

Praying for Healing: Faith Community Call for Solidarity with San Francisco

Last week, the life of Kathryn Steinle was tragically cut short by a senseless act of gun violence. Today, as united members of the faith community, we offer our heartfelt condolences to Kathryn's family and friends. We join the broader San Francisco community as we grieve, and pray for peace and healing for all who are impacted by this tragedy. Her death is a tremendous loss. In this moment, as our country has been shaken by a series of recent shootings that have resulted in the loss of life, we must come together to share both grief and resilience.

As we mourn, we must resist the inclination to allow grief and despair to turn us against one another, or to blame an entire community for the actions of one individual. The resiliency of our community must triumph over knee-jerk reactions that would harden our hearts. The City of San Francisco's policies are rooted in core constitutional principles and promote the safety of all community members, regardless of immigration status. These policies do not protect individuals from the criminal justice system, nor do they promote the release of individuals who have been convicted of violent offenses. These ordinances and policies build trust between local law enforcement and community members, so all individuals can report dangerous situations and seek protection from violence without the fear of being deported and separated from their families. More than 320 jurisdictions across the United States, including almost all of California, have adopted similar policies that limit or end detainer requests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. These ICE "holds" seriously undermine due process and have been found by federal courts, most recently in the U.S. District Court for Oregon, to be unconstitutional as they violate the Fourth Amendment prohibition against unreasonable search and seizure.

We urge all people of faith and good will, including our political leaders and members of the media, to support the long-standing efforts of law enforcement officials to foster trusting relationships with the communities they protect and serve. We believe the ordinances uphold the dignity of every person, regardless of their immigration status, and strengthen our communities.

Faith communities in the United States organized a sanctuary movement decades ago, in an effort that saved thousands of lives from death squads in Central America. More recently, congregations have opened their doors in an act of sanctuary to keep families and communities together when faced with deportations. Though some have chosen to use this tragedy to further a political agenda based on fear and racial profiling, we respectfully ask that they not conflate or confuse this isolated tragedy with the commitment of cities and congregations to welcome and provide sanctuary to undocumented individuals.

We mourn Kathryn Steinle's death and pray for healing and peace for her family and friends. We also stand with the city of San Francisco with purpose in our resolve that to be hospitable is to be whole.

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Refugee and Immigration Ministries
Church World Service
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Franciscan Action Network
Ignatian Solidarity Network
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity
PICO Network
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries