

Church supports asylum seekers in Supreme Court

The Supreme Court in late March heard arguments in *Noem v. Al Otro Lado*, in which the Church of the Brethren joined an interfaith amicus brief filed on behalf of the plaintiffs. Some 30 faith organizations filed the amicus curiae brief coordinated by the Kairos Center on Religion, Rights, and Justice.

The case focuses on Department of Homeland Security authority to prevent individuals from entering the United States at ports of entry to file for asylum. Plaintiffs challenged a DHS interpretation of 8 U.S.C 1158(a)(1), which 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 to mean that the individual must step across the border, and that an individual stopped right at the border is not eligible to apply for asylum.

The Ninth Circuit Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and the federal government appealed to the Supreme Court. If DHS prevails, the case will effectively allow the US to refuse asylum to all asylum seekers who seek to enter lawfully at a US border.



Hannah Nelson, a Brethren Volunteer Service worker at the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, holds a sign at the interfaith vigil outside the Supreme Court.

Board urges prayerful action to support immigrants

The Mission and Ministry Board issued the resolution “Walking Together: Immigration, Peacemaking, Conscience, and Supporting One’s Neighbors” emphasizing the church’s longstanding commitment to civil disobedience when government policies are unjust or conflict with biblical teachings.

The board drew on decades of church statements to urge individuals, congregations, districts, and the denomination to support immigrant communities, speak out against policies that harm families, and engage in civil disobedience when necessary. “Church of the Brethren history and tradition include radical discipleship, conscientious objection, and participation in civil disobedience,” the board said.

The resolution grew out of an Atlantic Southeast District query referred by the Annual Conference officers so that an urgent question could be answered in a timely way. It was prepared by a board-appointed committee and will be passed on to Annual Conference.

The board acted during its March 13-15 meeting in Modesto, Calif. The meeting was led by chair Kathy Mack with chair-elect Josiah Ludwick and general secretary David Steele.

A highlight was attendance Sunday morning at five congregations in the area. Board members and staff spread out to visit Empire Church of the Brethren, Centro Agape en Acción in Los Banos, Nueva Visión la Hermosa in Waterford, Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Sacramento, and Modesto Church of the Brethren.



Board members and staff visited several Church of the Brethren congregations in California.

The visit “started with handshakes and ended with hugs,” reported one board member. Others described stories, an impromptu opportunity to provide pastoral care, meaningful prayer, good music, and “so many connections.”

The board was hosted by pastor Andrew Sampson and the Modesto congregation, which prepared meals and introduced some of the non-profit ministries that share space in the building. These include an organization that provides temporary housing for families, a community

radio station, a daycare, and several other groups—which together bring “energy and life” to the church, Sampson said.

District executive Russ Matteson and board chair Gail Heisel described the Pacific Southwest District and its varied congregations, which range from some of the largest in the denomination to fledgling church starts.

Consultation sets next phase of South Sudan ministry

A consultation on the Church of the Brethren mission in South Sudan was held early this year in Nappanee, Ind., at Union Center Church of the Brethren. Participants included Athanasus Ungang, mission worker in South Sudan; Roger Schrock, Country Advocate Team member; Roy Winter, executive director of Service Ministries; and Sharon Norton, executive director of Global Mission.

The main objectives were to plan for building a headquarters for Brethren Global Services near Juba, the capital city, and to provide training for pastors and church planters in Church of the Brethren values, practices, and history. The Brethren Global Services team is led by Ungang and consists of a program manager, a woman's ministries coordinator, and several church planters and pastors.

Appreciation was expressed to Ungang for his years of service. The group acknowledged that, as the goals of the mission continue to grow, he needs the support of many more people in South Sudan and in the US to carry out and implement the vision.

The consultation decided to focus on providing temporary aid to the people who are committed to building the Church of the Brethren in South Sudan, while also giving aid to others as possible, as the country is affected by ongoing violence and attacks on humanitarian relief efforts. The strategy will be to collaborate with local partners who are focused on developing revenue-generating projects with communities, projects with which Church of the Brethren pastors and church planters can participate.



Deana Ward cares for a young child as part of the Children's Disaster Services response in an area of Michigan affected by a tornado. She was one of the volunteers who responded in Union City and Three Rivers after an EF3 tornado damaged or destroyed some 70 homes, killed 3 people and injured another 12. CDS volunteers also responded March 16-17 following a tornado that hit Aroma Park, Ill.

Grants support South Sudan mission and refugees in DRC

■ \$213,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund supports the Church of the Brethren mission in South Sudan in providing humanitarian relief in a time of escalating violence, and will help build a new church headquarters. Brethren Disaster Ministries and Global Mission staff will coordinate programming to help families address trauma, reduce intracommunity conflict, and target relief in areas where congregations are being developed.

■ \$75,000 from the EDF supports a relief effort for refugees, coordinated by the Church of the Brethren in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Communities in the DRC and neighboring Burundi have been affected by violence as the M23 rebel group has mounted an offensive across provinces of the DRC. As of early 2026, the eastern DRC was at a critical juncture that could expand into a regional war.

Personnel

Matt DeBall and **Nancy McCrickard** began March 23 as interim co-directors for the Church of the Brethren Mission Advancement. McCrickard is leading the giving and planned giving portion of the work, while DeBall leads stewardship and communication.

Mandy Park has begun as director of development for On Earth Peace. She is a member of Brownsville (Md.) Church of

the Brethren and holds master's degrees in Old Testament and Biblical Languages. Her professional experience ranges from teaching middle school Latin to local economic development, and she has played a key role in the Church of the Brethren Gun Violence Prevention Action Team.

Arndt Peter Schulz began March 9 as part-time Buildings and Grounds assistant at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill.

Janice Shaw-Morgan of La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren has joined the Mission and Ministry Board, filling the unexpired term of Erik Brummett who resigned in December 2025.

Tamisha Tyler resigns at the end of this spring semester as visiting assistant professor and director of the master of arts program at Bethany Seminary, where she began as a Louisville Postdoctoral Fellow in 2022.



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