

Approved March 9, 2025

Minute on Immigration, Sanctity of Worship and Protection of Sensitive Locations

Members of the Vassalboro Monthly Meeting of Friends seek a world free from violence, grounded in justice and alive with a community led by Spirit. We have been taught that there is “that of God in everyone” and that we must love all of our neighbors with dedication and kindness. We must be curious with differences and respect all who come before us.

We admit, knowing from the experiences of our own lives, that expressing love for all of our neighbors is not an easy practice. Anger and intolerance toward immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees and migrant populations is a historical fact around the world and, here in Maine, we are not immune from failing to welcome the stranger.

To answer the call of the inherent worth and dignity of all people, members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) stand firmly in support of the safety, rights, and religious freedoms of everyone, including immigrant communities. We believe that houses of Worship, whether Meeting Houses, Churches, Temples or Mosques, all must be free from violence or threat of violence so that all people might choose to gather to worship as they are called.

For this reason, we emphatically state that the presence of law enforcement officials, particularly in places of worship is antithetical to the Quaker peace testimony and to our belief that “there is that of God” in everyone.

As we learn of the needs of our immigrant neighbors, we see that they are also in need of safety in other sensitive locations including schools, health care facilities, places where children gather, and social services centers. These are locations where immigration enforcement activities have traditionally been prohibited in most instances. Known as “sensitive locations”, these are places where Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers have not been allowed to conduct enforcement actions including arrests, civil apprehensions, searches, interviews, and surveillance.

We firmly reject the intention of the current presidential administration to use houses of worship and other sensitive locations to conduct immigration enforcement activity. This changed policy harms families and communities and violates the values that we, as a country, profess. Under the new policies immigration enforcement operations could be conducted in churches, schools and hospitals including during religious ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals. The presence of armed government agents at or near places of worship disrupts people's ability to freely associate and worship. We believe that this abrupt shift in policy violates Federal law's prohibition against agencies of the Federal government acting arbitrarily and capriciously.

We affirm with one another that we will seek appropriate steps to protect the world to be free from violence, grounded in justice and alive with a community led by Spirit.