

ELCA bishop calls for immigration reform: Response to devastating raids

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A federal immigration raid with arrests of about 390 people at a meat processing plant in Postville, Iowa, has brought “devastation” to the community, said a Lutheran bishop at an ecumenical prayer service at a Catholic church in nearby Waterloo.

Calling for national immigration reform, Bishop Steven L. Ullestad of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America said, “The intervention by the U.S. government in my hometown of Postville has instilled fear into the hearts of U.S. citizens.”

The purpose of the May 12 raid at Agriprocessors, Inc., called the largest raid ever conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at one location, was to acquire evidence of possible identity theft and illegal immigration, said an ICE spokesperson.

Though more than 50 were released to care for children, another 300 workers were being sought. Hundreds of family members of those arrested took refuge inside St. Bridget’s Catholic Church in Postville, reported ELCA News Service. Most of those taking refuge were believed to be from Guatemala and Mexico.

In speaking to more than 400 people May 18 at an ecumenical service at Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Waterloo, Ullestad said immigration reform is urgently needed.

“American businesses need workers, and immigrants need jobs,” he said. “We must have immigration reform so that businesses can prosper legally and immigrants may know the freedom and opportunity of America legally,” said Ullestad. He said hundreds of children did not know the whereabouts of their parents for 72 hours.

“The ICE raid has not just affected immigrants,” said Steven P. Brackett, pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Postville. “The community of Postville has worked for over

15 years to embrace our new diversity.”