

Introduction to the Materials

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Rev. Minna Bothwell — updated January 2026

In a time marked by heightened fear, expanded immigration enforcement, and deep uncertainty for many immigrant and refugee neighbors, the Church is called to respond with faithfulness, wisdom, and courage. This moment requires more than good intentions - it calls for preparation rooted in love, clarity shaped by truth, and accompaniment grounded in trust.

Scripture speaks plainly: *“You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt”* (Deuteronomy 10:19), and *“I was a stranger and you welcomed me”* (Matthew 25:35). These are not abstract ideals or optional virtues. They are direct commands that shape how God’s people live, organize, and show up - especially when neighbors are at risk.

Faithful accompaniment in 2026 must be both **present and discerning**. It may involve physical presence, coordinated support, quiet protection, or intentional restraint. At times, love looks like showing up; at other times, it looks like staying back, guarding privacy, and reducing exposure. What matters most is that accompaniment is **consent-based, trauma-informed, legally aware, and centered on the dignity and safety of those most affected**.

These materials were developed in consultation with legal counsel to help congregations navigate this complex landscape with care and integrity. They offer practical guidance, protocols, and resources so communities of faith can respond calmly and consistently - protecting confidentiality, honoring legal boundaries, and sustaining ministry without fear or improvisation.

This work is urgent, but it is also holy. To prepare is not to panic. To set boundaries is not to withdraw. It is to practice faithful stewardship so that our churches may remain places of refuge, belonging, and hope. We proclaim, in word and deed: you are not alone. We will walk with you - carefully, faithfully, and together.

In Christ,
Rev. Minna Bothwell
SEIA Synod, ELCA

2026 Who is at Risk?

2026 Congregational Protocols for Advocacy and Accompaniment (Updated)

Rev. Minna Bothwell — *January 2026*

Protecting Refugees, Immigrants, and Asylum Seekers in an Escalating Enforcement Context

Recent months have seen a dramatic increase in interior immigration enforcement activities across the United States, including a *massive ICE presence in all major cities including Chicago and the Twin Cities and expanded federal operations nationwide targeting immigrants*. Enforcement actions have included aggressive tactics, widespread arrests, questions of civil-rights violations, and even fatal incidents involving federal agents.

These developments have created heightened fear among immigrants of all legal statuses - including those with pending claims or temporary protections - and underscore the need for clear, compassionate, and safety-focused protocols within our congregation.

Who Is At Risk? (Updated Context)

Important: Under current federal enforcement policy, interior ICE operations are no longer limited to individuals with serious criminal convictions, and large-scale sweeps can encompass people with no criminal record who are simply present without (and with) permanent status. Detention and deportation actions have escalated sharply nationwide, with federal operations described as unprecedented in scale.

U.S. citizens and law enforcement officers have been *wrongfully stopped or questioned by ICE agents*, raising deep concerns about community trust and rights violations.

General Note

Any individual with unresolved immigration status - *regardless of whether they have a work permit, valid driver's license, or pending case* - faces a substantially increased risk of detention or deportation in the current enforcement environment.

Category A: Individuals with Temporary Humanitarian Status

Examples: Recipients of special parole programs (e.g., for Venezuelans, Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans).

Updated Risk Level:

Extremely high. The original temporary parole programs have been rescinded, and protections once considered stable are now aggressively rolled back. Legal status that once reduced enforcement attention no longer guarantees safety.

Guidance

- Minimize solo travel and public exposure when possible.
 - Arrange trusted accompaniment for essential outings.
 - Maintain regular contact with legal counsel and monitor documentation expiration.
 - Develop written plans for childcare, financial responsibility, and health decisions, with trusted community support.
 - Recognize that work permits *do not guarantee protection* under current enforcement practices.
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Category B: Individuals Without Current Legal Status

Examples:

- Individuals who have never filed an asylum claim.
- Those whose asylum cases or immigration benefits have been denied or lapsed.

Updated Risk Level:

Consistently high and increasingly urgent due to expanded enforcement operations across interior cities. It is ideal to be connected to legal counsel immediately.

Guidance

- Avoid casual public exposure when feasible, particularly in high-visibility contexts.
- Connect with immigration legal aid to explore any possible remedies.
- Develop robust plans for childcare, decision-making authority, and support networks.
- Offer ongoing spiritual, emotional, and material support without asking about immigration status.

