

Letter to the Editor from Winona Friends (Quakers)

The Winona Area Friends Meeting stands in the long Quaker tradition of opposing state-sponsored violence, especially when it is directed at peaceful people and communities. As Quakers, we hold a simple but profound belief: *there is that of God in everyone*. This truth, echoed across many faith traditions, carries real consequences for how we treat one another.

Because of this belief, Quakers have long affirmed that every life is precious and deeply connected to all others. It is this sense of shared humanity that has led people of faith to act as Constitutional Observers of federal immigration enforcement actions in Minneapolis and Winona—not to interfere, but to bear witness and to ensure that the constitutional rights of those detained are honored. Our solidarity extends first to those targeted by these actions, and also, in a spirit of compassion, to those tasked with carrying them out. Our faith calls us to recognize the humanity on all sides.

It is from this moral foundation that the Winona Area Friends condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the unjustified killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, and the chilling attempt by the Federal Government to lie about them. These deaths have torn a hole in the fabric of our community. They diminish us all. Likewise, the unlawful arrests and detentions of Winonans and other Minnesotans by ICE and CBP fracture our community, sow fear, and cause untold harm to families who call this place home.

Given the lawful immigration status of a significant portion of those detained in Winona—and across Minnesota—it is clear that these enforcement actions serve not public safety, but division. They terrorize perceived enemies and treat local families as political pawns. In the same spirit that Quakers have historically spoken out against authoritarianism, we denounce the actions of ICE and CBP in our state. We stand in solidarity with the communities being targeted, and we hold compassion for the agents compelled to carry out these orders, knowing that all of us lose a measure of our humanity when we are instructed to deny it in others.

In moments like these, communities of faith have a responsibility to speak with moral clarity and spiritual courage. Our beliefs must not remain abstract; they must guide our actions. We call on other people and communities of faith to join us—to speak out for peace, to resist division, and to take concrete steps toward unity and justice here in Winona, today.

This was written by Dan Wilson, but the letter will have the by-line of Janet Hilliker, Clerk, & Winona Friends (Quaker) Meeting. It is as yet unpublished.