News



People protest as law enforcement officers attend to the scene of a shooting involving federal law enforcement agents, Jan. 7, 2026, in Minneapolis. (AP/Tom Baker)

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At least two pastors were among those shoved, shot at with pepper rounds and exposed to pepper spray while protesting the actions of federal immigration agents in Minneapolis on Wednesday, Jan. 7, as protesters demonstrated after a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent shot and killed a woman who had been observing them.

The Rev. Susie Hayward, a United Church of Christ minister who serves as minister for justice organizing at Creekside UCC in the city, was among the dozens who rushed to the scene after news of the shooting broke. The pastor, who was wearing a clerical collar and had already been patrolling to observe a spike in ICE activity around the city that day, joined a growing crowd protesting Department of Homeland Security officials as some of the agents began to leave the area.

"There was a request for clergy to show up" at the scene, she told Religion News Service. "I was out the door."

Hayward, who lives a mile from the shooting site and has been involved in pushback to immigration enforcement actions in the city, is one of many faith leaders around the country who have been demonstrating against DHS and the ICE agents enacting President Donald Trump's mass deportation effort. Minnesota recently emerged as a target of the administration, with around 2,000 federal agents and officers expected to arrive in the city this week amid allegations of fraud involving Somali residents.

On Wednesday, tensions between protesters and DHS escalated dramatically. A person who had been reportedly observing and possibly documenting ICE in a residential area — an increasingly common form of protest that includes following agents, filming officers and alerting the community to their presence — was fatally shot by an officer. DHS has accused the woman, who was identified by the Minnesota Star Tribune as 37-year-old mother named Renee Nicole Good, of attempting to use her vehicle as a weapon against an officer, a claim eyewitnesses dispute.



A bullet hole is seen in the windshield as law enforcement officers work the scene of a shooting involving federal law enforcement agents, Jan. 7, 2026, in Minneapolis. (AP/Tom Baker)

Hayward said she arrived on the scene of the shooting and tried to get information from federal agents and local police in the area, hoping to be a calming presence.

"What I was seeking to do there was to be a presence of love and care," she said.

But tensions remained high. Hayward said that at one point, a DHS agent shoved her while walking past, eliciting outrage from other demonstrators nearby. In addition, when officials tried to leave an alley, a crowd formed, a few of whom stood in front of the car. When an agent exited and began spraying the demonstrators with pepper spray, the irritant drifted through the crowd feet away, which included Hayward.

Hayward said she, too, briefly stood in front of an agent's car earlier, reciting Scripture before eventually moving out of the way. The pastor said she also asked an ICE agent if he followed Jesus. His response, she said, was "not particularly."

Also on the scene was the Rev. Ashley Horan, vice president for programs and ministries at the Unitarian Universalist Association. Horan, who lives a block away from where the shooting happened and was two blocks away when it occurred, rushed down and began livestreaming. Her footage shows protesters shouting at the agents, as well as officers firing at demonstrators with chemical irritants.

At one point in the video, an agent can be seen firing what appears to be a pepper round just a few feet from Horan's head, sending her and other protesters fleeing into the neighborhood.

"My Unitarian Universalist faith is the belief that every single human life has inherent worthiness and dignity, and that we are inextricably interdependent as humans, as neighbors," she told RNS, explaining her reason for rushing to the scene.

"The combination of those two things means that there's not actually a question about showing up like that — the greatest form of sin is feeling like we are separate from other people."

Other footage shows DHS agents using various forms of pepper spray, pepper rounds and apparent tear gas on demonstrators.

Several other clergy also arrived, and Hayward suggested they pray together near the site of the shooting. The ensuing prayers, captured on Horan's livestream, included prayers for the woman who was shot, whose death had yet to be confirmed at the time.

"God of many names and beyond all naming, be in the hands of the healers now," one faith leader can be heard saying on the stream. "Be in the hands of the healers who are working diligently to care for our beloved — who are everyone. Be in the hands of the street medics, be in the hands of the healers at the hospital."

Details of the shooting are still emerging, with contradictions between the government's assessment and those of local eyewitnesses. The Department of Homeland Security said in a statement that the shooting occurred when "rioters began blocking ICE officers" in a residential neighborhood and "one of these violent rioters weaponized her vehicle, attempting to run over our law enforcement officers in an attempt to kill them — an act of domestic terrorism."

An officer then opened fire on a woman in the car, killing her.

"The alleged perpetrator was hit and is deceased," the statement read.

But that does not appear to match the accounts of multiple eyewitnesses, who told journalists that the woman was not a threat to officers and was attempting to leave. In addition, videos shared on social media show officers approaching the woman's car and demanding she get out. As seen in one of the videos, the car then backs up as one officer attempts to open the driver's door and another steps in front of the car. As the car begins to move, the officer in front of the vehicle pulls a gun and opens fire, continuing to shoot even after he has stepped out of the way of the car.

DHS did not respond to questions about the discrepancies between its statement and those of eyewitnesses, nor did it respond to questions about Hayward being exposed to pepper spray.

Hayward joins a list of at least eight clergy members who have encountered chemical agents or even been shot by DHS agents and police officers with pepper spray, pepper rounds or pepper bullets while protesting Trump's mass deportation efforts since he was inaugurated last year. At least eight — all in Chicago — have also been arrested while protesting, and others have been hit with tear gas.

In the aftermath of Wednesday's shooting, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey released a statement on social media demanding that "ICE leave the city and state immediately."

"We stand rock solid with our immigrant and refugee communities," Frey's statement concluded.

As for Hayward and Horan, both said they were shaken by what occurred. But they plan to continue to do their best to serve their community amid the ongoing mass deportation efforts, including participating in efforts to observe ICE's actions.

"I am going to continue to show up in multiple ways as a clergyperson, because it's part of my call to ministry to care for neighbor and to protect nonviolently my community," Hayward said.

Hayward later attended vigil convened at the site Wednesday evening. When she arrived, she said the crowd was "thick with clergy."

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This story appears in the **Immigration Protests in Minneapolis** and **Immigration and the Church** feature series.