Haitian church members in US face end of TPS

The Department of Homeland Security moved to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians living in the US, as of 11:59 p.m. on Feb. 3. However, a US district judge ordered a stay in a last-minute ruling on Feb. 2. It is unknown how long the stay will be in effect.

The Church of the Brethren Deportation Defense Response Team called for intercessory prayer for the approximately 200 members of the Church of the Brethren, among some 350,000 Haitians living in the US, who will be affected if TPS is ended. Effects may include loss of employment and deportation.

TPS is a government designation allowing immigrants to legally live in the US when their home countries are unsafe because of armed conflict, environmental disasters, or other extraordinary conditions that prevent a safe return. TPS has been applied to Haitians almost continuously since 2011. Its termination was announced despite the lack of safe return to Haiti, where there is ongoing violence and a severe humanitarian crisis.

Funds close out 2025 with grants

Emergency Disaster Fund

- $120,000 for the Hurricane Melissa longterm recovery program of Église des Frères d'Haïti, aiding families affected by the storm in Haiti. Another $5,000 extended Hurricane Melissa emergency relief to Cuba via connections made by the Church of the Brethren in Venezuela.
- $20,000 for the Restoring Hope Campaign of Bethlehem Bible College's Shepherd Society in Gaza, aiding children who have suffered injuries and trauma.
- $19,850 for work by the Church of the Brethren in Uganda to repair a school damaged by a severe storm.
- $8,500 for purchase of a vehicle by the Burundi Church of the Brethren to support disaster and crisis response.
- $5,000 for response to the humanitarian crisis in Ecuador by Fundación Brethren y Unida (FBU, Brethren and United Foundation).

Global Food Initiative

- $35,000 for the Small Animal Microbusiness Projects of Proyecto Aldea Global (PAG) in Honduras.
- $19,000 for the Kanembwe Poultry Farming Initiative of the Church of the Brethren in Rwanda and another $1,780 for clean water projects.
- $8,000 for a school gardening and nutrition education program of FBU in Ecuador.
- $5,000 for the Soybean Value Chain project of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria.
- $3,410 for the Food Bank Ministry of Alpha and Omega Community Center in Lancaster, Pa.
- $2,500 for the food pantry at Hatfield (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.
- $2,500 for the Mountaineers' Table Ministry of Ephrata (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

Brethren Faith in Action Fund

- $5,000 for legal expenses of immigrant families at Jesus Lounge Ministry in West Delray Beach, Fla.
- $5,000 for a food pantry of Living Faith Church of the Brethren in Concord, N.C.
- $5,000 for purchase of a van for food distribution by Naples Haitian Church of the Brethren in East Naples, Fla.
- $5,000 for a Kingian Nonviolence Training led by On Earth Peace at Wichita (Kan.) First Church of the Brethren.
- $4,667 for immigrant and refugee support by West Charleston Church of the Brethren in Tipp City, Ohio.
- $3,333.33 for a food pantry at Miami (Fla.) Haitian Church of the Brethren.
- $2,000 for a Live Nativity community outreach of Sangerville Church of the Brethren in Bridgewater, Va.

More than 95 volunteers *from Brethren Disaster Ministries traveled from Sept. 15 to Nov. 21 to Johnson County, Tenn., to support 11 households affected by Hurricane Helene. The work was in partnership with International Orthodox Christian Charities and the Johnson County Long Term Recovery Group.*

Freida Driver

Children's Disaster Services *cared for children during a first anniversary American Airlines Flight 5342 memorial in January. The memorial for 67 people killed in the mid-air collision with a military helicopter over the Potomac River took place Jan. 29. CDS sent this team of Critical Response Care volunteers at the request of the Red Cross. The team, which is specially trained to respond after an aviation incident or other mass casualty, provided children and parents with a place to find respite during the emotionally taxing day.*

The Church of the Brethren Yearbook will not be published for 2025. Standing orders have been suspended after the Yearbook office was moved from Brethren Press to Mission Advancement. The 2024 edition is available to purchase at www.brethrenpress.com/product_p/year2053.htm.

Personnel

Pat Marsh retires May 29 as manager of accounting and assistant treasurer for the Church of the Brethren. She has worked for the denomination for 31 years, since January 1995 when she started as an accountant. In her most recent role, which began in April 2020, she has managed the general ledger, prepared financial statements, assisted with the organizational budget, and served as lead staff for the audit. Her extensive accounting knowledge and devotion to accuracy have been significant assets over the three decades.

Jenn Dorsch-Messler on Jan. 9 resigned as director of Brethren Disaster Ministries, after serving for more than 10 years since Feb. 24, 2015. She led the Home Rebuilding Program, nurturing a network of volunteers and supporters while also serving as representative to national disaster response groups. Her personal involvement in disaster relief included, in late 2024, a tour of areas hit by Hurricane Helene in Southeastern District. She has accepted a position on a new executive leadership team at Mennonite Disaster Service in Lititz, Pa.

Traci Rabenstein resigns on April 3 as executive director of Mission Advancement for the Church of the Brethren to become Southern Pennsylvania District executive. She began on the denominational staff in October 2016 as a congregational support representative in Donor Relations and assumed her current role in 2023. She is an ordained minister and has been a youth director and youth pastor. Her leadership in the district has included service as moderator and board chair of Cross Keys Village—The Brethren Home. She holds a Training in Ministry certificate from the Brethren Academy.

Chelsea Skillen on Feb. 10 resigned as director of Brethren Volunteer Service after having led BVS since Oct. 24, 2022. During her tenure BVS continued to develop new models for orientation and volunteer placement, added new placement sites, began a pilot Early Enrollment Program, and moved to remote work. Her previous work for the church included two years as a BVS volunteer and service with On Earth Peace, New Community Project, and Camp Bethel. She is moving to Portugal to join her husband's publishing business.

Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred and **Virginia Rendler** began Jan. 26 as interim co-directors of BVS. Witkovsky-Eldred will lead administration of BVS while continuing as coordinator of FaithX. Rendler will lead development and partner relationships while continuing as coordinator of volunteers.

Raul Rivera Arroyo began Feb. 2 as part-time administrative assistant for the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, working remotely. His prior employment included a supportive role with the Church of the Brethren in Puerto Rico. He holds a master of divinity from Bethany Seminary.

Sydney Goldsborough has begun as fulltime director of administration and communication for On Earth Peace. She first worked for On Earth Peace in 2023 as social media intern and most recently was communications coordinator.

Adam Swartz, a licensed CPA and a member of Stevens Hill Church of the Brethren, began Jan. 1 as part-time director of finance for Atlantic Northeast District. **Kay Weaver**, former interim director of finance, has become district treasurer.

Erik Brummett has resigned from the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board. He was elected in July 2024.

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