



Presbytery of Utah
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
P.O. Box 25394
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*The Presbytery of Utah:
Building Healthy and Joyful
Congregations in Utah.*

Presbytery of Utah Statement Opposing any DHS Mega-Incarceration Facility

The Presbytery of Utah is opposed to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) plans to operate a mega detention center at a Salt Lake City warehouse.

We speak as a community bound by Christ's admonition to love our neighbors. We recognize the inherent dignity of every human being, all of whom are created in the image of God. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus consistently aligned himself with those who were marginalized, displaced, and treated as outsiders. His teachings compel us to respond with compassion, justice, and hospitality toward all people—especially those who are the most vulnerable.

Jesus himself was a traveler. As an infant, he fled violence with his family and lived as a refugee in Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15). During his ministry, he had “nowhere to lay his head” (Luke 9:58), identifying with those who live without security or belonging. He taught that welcoming the stranger is not optional but central to faithful discipleship: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35).

Being faithful to Jesus' teaching, we must speak out against the DHS plans in Utah. If allowed, the federal government will incarcerate up to 10,000 children of God in an 830,000 sq ft, windowless building. It would house four times the population of Utah's largest prison. Warehouses are designed to store products, not imprison people. Sadly, existing federal detention facilities have already subjected 70,000 detainees, including children, to dehumanizing actions, human rights abuses, and separation from their families.

Utahns know the magnitude of harm that awaits our neighbors when we stray from this country's democratic ideals. When we illegitimately detain persons without due process and absent recognition of our shared humanity. We are home to the Topaz Mountain incarceration camp. It stands today as a monument to the pain and suffering our nation unjustly inflicted on 12,000 persons of Japanese descent in the 1940's.

Our Presbytery rose in 1942 to oppose the unconstitutional imprisonment of Japanese Americans and to minister to those families held captive in our state. Remaining steadfast to our Christian faith, we rise again to our sacred duty of protecting each other from harm and injustice.

The Presbytery of Utah calls on all political leaders to deny legal and regulatory consent for a mega detention center in our state. Do not allow the federal government to imprison a single soul in that building, whose very design and concept constitute an affront to human dignity.

We call on all who read this statement; join us in prayer this day and every day, that our leaders would “harden not their hearts,” (Hebrews 3:15) and that each of us recognize the inherent worth of all persons.

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May we all know the boundless love of God. May we be forever changed by that life-giving Eternal Love. And may Utah have no cause to memorialize another building that documents our nation at its worst.

We make this statement in the name of God, our Creator, Christ, our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Mirjam Haas-Melchior

Executive Presbyter and Interim Stated Clerk
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