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Evangelicals
Magazine | Fall 2025 | Vol. 11 No. 2

A CHURCH *for the* STRANGER

BIBLICAL MANDATES FOR THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN IMMIGRATION

ADRIAN HINKLE

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Evangelicals

The Magazine of the National Association of Evangelicals

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CONTEXT

Immigration is one of today's most polarizing issues. But beneath the headlines, much of the public discourse is shaped less by facts and principles and more by fear, misinformation and emotional manipulation. So how should Christians — whether natives or newcomers — engage with our immigrant neighbors?

As evangelicals, we start with Scripture. In her cover article, Adrian Hinkle helps us read familiar biblical stories with an eye for the unnamed characters who play critical roles in the mission of God. Scripture not only calls us to care for the stranger but also shows us how God uses the outsider — even those outside the faith — to bless and strengthen his people.

As Joanne Solis-Walker reminds us, many immigrants are no strangers to the faith at all, but Spirit-filled brothers and sisters in Christ. Their vibrant faith and spiritual depth are bringing renewal to churches and communities. Yet many are hurting and vulnerable amid intensified immigration crackdowns. Servando Valdovinos' testimony outlines the challenges of ministering to families facing deportation and family separation.

Bri Stensrud invites us to pursue proximity with those who are suffering. Personal relationships not only ground our compassion but also guide and sustain our long-term efforts to meet practical needs and advocate for just and merciful immigration policies, she writes.

Caring for immigrants also requires understanding the systems that shape their lives. Immigration law is notoriously complex, even for legal experts and seasoned advocates. Matthew Soerens helps us make sense of the current policy landscape. Evangelicals recognize that a secure border, consistent enforcement and national sovereignty are necessary for a just and orderly immigration system. These principles do not stand in opposition to compassion. We can honor national security while also seeking policies that reflect our biblical commitments to human dignity and family unity.

In March, the National Association of Evangelicals co-sponsored a report on the potential impact of mass deportations in the United States. The report found that roughly 80 percent of undocumented immigrants are Christians. This means that about one in 12 Christians in America lives in a household where someone is at risk of deportation. Most of their names are unknown to us — but when one part of the body suffers, we all suffer.

A warmer welcome and wise policy reforms that balance compassion with security could alleviate some of that suffering. As you read, ask God to show you what your part may be. E

A Gospel More Vast and Beautiful

"We want to demonstrate the gospel by how we live. The kind of things that Jesus did in demonstrating the gospel is he would preach and teach, he would heal and drive out demons. He did nature miracles in terms of feeding the hungry and in terms of stilling storms. So, he's concerned about safety. He's concerned about health. He's concerned about hunger. And of course, he's concerned about the most fundamental thing: the transformation to eternal life. But here's the good thing about being born again. Our eternal life doesn't start when we die. When we're born again into a new life, our eternal life starts now. And that means that we can live in a new way that reveals God's heart for the world."

Craig Keener, renowned New Testament scholar, in Today's Conversation podcast at NAE.org/keenerpodcast

Most Immigrants Facing Deportation Are Christians, Report Finds

"As many as four in five immigrants at risk of deportation from the United States are Christian, according to a new report that calls on their fellow believers to consider the impact of the Trump administration's aggressive deportation policies. The report says about 10 million Christians are vulnerable to deportation and 7 million U.S. citizens who are Christian live in households where someone is at risk of deportation.

The report, under the auspices of major Catholic and evangelical organizations, draws on a range of data, including percentages of religious affiliation in various migrant and national populations and on an advocacy group's analysis of U.S. census data on migrants."

Peter Smith, journalist, in an Associated Press article, "Most Christians at Risk of Deportation from U.S. Are Christian, Report Finds"

Revival Brewing Despite Decline in U.S. Christianity

"I believe in the bone of my bones, like deep inside of my body, that God is doing something big,' [Tre'] Giles [national director of campus engagement for Alpha USA] said, pointing to the Asbury University outpouring as one example. 'There's this expectation, and there's this hunger. Everyone has something rumbling.'

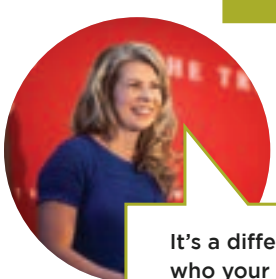
Keithen Schwahn, the young-adult pastor at Church of the City in New York City, has the same feeling. He's seen his church's teenage discipleship group grow from about five young people to more than 100 in a few years. College students are starting prayer groups and Bible studies on their own at schools like Pace University and New York University and are seeing them blossom and grow.

The decline of Christianity can feel palpable in the city, Schwahn told CT, like they're living on the front end of an irreversible trend. But then there's this other thing that seems to be happening. Young people are interested in all kinds of spiritualities and discover, in their exploration, the very Spirit bearing witness with their spirits that they are children of God and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16–17)."

Daniel Silliman **in a Christianity Today article, "Pew: America is Spiritual But Not Religious"**

What should we do in the face of division and political unrest in a world that seems increasingly volatile? Simple: love God, love other people, be generous, care for the poor and vulnerable and share the good news. These are always the right things to do.

Rich Stearns @RichStearns



It's a different way of being in the world — of understanding who your neighbor is and what it means to love them. The sociology of pilgrimage is something we could all use more of in our public life today.

Cherie Harder on the rhythms of pilgrimage, in a tweet from Comment Magazine @commentmag

If President Trump understood that evangelical Christians wanted secure borders and the deportation of violent criminals, I think he got that right. But if he concluded that evangelical Christians wanted to see deportations on a much larger scale — including hundreds of thousands who came to the U.S. lawfully from countries facing war or dire humanitarian crises — I am quite confident that he misunderstood, and I hope he will heed the pleas of evangelical and other Christian voters in asking him to reconsider this position.

Myal Greene, president & CEO of World Relief, in an April press release

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EVANGELICAL CALENDAR

Please join the evangelical community at these events hosted by the NAE and its members. **Your prayers are welcome, too.**

Many of these events include downloadable resources for promotion and participation.

OCTOBER 21–22, 2025

Digital Media Con

Virtual

Evangelical Press Association & National Association of Evangelicals
DigitalMediaCon.com

The Digital Media Con is a two-day online conference focusing exclusively on digital media and marketing for Christian communicators.

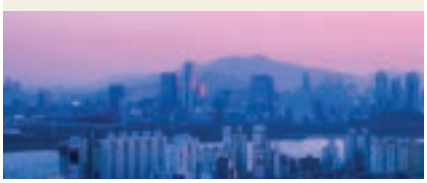
OCTOBER 27–31, 2025

Gospel for Everyone

Seoul, South Korea

World Evangelical Alliance
GospelForEveryone.WorldEA.org

The General Assembly of the World Evangelical Alliance will bring together evangelical leaders, national alliance representatives, and partners from across the globe to unite under the theme: "The Gospel for Everyone by 2033."



NOVEMBER 5–7, 2025

Spiritual Retreat for Leaders of Color

Richmond, VA

NAE Racial Justice & Reconciliation Collaborative
NAE.org

Leaders of color who are engaged in racial justice and reconciliation work in Christian ministry come together for a time of rest and reflection. This is an opportunity to connect with one another, to learn from one of the leading voices in this space, and to find spiritual and emotional care.

NOVEMBER 5–7, 2025

Immovable: Unshakable Faith in the Almighty God

Dallas, TX

RightNow Media
RightNowConferences.org

The RightNow Conference is for pastors and church leaders and will explore how to stand firm in the chaos of ministry. Together, they will reflect on trusting God, persevering in faith, and loving with purpose as they serve and lead others.

NOVEMBER 18–20, 2025

Creedal Christianity: Celebrating Nicaea

Boston, MA

Evangelical Theological Society
ETSJETS.org

At the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, scholars, pastors and students will celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. Don't miss the "Evangelicals in the Public Square" session cosponsored by the NAE.

DECEMBER 2–3, 2025

Denominational Executives & Spouses Retreat

Dallas, TX

National Association of Evangelicals
NAE.org

Each year, the NAE hosts the Denominational Executives & Spouses Retreat. This is an opportunity to gather with peers across denominations for a time of fellowship, encouragement, equipping and prayer.

JANUARY 26–30, 2026

Christian Student Leadership Conference

Washington, DC

National Association of Evangelicals
NAE.org/cslc

The Christian Student Leadership Conference is an opportunity for college students who care deeply about today's pressing issues to come learn how to faithfully and effectively offer a Christian witness in public policy. This year's theme is "Champions of Change."

JANUARY 29–FEBRUARY 1, 2026

2026 International Forum

Dallas, TX

Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
CCCU.org

The CCCU International Forum — held once every four years — unites presidents, cabinet ministers, academic deans and more key leaders for three days of powerful keynotes, worship, breakout sessions and more.

American Church Should Take Lead in Global Displacement Response

In the last decade, the number of people globally who have been forced by persecution or conflict to flee their homes has nearly doubled — from about 60 million to more than 120 million. According to the January/February 2025 Evangelical Leaders Survey, 65 percent of evangelical leaders believe the American church should be on the forefront of responding to this crisis.

"Christians are guided by the Bible to be particularly concerned for refugees who have been forced to flee their countries due to oppression, violence and persecution," said NAE President Walter Kim. "We remember that Jesus and his family were refugees. And we know that many millions of our brothers and sisters in Christ are among those who have fled their homes — or are seeking to flee — due to religious persecution."

Merle Heatwole, newly appointed national commander of The Salvation Army in the United States, spent the last four years in Latin America and witnessed firsthand the reality of people being forced to flee their countries due to poverty, oppression or violence. He believes the American church has a critical role to play by offering support to refugees who are fleeing these immense challenges.

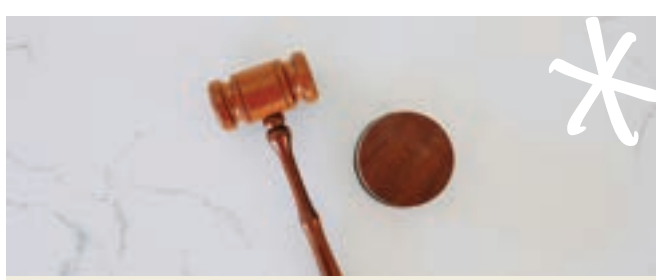
Evangelical leaders are more supportive of the role of the American church to the global displacement crisis than evangelicals at large. According to a recent Lifeway Research survey, 46 percent of evangelicals believe the American church should be on the forefront of responding to the increase in global displacement. Twenty-eight percent said the American church should be concerned with the increase in global displacement, but it is not a top priority.

Send a message to your elected leaders encouraging them to restore refugee resettlement in the United States at **NAE.org/takeaction.**

Give to World Relief as they continue to support refugees who are already in the United States at **WorldRelief.org/refugees**.

Supreme Court Backs Parental Rights in Gender-Themed Dispute

In *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, the Supreme Court held that the Montgomery County Public Schools violated parental rights by not allowing them to opt young children out of sessions where sex, romance and gender-themed storybooks would be discussed. The National Association of Evangelicals applauds this decision that affirms the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their children's education. The NAE previously joined the Christian Legal Society, Focus on the Family and others in amicus briefs supporting the parents in Fourth Circuit and Supreme Court appeals.



Review amicus briefs filed by the NAE at **NAE.org/court-briefs.**

‘Redeeming Conflict’ Workshop Equips DC-Area Church Leaders

We are living in a time when meaningful, respectful conversations between people who disagree seem harder to come by. Families, friendships, communities, and even churches are fracturing as we struggle to navigate conflict effectively. In June, the National Association of Evangelicals partnered with Matthew 5:9 Fellowship for a one-day event called Redeeming Conflict. Held at Cherrydale Baptist Church in Arlington, Virginia, the workshop brought together over 50 pastors, church staff, and ministry leaders from the Washington, D.C., area to explore how to engage in healthy conversations across differences.

Led by Ann Garrido of the Aquinas Institute of Theology — author of “Redeeming Conflict” and “Redeeming Power” — the day featured hands-on practicums, table discussions and practical frameworks for understanding both the internal and interpersonal dynamics of conflict.

Garrido, who has worked closely with members of the Harvard Negotiation Project, guided participants through a robust day of learning marked by curiosity, reflection and insight. Her teaching helped leaders not only explore *what* they think, but *how* they think and interact with others. Participants left equipped with tools and confidence to approach hard conversations with grace.

IRS Shifts on Pulpit Endorsements

The Internal Revenue Service recently announced a new interpretation of the Johnson Amendment, which prohibits tax-exempt nonprofits, including churches, from endorsing political candidates. The IRS now states that normal church communications with their congregations are not covered by this prohibition. In a 2024 survey, 98 percent of evangelical leaders said that pastors should not endorse political candidates from the pulpit.

Kimberly Reisman, executive director of World Methodist Evangelism, said, “Endorsing from the pulpit further polarizes our current culture. God can use leaders from all parties, and to equate God’s will with the will of any political party or person is exceedingly dangerous and a threat to the overall witness of Christians in the United States.”

Stay Informed

Policy Matters, an email newsletter from the advocacy team at the National Association of Evangelicals, offers up-to-date developments on policy proposals that the NAE is tracking in Congress through the lens of Scripture. We’ll help you stay informed, so you can better apply your faith to policy matters impacting our nation and your ministry.

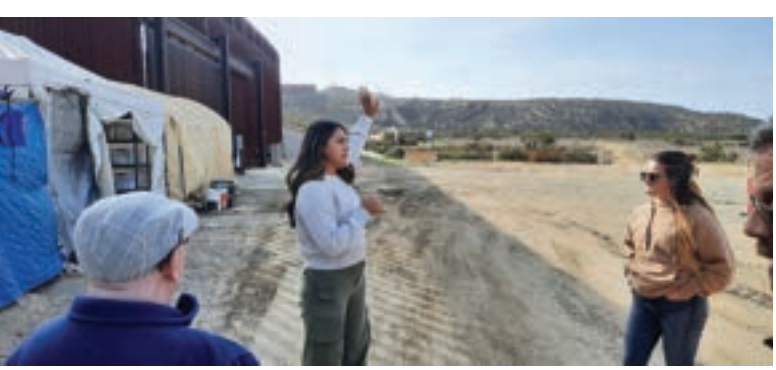
Sign up at **NAE.org/policymatters**.

Steve Eng is advocacy director at the National Association of Evangelicals.

Encountering the Realities of the Border

Recently, the National Association of Evangelicals has been inviting evangelical leaders to see border realities firsthand. On encounters hosted by Border Perspective and World Relief, we have met government officials, ministry leaders and migrants who are navigating changing border policies, enforcing laws, feeding the hungry, teaching English, and sharing Christ with gang members and those fleeing gangs. For many NAE participants, these border encounters have been life changing.

Sharon Hughes, director of immigrant ministries at The Hope Center in Cleveland, Ohio, remembers driving with our group to a remote area between San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico, seeing tangled barbed wire and surveillance equipment stretching for miles atop cement pillars. With Border Patrol vehicles "circling on a sandy hill up ahead…[these] reminded me we were not alone."



Walking up to the 30-foot-high steel beams, with her nose almost touching the metal, Hughes recalls, "I peered through and saw a man's jacket tangled on the ground. The barren stretch of land on the other side led to another wall… and from there I could see cars zipping home on their evening commute in congested Tijuana."

Months earlier, this open-air zone corralled a stream of migrants fleeing desperate situations to seek asylum in the United States. With government permission, volunteers propped up make-shift tents against the wall and brought supplies, food and toys to pass through the bars to mothers, fathers and unaccompanied minors waiting in the open air for hours or days.

Standing there, it hit Hughes:

"These are the mourners Jesus blessed, who weep because… they have said good-bye to home and family, not knowing if they will ever return…. These are the mourners who shudder at the danger of detention centers, and the risk of losing everything. These are the poor-in-spirit, battling fatigue and discouragement. These are the meek, hesitant to accept a cold drink."

"I could picture Jesus sitting on the sand… with border patrol in the background. This time his nose was touching the cold steel wall, boldly declaring: 'Blessed are you who are poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you who mourn, for you will be comforted. Blessed are the meek,

for you will inherit the earth' (Matthew 5:3–5)."

For Bishop Shawn McKinley, global communications director for the Church of God of Prophecy, his border encounter was both "heartbreaking and inspiring."

"Hearing firsthand from border patrol agents, local officials, pastors and migrants gave me a deeper understanding of the human complexities behind immigration. I came away with a reinforced sense of compassion, new questions, and a clearer prayer: 'Lord, what would you have me do in my own community, church and neighborhood?'

"The trip forced me to sit with the tension between the rule of law and Christ's call to love the stranger. I heard stories that challenged assumptions and witnessed ministries offering compassion without condition. It reminded me that immigration isn't just an issue to solve. It's a set of lives to see, serve and honor," McKinley said.

Nick Kersten, education and history director at Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, highlighted Border Perspective's "dogged desire" for participants to hear multiple voices and "see with their own eyes the realities of what is clearly a complicated situation."

The trip also drove home for him "the extent to which

"The trip forced me to sit with the tension between the rule of law and Christ's call to love the stranger."

'ordinary' human and Christian reactions can really make a substantive difference in the lives of real people… and the heartbreak of knowing that some of those least committed to aiding people are those who claim the cause of Jesus Christ."

For John Stumbo, recently retired president of Christian and Missionary Alliance, his NAE-led border experience "accomplished its goal, providing me with insights, relationships and reflections I would not otherwise have had opportunity to engage. I came home with a heavy heart, but the right kind of heaviness — that forms and shapes. Once again, NAE has provided a unique opportunity for me." E

A CHURCH *for the* STRANGER

BIBLICAL MANDATES FOR THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN IMMIGRATION

ADRIAN HINKLE

Adrian Hinkle is professor of theology and dean of the College of Theology and Ministry at Oral Roberts University.

There is a profound tension in the power of the unnamed. As we reflect on our most beloved biblical stories, we're often drawn to the legendary figures who make up the epic narrative arcs in Scripture. Characters such as Abraham, Joshua, David, Jeremiah and Paul quickly come to mind as noteworthy in our studies. However, a slower reading reveals an entire thread of characters woven through these same accounts that, if we allow, pull us deeply into the story and force us to ask a different set of questions. On the surface, we see the main characters, who walk mightily in their faith (albeit imperfectly). However, deeper into these accounts, we find the unnamed — those who, because of their background, race or gender, are deemed unnecessary to record.

Yet, it is through these characters that a different narrative emerges. The redemptive story of Scripture was never presented as exclusive to the powerful or pious. Instead, we find a counter-cultural message of a God who works through his chosen people, not for their sake alone, but to extend grace to the forgotten and the foreigner — the nameless stranger.

Pushing further, our theology of salvation history and the redeeming work of the Holy Spirit provoke us to continually evaluate ourselves and our churches on how we choose to convey God's truth. We must ask whether we have patterned our teaching on what comes easily or the hard work of truthfully exegeting the biblical text for its full message. Furthermore, have we considered that the way we teach is just as important as what we teach? Do our actions in reaching out to the stranger speak the same message of mercy we preach from our pulpits?

At the heart of an evangelical understanding of immigration is missiology — the theology of mission. It is fundamental to the *Missio Dei* — a Latin term meaning mission of God or sending of God. It underlines the importance of our collective response to immigration within the context of mission. Israel's call was never insular. Through the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, God forged a people to live distinctively — not to exclude, but to witness to the nations.

The biblical mandate of welcoming the stranger is easily identified in the laws' commands, such as, "Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner" (Exodus 22:21) and "Love them [the stranger] as yourself..." (Leviticus 19:33–34). We see a God who defends the alien and marginalized in texts such as Deuteronomy 10:18–19, and this same hospitality to the stranger is extended in the New Testament and early Church in texts such as Galatians 3:28, Acts 10, Romans 12:13, and Hebrews 13:2.

Israel's motivation for caring for the stranger is embedded in their history of being foreigners themselves. Stories such as Abraham's sojourn to foreign lands (Genesis 12), Jacob's family immigration to Egypt due to famine (Genesis 46–48), the wilderness excursions, and even the conquest of Canaan serve as the backdrop of Israel's memory to care for the foreigner. It is in this context that we also find characters such as Ruth, the Moabite (a "stranger"), who finds herself welcomed in Israel and becomes part of Jesus' lineage.

However, it is those who are unnamed who give us some of the most potent examples of the importance of caring for the stranger. It was the "stranger" who often cared most for Israel. Intricately woven alongside the stories of the epic leaders of our faith are stories of voiceless, unnamed characters who move on behalf of Israel and are unmistakably used by God to act on behalf of Israel. They protect, guide, comfort and care for a nation called to carry out the *Missio Dei*.

These extraordinary individuals are included in God's redemptive history as they act out of compassion and faith. Accounts such as Pharaoh's daughter, who rescues a foreign baby from death to raise as her own (Exodus 2:5–10). While unnamed, she is pivotal in the deliverance of Israel. The widow at Zarephath provides food and shelter for Elijah (1 Kings 17:8–16). Despite having almost nothing, she offers hospitality. The Egyptian servant of the Amalekite is left behind to die but is cared for by David's men. In return, he provides vital intelligence that helps David recover his people and possessions (1 Samuel 30:11–15). Similarly, the four lepers at the Gate of Samaria discover the flight of the Aramean army. They inform the city, saving it from starvation during a siege (2 Kings 7:3–11).

Through the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, God forged a people to live distinctively — not to exclude, but to witness to the nations.

In the New Testament, we find accounts such as the woman at the well, who is responsible for an untold number of Samaritans who come to faith because of her testimony (John 4:39–42). The woman who anoints Jesus is unnamed in Luke's account but praised for her extravagant love and hospitality, to which Jesus states her story will be told wherever the gospel is preached (Luke 7:36–50). Jesus heals an unnamed man possessed by demons. In response, the man begs to go with him, but Jesus insists he go home and tell his friends. This man becomes a witness to the Decapolis, a predominantly Gentile region (Mark 5:18–20). Among those scattered by persecution, unnamed people go to Antioch and begin preaching to the Gentiles, marking a pivotal shift for the Gentile inclusion into the Church and leading to the founding of the first "Christian" community (Acts 11:19–21).

Unnamed, but not unremarkable. Not only does Scripture record clear instructions to care for the stranger, but it includes numerous examples of strangers used by God to carry out the same mission of caring for those different from themselves, strangers. From these accounts, we find a clear message that Israel is exclusive to God, but God is not exclusive to Israel. God moves through ordinary individuals to protect and carry out his redemption plan.

There is a demanding but vital journey ahead as the Church seeks to engage thoughtfully and creatively in dialogue and discernment around how to best care for immigrants and contribute to meaningful solutions. Yet, this challenge must not dishearten us to settle for what is easy — caring only for those who are convenient to love — for in that decision, we create a false doctrine of "us" and "them" — of the worthy and unworthy.

It is our responsibility to insist on mercy extended to even the most difficult. When we shift our focus to anything else, we turn away from fulfilling our obligations by creating a "stranger" that does not exist. This hermeneutical construct keeps us from fully engaging in the command. Many of us find ourselves with a limited capacity to understand the expectation as we seek to define, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). We prefer to encase the command in a new law that narrows the definition of neighbor rather than walking in full obedience of loving without boundaries.

Identifying a problem yet neglecting to act upon information attained enables harm to persist. Passivity is not neutral; it is destructive. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for the performance of the Church but to bring hope to the overlooked and healing to the broken. Our insistence to extend hope to the "stranger" is part of our calling to preach the full gospel message that redemption is extended to all people.

No stranger is undeserving of courageous hospitality and mercy. It is a recognition that in serving the unnamed, we reach beyond ourselves and find a placement in the calling to see the unseen and hear the cry of the voiceless. Perhaps it positions us to hear the words of Christ differently, "'I was hungry and you gave me food ... I was a stranger and you welcomed me ... as you did it to the least of these my brothers, you did to me'" (Matthew 25:35–40).

The call of believers and the Church is love without limitation — because it is within this embodiment of sacrificial love that we find the power of the gospel message. Withholding when we have the capacity to share is cowardly, discriminatory and falls short of the biblical mandate. It's a false gospel stripped of hope and truth.

Matthew Soerens is vice president of advocacy and policy at World Relief.

Behind the Headlines

Making Sense of the Current Immigration Landscape

The Apostle Paul tells us that the Church is composed of one body, with distinct, interdependent parts, called to both rejoice and suffer together (1 Corinthians 12:12–26). Many evangelical leaders have celebrated the growth in their churches and denominations, fueled by immigrants and their children. But in a season when many of our immigrant brothers and sisters — and others whom we hope may one day embrace Jesus — are feeling the stresses and facing the dangers of rapidly changing immigration policies, it's vital that the whole of the Church engage.

The media often oversimplifies the complexity of U.S. immigration policy changes — and to some extent, I can't blame them. It's my full-time job to track these changes, and some weeks I cannot keep up. To start, it's important to understand how immigrants of different legal statuses have been affected by recent policy changes.

First, roughly half of immigrants living in the United States are naturalized U.S. citizens. Immigration policy changes shouldn't impact them directly, since — unless they committed fraud in their naturalization process — their status as a citizen is secure. Even efforts to reinterpret the 14th Amendment to limit birthright citizenship have, thus far, been met with significant skepticism by the courts.

However, citizens — whether naturalized or native-born — could face new challenges to family reunification, particularly if their relative happens to be from countries such as Burma, Haiti, Afghanistan or other countries recently subjected to travel bans. While U.S. citizens themselves cannot be deported under the law, their non-citizen parents, spouses or children could be at risk in some cases. An estimated 5 million U.S. citizen minor children have at least one parent who is vulnerable to deportation under existing law. Congress recently authorized a massive increase in funding for immigrant detention and deportation, with a goal of uprooting more than one million people per year.

Those "vulnerable to deportation" of course include immigrants who are undocumented, whether they entered the country unlawfully or overstayed a temporary visa. While the administration says violent criminals are the top priority for deportation — a priority with which the large majority of evangelical Christians agree, according to Lifeway Research polling — the share of detained immigrants facing deportation who have been convicted of any crime *declined* by about 35 percent between January and June, while the share of those not charged with any crime increased roughly fourfold. The White House has recently clarified that *anyone*

Read the NAE's resolution that guides our immigration advocacy at **NAE.org/immigration-2009**.

without legal status "is at risk of deportation."

That includes at least 1.5 million immigrants who entered the country lawfully and until recently have been present lawfully with humanitarian parole, which the administration abruptly terminated. Parole is a legal manner of entry that U.S. law allows for humanitarian or "public interest" reasons on a case-by-case basis, and the Biden administration used it extensively — first for Afghans fleeing the Taliban, then for Ukrainians, Venezuelans, Haitians and others. But parole granted by one administration can be withdrawn by another, as the U.S. Supreme Court recently affirmed. Among those whose parole has been terminated are certain Afghan Christians who, if deported, could face a serious threat of martyrdom.

A final category of immigrants are refugees and asylees, both of whom are granted permanent legal status under U.S. law only if they can prove a well-founded fear of persecution for specific reasons such as their religion, race or political opinion. Refugees receive that designation overseas and arrive lawfully on airplanes, whereas asylum is granted to individuals who make their own way to the United States and present evidence of their claim once in the United States. Those who *already* have refugee or asylum status should be secure, but the president halted new refugee resettlement (at least temporarily) on January 20, and access to asylum has also been significantly curtailed, particularly for those who arrive to the U.S.-Mexico border. Those restrictions began under the Biden administration and have been tightened under the Trump administration. The U.S.-Mexico border is much quieter than it has been in decades — but those with a well-founded fear of persecution, including Iranian converts to Christianity, are being turned away as a result, sent to third countries such as Panama and Costa Rica.

The vast majority of evangelical Christians affirm the government's authority and responsibility to ensure secure, orderly borders. We want our government to know who is entering the country and to do everything reasonably possible to prevent the entry of anyone who would seek to do harm. Both preventing unlawful entry *and* ensuring due process for those who profess to have fled a well-founded fear of persecution are vital as we urge leaders to uphold the rule of law, as is insisting that all people, even those who may ultimately need to be removed, be treated humanely as people made in God's image.

Many recent policy shifts have led to a great deal of fear in many immigrant communities, which is why it's a vital time for the Church to remind the immigrants among us of Jesus' love for them and of his promise to be a refuge — even as we advocate for public policies guided by biblical principles that honor the law, ensure secure borders, protect family unity, respect the dignity of all people and show compassion.

Read "2025 Evangelical Views on Immigration," a study by Lifeway Research.

Called to Compassion

In 2019, after years of supporting pregnancy centers and adoptive families in the pro-life movement, I was invited to explore a new calling — to get proximate to another vulnerable population: immigrants.

I said yes to an immersive trip to Oaxaca, Mexico, alongside a group of female evangelical leaders who had been invited to learn about migration dynamics south of the U.S. border. During our time together, we met with ministry leaders, government officials and migrants.

One afternoon, we visited a government-run shelter for unaccompanied migrant children — those who had been lost, deserted or separated from their parents during their journey north. As our group dispersed to greet the children, two young girls caught my attention when they came walking out into the courtyard with babies in their arms. A friend and I walked over to greet them. We learned that Maria* and Alicia* were 11 and 13 years old.

Through a translator, we asked where they were from and whose babies they were holding. Since we didn't speak their language, we simply held their gaze and smiled as the shelter staff and translator explained what we were not prepared to hear. Maria and Alicia were neither babysitters nor big sisters: *They were mothers*. They were children raising children, without their own mothers beside them.

I couldn't fully comprehend what I had just been told, but I knew one thing for certain: No child chooses to become a mother at age 11 or 13.

As I learned about the "push factors" that forced these children from their home — violence, poverty and persecution — I realized how common situations like these are for young women and families in the Northern Triangle (i.e., El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras). The threats they

Watch videos of immigrants sharing their stories at **NAE.org/immigrantneighbor**.

Bri Stensrud is the director of Women of Welcome.

face don't end when they leave; in many ways, the journey north is just as dangerous.

Why hadn't I heard stories like this before? Why wasn't I told the full story of what was happening to so many families migrating south of the border? I became convinced that if more people could witness these two children holding their babies and if they could hear what I had just heard, they would be deeply grieved alongside me.

Let's Not Miss This

Six years have passed since that experience, and my advocacy has grown from traditional pro-life issues of abortion and adoption to a whole-life ethic — including care for immigrants and refugees. Today, I lead Women of Welcome, a community of over 150,000 Christian women dedicated to advocating for immigrants and refugees.

Over the years, I've led over a dozen immersive trips, taking more than 200 Christian women across the border to experience a similar proximity to the issues that changed my perspective in 2019. As we pray with pastors, meet Border Patrol agents and listen to migrants' stories, we return home with a more nuanced picture of what is often oversimplified in the public.

As a conservative white evangelical, people sometimes find me to be an unlikely voice in this space. But I've found that many women are profoundly curious about what to do with their God-given compassion for the strong but vulnerable immigrants we have met.

The politics of immigration remain divisive, but with only 26 percent of evangelicals claiming the Bible is what influences them most on immigration, a lack of biblical knowledge is our true crisis. We must help our faith communities attach biblical confidence to their compassion.

While some might find it a big leap between social advocacy arenas (abortion to immigration), if we're a pro-life people the jump isn't far. It's deeply tethered to our core belief in the *imago Dei*.

Christians are called to a consistent ethic regarding the dignity and sanctity of human life. We're not pro-life simply because of our opposition to abortion, but rather out of a biblical understanding of God's intentional design of human beings made in his image and his hope for their flourishing.

To be truly pro-life is to apply this ethic across the entire spectrum of life, including culture, class, race, age, ability, opinion, and yes, even citizenship. The heartbeat of the pre-born child is immensely valuable, as is the heartbeat of a child at the border, or the one desperate for medical care overseas, or struggling for their next meal in our own backyard.

Loving Your Immigrant Neighbor

When headlines about immigration dominate our social feeds, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Here are three ways you can begin to engage:

1. Pray

For immigrants and refugees in this country who feel unwelcome and alone. For wisdom on how to show up well wherever God has placed you. For our national leaders who can create solutions for these neighbors.

2. Pursue Proximity

Without proximity to people, nothing becomes personal enough to sustain the complex pursuit of peace and justice for our neighbors. Reach out to a friend or local immigrant congregation. Ask how you can be a tangible support during this time when immigrant communities feel isolated and fearful of the days ahead.

3. Find Your Voice

Wherever God has placed us, with whatever influence we have, as Christians, we must love our neighbor well by speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8). Start with Scripture and let that inspire discussion at home, in the pulpit, and even in the halls of Congress.

Learn more about Women of Welcome.

Get Your Church Ready To *Do More Good!*

Top photo, from left to right: *Dunia, a mother in Honduras, raised her three daughters alone, holding onto faith through every hardship.*

Left photo, from left to right: *Eybis, 10, Genesis, 5, Kenia, 11, now live joyfully in a safe, new home thanks to the generosity of church communities like yours.*

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(Matthew 25:40, NIV)

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Joanne Solis-Walker serves as associate dean of La Mesa Academy of Theological Studies at Candler School of Theology.

The Blessing of Presence

How Immigrants Contribute to Society and the Church

Immigrants have long enriched American society — through music, art, sports, and through their work and entrepreneurship in every area of our economy. The Church has also benefited. As Gabriel Salguero, president of the National Latino Evangelical Association, notes, "Immigrants have been part of the backbone of the rapid growth of the Latino evangelical church," contributing to church planting, leadership and the revitalization.

We can and should quantify these contributions, but if we are not careful, we may overlook their greatest contribution: the blessing of their presence.

Sociologist and theologian Jonathan Calvillo writes:

> …for many of the Latino Pentecostals whom I encountered throughout my life, crossing borders, social and geopolitical — was a matter of survival, and as these Pentecostals crossed, the Spirit crossed with them.

This powerful image reminds us of the spiritual resilience and empowerment immigrants carry with them — of the Divine accompanying them in their journey. Not only are they strengthened; they bring strength. We must look beyond surface-level contributions of immigrants to recognize the resilience, empowerment and spiritual fervor that have significantly contributed to the *avivamiento* ("revival") of the Church.

And so, we welcome the presence of immigrants among us as a blessing, embracing who they are and what they represent as their greatest contribution to the Church and society.

This is both simple and complex. As Itzel Meduri of World Outspoken says: "...we're often tempted to measure the contributions of immigrants in terms of tax revenue or manual labor. But let us not forget their intrinsic worth and the vital role many play in sharing God's message."

Daniel Montañez writes, "... God chose a migrant and displaced community to bring the greatest blessing of all, the hope of salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ." God continues to do this for us today through the presence of immigrants, and what a blessing! When history tells this story, may the Church be known for recognizing and defending the inherent dignity of every immigrant — honoring their contributions and, even more, valuing them for who they are: a blessing. E

Listen to Daniel Yang share what happens when God brings the nations to us at **NAE.org/global-church-podcast**.

Q&A

Immigration on the Ground

Servando Valdovinos is a pastor, author and licensed practical nurse with a heart for the immigrant community. Born in California in 1993 to migrant farmworker parents, his upbringing instilled both a strong work ethic and a deep evangelical faith. He currently serves as pastor of Iglesia Cristiana in Ohio and provides care as a licensed practical nurse in Northwest Ohio. Servando is the author of "Israel & the End of Days" and an active member of the National Hispanic Pastors Alliance in Washington, D.C. He is pursuing a master's degree in theology at Ashland Theological Seminary.

YOU PASTOR A CONGREGATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH VARIED IMMIGRATION STATUSES. IN TODAY'S POLITICAL CLIMATE, HOW HAS YOUR CHURCH BEEN AFFECTED, AND HOW HAVE THEY RESPONDED?

In essence, everything has changed. In December 2024, undocumented immigrants who have been in the United States for more than 20 years — who avoided crime, paid taxes and contributed to society — were considered "safe" from deportation.

That has been the case for many years. Both Republican and Democrat administrations over the past 30 years primarily focused on deporting undocumented immigrants who recently arrived or who committed crimes.

But in January 2025, everything changed. Immigration officials have now been directed to deport as many undocumented immigrants as possible, regardless of how much they have contributed to America. We're talking about grandparents who crossed the border when they were teenagers. Many of them have become deeply rooted in their communities and American society.

MANY LATINO FAITH COMMUNITIES HOLD DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ON IMMIGRATION POLICY. HOW ARE YOU AND OTHER PASTORS NAVIGATING THESE DIFFERENCES AND WORKING TO FOSTER UNITY?

Yes, the Latino church is divided on the issue. Some pastors have undocumented immigrants in their congregations, yet they've remained silent — or even defended the deportations.

Imagine accepting tithes and offerings from undocumented church members, calling them your brothers and sisters in Christ — yet in the moment when your undocumented flock need you the most, saying nothing in their defense and remaining silent to this day.

I ask you — regardless of whether you are Baptist,

Pentecostal, Apostolic, Lutheran or another tradition — if you are undocumented and belong to a Latino church or denomination, check whether your church leadership has spoken up about the deportation of nonviolent undocumented immigrants who have contributed to America for many years.

And if they haven't, ask them why. If they respond that the church doesn't get involved in politics, remind them: The church can be pro-life, pro-marriage, and also pro-mercy and pro-forgiveness toward undocumented immigrants.

Church unity will happen when we start living the gospel, not only preaching it.

PUBLIC DISCOURSE AROUND IMMIGRATION OFTEN INCLUDES HARMFUL STEREOTYPES, ESPECIALLY ABOUT UNDOCUMENTED INDIVIDUALS. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE OTHERS TO KNOW ABOUT THE UNDOCUMENTED CHRISTIANS IN YOUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY?

Undocumented immigrants who have committed violent crimes should be deported or imprisoned. But in my 32 years of serving the migrant community, I have yet to meet an undocumented immigrant who committed a serious crime.

The media doesn't report that there are undocumented nurses, bank tellers, pastors, addiction counselors and valedictorians — people who have learned English, love America and want a chance to earn forgiveness. They would love an opportunity to earn legal immigration status by paying significant fines, submitting background checks, completing their education, working or serving in the military, and paying taxes. Legislation, such as the recently reintroduced Dignity Act, could do exactly that.

I understand America must secure its borders and enforce its laws. Immigrants value this, too. But we can still create a merit-based system — one where the evildoers are deported, and hardworking and good human beings are allowed to stay.

SOME ARGUE THAT IMMIGRANTS PLACE A STRAIN ON NATIONAL RESOURCES. BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE, HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THAT CLAIM?

The 11 million undocumented immigrants who have been in America for over 20 years are not eligible for Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security or Pell grants. All those programs require a valid Social Security number. They pay taxes using ITINs issued by the government. They pay into the system but can't reap its benefits.

Yes, there have been programs for asylum seekers from Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti and other countries, but most of the 11 million undocumented immigrants did not qualify for this help.

CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE FACED TIMES OF HARDSHIP AND PERSECUTION. HOW DOES YOUR PERSONAL FAITH — AND THAT OF YOUR CONGREGATION — INFORM YOUR RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT REALITIES FACED BY IMMIGRANTS?

Our faith is grounded in our God who is with us, no matter what happens in this world. I'm reminded of the story in Esther, where Mordecai wonders if Esther was called "for such a time as this."

Personally, I am "safe" as an American citizen. But that doesn't mean I can turn a blind eye to what is happening. My participation in this article may strain relationships with certain pastors and churches. That is not my intention. I love America; I love what it stands for. I implore fellow pastors to speak up, as Esther did.

In a world full of division and struggle, it should be the pastor's voice that is heard — advocating for those who can't speak for themselves.

HOW CAN OTHER CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES SUPPORT IMMIGRANT CHURCHES AND PASTORS?

There's a story about a group of people who were praying for a chair to move. They prayed and prayed until — a young man got up and moved the chair. Both prayer and action are essential.

I urge every reader to reconsider the forgiveness of undocumented families who have lived humble, decent lives in America. Pray, speak up and remind the Church of the message of the gospel: repentance, mercy, forgiveness and redemption through Jesus Christ.

POSTSCRIPT

Walter Kim is president of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Remembering We Are a Migrant People

Long before my family knew the word "evangelical," we encountered its witness. Refugees like my father and displaced souls like my mother met followers of Jesus in Korea who came "to proclaim good news to the poor … to set the oppressed free." They came in word and deed, with a tender but tenacious faith, irrepressible hope and inexpressible joy.

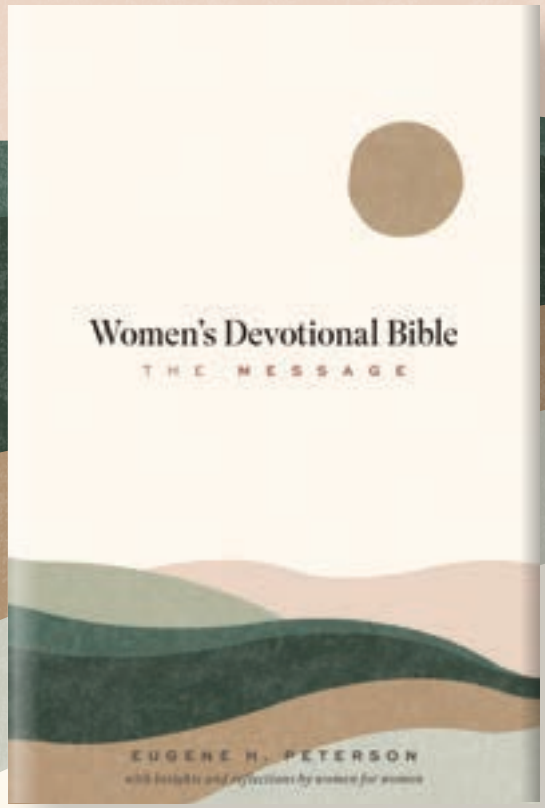
When my parents immigrated to the United States in 1965, a Lutheran minister helped them settle. We lived in the basement of an Irish Catholic family in the Bronx and found spiritual refuge in a Korean Presbyterian church. Their story is not unique. It is echoed in the lives of millions whose labor feeds our tables and heals our bodies — immigrants who harvest crops, stock shelves, care for the sick and serve in countless unseen ways.

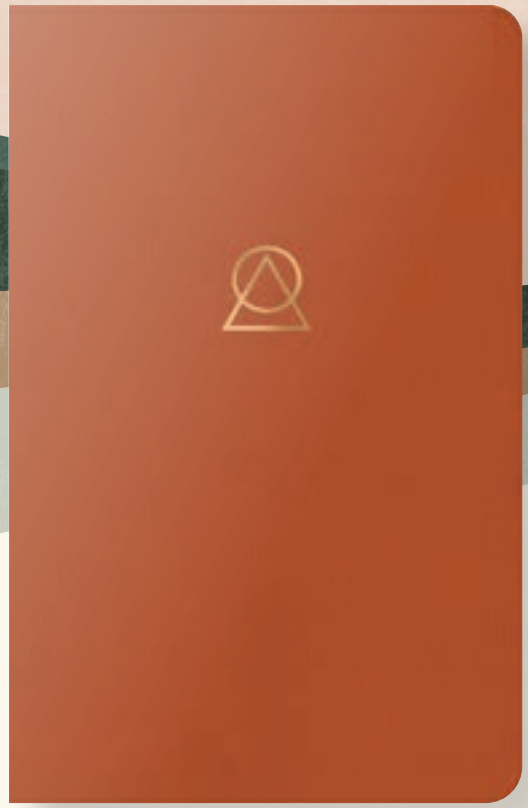
Scripture calls the Church "strangers and sojourners." This is not metaphor; it is memory. Abraham, though wealthy, called himself a foreigner and stranger. Jesus, born under occupation, fled as a refugee and declared, "My kingdom is not of this world." In Christ, we follow a migrant Savior.

Faith is a pilgrimage. We are resident aliens, longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Hebrews reminds us that those who live by faith admit they are foreigners on earth, seeking a city prepared by God.

Today, as we face complex questions about immigration, we must remember: The Church is a migrant people. Our true home is in Christ. Our values are shaped by another reality. And our calling is to welcome the stranger, because we are strangers too.

Faith is a pilgrimage. We are resident aliens, longing for a better country — a heavenly one.





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