

# AUTUMN RIDGE CHURCH

Autumn Ridge family,

To those who feel disappointed that you haven't heard from church leadership sooner, that's understandable. I don't know if I have a good answer—only an honest one. When the lead pastor is out of the country and in a location with intermittent communication, the process slows down. That's not an excuse; it's simply the reality we've navigated.

Now that I'm back from Ghana, I want to speak to you first as your pastor, not as a pundit or strategist. My agenda is not to get you to support a policy, party, or an action group. My agenda is to call us together to be formed into the likeness of Jesus right here, right now. Before we talk about ICE, protests, or public policy, we must remember who we are.

## ***Start with who you are in Christ***

If you belong to Jesus, his status is given to you as your own. The Father doesn't see you as a political label, an ethnicity, a social class, or an opinion column. He sees you in Christ—as a beloved son or daughter, an heir of his kingdom. That means you are free from false charges of condemnation, including the pressure to prove your faith by aligning with one political tribe over another.

In days like these, some voices will tell you that “real Christians” stand with law enforcement and reject the protesters. Others will insist that “real Christians” stand with the protesters and denounce ICE in total. When you hear that kind of talk, I want you to remember what the Apostle Paul called matters of first importance. Genuine faith rests on allegiance to Jesus and the declaration that he died on our behalf and that he rose from the dead.

## ***Grieve what is evil and affirm the worth of every person***

At a bare minimum, Christian love requires us to affirm the worth of every human being involved in this story. That includes those shot and killed, their families and community, immigrants who are already living with fear, law enforcement officers and federal agents who carry a heavy burden, and neighbors who are trying to make sense of what is happening on their streets.

Love also requires us to name what is evil. Violations of civil rights, disregard for due process, and contempt for immigrants are not political talking points. They are serious concerns, and followers of Jesus must refuse to baptize them in religious language. At the same time, love does not sanctify mob justice, destruction, or the demeaning of the dignity of those we believe are in the wrong. We do not correct abuses of power by abandoning the rule of law and taking

vengeance into our own hands. The way of Jesus calls us to a different path: to seek justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God, even when our hearts are outraged and our emotions are raw.

### ***Refuse to be pawns; reclaim a prophetic voice***

Moments like this reveal how easy it is to be disciplined more by our culture than by our Savior. If we uncritically echo the talking points of our preferred media outlet—whether conservative or progressive—we will quickly find that our faith has been conflated with a party, a platform, or a personality. When that happens, we stop being ambassadors for King Jesus and become pawns for someone else’s agenda.

### ***Learn from Paul’s engagement with power***

Scripture gives us a living illustration of how a follower of Jesus can engage deeply with a broken legal and political system without being owned by it. In Acts 21–26, the apostle Paul uses his Roman citizenship and the court system not to protect his comfort but to advance the gospel and bear witness before governors, a king, and ultimately Caesar. He respects authorities, he insists on due process, and he uses every lawful means available—but he does it with his eyes fixed on Jesus’ interests, not his own.

That’s an important model for us in a moment when there are serious questions about the use of force, civil rights, and the treatment of immigrants. It is right and good for Christians to care about due process, to ask hard questions about whether deadly force was justified, and to advocate for accountability when the state takes a life. It is right and good for Christians to use legal channels, public testimony, and peaceful protest to pursue justice and protect vulnerable people. It is also right and good for Christians serving in law enforcement or immigration enforcement to do their work faithfully, with integrity, restraint, and deep awareness that every person they encounter is made in the image of God.

### ***Concrete steps for our church family***

So, what does this look like for Autumn Ridge Church, right now, in Minnesota?

#### **1. Pray specifically and persistently.**

Pray for the family and friends of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, for comfort, healing, and justice.

Pray for immigrants in our state who are now even more afraid, that they would experience protection, wise counsel, and the hospitality of God’s people.

Pray for law enforcement officers and ICE agents, that they would act with wisdom, restraint, and courage, and that those who misuse their authority would be held accountable.

Pray for our city and state leaders, that they would resist political theater and pursue truth, transparency, and real solutions.

I'm asking you to make it a priority to join us at our [Prayer Gathering for Minnesota](#), on Sunday night, February 1, at 5:00p.

## **2. Listen before you label.**

Seek out voices you don't normally hear: immigrants and refugees, people working in the legal system, law enforcement officers, and community leaders.

When you hear a story, slow down before you repost, react, or reduce it to a slogan. We live in a time when distinguishing facts from falsehoods is increasingly difficult.

