

A Pastoral Letter from Bishop Hee-Soo Jung



Dear Beloved People of The Ohio Episcopal Area,

I write to you today with a heavy heart and a praying spirit as we witness the recent tragic deaths of two people in Minnesota. These losses are not isolated incidents. They are part of a wider pattern of fear-driven, indiscriminate immigration enforcement that has crossed moral and spiritual boundaries. Nothing can justify violence against human life.

As an immigrant myself, I know in my own body what it means to live under the weight of uncertainty, vulnerability, and being labeled. I also know that many who are called “undocumented” are not criminals. They are workers, parents, and neighbors who crossed borders because economic systems, political violence, and family survival left them no other choice. Today, families, industries, and entire communities in the United States depend on their labor and their lives. This is why we must continue to call for comprehensive immigration reform that reflects reality, justice, and mercy.

Scripture is unambiguous about God’s heart toward the stranger. “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the stranger. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself” (Leviticus 19:33–34).

The crisis before us is not only legal or political – it is moral and spiritual. The United States is being tested at the level of its soul. Will we be a nation shaped by fear and exclusion, or a society rooted in hospitality and justice? Our faith reminds us that God is always found among the displaced, the vulnerable, and the unwelcome.

Jesus himself was a refugee. Scripture tells us that his family fled violence and crossed borders to survive (Matthew 2:13–15). And our Lord teaches us plainly: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35).

The church cannot be silent in such a moment. The Ohio churches are called again to be a people who build true human community – where dignity is protected, where the stranger is seen as neighbor, and where love is stronger than fear. Laws matter. Policies matter. But before all of that, the spirit of hospitality must shape our homes, our congregations, and our public witness.

Let us become communities of sanctuary – places where justice has a face, and mercy has hands:

We lift before you the names and faces
of those who have died,
and the families who now grieve.
Hold them in your healing light.
Make our churches places of welcome,
where the stranger is no longer invisible,
and the wounded find safety.
Let justice walk freely in our streets,
and let compassion become
the language of our nation.
Break the power of fear.
Restore the soul of this land
through the love of Christ,
who makes us all neighbors.
Amen.