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Upcoming Orientations:

- **Winter Unit #328**
January 31 – February 12, 2021
Location: Virtual
- **Summer Unit #329**
July 18 – August 6, 2021
Location: Inspiration Hills Camp
- **Fall Unit #330**
September 19 – October 8, 2021
Location: Camp Brethren Heights

By the Numbers:

- **Active volunteers – 24**
18 in United States
2 in Europe
1 in Latin America
3 in Japan
- **Active Projects – 64**
44 in the United States
7 in Europe
5 in Latin America
1 in South America
2 in Japan
4 in Africa
1 in China

The Volunteer

Sharing God’s love through acts of service

ENVISIONING BELOVED COMMUNITY

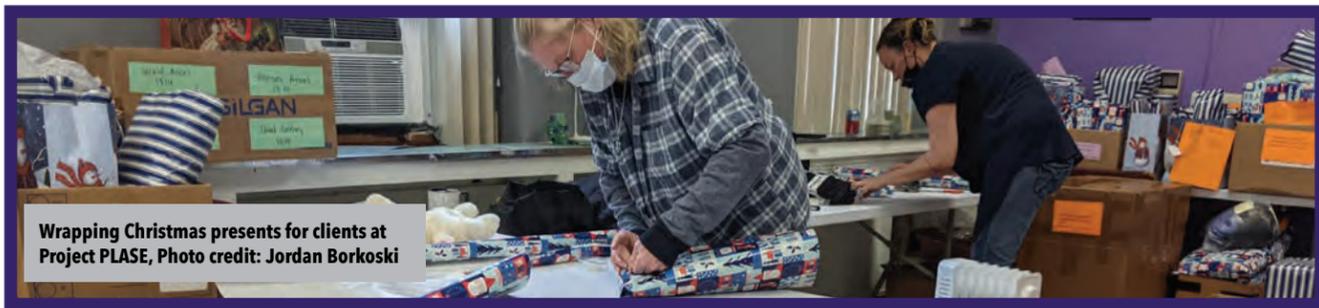
Community as Kindness and Compassion

Deb Wilson



Deb Wilson, Unit 327

Revelation 2:19 tells us, “I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.” How fitting a scripture for reflection during my first year of service with Brethren Volunteer Service. In this year of challenge and change, I find, as Hosea did, that my heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. And so it is that I have aligned myself with BVS, serving at Project PLASE here in Baltimore, MD. I find that the juxtaposition in this city that is rich in commerce, history, and faith, but also in homelessness, addiction, and crime, is startling. I am, once again, right where God intends for me to be. In Ephesians 4:32, we are instructed to, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Now, more than ever, we are called to model the kindness of Jesus. Whether it be a heart-felt “Good morning!” to others at the bus stop, a listening ear for a Wal-Mart employee, or helping Project PLASE clients fulfill a need, I try to be intentional in my kindness and service to others. And it is so much fun! I love feeding people, helping others, and giving things away, all of which I have the opportunity to do on a daily basis while serving at Project PLASE. It is through this service that I am able to participate in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision for a beloved community that is grounded in justice and love for one’s fellow humans. 🌿

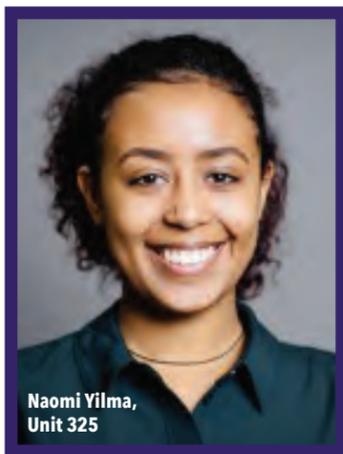


Wrapping Christmas presents for clients at Project PLASE, Photo credit: Jordan Borkoski

Envisioning Beloved Community: The following contributions come from current BVS volunteers. Hear stories of laughter, connection, appreciation, and blessing as volunteers share experiences from their projects that have shaped their understanding of a Beloved Community that emphasizes justice, equal opportunity, and love for another.

Community as a Call for Justice

Naomi Yilma



Naomi Yilma, Unit 325

Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.
— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Every holiday, after a season of fasting, church members make sure that all in the community have the opportunity to break their fast with a good meal. Photo by Naomi Yilma

According to a press release from the People’s Vaccine Alliance, 9 out of 10 people in poor countries are set to miss out on the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021, while rich countries have hoarded enough doses to vaccinate their entire populations nearly 3 times over.¹ During a pandemic that has affected millions across the globe, the need for a beloved community becomes ever more urgent. This is a community that, according to Dr Martin Luther King Jr, is based on the love of one’s fellow human beings and, in turn, puts the just treatment of all humans at the center of its values. In recognizing the humanity of those around us, we would work towards systems that give everyone in the community access to healthcare, food, and shelter, especially in crisis situations. In a beloved community, we would prioritize giving vaccines to those who bear the brunt of the health and economic fallout from the pandemic. At my project with the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, I have contributed to a series of blog posts on simple living, racial justice, environmental justice, and economic justice. My work so far has helped me recognize the interconnectedness of our society and the systems that exist within it. It has helped me recognize that systemic injustices that were fostered over decades play a huge role in magnifying the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 in Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. I have also learned that issues of justice are multi-dimensional and must be approached as such. In the words of former BVSer Susu Lassa, “Climate justice is economic justice and economic justice is racial justice.” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. preached that the end of non-violence is a beloved community. As we build a beloved community which encompasses all forms of justice for all people, advocacy geared towards equitable distribution of resources and opportunities should take center stage. 🌿

