

Update on the Sensitive Locations Lawsuit

Sacred spaces should never be places of fear. Yet today, our sanctuaries are less safe because of a harmful policy change.

For more than thirty years, the federal government's "sensitive locations" policy protected churches, schools, and hospitals from immigration enforcement, recognizing these as sacred and essential community spaces. That protection was abruptly rescinded in January. Since then, many congregations, including Episcopal churches, have experienced real harm: sharp declines in worship attendance and ministry participation, increased fear among members, immigrant and nonimmigrant alike, and costly security measures that conflict with our call to hospitality.

Earlier this year, The Episcopal Church joined a broad interfaith coalition in filing suit to challenge this rescission. This week, our case has moved forward on appeal with the filing of the opening brief in *Mennonite Church USA v. Department of Homeland Security*. The brief makes clear why restoring protections for houses of worship is essential to religious freedom, public safety, and the integrity of our ministries.

Both the Presiding Bishop and I submitted declarations in support of this case, bearing witness to the harm faced by our communities when sacred spaces are no longer safe. In my declaration, I spoke not only from my role as President of the House of Deputies, but also from lived experience as a first-generation American and the daughter of an undocumented Mexican immigrant.

You can read the opening brief here: [**Mennonite Church USA v. DHS – Opening Brief**](#)

As deputies and leaders in this church, I encourage you to study this case closely. The outcome of this litigation will shape not only the legal landscape, but also the spiritual terrain in which future generations will practice their faith. May our advocacy be grounded not in political positioning, but in our deepest theological convictions: that every person bears the image of God, that our churches must remain spaces of sanctuary and welcome, and that religious freedom means the freedom to practice our faith fully, including our call to love the stranger.

Let us continue to hold this work in prayer, trusting that even in these challenging times, the Spirit continues to move, calling us toward a more expansive vision of beloved community.

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