



**American
Friends
Service
Committee**

AFSC Midwest Digest – February 2026

Stories of work from around the region



Upcoming AFSC Third Tuesdays webinar to feature Midwest trio

February's theme is Love and Liberation! What are the ways love shows up in resistance? How can love help us defeat authoritarianism and grow healthy communities? Hear from on-the-ground organizers from Michigan, Illinois, and Missouri about love as a central theme in their work with youth and elders.

Be sure to [register now](#) for the February 17, 7 pm CT event. It will feature Third Tuesday emcee Barbara Gunn Lartey, St. Louis Peacebuilding Program Director; asia smith, Chicago Peacebuilding Program Director; and LaWanda Hollister, Statewide Organizer with the Michigan Criminal Justice Program.

This monthly webinar series brings together AFSC constituents to learn about how to protect, resist, and build just peace, just migration, and just economies. Click to view episodes from [all of 2025](#) and [January 2026](#).



“Funds not Feds” rally in Chicago, organized by the Public Health and Safety Coalition and the People’s Unity Platform. (Sarah-Ji/Loveandstugglephotos)

Years of organizing lead to big wins for youth safety in Chicago

Youth with AFSC Chicago Peacebuilding are helping move money from police vacancies to non-police crisis response, summer jobs for youth, and more. In December, the Chicago City Council approved a budget that included nearly all the spending and revenue demands our coalition—the Public Health and Safety Campaign—had been striving for. These historic wins will change the material conditions in communities across Chicago. Along with allies, AFSC helped redirect \$30 million in funding for 500 Chicago Police Department (CPD) vacancies to alternative areas. Additionally, we redirected \$50 million from CPD overtime pay. Read [more](#) from asia smith.



Initial intergenerational gathering creates space for healing justice work

In January, people in St. Louis gathered across generations for the very first meeting of the Intergenerational Freedom Futures Collective (IFFC). Organized by AFSC, it was a circle of healers, movers, and shakers sharing stories, healing, and vision shared in sacred community. More coming soon! Follow [AFSC St. Louis on Instagram](#) and please spread the word: [IFFC Fellow applications](#) are due February 20.

Michigan Survivors

Justice Act (SJA)

New legislation would create pathways for more just sentencing

From the Michigan Criminal Justice Program [newsletter](#): Stay tuned for information regarding our policy focus for 2026: a Michigan Survivors Justice Act (SJA). We have worked in deep and meaningful coalition with many stakeholders from Michigan and around the country. We are hopeful that we can pass an SJA in Michigan. This kind of policy would help provide an opportunity for prospective and retroactive sentencing that considers the survivor's experiences of violence and trauma that impacted them and ultimately led to the offense.



January Love as Action event in Chicago (photo: Daniel Lakemacher)

Next Love as Action events set for February 21-22

Please join the next Love as Action event near you – or [create your own!](#) Midwest sites currently include [Chicago](#), [Des Moines](#) and [Royal Oak, MI](#). Next month, Love as Action dates will be March 21-22.

Emerging Leaders for Liberation (ELL) applications due March 8

AFSC's [ELL program](#) unites young people who share a vested interest in social justice and grassroots organizing. Over the course of eight months, participants develop their leadership skills and deepen their commitments to social justice through in-person convenings, virtual meetings, and the completion of a community action project. [Applications are open](#) to young people (aged 18-22) who have a relationship with an AFSC program, a Quaker Meeting/organization, or a Quaker college.



Becky Flory witnesses outside the Whipple Federal Building in Minneapolis, where immigrants are detained.

Taking a stand against ICE and Border Patrol violence in Minnesota

Recent violence in Minnesota has served as another stark reminder of the brutality inherent in ICE and Border Patrol. In the Twin Cities, Quakers—along with others in the faith community—are taking a stand against attacks on immigrants in their communities. Last month, more than 1,000 people of faith held a nonviolent action at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. Longtime AFSC volunteer Becky Flory, a member of the Twin Cities Friends Meeting, was one of them. [Here](#) she shares her experience.



Sharon Goens-Bradley and Keith Harvey

A fond farewell to Sharon and Keith

In late January, AFSC celebrated the retirements of two Regional Directors – Sharon Goens-Bradley in the Midwest and Keith Harvey in the Northeast. Sharon began with AFSC in 2012 as the Twin Cities Healing Justice Program Director before becoming Associate Regional Director and then Regional Director. Mary Zerkel, based in Chicago, is the new Interim Regional Director of the Midwest Region.

Short takes

A warm welcome to [Karen Francis](#), AFSC's new Global Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion....Here are [four things to know](#) about the recent end of the US-Russia nuclear arms treaty....Here's the latest [resistance update](#) from AFSC alums with Iowa Migrant movement for Justice....[Take action today](#) to stop funding ICE and Border Patrol violence.

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AFSC Mission Statement: *Guided by the Quaker belief in the divine light of each person, AFSC works with people of all faiths and backgrounds to challenge unjust systems and promote lasting peace.*