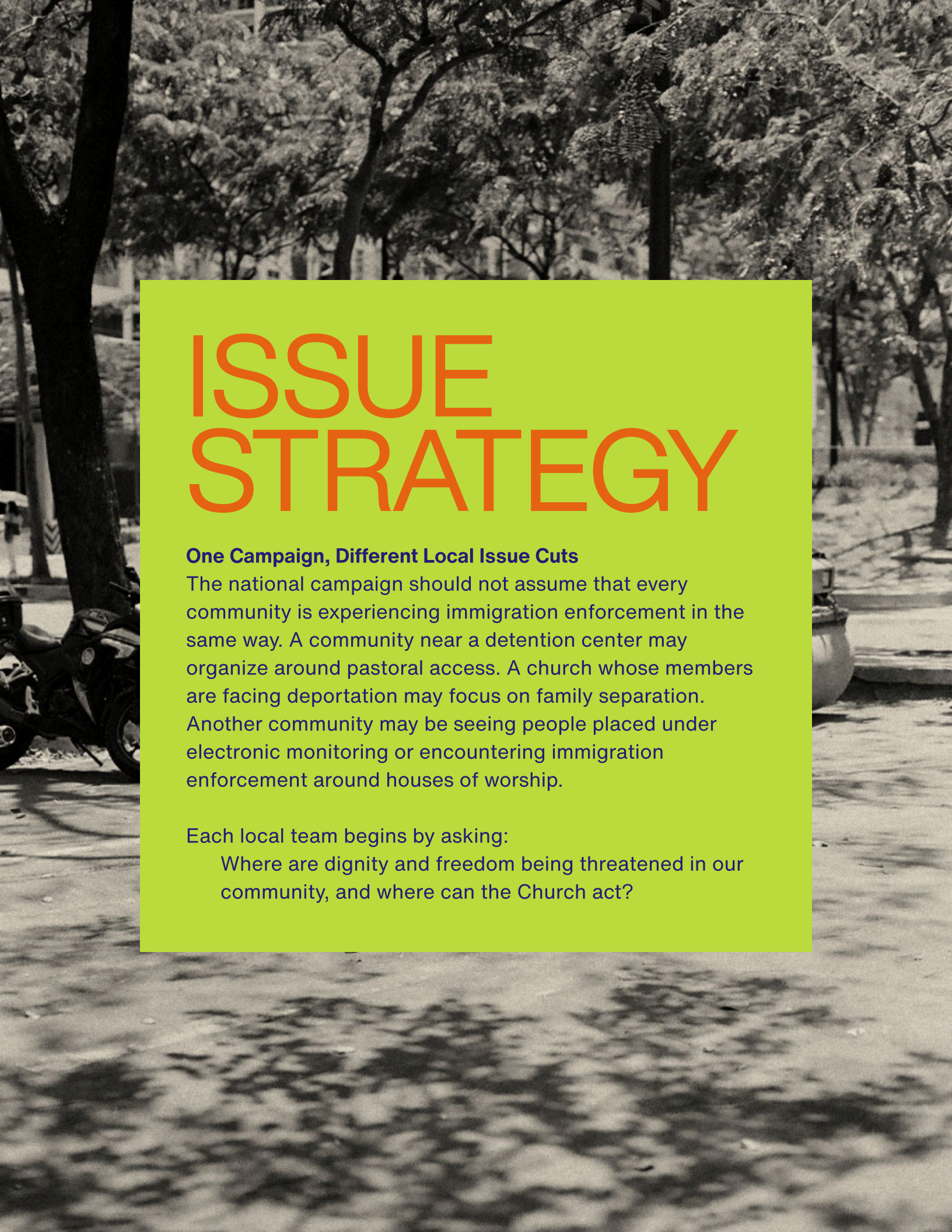
Love the foreigner as yourself.

Welcome the stranger, for in doing so, you are welcoming Christ.

For the foreigner is made in the very image of God.

We are deeply alarmed by the current treatment of immigrants in our country when it conflicts with the way Scripture calls us to treat our neighbors. As image bearers, immigrants must be treated with dignity at every stage of the immigration process, including during ICE enforcement and in detention. We are calling for the dignified treatment of our immigrant neighbors, a dignity that includes both the freedom to practice and express their faith. Join us in this campaign to call for dignity and religious freedom, bearing faithful witness to the truth that our immigrant neighbors are made in the image of God.



A black and white photograph of a park with trees and a motorcycle parked on the left. The motorcycle is parked on a paved area, and the trees are in the background, creating a dappled light effect on the ground.

