# Preliminary injunction denied in sensitive locations lawsuit

**A US District Court judge denied** a preliminary injunction motion in Mennonite USA v. DHS, the sensitive locations lawsuit in which the Church of the Brethren is one of 27 plaintiffs.

The decision was on the preliminary injunction and is not the final disposition of the case.

"We are currently reviewing the decision and are assessing our options," said Kelsi Corkran, Supreme Court director at the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection, which is assisting the plaintiffs in the case. "We remain gravely concerned about the impacts of this policy and are committed to protecting foundational rights enshrined in the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act."

A hearing on the motion for a preliminary injunction was held on April 4. The case challenges the Department of Homeland Security's rescission of its three-decades-old policy restricting immigration enforcement actions at houses of worship. The motion sought to enjoin the new policy pending a final resolution of the case.

The motion for a preliminary injunction was supported by 66 declarations from the plaintiffs, including a declaration by David Steele, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren, and two Church of the Brethren pastors. The declarations explained how congregations serving immigrant communities have seen a significant decline in worship attendance and participation in social services as a result of the new policy.

During the hearing before Judge Dabney F. Friedrich, the courtroom was filled with faith leaders and members of the plaintiff denominations and associations. Those attendees had joined in a prayer together right before entering the courtroom. The night before the hearing, an interfaith prayer vigil was held at the National City Christian Church in Washington with approximately 150 people in attendance in person and up to 1,500 watching online.

*Faith leaders held a prayer vigil before entering the courtroom.*

## New ministry offers resources on detention and deportation

**In response to concerns** raised by congregations and church districts about potential detention and deportation of members of the Church of the Brethren, a group of districts is cooperating with Intercultural Ministries and On Earth Peace to support affected congregations and the whole church. This new ministry is offering resources and relational/pastoral support.

Support of those congregations has begun, and the ministry hopes to share more resources for members and congregations looking to grow in discipleship and involvement around immigration. An initial commitment from districts of $100,000 is launching the initiative. Additional financial support is welcome to help sustain it.

To express interest, request assistance, or offer support, contact Beth Sollenberger at atlanticsoutheastcob@gmail.com.

## Church of the Brethren extends condolences on death of Pope Francis

**Church of the Brethren leaders** sent a letter expressing condolence to the Catholic Church on the death of Pope Francis. The letter dated April 23 was signed by Annual Conference moderator Dava Hensley and general secretary David Steele, and was sent to the Vatican and denominational ecumenical partners based in the Catholic tradition.

"To the Catholic Church and all Catholic sisters and brothers in the faith, we join with you in mourning the death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday, April 21, 2025," the letter said, in part. "Remembering his namesake Saint Francis, we celebrate with you Pope Francis's commitments to care for 'the least of these' among the poor and vulnerable of this world and to care for God's Creation. His heart for peace and justice was a testimony to his radical discipleship to Jesus Christ."

# Global Church of the Brethren Communion meets virtually

**The Global Church of the Brethren Communion** gathered online in late April for its first meeting of 2025. All 12 countries were represented: the United States, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Honduras, India, Nigeria, Rwanda, Spain, Uganda, and Venezuela.

Darryl Sankey of India led the meeting. New delegates and alternates from Nigeria and the US were welcomed. New Global Mission executive director Sharon Brugger Norton shared about her intention to help build stronger relationships among the member churches.

The rest of the meeting was spent clarifying how delegates and alternates function and how they are appointed to represent their national churches. It was affirmed that, according to the bylaws, national churches have the sole authority to appoint their delegates and alternates. It was clarified that the delegates vote to choose the officers who serve on the executive board of the communion. No such board positions are inherited when national delegates who held these positions change.

**On March 1, 47 leaders from the Church of the Brethren districts** *west of the Mississippi River gathered by Zoom for the first of several planned meetups to enhance connection and relationships across the western Brethren. The gathering included district moderators and moderator-elects, Standing Committee delegates, board chairs, members of denominational staff and boards, and the district executives. Conversation focused on how people came to be Brethren and to serve in the leadership roles they are in, as well as the hopes and concerns that they have for the church today. Follow-up gatherings are planned.*

**Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria)** *celebrated its 2025 majalisa, or annual meeting, on April 8-11. Representing the Church of the Brethren in the US was Global Food Initiative manager and former Nigeria mission worker Jennifer Hosler, shown here with EYN president Daniel Y.C. Mbaya. Hosler gave one of the sermons for the gathering.*

## Personnel

**Stan Dueck** retires July 31 as director of Formation Leadership for the Church of the Brethren, a position in the Discipleship and Leadership Formation department. He began work for the denomination on June 21, 1999, as Congregational Life Team member for Area 1. Over some 25 years, he has coached pastors, consulted with congregations, helped districts plan and develop goals, led deacon training seminars, and served in numerous other ways, including convening the New Church Advisory Committee and for multiple years planning the New and Renew Conference.

**Donna Rhodes** retired April 30 after some 24 years with the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center, a partnership of five districts—Atlantic Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Middle Pennsylvania, Southern Pennsylvania, and Western Pennsylvania—with the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership and Bethany Seminary. She had served as executive director since 2006 and previously was director of the ACTS Ministry Training Program and Continuing Education beginning in 2001.

Due to budget cuts, **Mishael Nouveau**, office manager for the Church of the Brethren Ministry Office in the Discipleship and Leadership Formation department, will have her hours reduced from full-time to part-time, beginning June 30.

**Tabitha Hartman Rudy** joined the staff of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership May 1 as part-time coordinator of English-Language Ministry Training Programs. She continues as part-time administrative assistant for the Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church program of the denomination's Ministry Office.

**Jessica Sheets** has joined the staff of Shenandoah District as office manager. Most recently she was the security and training secretary at Middle River Regional Jail in Staunton, Va.

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