

North Hills United Methodist Church Hispanic Mission

January 30 of our Year of our Lord, 2026.



On January 29, 2026, at approximately 10:59 am, the North Hills community along with our church experienced a deeply distressing incident and the leadership of the church has decided not to remain silent. We will raise our voices now and whenever it is necessary. The church cannot and will not hide. We are called to be the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

Yesterday, federal immigration authorities entered the church parking lot wearing masks and carrying weapons and took an individual into custody. They blocked both exits of our parking lot with their vehicles. We were ambushed during the operation. Upon entry they ran through our parking lot all while our food ministry was taking place. We are all deeply wounded. Our sacred place was desecrated. Our food ministry is an expression of God's love for the hungry and as a result of ICEs senseless actions, we were forced to stop the food ministry. The food ministry is biblical. It was the first ministry entrusted to Peter. Before becoming a full-time preacher. Later, he appointed seven deacons to oversee that ministry so that he could focus on preaching the Gospel (Acts 6). Feeding people has always been at the heart of the Church's calling.

Another ministry that was interrupted was the activity in our church garden. An event where mothers, young children, and youths were all on church campus. What happened yesterday prompted leaders to take action and shelter all attendees in a secure room for more than four hours. Also, our Preschool was impacted. Imagine, being a child and seeing your mother scared, crying and wondering what's going on and having to confine yourself to a small room for four hours.

After the initial commotion, community members took action and used their own personal vehicles to transport families to their homes and to their children's school for safe pick up. We want to say thank you to everyone who rose up and volunteered at a time where it was needed the most. What happened on our church campus yesterday, caused community members and members of our church to have fear. To question what has our country come to and to think that we cannot be safe in our churches. That is why we had to come together and share words of encouragement and stand firm in the fact that our church remains committed to the dignity, safety, and sacred worth of every person. We will continue to be a place where

all are welcome to worship without fear. Additionally, our church campus also has preschool, an after-school program, and women's and children's activities every single day.

Every Sunday, we have a Worship Service in the morning in the parking lot, exactly where ICE detained Carlos Chavez, who is a member of our faith community. He faithfully supported, participated in, and attended our church's events and worship Service. What happened to Carlos was wrong and inhumane. His family has a GoFund me page and if you are able and can donate, please do so. We also want to share a personal statement from our pastor, pastor Ervin who shared:

“It was deeply traumatizing to witness masked, armed men running through our parking lot ground that we consider sacred. A place meant for refuge became a place of fear. As the pastor of North Hills United Methodist Church Hispanic Mission, I'm devastated. It was deeply painful to witness mothers and children under 3 crying, young people running, and individuals trembling with fear, paralyzed and unable to speak. As the pastor, I was unable to sleep last night. Several times I woke up to cry and pray, because my heart is in pain for what happened to my church, the place where I am serving my Lord Jesus Christ. As the pastor, this church is my house—my house of worship. I serve the Lord here and this is a place of ministry. They cannot come onto our property and interrupt a family healing activity and a food distribution ministry. For us, the food ministry is also a way of worshiping God. The Church should never be a place of fear. It must remain a sanctuary, a place of refuge, compassion, and hope where people can come to heal their souls.”

Our pastor has been providing pastoral care to many people and will continue to do so because people continue seeking for healing. Yesterday, he remained in the sanctuary the entire day, praying for each person until night. The superintendent, Rev. Garth Gilliam, along with Rev. Kalesita, Rev. Karin, and Dori, leader of the immigration task Force of California Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church came to assist our pastor in providing pastoral care to grieving mothers. They also wept alongside our pastor and affected members of our church and the community.

Our Thursday night Worship Service and Bible Study were canceled and instead dedicated to a time of prayer and grieving. During that time, we prayed and wept with our church members who experienced this horrific event firsthand. At this time, we are focused on caring for our community and its members as well as praying for the individual who was taken; Carlos Chavez and for their loved ones.

As a church we are hurting. We are grieving. But we will not remain silent. We will speak because remaining silent is to participate in injustice. We will raise our voices because remain silent in moments like this is to participate in injustice. We will stand because as a church we want to serve the Lord, to worship, and to Proclaim the Gospel with Freedom. We are devastated, but we will continue to serve and worship God, and to proclaim the Gospel with Courage. We stand on the Rock, who is Christ our Lord, and the gates of hell will not prevail against our church (Matthew 16:18).

**The United Methodist Church of North Hills of California Pacific Annual
Conference.**

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Local Pastor, Ervin Adin Aguilon. Lay Leader, Cristina Barrientos