ISSUE STRATEGY

One Campaign, Different Local Issue Cuts

The national campaign should not assume that every community is experiencing immigration enforcement in the same way. A community near a detention center may organize around pastoral access. A church whose members are facing deportation may focus on family separation. Another community may be seeing people placed under electronic monitoring or encountering immigration enforcement around houses of worship.

Each local team begins by asking:

Where are dignity and freedom being threatened in our community, and where can the Church act?

POTENTIAL ISSUE CUTS



1. FREEDOM TO WORSHIP

Problem: People affected by immigration enforcement may face barriers to practicing their faith, including access to worship, Scripture, religious rituals, clergy, or pastoral care. This could include people held in detention centers, county jails, federal facilities, or other forms of custody.

Possible asks:

- Guarantee access to worship and religious materials.
- Guarantee meaningful access to clergy and pastoral care.
- Ensure clergy can enter facilities to provide religious services and pastoral support.
- Prevent immigration procedures from unnecessarily interfering with religious observance.

Targets: Members of Congress, detention administrators, sheriffs, county officials, DHS or ICE leadership.

2. CHURCHES MUST BE FREE TO SHEPHERD THEIR PEOPLE

Problem: Immigration enforcement can separate pastors and churches from people they are called to shepherd and accompany. Church members may disappear from pews because they have been detained, deported, placed under monitoring, or are afraid to participate fully in church life.

Possible asks:

- Protect clergy access to detained members.
- Protect appropriate access to houses of worship and religious ministry.
- Establish clear policies that allow churches to accompany people navigating immigration proceedings.
- Remove unnecessary barriers to pastoral care and religious community.

Campaign question: What happens when immigration enforcement prevents the Church from being the Church?

3. KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER

Problem: Detention and deportation can separate parents from children, spouses from one another, and individuals from the communities that support them.

Possible asks:

- Reduce unnecessary family detention.
- Oppose unnecessary separation of parents and children.
- Protect access between detained individuals and their families.
- Support policies that allow families to remain together while navigating immigration proceedings.

Potential targets: Members of Congress, DHS, ICE, local officials, sheriffs, detention administrators.

4. DIGNITY, NOT DEHUMANIZATION

Problem: Some immigration enforcement practices can treat people primarily as risks to control rather than human beings made in the image of God.

Local teams may identify concerns such as:

- unnecessary shackling
- electronic monitoring
- Mass dockets
- degrading detention conditions
- lack of access to basic religious or pastoral care
- treatment of children and families
- other practices that undermine human dignity

Possible asks: Teams identify one concrete practice occurring locally and organize for a specific policy or practice change.

5. PROTECT SACRED SPACES AND COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

Problem: Fear of immigration enforcement can affect whether immigrant families feel safe attending worship, receiving ministry, or participating in church life.

Possible asks:

- Protect the ability of congregations to gather and worship without unnecessary interference.
- Establish clear protections for pastoral ministry and religious practice.
- Ask local and federal officials to publicly affirm the importance of religious freedom and access to worship.
- Ensure immigration procedures do not unnecessarily force people to choose between complying with government requirements and participating in religious observance.

START WITH LISTENING.

Before choosing an issue, each local team should spend time understanding what is actually happening in its community.

Teams should talk with:

- immigrant church members and families
- pastors and clergy
- immigration ministries and legal service providers
- chaplains
- people who have experienced detention, deportation, or electronic monitoring
- organizations serving immigrant communities

LOCAL DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS

1. How is immigration enforcement affecting churches and immigrant families in our community?
2. Where are people experiencing a loss of dignity or freedom?
3. What immigration enforcement practices are most visible locally?
4. Who has the power to change this?
5. What is one concrete change around which we could organize?

A black and white photograph of a busy public transit station. In the foreground, the backs of several people's heads and shoulders are visible as they wait. In the background, a tram is partially visible, and a directional sign points towards 'Tram', 'Ride and Ride / Dolmetschplatz', and 'Taxi'.

SHARED CAMPAIGN ACTIONS

Local campaigns may focus on different issues, but they should participate in a shared rhythm of Christian witness.

1. BUILD A TEAM

Gather at least three people from your congregation, organization, or community who will help lead the campaign. Include people who can help with:

- relationships
- storytelling
- clergy engagement
- organizing
- communications
- Advocacy
- Connect with the [Faithful Witness campaign](#) for ongoing coaching and support as you build your team and lead your campaign

2. LISTEN AND LEARN

Before acting publicly:

- Listen to people directly affected.
- Identify what is happening locally.
- Map the institutions and decision-makers involved.
- Identify the person or institution with the power to make change.
- Choose one clear issue and one clear ask.

