



FaithX wraps up summer of service

In summer 2026, FaithX brought together 51 participants from across the Church of the Brethren for trips full of service, faith exploration, and fellowship.

The summer began with 13 adult participants traveling to Northern Ireland to work alongside nonprofit partners within the Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) year-long program. A total of 33 junior high youth and advisors served those in need throughout the United States, including at a therapeutic horse-riding farm near

Hershey, Pa., and at community organizations in Winston-Salem, N.C. The summer concluded with the We Are Able trip in which five young adults with intellectual disabilities served in southern Michigan and enjoyed time together at Amigo Camp.

Registration for summer 2027 FaithX opens Jan. 6 at 7 p.m. (Eastern time). Registration is open now for the next Older Adult FaithX experience for ages 50-plus at Camp Ithiel in Florida on Feb. 21-26. Go to www.brethren.org/faithx.

Bethany opens year with strong enrollment

Bethany Theological Seminary this fall welcomed 42 students who are enrolled for the first time at the seminary or are beginning new graduate programs. Nine come from the Church of Brethren and will benefit from the new scholarship that covers the full cost of tuition for qualified students from the denomination.

The seminary expected a total of 117 students to enroll this fall, continuing a strong enrollment trend over the last few years. In May, the seminary awarded 40 master's degrees and certificates—the largest number since at least the 1960s.

Bethany also has begun enrolling undergraduates from Church of the Brethren-related colleges and universities in the UP@Bethany program, funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment. This year, new students from Manchester University are participating.

Loss of Temporary Protected Status affects Brethren

The Deportation Defense Response provided an update following termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians at the end of July.

“Our immigrant neighbors and siblings in Christ continue to face excruciatingly difficult times,” said the report. “The Haitian community is being targeted. Haitian Church of the Brethren members in Florida have lost the ability to work, are facing significant hardships and uncertainty, and are living in fear. Aggressive immigration enforcement has hit the Haitian community in Springfield, Ohio, and two pastors in the area have been unjustly incarcerated by ICE. Unjust arrests continue across the country, and our neighbors needlessly suffer in ICE detention. Deportations to unstable countries continue, and families are separated.”

Church of the Brethren members affected, as of August:

Detained: in Atlantic Northeast District, one person from

Buffalo, N.Y.; in Atlantic Southeast District, four people from Lehigh Acres, Fla.; in Pacific Southwest District, one person from Los Banos, Calif.; in Southern Ohio and Kentucky District, one person from Dayton, Ohio.

Deported: in Atlantic Northeast District, one person from Lancaster, Pa.; in Atlantic Southeast District, one person from Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; in Missouri and Arkansas District, one person from Cabool, Mo.; in Southern Ohio and Kentucky District, two people from Tipp City, Ohio; in Pacific Southwest District, one person from San Diego, Calif., and two people from Las Vegas, Nev.; in Virginia District, three people from Bassett, Va., and three sisters from Christiansburg, Va.

Released: in Atlantic Southeast District, one person from Lehigh Acres, Fla.; in Pacific Southwest District, two people from San Diego, Calif., and one from Las Vegas, Nev.



Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 339 completed orientation on July 27-Aug. 4 at Inspiration Hills Camp in Burbank, Ohio: *(back row, from left)* **Samuel Hupp** of Manchester Church of the Brethren and North Manchester, Ind., to the Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy in Washington, D.C.; **Gillian Thompson** of Carmel, Ind., to Greenhill YMCA in Newcastle, Northern Ireland; **Dominic Nozzarella** of Washington, D.C., to Washington City Church of the Brethren and the Center on Conscience and War; **Kelan McConnell** of La Verne Church of the Brethren and Chino, Calif., to Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center in Little Rock, Ark.; **William Hart** of Kittery, Maine, to Gould Farm in Monterey, Massachusetts; *(middle row, from left)* **Colleen Caylo** of Ossian, Ind., to Greenhill YMCA in Newcastle, Northern Ireland; **Leah Mack** of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren and Elgin, Ill., to the Bernardo Kohler Center in Austin, Texas; **Josethy Perez** of Chicago, Ill., to L'Arche in Ireland; **Dimitri Janko** of Bayern, Germany, to Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center in Little Rock, Ark.; **Nico Ziegler** of Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, to Camp Stevens in Julian, Calif.; *(front row, from left)* **Miriam Erbaugh** of Manchester Church of the Brethren and North Manchester, Ind., to Greenhill YMCA in Newcastle, Northern Ireland; **Elise Harter** of North Manchester, Ind., to the Shalom Project in Lancaster, Pa.; **Darek Leschber** of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren and Elgin, Ill.

Personnel

Beth Sollenberger retired Sept. 30 as interim director of administration for Atlantic Southeast District, serving since April 1, 2024. She worked from her home in Goshen, Ind., as well as in the district. Highlights of her tenure include the district hosting a Council of District Executives event featuring multicultural ministries, and work with other district and denominational leaders to create the Deportation Defense Response. Her previous leadership roles in the denomination included serving as executive for South/Central Indiana District for nearly 11 years, interim leadership for Michigan District, and as denominational staff in stewardship education and on the former Congregational Life Team.

Jon Lucas Keller resigned on Sept. 11 as Mission Advancement advocate for the Church of the Brethren. He

joined the denominational staff on July 28, 2025, working remotely from Maineville, Ohio. He has accepted a position with a nonprofit that will enable him to serve more directly in his community.

John Fillmore has been named director of ministry for the Church of the Brethren, succeeding Nancy Sollenberger Heishman who retired in July. He has pastored Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren since 2011 and has been district executive minister for Idaho and Western Montana District and a “circuit rider” for Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church. He holds a bachelor’s degree in English from Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa; a master of divinity from Bethany Seminary; and a doctor of ministry from Portland Seminary at George Fox University.

Beginning Nov. 2, he will serve fulltime in the Ministry Office, working remotely from Nampa.

Nick Beam has accepted a three-year contract to serve as district executive minister for Southern Ohio and Kentucky District, following a term of interim leadership.

Carolyn Willoughby began Aug. 1 on the interim district executive minister team for Middle Pennsylvania District, succeeding Rebecca Zeek who completed her service July 31. Willoughby is a retired minister currently working part-time in an Alzheimer’s unit at Arbutus Park retirement center in Johnstown, Pa. She is a 1992 graduate of Bethany Seminary and previously pastored Farmington Bethel Church of the Brethren.

Rachel Johnson has begun a one-year, part-time role as

assistant for Youth and Young Adult Ministries. She completed her term as National Youth Conference coordinator on Aug. 24. Working from her home in Pennsylvania, she will support programing for 2027 events including Christian Citizenship Seminar, National Junior High Conference, and Young Adult Conference, and will support regional youth conferences.

Samuel Hupp has begun as a Brethren Volunteer Service worker at the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy. His work will involve foreign policy research, analysis, and advocacy opposed to the perpetuation of warfare, war profiteering, and state violence. From Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., he recently graduated from Manchester University with a bachelor’s in Philosophy and Peace Studies.



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