¹ “Campaigners warn that 9 out of 10 people in poor countries are set to miss out on COVID-19 vaccine next year,” Oxfam International, December 9, 2020, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/campaigners-warn-9-out-10-people-poor-countries-are-set-miss-out-covid-19-vaccine>

**INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?
VISIT BRETHRENVOLUNTEERSERVICE.ORG OR EMAIL BVS@BRETHREN.ORG**

Community as Accessibility

Cory Alwais



I cannot think of anywhere that embodies and promotes the idea of beloved community more than here at camp. This year was a strange one at Camp High Hopes and it really highlighted how much of a difference this place has been making in the community. Catering to a population of youth and adults with disabilities, Camp High Hope's main goal is to make camp accessible to everyone. Equal opportunity is the backbone of this mission; something that comes so easily to many requires counselors with specific skills, and a bit of training, for our campers to have a fun and safe experience. Every camp session is humbling; it involves long hours and sometimes very stressful work, but it is always worth

it. Aside from the sheer joy of helping these campers to try new things and interact with peers, I have realized how much their caregivers depend on us as well. For many of our campers with severe disabilities, camp is one of the very few options their caregivers have for respite. Even the most dedicated among us need a chance to refuel and recharge, and this is something our work here can help do for them. For me, this comes from my love for my fellow humans, something that is shared by everyone here at camp. We do this work because we want to improve the lives of the people in this population and we believe deeply and passionately that everyone deserves to have access to this experience. The community that this camp has created, from regulars who come every weekend to our first-timers, is beloved to me and, I believe, to all the staff. We have created a community that I hope would do Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. proud. 🌿



Spooky theme night at camp



Cory with camp animals at camp. Photo Credit: M Gresh Alwais



Stan and Hazel during their BVS unit in 1948

Alumni Corner

Debi Zagumny

Stanley & Hazel (Trimmer) Barkdoll celebrated 70 years of marriage on November 25, 2020. They met in the 2nd BVS unit in December, 1948. Hazel served in a migrant camp in Florida and Stan served by driving a truck in the Chicago area. They corresponded over that period and married November 25, 1950. They have 5 children, 3 of whom also were in BVS units- Larry (1971), Pam (1976), and Linda (1977)- 10 grandchildren, and 2 great-children. They still live in their home in Leetown, WV and are in relatively good health. Stan is 91 and Hazel is 94. 🌿



Stan and Hazel during a party in 2018

Community as Solidarity Across Divides

Michael Brewer-Berres



In times like these, it can be difficult to find a "Beloved Community" such as one that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described. When opinions are so polarized and we have to stay so far apart, where do we find the love for one another?

Throughout the past year, I've struggled to see outside of my own little bubble of influence. I stayed at home during lockdown with my family, which I was incredibly lucky to have. We all get along well and enjoy spending time with one another. But we also have shared life experiences, so when we see other people's struggles on TV and social media, it's hard for us to see beyond our own privileges. Of course, we all want to help our fellow humans whenever we can, and our sympathies lie with those who are suffering. Beyond our thoughts and prayers, though, there wasn't much we could do to ease the pain of our neighbors.

At the end of the summer, when I left for my project in Northern Ireland, I was terrified of being part of the world again. Questions flurried through my mind. Once I got to Belfast, would I find a community in chaos, worse than the ones I'd seen on TV all year? Would this other country be in a better state than mine, and I'd spend the days worrying about my family on the other side of the Atlantic?

In fact, I found a city that was much like the one I'd come from. No one quite knew what to do or what they should do, but they were all trying their best. Sure, there were people who complained, but overall, I found people who just wanted to help make the world right again. I felt I understood these people who were so culturally different from me, and they could understand where I was coming from too.

While the intention to want to do good and make things right is amazing to have, I had yet to do my part. This is where my project comes in. Was I incredibly nervous and scared to work in close contact with other people I barely knew in the midst of a pandemic? Absolutely. But once I started, I realized that the work I had to do was more important.

There were people in Belfast who were struggling regardless of the pandemic. And I was able to help give them opportunity and the hope they needed to keep going. It didn't matter whether we had the same politics or whether they wore a mask, what mattered was that they needed help. Everyone deserves to be happy and live without worry. When we're all worried about ourselves or our families getting sick, the least we can do is assure our neighbors that we will help each other get through this. Even across cultural divides and oceans, we all want the same thing: for our communities to be safe and healthy. 🌿



Belfast mural thanking health care workers



A rainbow amidst the clouds above Belfast

