

Rage

A sermon preached at Niles Discovery Church, Fremont, California, on Sunday, January 25, 2026, by the Rev. Jeffrey Spencer.

Scriptures: [Isaiah 9:1-4](#) and [Psalm 27:1, 4-9](#)

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This past Wednesday started off quite nicely for me. It began gently. I attended a morning webinar that got my creative juices flowing about Lent. After lunch, I turned to my big Wednesday task: putting together the order of worship and other materials worship leaders need for the coming Sunday. There were a few administrative matters that needed my attention, and (as always) there were plenty of emails to read, some of which needed thoughtful replies.

The theme I had settled on for today's service, embracing laughter as a spiritual practice, kept bubbling inside as I tended to the other duties. Laughter as a spiritual practice was amusing me by the time I had my dinner.

And then I checked social media and I learned about three things that had happened that day in Minneapolis. One of them really happened nationwide, though it would have immediate impact in Minneapolis.

The Minnesota Star Tribune

Children as young as 5 detained

Somali American citizen arrested, held for 2 days

By Associated Press
A 5-year-old Somali American citizen was arrested and held in a detention facility for two days after his father was arrested and held in a detention facility for two days. The child was held in a detention facility for two days after his father was arrested and held in a detention facility for two days.



Preschooler's detention marks fourth for district

By Associated Press
A preschooler's detention marks the fourth for the district. The child was held in a detention facility for two days after his father was arrested and held in a detention facility for two days.



ICE claims enhanced power to enter homes

By Associated Press
ICE claims enhanced power to enter homes. The child was held in a detention facility for two days after his father was arrested and held in a detention facility for two days.

Tactics raise questions on ICE training

By Associated Press
Tactics raise questions on ICE training. The child was held in a detention facility for two days after his father was arrested and held in a detention facility for two days.

Smith publicly defends Trump investigations: 'No one should be above the law'

By Associated Press
Smith publicly defends Trump investigations: 'No one should be above the law'. The child was held in a detention facility for two days after his father was arrested and held in a detention facility for two days.

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ICE claims enhanced power to enter homes. The child was held in a detention facility for two days after his father was arrested and held in a detention facility for two days.

This is the front page of Thursday's Minnesota Star Tribune, covering Wednesday's news. They covered these three events as front-page news. ICE detained a five-year-old preschooler after using him as bait to get someone in his house to open their door. Then ICE transferred him and his father from Minnesota to detention in Texas. His family has an active asylum case and it does not have an order of deportation, meaning they are in the U.S. legally.¹ ICE detained them and shipped them across the country anyway. The lack of compassion for the child, the choice of using the child – of traumatizing the child – is evil. I have no other word to describe it.

The second story is about video footage from Minneapolis that shows a federal agent spraying chemical irritants directly into the eyes of a man other agents had pinned and held to the ground. After reading about the five-year-old and watching the video of the chemicals being sprayed into the eyes of someone pinned to the ground and who was showing no signs of

¹ Based on a summary by Heather Cox Richardson, "January 21, 2026," *Letters from an American*, <https://heathercoxrichardson.substack.com/p/january-21-2026> (posted 21 January 2026; accessed 23 January 2026).

struggle, I was hopping mad! In the video, it looked to me like the federal agent walked away from the spraying incident hunting for someone else to spray. I want that agent arrested under Minnesota law for assault causing grievous bodily harm.

And then I read the story that broke on Wednesday about a secret memo from May 12, 2025, signed by the acting director of ICE, Todd Lyons. This memo says that federal agents do not need a judge's warrant to force their way into people's homes. Dr. Heather Cox Richardson summarized what is at stake in this memo:

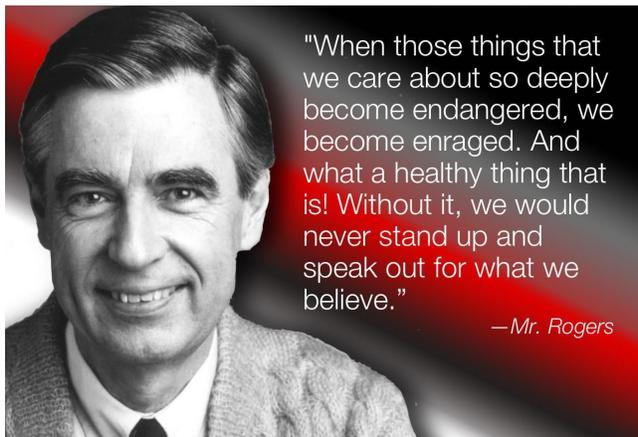
"The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, one of the ten amendments that make up the Bill of Rights, says: 'The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.'

