

Jewish Reflection on Immigration – Multi-Faith Vigil, 4/3/25, on the  
“Sensitive Locations” lawsuit joined by many religious groups  
from Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb (COEJL, ASRC, TBI)

Honored to be here with you all. To see why so many Jewish groups want to keep ICE out of our houses of worship, consider the three Hebrew words for ‘synagogue’:

Most obvious, yet least common, is **Beit Tefilah**, house of prayer. Jewish prayers are mostly in the plural – over and over we hear the suffix *nu*, the word *anachnu*, WE, US. Similar is our notion of a *minyan*, a prayer quorum – if nine are gathered, we’ll wait for you, or you, or you: everyone counts. And of course, the prophet Isaiah’s famous hope: *veiti, beit tefillah yikare l’chol ha’amim* -- God says, “let My house be a house of prayer for ALL peoples.” All – no exceptions.

A more common name for synagogue is **Beit Sefer** – house of the book, house of study [school] – as all our sanctuaries are places for learning as well as for encounter. So what exactly *do* we learn, when we open our Torah, our Bible? Tonight, just two top texts – oft-cited; one already by Rabbi Liz Hirsch – but they’re worth repeating, until the politicians who piously proclaim their ‘faith’ truly hear and heed these words:



Genesis 1: “*b’tzelem Elohim bara oto*, in God’s own image did the Holy One create humanity.” Every person, since the first mythical Eve & Adam, actively bears the divine image – so all are entitled to decency, to fair treatment, to due process, to respect – no exceptions.

And Leviticus 19:33-34 (here it is again; memorize this): "When a foreigner, a *ger*, resides among you in your land, *do not mistreat* them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated **as** your native-born. **Love them** as yourself – *v’ahavtem et ha’ger!* – for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." [that last line is the Torah’s exclamation point!]

Clearly, Torah embodies a great ethos here. Important as tomorrow’s case is, dream with me for a moment: imagine if we could all be plaintiffs on a suit demanding more: a respectful reset at our borders; an immediate end to caged detentions and family separations and roundups of people whose only so-called ‘major crime’ was crossing the border, overstaying their visa, or just speaking their mind. How about extending TPS; living up to treaty commitments on refugees; instant citizenship for Dreamers; a direct path to citizenship for all 12 or however many million undocumented *human beings* are already here?! And since we’re dreaming, how about all Americans learning the facts -- on how immigrants build up our society, bring down the crime rate, and contribute greatly to our social fabric?! (!!!!)

That ICE agents shouldn't enter, and seize people from, our religious buildings – that's just the smallest piece of the puzzle. Deut. 23 is clear about the rights of wrongly detained folk: “(16) You shall not turn over to their master, a slave, who seeks refuge with you... (17) They shall live with you, in *any* place they may choose among the settlements in your midst ... you must not ill-treat them.” Biblically, and now: we will *not* turn over those under threat of wrongful detention!

Now back to these holy buildings that ICE should never enter: the *most* common name for congregation is **Beit Knesset** -- literally ‘a place where people congregate,’ a House of Assembly, of community. And that's where every religious community has a choice: be more inclusive, or exclusive –

Pray and connect and learn with only folks who look and sound and think like you, staying insular, and ossified, becoming unhealthy, even obsolete? Or:

Embrace new people, new ideas, perspectives; new accents, new flavors, new melodies, new friends, new strength **as** a community, **BECAUSE** we congregate with a wider circle of holy people. Let more and more houses of worship choose the latter – why? Because that's the path of loving God *and* neighbor *and* immigrant. And why? Because we need each other! [Refrain of the evening: “We need each other!”]



Last: look around; and consider this central room of a house of worship: the **sanctuary**. From *sanctus*, the sacred, the holy -- connoting safety, refuge, protection. May every masjid, gudwara, temple, church, and synagogue offer that refuge -- each with its own members mobilizing, plus connections *among* these myriad communities flowering.

And: since one's home is a *mikdash m'at*, mini-temple: may people be safe from roundups, in their homes! And since public spaces are our collective treasure, may all be safe on the street, at work, school, the store! And – since this very nation has, at its best, been a beacon of loving enlightened welcome – after we win this case and many others, may we again enjoy a USA that *itself* is a sanctuary, from sea to shining sea.

Amin, Om, Shanti, Sadhu, may it be so: Amen.

# Order of Service

## Sensitive Locations, Sacred Spaces Prayer Vigil

National City Christian Church | Thursday April 3rd, 2025 6:30pm

### WELCOME

REV. STEPHANIE KENDELL, NATIONAL CITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
REV. JIM WALLIS, CENTER ON FAITH AND JUSTICE

### OPENING PRAYER

REV. NANCY McDONALD LADD, UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

### RESPONSIVE SONG

RABBI LIZ P.G. HIRSCH, WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM

### READING AND PRAYER

REV. DR. LESLIE COPELAND-TUNE, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES USA

### REFLECTION

REV. IRIS DE LEÓN-HARTSHORN, MENNONITE CHURCH USA

### SONG

WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM CHOIR, ACCOMPANIED BY RABBI LIZ HIRSCH

### RESPONSIVE LITURGY

REV. LAURA EVERETT, MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL OF CHURCHES  
REV. DR. JENNIFER COPELAND, NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES  
REV. ANYRA CANO, FELLOWSHIP SOUTHWEST  
REV. JEREMY LANGILL, RHODE ISLAND STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

### READING AND PRAYER

SANDY OVALLE, SOJOURNERS

### REFLECTION

RABBI FRED SCHERLINDER DOBB, COALITION ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND  
JEWISH LIFE

### RESPONSIVE SONG

RABBI LIZ P.G. HIRSCH, WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM

### READING AND PRAYER

SISTER EILIS MCCULLOH, HM, NETWORK LOBBY

### REFLECTION

REV. CARLOS MALAVE, LATINO CHRISTIAN NATIONAL NETWORK

### CLOSING PRAYER

REV. DR. GIOVANNI ARROYO, THE GENERAL COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND  
RACE, UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
REV. DR. LYDIA MUÑOZ, EL PLAN FOR HISPANIC/LATINE MINISTRY OF THE  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH