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## Leger Fernández, faith leaders honor dead and detained in Minneapolis

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Roshi Joan Halifax, of Upaya Zen Buddhist Center, embraces Elizabeth Sackler as community members lit candles, prayed and sang together Thursday at the end of an interfaith vigil in opposition to ICE brutality bringing together faith leaders and members of the community at First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

After a year of raucous protests reignited by a month of nationwide rancor over two killings by immigration agents in Minneapolis, outraged Santa Feans tried a new strategy — faith.

A few hundred packed the pews and overflow standing room of First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe on Thursday night for a candlelight procession and interfaith vigil in remembrance of victims of immigration enforcement and in encouraging all to embrace light amid the darkness.

“We come this evening to pray, to reflect, to listen, to commit ourselves to working toward a world of compassion, peace and justice,” the Rev. Andrew Black of First Presbyterian told the attendees.

U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández, who organized the vigil, spoke of recent victims in Minneapolis: Alex Pretti, who, she said, “should not have paid with his life for his constitutional courage”; Renee Good, who died “when an angry man shot her three times”; and others being held in detention.

“We will not forget them,” the Democrat said. “The light shining in the darkness is not a mere metaphor. It is our dedication to rebuilding a nation we can cherish.”



A view of the packed First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe for the interfaith vigil “We Are Called for Such a Time as This,” bringing together faith leaders and members of the community in opposition to ICE brutality.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

The outcry against the Trump administration’s immigration crackdown, she told the crowd, is working. She pointed to a recent federal spending bill where a few Republican lawmakers split with the party’s original proposal to support an increase to Immigration and Customs Enforcement funding.

“We are part of something that is woven together in districts across our country,” she said.

Archbishop John C. Wester, leader of the Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe, told the crowd he has been thinking lately about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor who spoke against the Nazi regime and was executed in a concentration camp.

“My point’s not to say that the United States is like Nazi Germany,” Wester said. “That’s not true. My point, rather, is to say that Diet Bonoff made a decision to stand up against violence, against those who violate human rights, against political overreach and the dehumanization of vulnerable groups of people.”

Wester acknowledged the federal government has a role to play in enforcing immigration law but said current immigration laws are “no longer able to meet the reality of the day.” Authorities, he said, must not “trample God-given rights that are shared by every human being, regardless of their origin or legal status.”

“Doors are broken. People are terrified. Trust is eroded,” Wester said. “It has not been the immigrant breaking the law as much as it’s been the law breaking the immigrants.”



Cathy LaForte closes her eyes and sings “We Shall Overcome,” the closing hymn for the interfaith vigil “We Are Called for Such a Time as This,” on Thursday at First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

## ‘Values that created democracy’

The only speaker from a secular group — Marcela Díaz, executive director of the civil and workers’ rights group Somos Un Pueblo Unido — entered the church just in time for her speaking spot.

She came from the state Capitol, she told the audience, where she was advocating for Senate Bill 40 — a bill restricting access for out-of-state entities, including federal agencies, to license plate camera data in New Mexico. Without the bill, she said, immigrants are tracked, stopped, detained and deported after leaving their homes in the morning.

“Even if we live in a city where we know that our local government isn’t going to collude with any other agencies to attack us, to separate us from our families, to put us in detention centers, we know that there’s only so much we can do at the city level,” she said.

Rabbi Jack Schlachter, who serves synagogues in Santa Fe and Los Alamos, said he came to speak as the descendant of his four grandparents, who all fled rising antisemitism in Eastern Europe in the early 20th century.

“Had they not been admitted into the United States, they and their descendants would surely have perished in the worst atrocity ever, the Nazi Holocaust,” Schlachter said.

Roshi Joan Halifax from the Upaya Zen Buddhist Center spoke the names of nine people killed in shootings by federal immigration officers while in immigration detention.

Now is the time for “good trouble,” she said.

“It is a time for us not to lose our faith in our democracy,” Halifax said. “It is time for us to stand up and to uphold the values that created democracy.”



The Rev. Andrew Black of First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe delivers the final remarks for the interfaith vigil “We Are Called for Such a Time as This,” on Thursday at the church.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

## Rumors of ICE

Thursday's vigil came amid some local furor about ICE presence in Northern New Mexico, including rumors in recent days about agents stopping, detaining and deporting New Mexicans.

Eric Thompson, marketing director of Ski Santa Fe, refuted a rumor that ICE agents were at the ski basin recently.

"We heard those rumors," Thompson said. "There were never any agents here."

Similarly Joseph Abeyta, spokesperson for Santa Fe Public Schools, suggested a rumor someone was targeted on their way to Santa Fe High School was false.

"We are unaware of any ICE activity near Santa Fe [High], however we have learned that State Police made a traffic stop near Santa Fe High," Abeyta wrote in an email. "They were in an unmarked car and wearing camouflage. We confirmed this information with the State Police Department."

Brenda Torres, a member of San Ildefonso Pueblo, wrote in a social media post last week she was pulled over by an all-black truck accompanied by a state police officer while driving past La Bajada on Interstate 25 to Cochiti Pueblo.

Torres wrote an agent wearing a ski mask with "ICE" on his vest then asked her a series of questions, ranging from the whereabouts of her pueblo and name of her governor to asking her to recite the Pledge of Allegiance before letting her go.



Candles are lit near the end of the interfaith vigil “We Are Called for Such a Time as This,” Thursday at First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

Pueblo Gov. Christopher Moquino said in a phone interview Thursday that Torres had reported the incident to Pueblo leadership and that his office was preparing a statement informing Pueblo members of her experience and urging them to remain calm, provide any documentation requested by officers and report any similar incidents.

“We’re ... not immune to any type of these types of activities,” he said. “But ... what won’t be tolerated is active targeting of our tribal members.”

Still, Moquino had not received confirmation that ICE was operating in the area at the time of Torres’ experience after consulting with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Pojoaque Pueblo Police Department, whose law enforcement entities he said help oversee the area.

“I think my concern is more of what’s happening on the national level,” he said. “Some of the places like Minnesota where people of all different creeds and races and ethnic groups are being targeted.”

**MORE INFORMATION**



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