How CBF's Immigration Injunction Protects Your Church

Frequently Asked Questions

cbf Advocacy

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE CASE IN WHICH CBF IS INVOLVED?

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, et al. v. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, et al., No. 8:2025cv00243 (D. Md. 2025).

WHY DID CBF JOIN THE LAWSUIT?

CBF Executive Coordinator Paul Baxley addressed why CBF's governing board voted to enter the lawsuit. One pertinent quote from that initial statement is this:

> "As Baptists, despite our many differences on theology and political preference, we have stood steadfast for centuries in the belief that local congregations should be free to carry out their mission as guided by the Holy Spirit. As a Fellowship, we have experienced a clear and unmistakable calling to be a community that is racially, ethnically, generationally and geographically diverse as we believe this reflects the mission of God and the character of Jesus. The revocation of sensitive location status for houses of worship has also harmed our capacity to live into that divine calling. … A primary reason for our joining this legal action is a hope that DHS's abrupt policy reversal will be blocked and our partner congregations will experience relief needed to freely associate and worship. We also believe that the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act grant clear legal warrant for our action."

WHAT DID THE COURT DO?

The U.S. District Court of Maryland's ruling applies only to the named plaintiffs in the lawsuit. This includes all CBF partner churches, the Sikh Temple Sacramento and six Quaker Meetings. The ruling blocks ICE (and all Department of Homeland Security agents) from entering our houses of worship to carry out enforcement operations unless they have first obtained a warrant signed by a judge or there are exigent circumstances. This decision effectively restores the sensitive location policy that had been revoked by the interim secretary of DHS, ensuring that houses of worship remain free from warrantless government raids.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Our congregations can now continue to worship and minister without the fear of unexpected enforcement actions. The ruling validates our longstanding commitment to religious liberty, local church autonomy, and the separation of church and state. It safeguards our ability to serve immigrant and refugee communities effectively, reinforcing the bold and courageous witness that has defined our mission.

HOW CAN CBF PARTNER CONGREGATIONS IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS PROTECTED BY THE INJUNCTION?

Such as church may post the following language at all entrances of the church____ [Name of Church]____ is part of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). Pursuant to a court order from the U.S. District Court of Maryland entered on February 24, 2025, Department of Homeland Security including ICE and CBP must treat our church as a "sensitive location" under the DHS Memorandum of October 27, 2021.

Download these posters to use at each entrance of your church.

WHAT ARE SOME KEY POINTS TO EMPHASIZE IF ASKED ABOUT THE LAWSUIT?

- The ruling restores essential protections for our houses of worship.
- The ruling reflects our unwavering commitment to our founding values.
- Immigrants and refugees are vital members of our beloved community and the larger church of Jesus Christ. Our religious freedom is lessened when immigrant communities are discouraged from participating in worship and participating in our ministries. We've been committed to ministry among immigrants and refugees from the beginning in our global mission engagement and in the mission commitments of our partner congregations.

WHAT DOES THE INJUNCTION REQUIRE?

An immigration officer who wants to search or make an arrest at a CBF partner church must first obtain a judicial warrant or be responding to an exigent circumstance like a foreign terrorist in the church actively planning an attack. The order further requires "to the fullest extent possible, any enforcement action in or near a place of worship shall be taken in a non-public area, outside of public view, and be otherwise conducted to eliminate or at least minimize the chance that the enforcement action will restrain people from accessing the place of worship." That means that if the officers come to the church with a warrant, they should be willing to work with you to execute the warrant in the least intrusive way possible.

IS THE CHURCH PARKING LOT COVERED BY THE INJUNCTION?

Yes. The injunction prohibits immigration officers from enforcing immigration law "in or near any place of worship owned, operated, occupied or used by" a CBF partner congregation.

SHOULD OUR CHURCH DESIGNATE CERTAIN AREAS AS PRIVATE WITHIN THE CHURCH BUILDING?

It is unclear whether posting private signs inside a church covered by the injunction provides any additional legal protection. Some churches who have chosen to designate areas as private have chosen areas such as the church offices, nursery, children's classrooms and other areas where there is an even higher expectation of privacy than in the rest of the church.

IN ADDITION TO THE INJUNCTION, WHAT OTHER LAWS PROTECT A HOUSE OF WORSHIP?

The U.S. Constitution and many laws provide certain protections for individuals and institutions during law enforcement activity including by immigration officers. The 1st amendment protects religious exercise as well as our rights to speak and peaceably assemble. In public spaces, the 1st amendment gives you the right to video law enforcement activity. On private property including churches, the landowner can decide whether or not you are allowed to video law enforcement activity. The 4th amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects against unreasonable searches and seizures while the 5th amendment of the U.S. Constitution provides the right to remain silent when confronted by law enforcement. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act also protects our right to worship while state laws may provide additional protections.