Category C: Asylum Seekers with Active Legal Cases

Examples:

- Individuals who lawfully entered and timely filed for asylum.
- Those with valid work authorization or driver's licenses.

Updated Risk Level:

While previously considered lower risk, current enforcement patterns have made interior operations more expansive and unpredictable. Individuals with pending or legally pursued claims now face heightened scrutiny and possible detention even before decisions are finalized.

Guidance

- Arrange accompaniment for essential travel.
- Keep documentation accessible and secure, with copies stored safely.
- Continue contact with legal advocates to monitor case status and potential enforcement actions.
- Build community support networks that can respond quickly if needed.

Cross-Cutting Guidance for All Categories

Documentation and Planning

- Maintain secure copies of all identification and immigration paperwork.
- Develop trusted caregiving plans for children, including guardianship and emergency contacts.
Note: Iowa currently lacks formal statutory standby guardianship for people, but properly notarized plans naming trusted adults can still be crucial.

Accompaniment and Public Presence

- Where appropriate and with consent, arrange safe accompaniment for essential travel (work, healthcare, legal appointments).
- Avoid unnecessary public exposure when possible in communities experiencing intensive enforcement actions.

Community Support

- Provide ongoing spiritual care and emotional support for individuals and families under stress.
 - Respect confidentiality and privacy around immigration status, especially in public or congregational contexts.
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Legal and Emotional Safety

- Emphasize that enforcement practices have increasingly been challenged in courts - including actions by Minnesota government entities alleging unlawful federal operations - and that public safety and rights are active concerns among local leaders.
 - Encourage individuals to understand their rights and to work with qualified legal counsel on matters affecting their status and interactions with enforcement.
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Final Note

This document reflects *current enforcement realities as of early 2026* and should be reviewed often as federal immigration policies evolve.

2026 Congregational Accompaniment

2026 What Does Faithful Accompaniment Look Like?

Rev. Minna Bothwell - January 2026

**additions*

*In 2026, immigration enforcement in the United States has become more expansive, unpredictable, and deeply frightening for many of our neighbors - including people with work authorization, pending legal cases, and long-standing ties to their communities. Increased interior enforcement, surveillance, and detention practices have heightened fear and trauma, especially among families with children.

In this context, faithful accompaniment is not optional. It is a gospel response. The practices outlined below are rooted in prayerful discernment, respect for human dignity, and a commitment to walk with our neighbors in ways that are careful, compassionate, and grounded in love rather than fear. These protocols will continue to be reviewed and adapted as conditions change, always guided by the call to love our neighbor and seek the common good.

Reminder: You can face felony charges if you accompany undocumented individuals.

Below are key components of a comprehensive accompaniment strategy:

1. Transportation Support

- **Objective:** Reduce public visibility and risk by ensuring individuals do not travel alone - especially to and from work or appointments.
- **Actions:**
 - Create and maintain a rotating transportation schedule **with vetted, trained drivers**.
 - Provide drivers with written protocols for responding to law enforcement, including knowledge of First, Fourth, and Fifth Amendment rights.
 - Offer training sessions on **de-escalation, safety, and best practices** when stopped by ICE or local police.
 - Equip vehicles used for regular transport with **dash cams** to document any encounters.
**Please note that these can be subpoenaed - only do this with the support of legal counsel.*
 - Keep an emergency contact list in the vehicle, **including legal counsel** and primary advocates.

2. Grocery Delivery and Essential Errands

- **Objective:** Minimize unnecessary public exposure in high-surveillance spaces (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies).
- **Actions:**

- Set up a weekly **grocery fund** or gift card donation system managed by the advocacy team.
- Provide families with a way to submit grocery needs confidentially.
- Organize weekly delivery either directly to the family's home (through church) or by having a volunteer drop off groceries at a **central advocate's house for final delivery**.
**Encourage bulk or less-frequent trips to reduce patterns. Avoid fixed schedules that could be predictable.*
- Ensure volunteers understand the importance of discretion.
- Maintain confidential records of preferences, allergies, and dietary needs for culturally competent care.

