IAF statement calls on 'Spirit of Power and Love'

The Inter-Agency Forum meeting in Florida on Jan. 27 issued the statement "A Spirit of Power and Love" on immigration enforcement and political violence and their effects on church members. The IAF includes the Annual Conference officers and other denominational leaders.

The statement cited scripture and Brethren heritage to address concern about "the terror and disorientation that many of our churches and communities are experiencing" and "the health of our common life together."

"At this writing, 21 members of the Church of the Brethren have been detained or deported," it said, in part. "People in the United States are losing their lives in detention and in public, at the hands of the authorities. We write now to members of the Church to remind all of us: In the face of brutal immigration enforcement, misinformation, and political violence, 'God did not give us a spirit of timidity but one of power, love, and self-discipline' (2 Timothy 1:7, ISV)….When the military is asked to serve as a police force, when trusted institutions become politicized, when the integrity of elections is questioned or attacked, and when misinformation flows from official voices, we sense patterns that trouble the spirit and strain the fabric of our lives together as a country."

Find the full text at www.brethren.org/news/2026/spirit-of-power-and-love-statement.

Walt Wiltschek

Founa Badet (at microphone), director of Intercultural Ministries was among leaders of a press conference and prayer service calling for the extension of TPS for Haitians.

District executives make intercultural connections

The Council of District Executives held winter meetings on Jan. 28-Feb. 1 in Miami, Fla., combining business sessions with intercultural continuing education that connected with local congregations.

CODE and several agency representatives spent time at Miami Haitian Church of the Brethren and other area congregations (Miami First, Tabernacle of the Restoration, and Unify Christian). The time included a conversation with Intercultural Ministries director Founa Badet and Deportation Defense Response staff Vildor Archange, Bible studies on Acts 2 shared through the lenses of different cultures and languages, and attendance at the Atlantic Southeast Multicultural Festival.

In their business sessions, CODE received various reports from Annual Conference and its agencies, the Deportation Defense Response Team, and the Annual Conference Review and Evaluation Committee, among others. The group held conversations with the Ministry Advisory Council on possible updates to the 2014 Ministerial Leadership paper and with the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee on potential revisions to denominational sabbath renewal guidelines. Bethany Seminary president Jeff Carter led a combined session with the Inter-Agency Forum on "Creating a Culture of Calling." Another combined session with IAF explored the "New Table" process being developed by CODE and the Annual Conference agencies.

Prayers were raised for the impending end of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian immigrants, a move that was later stayed by a federal judge.

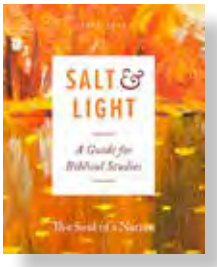
Walt Wiltschek

While in Florida, district executives and other denominational leaders joined in Atlantic Southeast District's first Multicultural Festival.

Church joins amici curiae brief in Supreme Court

On Feb. 17, the Church of the Brethren joined 30 other faith organizations in an amici curiae brief in the Supreme Court in support of the plaintiffs in Noem v. Al Otro Lado, No. 25-5. The case challenges the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) authority to prevent individuals from filing for asylum at ports of entry into the US.

Plaintiffs challenged a DHS interpretation of 8 U.S.C 1158(a)(1) that states that "[a]ny alien who is physically present in the United States or who arrives in the United States…may apply for asylum." DHS has interpreted the language "arrives in the United States" to mean that the individual must step across the border. Under that interpretation, an individual stopped right at the border is not eligible to apply for asylum.



Brethren Press, MennoMedia curriculum partnership

Salt & Light: A Guide for Biblical Studies is a new quarterly Bible study curriculum for adults produced jointly by Brethren Press and MennoMedia. It blends *A Guide for Biblical Studies* published by Brethren Press and *Salt & Light* published by MennoMedia.

Building on decades of partnership between the two publishing houses, the curriculum will be written by Church of the Brethren and Mennonite biblical scholars, pastors, and educators. A Spanish-language edition will be available in digital form. To be released quarterly beginning this fall, the curriculum will be available at www.brethrenpress.com.

Discussions begin between Eder Financial and Everence®

Eder Financial has entered into discussions with Everence® (formerly known as Mennonite Mutual Aid) to explore how the two agencies can build on a shared commitment to better serve individuals, organizations, and congregations. "Eder and Everence have come to these discussions grounded in a shared foundation of faith, values, mission, and heritage," Eder announced.

Personnel

Wendy McFadden has announced her retirement as publisher of Brethren Press and executive director of Communications for the Church of the Brethren, after almost 45 years of work for the denomination. She started in October 1981 as managing editor of Messenger and director of News Services. Her many accomplishments have included guiding Brethren Press through the struggles that have faced all small faith-based publishers; supporting Messenger and its several editors, culminating in 2016 in her creation of an editorial team on which she is an active member; creating the Church of the Brethren annual report in its various forms including written, pictorial, video, and display; serving on committees that developed the Church of the Brethren logo and denominational taglines; representing the Church of the Brethren at national and international ecumenical bodies and events, most recently Christian Churches Together; leading collaborations with the Mennonite publishing house including the major children's Sunday school curricula Jubilee, Gather 'Round, and Shine. She led Brethren Press's publication of the 300th anniversary devotional *Fresh from the Word* as well as new iterations of the *Inglenook Cookbook*. She will retire on July 31.

Nancy Sollenberger Heishman retires July 17 as director of the Ministry Office, a position she has held since Nov. 6, 2017. During her tenure, she facilitated search processes for district executives for most of the 23 districts; worked with the Council of District Executives in reviewing policy and polity; worked with the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee on pastoral compensation practices; oversaw the ethics training for credentialed ministers that takes place every five years; sponsored and helped plan the Clergywomen's Retreats; and more. The Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church program supporting multi-vocational pastors was made possible by her work to acquire and oversee grants from Lilly Foundation Inc. She is a previous coordinator of the Spanish-Language Ministry Training Programs of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership and a past mission co-coordinator in the Dominican Republic. In 2014, she was moderator of Annual Conference.

Gene Hollenberg retires at the end of 2026 as executive director of Camp Mack in Milford, Ind. He has served in the position for almost 10 years, since September 2016. His tenure included accomplishments such as facility improvements, new programs and staff, successful completion of a capital campaign, and successful pursuit of multiple grants.

Kelly Rumpf has been hired as director of camps and the Global Village at Shepherd's Spring in Mid-Atlantic District. She and her husband, Danny, are ministry fellows at Grossnickle Church of the Brethren.

Preston Killough started Feb. 4 as an intern in the Brethren Historical Library and Archives at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill. He also is an intern at the Lombard (Ill.) Historical Society.

Post this page You are welcome to photocopy these news pages. For more Newsline stories, go to **www.brethren.org/news**