"As Joyce White Vance of Civil Discourse notes, courts have always interpreted that amendment to mean that a judge must sign a warrant to allow law enforcement to break into a home. Now the Department of Homeland Security says it does not need such a judicial warrant, but can simply use an administrative warrant signed by an official at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or ICE if immigrants believed to be inside a home have a final order of removal.

"The legal training manual for DHS itself quotes a 1984 Supreme Court decision that the 'physical entry of the home is the chief evil against which the wording of the Fourth Amendment is directed.'

"Immigration law specialist Aaron Reichlin-Melnick noted that this memo is a big deal: it is 'the federal government conspiring in secret to subvert the Fourth Amendment.'"²

That's all a very rational explanation of the dangers of the secret memo. I was not feeling rational. At this point, I was enraged. I was unable to get to sleep. I felt powerless to do anything except to write emails to my Senators and Representative. I was so enraged, I have no idea if my emails to them made any sense. I am not typically at a loss for words. On Wednesday night, I was so angry I couldn't even breathe deeply.



I finally fell asleep, and when I woke up Thursday morning, I was still deeply angry. Mister Rogers came to my aid. A meme happened to pop up on my Facebook feed, a quote from Mister Rogers: "When those things that we care about so deeply become endangered, we become enraged. And what a healthy thing that is! Without it, we would never stand up and speak out for what we believe."³ I

² *Ibid.*

³ This meme was shared on <https://www.facebook.com/TVNeighbor>. As far as I can tell, it is an accurate quote. It is also cited on the Good Reads website <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/819704-the-values->

am so grateful Mister Rogers named my rage as a healthy thing, as something that could empower my action.

Later that day, I read an essay about how ICE is behaving the way the Ku Klux Klan behaved in the Jim Crow South. Somehow, Dr. Cheryl Townsend Gilles found words to express what's happening:

“Currently the United States is facing the unprecedented growth of a law enforcement group using masks and terror to do its work. These armed and masked I.C.E. officers have been seen dragging people from cars, smashing into cars with Halligan tools (a forcible entry tool), tear-gassing and pepper-spraying schools and day care centers, smashing into houses without warrants, raiding entire apartment houses, stopping people because of their accent or skin color, and engaging in round-ups rather than orderly due-process-oriented arrests. And now, in Minnesota, we see the murder of Renee Good, an unarmed American citizen, a very white woman who was subjected to conflicting orders by I.C.E. officers who clearly, according to a conversation I had with a police superintendent, were inadequately trained and had not passed Policing 101.

“We are learning that these masked men, and it seems to be overwhelmingly men, have been given significant signing bonuses, have been offered student loan relief, have been allowed lower standards for fitness, and have been provided with a shortened training period... When compared to the training that is required to become a police officer, one wonders if we are witnessing the creation of a mob of masked night riders with a badge.”

Dr. Gilles continues, “Instead of the Ku Klux Klan, it is now I.C.E. that wears the masks that hide their faces as they brutalize and kill. The states that have ... laws against masking for such purposes need to revive them and attempt to enforce them against I.C.E. Other states need, if possible, to legislate against this evil. Public servants on the public payroll must face the full light of day in the performance of their duties. They must unmask and be fully accountable.”⁴

Mr. Rogers is right. We need our rage. We need to harness our rage to empower our speaking out.

I was almost there by diner time on Thursday. I was seeing parallels between the bleakness we are facing, and the bleakness of the Hebrew people faced during the reign of King Ahaz. “Maybe,” I thought, “I can hear a word of promise the way Isaiah heard a word of promise. Maybe I can trust that in a land of deep darkness, light is shining on us. Maybe joy does come in the morning. Perhaps I can segue in my sermon to the power of laughter to build community, something we desperately need in times of darkness.”

[we-care-about-the-deepest-and-the-movements](#) as coming from *The World According to Mister Rogers: Important Things to Remember*.

⁴ Dr. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, “I.C.E. Wears the Masks that Hide the Killers, and that is an American Tradition,” *No Fear Religion and Politics*, <https://susanthistlethwaitewaite.substack.com/p/ice-wears-the-masks-that-hide-the> (posted and accessed 22 January 2026).

By Thursday night, I was hearing from friends and colleagues who had already arrived in Minneapolis in response to a call for clergy to gather there. Most would arrive by Thursday night – over 700 faith leaders from across the country.

Jack Jenkins reported for Religion News Service that on Thursday morning, “Around 200 faith leaders [some from out of state and some from Minnesota] fanned out across the city ... to observe and document the actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, with some clergy confronting Department of Homeland Security agents, adding a visible religious presence to widespread efforts to counter the president’s mass deportation campaign in the region.

“The faith leaders, who are in Minneapolis as part of a larger convening focused on religious pushback to ICE, deployed to neighborhoods with significant immigrant populations, where DHS agents have been most active during an ongoing campaign known as Operation Metro Surge. The clergy, who hail from a range of traditions and worship communities across the country, sang on the buses as they ventured out into the street. They belted out hymns and songs popular during the Civil Rights Movement, such as ‘Woke Up This Morning.’”⁵

And before I went to bed, I was smiling as I read stories about the group of Buddhist monks on their 120-day, 2300-mile “Walk for Peace” from Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C.

By Friday night, the stories coming out of Minneapolis had my heart soaring. There were stories about a protest at the Minneapolis Saint Paul airport. NPR reported, “Friday morning, protesters also gathered at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, where the Department of Homeland Security has chartered flights of people detained in the state to detention centers out of state. Clergy and community members sang hymns and prayed outside the airport. Around 100 clergy were arrested at that protest, organizers told NPR. Airport Police said those arrested were issued misdemeanor citations for trespassing and failure to comply with a peace officer, and were released.”⁶

And there were stories about the general strike and photographs of the march. Here’s how local TV station WCCO described it: “Hundreds of businesses in the Twin Cities were closed Friday to protest the presence of federal immigration agents in Minnesota, as thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets of downtown Minneapolis in a show of solidarity over the Operation Metro Surge crackdown. Community members asked for no work, no school and no shopping, calling it a ‘Day of Truth and Freedom.’ Some small business owners have called on elected leaders to act to limit U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations in the state. Thousands of people marched from outside

⁵ Jack Jenkins, “Hundreds of clergy descend on Minneapolis and go on lookout for ICE,” *Religion News Service*, <https://religionnews.com/2026/01/22/hundreds-of-clergy-descend-on-minneapolis-and-go-on-lookout-for-ice/> (posted 22 January 2026; accessed 23 January 2026).

⁶ Meg Anderson, Jasmine Garsd, and Sarah Ventre, “Minnesotans turn out in the frigid cold to protest Trump’s immigration crackdown,” *National Public Radio*, <https://www.npr.org/2026/01/23/nx-s1-5686733/minnesotans-day-of-ice-protests> (posted and accessed 23 January 2026).

U.S. Bank Stadium in downtown Minneapolis to the Target Center, where a rally took place inside the arena.”⁷

I went to bed Friday night hopeful. I wasn't all that excited about waking up at 6:30 Saturday morning to go into Oakland, but I was excited about why I was going: to attend a noncooperation training.

We weren't 5 minutes into the training Saturday morning when one of the leaders announced that federal agents had shot and killed another person in Minneapolis. There weren't any details available yet, so we went forward with the training.

By sundown yesterday, we knew that the victim was Alex Pretti and that the Department of Homeland Security was, again, lying about what happened and who was to blame. Pretti was a 37-year-old ICU nurse at a Veterans Administration hospital. He spent his professional life helping people. He was an American hero. He was murdered by Trump's regime. This is not okay.

On Wednesday, my intention was to preach a sermon about harnessing laughter as a spiritual practice. I believe laughter can be a spiritual practice. I also know that a sermon about it is a sermon for another day.

Today, I invite you to consider anger as a spiritual practice. May your anger move you to stand up and speak out for what you believe.

Amen.

⁷ WCCO Staff, “Thousands march through downtown Minneapolis protesting against ICE as state workers hold general strike,” *CBS News*, <https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/live-updates/general-strike-rally-planned-in-minnesota-friday-to-protest-ice/> (posted 23 January 2026; accessed 24 January 2026).