3. Physical Presence and Accompaniment

- **Objective:** Provide moral support and legal witness by ensuring families are not alone during high-risk public engagements.
- **Actions:**
 - Offer **accompaniment for legal appointments, ICE check-ins, medical visits, school meetings**, and any required travel.
 - **Volunteers should carry personal identification but avoid attire or credentials that could escalate encounters or suggest obstruction.*
 - When public presence is necessary, **encourage group accompaniment** to deter targeting.
 - Encourage families to remain in safe spaces as much as possible. Provide **indoor enrichment resources** or safe, private spaces for play if children are involved.

4. Relational Check-Ins and Communication

- **Objective:** Maintain regular, supportive contact and stay informed of changes in legal status, safety, or needs.
- **Actions:**
 - Assign a core **Advocacy Team** (ideally 3–5 members) to each family.
 - Schedule regular check-ins (e.g., twice weekly) by text, phone, or in person.
 - **Use encrypted messaging apps when possible for sensitive communication.*
 - Keep sensitive information confidential and share only within the Advocacy Team.
 - Designate one team member to be the **primary point of contact** with the family and any legal representatives.

5. Legal Referrals and Emergency Numbers

- **Objective:** Ensure all families have access to qualified legal support and are prepared for rapid response.
- **Actions:**
 - Build relationships with **trusted immigration attorneys**, legal aid nonprofits, and advocacy organizations.
 - Have families **memorize their attorney's phone number**, or keep it written in a safe, accessible location.
 - Maintain signed G-28 forms (notice of attorney representation) and copies of all important legal documents in a secure file. **A G-28 ensures legal representation if detained, but does not prevent arrest or detention.*
 - Offer **accompaniment** to court or legal meetings whenever appropriate.

6. Community Education and Safety Preparedness

- **Objective:** Equip the wider congregation with knowledge and readiness to protect the safety and dignity of at-risk individuals.
- **Actions:**
 - Host quarterly or monthly **Know Your Rights** trainings focused on First, Fourth, and Fifth Amendment protections.
 - Use the “**Welcoming and Protecting**” toolkit (or similar resources) to guide your congregation's readiness.
 - Clearly label “Non-Public” areas of the church with “**Private Property**” signage to prevent unauthorized ICE and Law Enforcement access.
 - **Congregations should assume enforcement may observe public areas surrounding church property, even if they do not enter.*
 - **Educate all building users** (staff, volunteers, renters) about **how to respond if** immigration enforcement appears on church grounds.
 - Post **emergency numbers and protocols** in the office or designated secure area.

7. Documentation and Paperwork Support

- **Objective:** Assist families in maintaining legal paperwork, renewals, and organizing their documentation.
- **Actions:**
 - Help track work permit and license **renewal deadlines**.
 - Provide language or translation assistance if needed.
 - Organize and store copies of essential documents in case of emergency.
 - **Secure cloud backups*

- *Avoid carrying originals unless legally require
- *Minimize documents kept in vehicles
- Offer notary services or accompaniment for document-related appointments.

8. Emergency Planning and Rapid Response

- **Objective:** Prepare for worst-case scenarios (e.g., detention, family separation) with practical plans of action.
- **Actions:**
 - Work with families to create emergency care plans, including child guardianship and financial access. Note: not every state has laws to support child guardianship in this situation. *Iowa does not provide a statutory standby guardianship mechanism for immigration detention; notarized plans may help caregivers act informally but are not legally binding.
 - Identify a **designated emergency advocate** who will act on the family's behalf if needed.
 - Establish a **rapid response phone tree or group** to mobilize support quickly.
 - Coordinate with sanctuary networks or other local congregations for shelter if legally permissible.

9. Mental and Spiritual Health Support

- **Objective:** Address the trauma, anxiety, and spiritual needs of families under constant threat.
- **Actions:**
 - *Normalize ***grief, anger, and exhaustion*** as spiritual responses - not failures of faith.
 - Provide regular pastoral care and prayer.
 - Offer connections to culturally competent therapists or counselors when possible.
 - Organize safe spaces for children to play, families to gather, and trust to grow.
 - Celebrate family milestones (birthdays, graduations, baptisms) to affirm life amid uncertainty.

2026 Driver Protocols

2026 Driver Protocols for Transporting Immigrant and Refugee Neighbors

Rev. Minna Bothwell – January 2026

Being present with our refugee and immigrant neighbors - especially in moments of risk - provides critical support in many ways. It offers emotional reassurance in times of fear, helps individuals exercise their rights during encounters with law enforcement, creates a calm and steady presence that can reduce escalation, and ensures timely access to legal and pastoral support if needed. Simply showing up is a powerful act of solidarity that communicates: *You are not alone, and your life matters.*

1. General Best Practices

Maintain a calm presence: Your role is not only to transport, but to help provide a safe, steady, and reassuring environment.