3. BRING ALONG YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY

Help congregations understand that immigration enforcement is not an abstract policy debate. It is affecting people, families, and churches. Sometimes you need to do the discipleship work before doing a public action with a local, state, or federal official. Here are some suggestions:

Do a Bible Study / Prayer Gathering

What are local immigration issues you can lift up together? Consider using the Imago Dei or Religious Freedom Scripture texts and have a

discussion with a small group from your congregation. Pray together about how God might be asking you to be a faithful public witness alongside your immigrant neighbors.

Take Public Faith Action

Faith-rooted public actions could include:

- Actions at Detention Centers, county jails: Prayer vigil, jericho walks, communion service
- Pilgrimages: to detention center, on historically significant routes or locations
- public lament
- fasting
- pilgrimages
- clergy gatherings
- public declarations
- worship or prayer services focused on affected families
- press events led by clergy and immigrant Christians

4. ENGAGE YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR

Move from witness to building a relationship with your Congress representative or Senator. Having a meeting to express your concerns and beginning a relationship with your representative can go a long way. **[Here's a civic engagement toolkit to facilitate the process of meeting with your official.](#)**

Do some research on your official's website, on the official [house.gov](https://www.house.gov) website or [senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov) website. See what committees they are on and how they voted on various religious freedom bills.

Pick one of the issue cuts below to narrow down your research.

You can even consider a meeting with your member of Congress as a way to do research. Pick an issue cut and then ask them questions around it.

1. Freedom to Worship

Possible asks:

- Guarantee access to worship and religious materials.
- Guarantee meaningful access to clergy and pastoral care.
- Ensure clergy can enter facilities to provide religious services and pastoral support.
- Prevent immigration procedures from unnecessarily interfering with religious observance.

2. Churches Must Be Free to Shepherd Their People

Possible asks:

- Protect clergy access to detained members.
- Protect appropriate access to houses of worship and religious ministry.
- Establish clear policies that allow churches to accompany people navigating immigration proceedings.
- Remove unnecessary barriers to pastoral care and religious community.

3. Keep Families Together

Possible asks:

- Reduce unnecessary family detention.
- Oppose unnecessary separation of parents and children.
- Protect access between detained individuals and their families.
- Support policies that allow families to remain together while navigating immigration proceedings.

4. Dignity, Not Dehumanization

Local teams may identify concerns such as:

- unnecessary shackling
- electronic monitoring
- Mass dockets
- degrading detention conditions
- lack of access to basic religious or pastoral care
- treatment of children and families
- other practices that undermine human dignity

Possible asks: Teams identify one concrete practice occurring locally and organize for a specific policy or practice change.

5. Protect Sacred Spaces and Communities of Faith

Possible asks:

- Protect the ability of congregations to gather and worship without unnecessary interference.
- Establish clear protections for pastoral ministry and religious practice.
- Ask local and federal officials to publicly affirm the importance of religious freedom and access to worship.
- Ensure immigration procedures do not unnecessarily force people to choose between complying with government requirements and participating in religious observance.

Then, consider a possible ask/action with your community. Possible actions include:

- Nonpartisan public meetings with candidates for US House, Senate, local and county offices
- congressional meetings
- meetings with candidates or campaign staff
- meetings with sheriffs or county officials
- attending county commission or city council meetings
- attending candidate forums
- clergy delegations
- public letters
- faith leader sign-ons
- coordinated call-in days
- letter deliveries

Whenever possible, ask leaders for a specific public commitment, not simply a conversation.



NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ALIGNMENT

Local campaigns may focus on different issues, but they should participate in a shared rhythm of Christian witness.

PROTECT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

People must be able to pray, worship, access Scripture, participate in religious practices, and receive pastoral care.

Churches and clergy must be able to faithfully accompany the people they serve.

PROTECT HUMAN DIGNITY

Immigration enforcement must recognize that every person is an image bearer and should not be subjected to degrading, unnecessary, or dehumanizing treatment.

PROTECT FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Immigration policy should not unnecessarily tear parents from children, separate families, or isolate people from the communities that sustain them.

SHARED PUBLIC ASK

For the current campaign period, Christians can call on elected officials and candidates to publicly commit to advancing policies in 2027 that:

- Protect religious freedom, preserve family unity, and uphold the God-given dignity of people affected by our immigration system.



Find more resources at faithfulwitness.us