## **3. Show up for immigrants in tangible ways.**

Support ministries and legal clinics that provide trustworthy counsel, language help, and practical aid to immigrants and refugees in Minnesota. **At the bottom of this letter is a list of resources and organizations with whom you can partner.**

One of our church's responses has been to donate to the [ONE Fund](#). The One Fund provides emergency financial support to immigrant churches and ministries in Minnesota as they respond to this crisis. Gifts to the One Fund are distributed to congregations to help them meet the urgent needs of immigrant families—especially those who are lawfully present, part of mixed-status households, or otherwise especially vulnerable—whose livelihoods have been disrupted by intensified immigration enforcement.

## **4. Support those who risk their lives to keep order.**

Befriend local officers; express genuine gratitude for those who serve with integrity in an increasingly volatile environment. Their job is neither easy nor safe. Let's ensure we don't take them for granted.

## **5. Engage the public square as ambassadors, not combatants.**

Some of you will sense a call to march peacefully, write op-eds, or work on policy around immigration and policing. Others will serve quietly, mentoring kids, hosting immigrant families, or offering trauma-informed care.

Wherever you land, remember that your first allegiance is to Jesus, not to a movement. Be willing, as Constantine Campbell has written, to ask whether loving your neighbor might sometimes mean acting or even voting against your own immediate interests.

## 6. Guard our unity in Christ.

In our church family, some will emphasize law and order. Others will emphasize systemic injustice and the plight of immigrants. Many will feel torn between impulses that all have roots in biblical concerns. Like the Roman Christians in Romans 14, you are responsible before God to do what you are convinced is most right, most loving, and most wise—and then to refuse to condemn brothers and sisters in Christ who, in good conscience, come to different conclusions.

Church family, moments like this test what is really forming us. Are we being shaped primarily by fear, outrage, and partisan narratives, or by the crucified and risen Jesus who gave up his rights for the sake of his enemies? The history of the church is full of men and women who lost their lives rather than their witness. May we not be the generation that trades that heritage for a few news cycles of political adrenaline.

Let's fix our eyes on Jesus. Let's refuse to be pawns. Let's reclaim a prophetic voice of truth, justice, mercy, and hope—for immigrants, for officers, for protesters, and for all our neighbors in Minnesota.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Rick

# RESOURCES

## ***Agencies In and Around Rochester***

- [The Advocates for Human Rights](#): Offers legal services for immigration, asylum, and trafficking cases. Working to help with immigrants to help solve immigration problems.
- [Minnesota Interfaith Coalition on Immigration \(ICOM\)](#): ICOM is a dedicated, grassroots, 501 © non-profit organization that formed in 2008 in response to state and national policies that unfairly target immigrants and refugees. Guided by our faith values, ICOM stands in solidarity with immigrants, refugees, and their families, and our active volunteer network provides a variety of compassionate support while advocating for systemic justice through policy change.
- [Arrive Ministries](#) (part of Transform Minnesota): Arrive Ministries is a refugee resettlement agency providing essential services and practical assistance to refugees and immigrants to advance self-sufficiency.
- [Alliance of Chicanos, Hispanics and Latin Americans \(ACHLA\)](#): This organization has built up a continually expanding network that collects donations and makes deliveries to vulnerable families.
- [Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee](#): Advocates for immigrant rights and holds community actions.

## ***City of Rochester Information Page***

- [Immigration Resources](#): This contains information on rights and legal assistance.

## ***Vetted groups resourcing those in need***

- [Catholic Charities](#): works in housing Job training, advocacy and immigration services
- [COPAL MN](#): A statewide organization with a Rochester location that helps Latino families, provides resources, and coordinates with the Immigrant Defense Network (IDN) to support families following ICE activity.
- [Channel One Regional Food Bank](#): Provides a home delivery program for families in need. Clients can call to set up orders or arrange for a proxy to pick up food.
- [Refugee and Immigrant Helpline](#): A Minnesota state service that connects families to food, resources, and support.

### ***Non-vetted groups***

- [RRRN Rochester Rapid Response Network](#): helps immigrants facing problems with ICE and immigration enforcement, from education and advocacy to legal aid to emergency assistance.
- [We the Gente](#): Rochester based non-profit that seeks to empower Hispanic communities.
- [Pamoja Women](#): An organization in Rochester that educates, supports, and amplifies women and girls and their families of East African Heritage. They are accepting donations and need an increase in funding to support their food shelves.

### ***Local Schools***

- Contact local school social workers (neighborhood schools) to find out what needs each school has for families affected by ICE or other needs, because other needs are still out there.
- Purchase grocery gift cards for the social workers to distribute to families.
- Contact [missions@autumnridge.church](mailto:missions@autumnridge.church) to find out direct needs and be added to the shop for kids list, where these needs will be sent out.