Drive legally and safely at all times: follow all traffic laws, avoid distractions, and ensure your vehicle is in good working order. Please note, Federal law states that transporting an undocumented immigrant can result in felony charges. Immigrant passengers should always carry their legal documents while being transported.

Note: Warrants (search, arrest, ICE administrative) authorize the stopping of vehicles, the conducting of vehicle searches, and the arrest of named individuals. Police officers and ICE officers can always stop individuals on probable cause. DO NOT have any unauthorized substances in the vehicle (marijuana, drug paraphernalia, and prescription drugs).

Minimize risk: Keep routes consistent and avoid unnecessary stops. Always carry a valid driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance. Have a printed or digital copy of this protocol in the vehicle.

**Do not ask the individuals being accompanied to record encounters. Individuals accompanied may record if they wish to although it may not deescalate the situation. Accompaniment partners may install a dash cam. You are free to record anything in public in Iowa.*

Transportation support should always be voluntary and guided by the wishes and risk assessment of the passenger(s).

2. If You Are Pulled Over by Law Enforcement

Stay calm and follow these steps:

- Safely pull over to the side of the road.
- Turn off the car and place both hands visibly on the steering wheel.
- Let the officer speak first. Be polite and direct. You may say: “Good morning/afternoon, officer. May I ask why I was stopped?”
- If the officer asks “where are you going” - if you are taking to school, job, or hospital - just state that plainly.

Provide only the documents requested:

- Your driver’s license
- Vehicle registration
- Proof of insurance
- If you (the driver) are asked for your immigration papers, provide them if you have them.

Do not volunteer information beyond what is required.

3. Rights of the Passengers (Iowa)

- Provide immigration papers immediately if asked (passengers do have the right to remain silent - but currently there are a lot of reasons not to practice this as it may not keep them any safer.)
 - With this - orally say who they are and their status but do not need to answer anything else and can ask to speak to an attorney.
- Should give ID if asked (the law doesn’t necessarily require this but it is the safest thing).
- Passengers do not have to exit the vehicle unless specifically ordered to do so by law enforcement.
- If one accompaniment driver is asked for another’s ID or questions about status, the driver may say: “I cannot provide that information.”

If ICE is present, passengers may:

Show their ID - no benefit not to show their ID.

If a law enforcement or ICE asks other questions “why did you leave your country”, “why are you here” - passenger can say “I would like to speak with my attorney”

Passengers should not present false documents or provide false information.

4. De-escalation Guidance for the Driver

- Speak calmly and respectfully.
- Do not argue or raise your voice.
- If asked about passengers, you may respond with: “I’m providing a ride. I’m not able to speak on anyone else’s behalf.”
- Do not consent to a search of your vehicle unless the officer has a warrant. You may say: “I do not consent to this search, can you please show me the warrant to search the vehicle?”
 - They can search your vehicle anyway - and let them do it. If they don’t have the search warrant it’s important to state that you do not consent - so that later in court other evidence they find is illegally obtained.
 - People can be searched and they can pat you down etc. (driver or passenger)

Avoid making statements about immigration status, plans, or destinations beyond what is legally required.

5. If ICE Is Involved

ICE should not search a vehicle or make an arrest without legal authority. However, the threshold for “legal authority” has changed.

ICE authority generally requires:

- Probable cause: In ICE-related encounters, a search warrant is often **not presented**, as ICE may claim “probable cause” under a much lower threshold—sometimes based on appearance, language, or other subjective factors rather than clear evidence.
 - All ICE needs is probable cause to arrest someone in the vehicle.

If no warrant is presented, you may say:

“I do not consent to a search. I am exercising my right to remain silent. Am I free to go?” and then comply with everything they ask.

Do not open the door of the car

Remain silent

Do not show them other items in the vehicle or reach for anything.

6. Important Reminders

- Do not flee or physically resist.
- Do not make jokes or statements that are unhelpful.
- Do not lie. It is acceptable to say, “I do not know,” or “I cannot answer that.”
- Call the designated legal or advocacy contact as soon as safely possible after any law enforcement interaction.
- Keep emergency phone numbers (attorney, clergy, advocacy coordinator) accessible in both your phone and the vehicle.

Document the encounter afterward.

7. For the Passenger(s): Know Your Rights

This is very passenger specific. Please speak with legal counsel of the individuals you are accompanying.

- Answer questions asked by law enforcement and comply with directions for ID and immigration papers.
 - You have the right to speak with your attorney.
 - **DO NOT LIE AND DO NOT SHOW FALSE DOCUMENTS.**
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8. Suggested Dash Card (for driver)

If you are an officer or ICE agent:

- Can you share why you are pulling me over?
- I do not consent to a search.
- You do have the right to remain silent.
- I wish to speak with my attorney.
- I cannot answer that question.
- Please provide your name and badge number.

(This card should be used calmly and only when appropriate; it does not replace legal counsel.)

2025 Protocols

Introduction to the Materials

Rev. Minna Bothwell - June, 2025

In times of fear and uncertainty, the ministry of *presence* becomes a powerful act of faith. Being physically present with our immigrant and refugee neighbors—especially when they face increased scrutiny or risk of detention—can provide comfort, witness, and protection. Presence offers accountability in the face of injustice, support in moments of crisis, and reassurance that no one walks alone.

Scripture reminds us: “*You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt*” (Deuteronomy 10:19), and “*I was a stranger and you welcomed me*” (Matthew 25:35). These are not passive suggestions—they are bold, active calls to solidarity. Throughout the biblical witness, God’s people are charged to care for the most vulnerable, to advocate for justice, and to embody God’s love in concrete ways.

We strongly urge congregations to form accompaniment teams to walk alongside immigrant and refugee families in their communities. This includes offering transportation, grocery delivery, childcare, court accompaniment, phone trees, legal referrals, advocacy, and trauma-informed presence. The Spirit of Christ leads us not into safety and silence, but into risk and relationship—into truth-telling, neighbor-loving discipleship.

These materials were created in consultation with legal counsel, and we urge **every congregation to seek appropriate legal guidance** before using or distributing any of the included documents or protocols. Immigration law is rapidly changing and state-specific. What is appropriate accompaniment in one location may present legal or safety concerns in another.

This work is not only urgent—it is sacred. As congregations committed to the Gospel, we cannot remain silent or still. Now is the time to prepare, to protect, and to proclaim: you are not alone. We will stand beside you.

In Christ,

Rev. Minna Bothwell, SEIA Synod, ELCA

Resources:

- <https://www.aclu-ia.org/en/know-your-rights/what-do-if-you-are-stopped-police-immigration-agents-or-fbi>
- Passengers are generally not required to provide identification unless an officer has a reasonable suspicion of criminal activity.
- The Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable searches and seizures. During a routine traffic stop for a driver's violation, the passenger's identity is typically not at issue unless there's a reason to suspect the passenger of a crime.
- Iowa does not have a "show me your papers" law, meaning state and local police cannot ask people for their immigration papers unless they are federal immigration (ICE) agents.
- Drivers are required to show their driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance when requested by an officer during a traffic stop.
- <file:///Users/minnaquint1/Downloads/TIRRC%20Toolkit.pdf> - shared from iowammj.org

(Previous) Congregational Protocols for Advocacy and Accompaniment

Rev. Minna Bothwell - June, 2025

Protecting Refugees, Immigrants, and Asylum Seekers in a Shifting Legal Landscape

Who Is “At Risk”?

Note: Individuals with any kind of criminal record, even for relatively minor offenses such as OWI/DUI, may be especially vulnerable to deportation. The current Administration NOW also treats overstaying a visa as a violation that can place someone at risk (civil not criminal offense).

Category A: Humanitarian Parole Recipients (Biden-era “Parole” Program - TPS)

Definition: Individuals who entered the U.S. under President Biden’s special parole program (particularly from Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Haiti), often with a sponsor and a temporary legal status.

Current Risk Level:

- **Extremely high.** This program has been **rescinded**, and many recipients now face legal limbo.
- Though many still have valid work permits, their legal protection is in jeopardy. Many work permits have been removed.
- ICE under the current administration has **expressed intent to prioritize the deportation** of these individuals—even if they are gainfully employed and following the law.

Do They Still Have Work Permits?

- Some do. Others are expiring without clear pathways for renewal.
- It is case-dependent. A work permit alone does not guarantee protection.

Advocacy Guidance:

- **Avoid public appearances**, especially driving alone, going to grocery stores, parks or any other public facility. Provide physical accompaniment when possible.

- It is recommended that individuals travel **to and from work with a trusted driver** whenever possible.
- A valid work permit **does not ensure legal** security under current immigration enforcement.
- **Communicate with legal counsel** to track any expiration of documentation. Maintain up-to-date documentation (copies stored securely).
- Help identify power-of-attorney and child guardianship plans if needed. Please note that not all states treat these legal tools the same, and **Iowa does not offer a statutory standby guardianship mechanism** specifically for undocumented or soon-to-be-detained individuals. **There is no formal legal process in Iowa** that enables someone under threat of deportation to appoint a standby guardian for their children – Still, having a **written and properly notarized plan naming trusted adults** for childcare or decision-making is crucial.
- Ensure trusted community members are aware of their schedule and check in regularly.
- If the individual is currently employed and the congregation has the capacity to provide financial and logistical support, **encourage a conversation about whether it is safer for them to temporarily leave their job to reduce public exposure and risk.** This decision should be made carefully and with full respect for the individual's autonomy and financial needs.

Category B: Individuals Not Currently Seeking Asylum or Parole

Definition: People present in the U.S. without an asylum claim or legal status, or whose asylum cases have been denied or closed.

Current Risk Level:

- Always considered **high-risk** for detention or deportation.
- May have lived in the U.S. for years, contributing to their community and raising children, but have few legal protections.

Advocacy Guidance:

- Avoid **ALL public** appearances.
- Encourage **connection to legal aid** to explore any available remedies.
- Help identify power-of-attorney and child guardianship plans if needed. Please note that not all states treat these legal tools the same, and **Iowa does not offer a statutory standby guardianship mechanism** specifically for undocumented or soon-to-be-detained individuals. **There is no formal legal process in Iowa** that enables someone under threat of deportation to appoint a standby guardian for their children – Still, having a **written and properly notarized plan naming trusted adults** for childcare or decision-making is crucial.
- **Provide** spiritual care and emotional support.
- **Do not press** for disclosure of immigration status publicly.

Category C: Asylum Seekers with Legal Status

Definition: Individuals who entered the U.S. lawfully (often at a legal port of entry), filed for asylum within the permitted window, and currently possess valid work permits and/or driver's licenses.

Current Risk Level:

- While previously low-risk, **these individuals are now vulnerable** under the current administration.
- The Biden administration's prior guidance deprioritized deportation of such individuals. The **Trump administration has pledged to reverse this and treat even legally-present** asylum seekers as deportable.
- Individuals who have not yet received asylum decisions, **especially those who have been in the country less than two years**, may be subject to increased scrutiny and surveillance.

Advocacy Guidance:

- **Avoid public appearances**, especially driving alone, going to grocery stores, parks or any other public facility. Provide physical accompaniment when possible.
- It is recommended that individuals travel **to and from work with a trusted driver** whenever possible.
- A valid work permit **does not ensure legal** security under current immigration enforcement.
- **Communicate with legal counsel** to track any expiration of documentation. Maintain up-to-date documentation (copies stored securely).
- Help identify power-of-attorney and child guardianship plans if needed. Please note that not all states treat these legal tools the same, and **Iowa does not offer a statutory standby guardianship mechanism** specifically for undocumented or soon-to-be-detained individuals. **There is no formal legal process in Iowa** that enables someone under threat of deportation to appoint a standby guardian for their children – Still, having a **written and properly notarized plan naming trusted adults** for childcare or decision-making is crucial.
- Ensure trusted community members are aware of their schedule and check in regularly.
- If the individual is currently employed and the congregation has the capacity to provide financial and logistical support, **encourage a conversation about whether it is safer for them to temporarily leave their job to reduce public exposure and risk**. This decision should be made carefully and with full respect for the individual's autonomy and financial needs.

Note: Individuals with any kind of criminal record, even for relatively minor offenses such as OWI/DUI, may be especially vulnerable to deportation. Immigration law also treats overstaying a visa as a violation that can place someone at risk.

What Does Faithful Accompaniment Look Like?

Rev. Minna Bothwell - June, 2025

Faithful accompaniment is the Church's embodied response to the Gospel call to love, protect, and remain present with our neighbors—especially those most vulnerable. It includes proactive, coordinated, and legally sound care rooted in mutual trust and dignity.

Below are key components of a comprehensive accompaniment strategy:

1. Transportation Support

- **Objective:** Reduce public visibility and risk by ensuring individuals do not travel alone—especially to and from work or appointments.
- **Actions:**
 - Create and maintain a rotating transportation schedule **with vetted, trained drivers**.
 - Provide drivers with written protocols for responding to law enforcement, including knowledge of First, Fourth, and Fifth Amendment rights.
 - Offer training sessions on **de-escalation, safety, and best practices** when stopped by ICE or local police.
 - Equip vehicles used for regular transport with **dash cams** to document any encounters.
 - Keep an emergency contact list in the vehicle, **including legal counsel** and primary advocates.

2. Grocery Delivery and Essential Errands

- **Objective:** Minimize unnecessary public exposure in high-surveillance spaces (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies).
- **Actions:**
 - Set up a weekly **grocery fund** or gift card donation system managed by the advocacy team.
 - Provide families with a way to submit grocery needs confidentially.

- Organize weekly delivery either directly to the family's home (through church) or by having a volunteer drop off groceries at a **central advocate's house for final delivery**.
- Ensure volunteers understand the importance of discretion.
- Maintain records of preferences, allergies, and dietary needs for culturally competent care.

3. Physical Presence and Accompaniment

- **Objective:** Provide moral support and legal witness by ensuring families are not alone during high-risk public engagements.
- **Actions:**
 - Offer **accompaniment for legal appointments, ICE check-ins, medical visits, school meetings**, and any required travel.
 - Provide volunteers with ID (lanyard/name badge - church issued), advocacy training, and key contact numbers.
 - When public presence is necessary, **encourage group accompaniment** to deter targeting.
 - Encourage families to remain in safe spaces as much as possible. Provide **indoor enrichment resources** or safe, private spaces for play if children are involved.

4. Relational Check-Ins and Communication

- **Objective:** Maintain regular, supportive contact and stay informed of changes in legal status, safety, or needs.
- **Actions:**
 - Assign a core **Advocacy Team** (ideally 3–5 members) to each family.
 - Schedule regular check-ins (e.g., twice weekly) by text, phone, or in person.
 - Keep sensitive information confidential and share only within the Advocacy Team.
 - Designate one team member to be the **primary point of contact** with the family and any legal representatives.

5. Legal Referrals and Emergency Numbers

- **Objective:** Ensure all families have access to qualified legal support and are prepared for rapid response.
- **Actions:**
 - Build relationships with **trusted immigration attorneys**, legal aid nonprofits, and advocacy organizations.

- Have families **memorize their attorney's phone number**, or keep it written in a safe, accessible location.
- Maintain signed G-28 forms (notice of attorney representation) and copies of all important legal documents in a secure file. Families with a G-28 on file are more protected.
- Offer **accompaniment** to court or legal meetings whenever appropriate.

6. Community Education and Safety Preparedness

- **Objective:** Equip the wider congregation with knowledge and readiness to protect the safety and dignity of at-risk individuals.
- **Actions:**
 - Host quarterly or monthly **Know Your Rights** trainings focused on First, Fourth, and Fifth Amendment protections.
 - Use the “**Welcoming and Protecting**” toolkit (or similar resources) to guide your congregation's readiness.
 - Clearly label “Non-Public” areas of the church with “**Private Property**” signage to prevent unauthorized ICE and Law Enforcement access.
 - **Educate all building users** (staff, volunteers, renters) about **how to respond if** immigration enforcement appears on church grounds.
 - Post **emergency numbers and protocols** in the office or designated secure area.

7. Documentation and Paperwork Support

- **Objective:** Assist families in maintaining legal paperwork, renewals, and organizing their documentation.
- **Actions:**
 - Help track work permit and license **renewal deadlines**.
 - Provide language or translation assistance if needed.
 - Organize and store copies of essential documents in case of emergency.
 - Offer notary services or accompaniment for document-related appointments.

8. Emergency Planning and Rapid Response

- **Objective:** Prepare for worst-case scenarios (e.g., detention, family separation) with practical plans of action.
- **Actions:**

- Work with families to create emergency care plans, including child guardianship and financial access. Note: not every state has laws to support child guardianship in this situation. **Iowa laws do not uphold POA in this situation.**
- Identify a **designated emergency advocate** who will act on the family's behalf if needed.
- Establish a **rapid response phone tree or group** to mobilize support quickly.
- Coordinate with sanctuary networks or other local congregations for shelter if legally permissible.

9. Mental and Spiritual Health Support

- **Objective:** Address the trauma, anxiety, and spiritual needs of families under constant threat.
- **Actions:**
 - Provide regular pastoral care and prayer.
 - Offer connections to culturally competent therapists or counselors when possible.
 - Organize safe spaces for children to play, families to gather, and trust to grow.
 - Celebrate family milestones (birthdays, graduations, baptisms) to affirm life amid uncertainty.

Driver Protocols for Transporting Immigrant and Refugee Neighbors

Rev. Minna Bothwell - June, 2025

Being present with our refugee and immigrant neighbors—especially in moments of risk—provides critical support in many ways. It offers emotional reassurance in times of fear, ensures that rights are upheld during any encounter with law enforcement, creates an accountability witness that can deescalate tense situations, and provides immediate access to help if needed. Simply showing up is a powerful act of solidarity that communicates: You are not alone, and your life matters.

1. General Best Practices

- **Drive legally and safely** at all times: follow all traffic laws, avoid distractions, and ensure your vehicle is in good working order.
- **Minimize risk:** Keep routes consistent and avoid unnecessary stops.
- **Always carry a valid driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance.**
- **Have a printed or digital copy of this protocol in the vehicle.**
- **Install a dash cam** if possible (to protect both passengers and drivers).
- **Maintain calm presence:** Your role is not only to transport but to help provide a safe and steady presence.

2. If You Are Pulled Over by Law Enforcement

Stay Calm and Follow These Steps:

1. **Safely pull over** to the side of the road. Turn off the car, turn on the interior light (if it's dark), and place both hands visibly on the steering wheel.
2. **Let the officer speak first.** Be polite and direct. Say, "Good morning/afternoon, officer. May I ask why I was stopped?"
3. **Provide only the documents requested:**
 - Your driver's license
 - Vehicle registration
 - Proof of insurance

3. Rights of the Passengers (In Iowa)

- **Passengers do NOT have to answer questions** about their immigration status or show ID unless they are being arrested.
- **Passengers do NOT have to exit the vehicle** unless specifically ordered to do so by the officer.
- If asked for ID, a passenger can politely say:
"I do not wish to answer questions or provide ID. I am exercising my right to remain silent."
- If ICE is present, passengers can say:
"I am exercising my right to remain silent and wish to speak to an attorney."

4. De-escalation Guidance for the Driver

- **Speak calmly and respectfully.**
- **Do not argue** or raise your voice.
- If asked about passengers, respond with:
"I'm simply providing a ride to work. I am not able to speak on their behalf."
- Do **not consent to a search** of your car unless the officer has a warrant. You can say:
"I do not consent to a search."

5. If ICE Is Involved

- ICE cannot enter the vehicle or make arrests without:
 - **Probable cause**
 - A **signed warrant** issued by a judge (NOT just a Form I-200 or I-205)
- Ask calmly and clearly:
"Do you have a judicial warrant signed by a judge? May I see it? I need to speak with legal counsel to verify this warrant."

If they do **not** have a signed warrant, you can say:

"I do not consent to a search. We are going to remain silent and leave if we are free to go."

6. Important Reminders

- **Do not flee or resist.**
- **Do not lie.** It is okay to say, “I don’t know” or “I cannot answer that.”
- **Call a designated legal contact** immediately after any law enforcement interaction.
- **Keep a list of emergency phone numbers** (attorney, clergy, advocacy coordinator) in the glove compartment and in your phone.

7. For the Passenger(s): Know Your Rights

- You have the **right to remain silent.**
- You have the **right to refuse consent to a search.**
- You have the **right to ask for an attorney.**
- You do **NOT** need to show ID unless you are under arrest.
- You have the **right to film** an encounter with ICE or law enforcement from inside the vehicle.

8. Suggested Dash Card (print for glove box or passenger use)

If you are an officer or ICE agent:

I am choosing to remain silent.

I do not consent to a search.

I want to speak to my lawyer.

I do not wish to answer any questions.

Please provide your name and badge number.