

St Michael & All Angels

Immigration Ministry 2025

January 22, 2026

If you are interested in participating in the work of providing humanitarian support and restoring dignity to immigrants released from ICE detention, contact Jane McGuire at jmcguire@unm.edu or 505 220 5667.

In 2025, the second Trump administration has brought new challenges to immigrants in our communities. Between January and September, as thousands of resident immigrants were being detained in prisons across the country, attorneys were learning how it might be possible to get them released. By October, the Landing was again contacted by ICE and immigration attorneys across the US to assist with the safe release of non-citizens.

Detention Release Support. Between October and December seven individuals were assisted with either overnight stays at the Landing, meals, guidance through TSA, backpacks, clean clothes and a shower, or all the above. From them we learned that detainees who came with them on the transport into Albuquerque from Grants or Moriarty were on their way out of the country, and our guest was the only one being released.

Unlike those we received who had just crossed the border, some of these individuals were quite established in the US and had been picked up coming out of ICE check-ins, at workplaces, at traffic stops for having tinted windows or unpaid parking meters. They endured harsh treatment in US prisons (such as Alligator Alcatraz and East Montana), refused deportation options and gained release through the efforts of their families, friends and employers here in the US, and private or pro-bono attorneys. With a foothold on a safe life, they now know their rights on US soil, are more savvy travelers, and are eager to get home and back to work. But they have endured the trauma and humiliation of detention. They all weep to be free again.

Following is a recap of one aspect of the immigration work being done in the parish *before 2025*. Law and policy around immigration are complicated, and practices are never static. Working in this field – advocacy or direct support - continues to be a learning experience.

Brief historical overview: Guided by Matthew 25 teachings, St Michaels' immigration work has provided humanitarian aid since 2016 in many ways:

- **Long-term hospitality:** 2017-2018 St Michaels housed an Angolan asylum-seeking family and began the connection with centers detaining migrants by writing letters and visiting the incarcerated; a program that became **VIDA** (Volunteers for Immigrants in Detention – Albuquerque <https://www.abqvida.org/>).

- **Crisis Response:** In the Spring of 2019 St Michaels was one of five organizations in the City receiving families sent to Albuquerque in ICE buses to go to sponsors elsewhere in the US. The work of helping almost 300 people was done at the Bosque Center with support of the Diocese and hundreds of parish volunteers.
- **Short-term hospitality:** 2019 the Landing Ministry was established as a joint effort between the Youth, Navajoland, and Immigration ministries. The first guests in June 2019 were a youth group from Indianapolis going to Navajoland.
- **2020 through 2025:**
 - St Michaels affiliated with **ABQ FaithWorks Collaborative** to support asylum seekers resident in Albuquerque. Parishioners volunteered with this program and Casa San Miguel provided space for FaithWorks food distribution through the LDS church. In 2025, FaithWorks stopped operations as City contracts ended and the Asylum program became less public.
 - Separately, **the Landing** began working with immigration attorneys and ICE to provide a safe release for migrants detained at Cibola and Torrance County detention centers. Casa San Miguel also provided staples for the over 500 non-citizen guests received at the Landing. Albuquerque opened a migrant shelter in 2023 that relieved our burden, and Biden's closing the border in June 2024 led that shelter to close in September 2024. The Landing continues to schedule stays from immigrant guests.
 - Also separately, parishioners led and participated in provisioning monthly trips to migrant shelters in El Paso through **Las Familias Solidarity**. This effort ceased as border shelters closed with border closings.
 - **Advocacy.** The work of St Michaels parishioners provides the credibility for the advocacy. Parishioners volunteer with many other partner organizations as availability and skillsets allow, such as Catholic Charities, New Mexico Immigrant Law Center, El Centro, Encuentro, Lutheran Advocacy, and many other related organizations. This knowledge and experience support advocacy at local, state and national levels. Forgive me for not mentioning all of the organizations.

What does 2026 look like? In the first 3 weeks of the year, St Michaels has already been called upon to support four people being released from detention. At the same time, this legislative session is likely to pass the Immigration Safety Act to end migrant detention in New Mexico:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?Chamber=H&LegType=B&LegNo=9&year=25>.

Although this bill failed in the last two sessions, current ICE tactics have spurred support from powerful conservative Democratic senators who were previously opposed. That could end immigration detention in New Mexico, and end having these individuals as guests at the Landing. The work isn't over, of course, until the broken immigration system is humane and no longer has victims. We'll see what changes 2026 brings!