



# CHARLESTON 2004

218th Church of the Brethren Annual Conference

July 3-7 \* "Loving God and Neighbor" Mark 12:28 \* Wrap-up edition

## Delegates persist on key issues

Conference shows commitment to take on difficult discussions

Annual Conference showed persistence and a commitment to deal with difficult and divisive issues in its deliberations in Charleston.

Extensive discussion and an extremely close vote on a substitute motion revealed deep division in the delegate body over the report on "Congregational Disagreements with Annual Conference Decisions."

Similar discussion with regard to other business items--particularly the items on denominational name, doing church business, and multi-ethnic and cross cultural ministries--gave a sense that the delegate body also was deeply divided over the question of how open to diversity and differing opinions the church ought to be.

There were indications that Annual Conference leadership may be moving to invite more open conversations, in business carried out at pre-Conference Standing Committee meetings that talked about hurts and brokenness in the denomination and sought ways to hear concerns that do not come through established channels.

The Conference adopted reports on "The Functions and Qualifications of the



Photo by Regina Bryan

Moderator Bowman and Moderator-elect Hardenbrook focus on guiding the delegate body through the business sessions.

Local Church Moderator" and on "Denominational Name." That committee reported overwhelming support for the name Church of the Brethren but called for attention to processes for controversial issues.

Study committees were elected to answer a query on "Doing Church Business" and to answer the queries on "Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church" and "The Need for Cross Cultural Ministries."

The General Board's resolution on Iraq was adopted with hardly any discussion.

In other business, a 3.1 percent cash salary increase for pastors was approved.

### Bowman sets tone of servant leadership

A towel given by his congregation--Martinsburg (Pa.) Memorial Church of the Brethren--lay across Annual Conference moderator Chris Bowman's podium at opening Standing Committee meetings in Charleston, setting a tone of servant leadership for the Conference.

That tone continued through days of meetings as Bowman guided an engaged and lively delegate body through a maze of issues, motions, and amendments with intelligence and clarity.

### BUSINESS AT A GLANCE

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

\* **Functions and Qualifications of Local Church Moderator:**

Adopted.

\* **Denominational Name:**

Adopted.

\* **Congregational Disagreements with Annual Conference**

**Decisions:** Adopted with an amendment to delete a suggestion that in extreme cases of disagreement district conferences not seat congregations.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

\* **Query: Doing Church Business:** Accepted. A five-member study committee will report in 2005.

\* **Query: Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church and Query: The Need for Cross Cultural Ministries:**

Appointed a seven-member ethnically diverse study committee--including an ex-officio representative of the American Baptist Churches--and incorporated Standing Committee recommendations that cross-cultural ministry become an increased priority in the denomination and that a progress report be made each year for five years, with reassessment in 2010 by the Annual Conference.

\* **Resolution on Iraq:** Adopted.

#### OTHER NOTES:

\* Delegates approved a 3.1-percent pastoral scale increase.

# Daily worships focus on loving God, neighbor

Worship, focused on the Annual Conference theme of "Loving God and Neighbor," provided a strong foundation on which to build numerous days of worshipful work.

Moderator Chris Bowman's sermon on Saturday evening set the tone for the week. He encouraged Brethren to "turn our efforts and our energies back to the basics—loving God and loving neighbor, living lives for the glory of God and our neighbor's good. That is something worth our passion, something worth our protec-

## Beachley to lead church

Delegates called Ronald D. Beachley, executive minister of Western Pennsylvania District, as moderator-elect. He will assist moderator Jim Hardenbrook in the coming year, then serve as moderator for the 2006 Conference in Des Moines.



**Beachley**

Beachley's leadership experience in the church includes the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, district and congregational boards and commissions. He is a member of Maple Spring Church of the Brethren, Holsopple, Pa.



Photo by Regina Bryan

Actors dramatize the story of the Good Samaritan through the "Mouse Tale."

tion, something worth our lives in the body of Christ."

On Sunday morning, Dena Pence Frantz, professor of Theological Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary, asked a question from scripture, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5b). She said, "The living God is known among us as we live our everyday lives in fullness and delight in God's presence and in

active love for others."

Worship on Monday evening was well-seasoned with laughter, soulful music, drama and heartfelt reflection on the question of "who is my neighbor?"

James Washington spoke Monday night on "Living Lovingly Together." He underscored the importance of loving all of our neighbors, equal to all humanity, as opposed to only loving those with whom relationship is easy.

Tuesday evening's worship will highlight Tim Button-Harrison's message, "Lessons from Love Feast," allowing conference-goers the chance to reflect on the idea of loving each other

Annual Conference worship will conclude on Wednesday with words

from Andrew Murray. He will provide insight about what it means to draw near to the kingdom. His sermon, "Are We There Yet?," will be nested in a service full of music, story, and praise.



**Bowman**



**Pence Frantz**



**Washington**



**Button-Harrison**

## Brethren rally follows President's visit

Marching behind a banner proclaiming, "Church of the Brethren: A Living Peace Church," hundreds of Conference attendees

participated in a 4th of July rally to protest the policies of President Bush, who spoke in Charleston earlier in the day.

Brethren protesters at the US Courthouse in Charleston displayed a banner bearing the names of the more than 800 US military killed in Iraq .

Photo by Carl Seese



The action also involved the West Virginia Patriots for Peace and the Sierra Club. The group assembled at the US Courthouse where a "wall" was stretched across the steps, bearing the names of the more than 800 US military personnel who have been killed in Iraq since the invasion.

Among the many protesters were 18-month-old Michael Bidgood Enders--with his dad, Greg--and Dale Brown, who has led and participated in many peace demonstrations over the decades. The action was coordinated by the General Board's Washington Office.



## ELECTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

**Moderator-elect:** Ronald D. Beachley

**Annual Conference**

**Council:** Joan Lawrence Daggett

**Program and Arrangements Committee:** Joanna Wave Willoughby

**Committee on Inter-church Relations:** James O. Eikenberry

**Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory**

**Committee:** Herman Kauffman

**Association of Brethren**

**Caregivers board:** Diane Harden (delegates also affirmed appointed members Eddie H. Edmonds, John Katonah, and John Wenger)

**Bethany Theological Seminary board:** David B. Eller (delegates also affirmed appointed members Jerry A. Davis and John D. Miller Jr., and Charles Boyer, elected by the alumni)

**Brethren Benefit Trust board:** John A. Braun

**General Board, At-Large:** Michael Benner (delegates also affirmed district appointees Ken Wenger, Mid-Atlantic District; Dale Minnich, Western Plains District; and Susan Kinsel Fitze, Southern Ohio District). The General Board selected Donna Shumate as chair, Glenn Mitchell as vice chair, and David Sollenberger, Doug Price, JD Glick, and Jeff Neuman-Lee as executive committee members.

**On Earth Peace board:** Robbie Miller (delegates also affirmed appointed members David Jehnsen and Bev Weaver)

# Report highlights agency work



Photo by Regina Bryan

Cara Atkins gave testimony to the healing power of anointing and prayer during the Ministries and Mission Report.

The five Annual Conference agencies presented a "Ministries and Mission Report" tied together by the theme, "Who is my neighbor?" Segments of a mock game show inserted humor into a serious look at the denomination's ministries.

The Association of Brethren Caregivers began the reporting with the videotaped story

of Cara Atkins, a member of Greenmount Church of the Brethren, Harrisonburg, Va., whose road to recovery following a serious car accident began when her deacons held a symbolic anointing service for her while she lay unconscious. The delegates rose in a standing ovation when Atkins walked onto the stage in person, to give testimony to the healing power of anointing and prayers.

As the report continued, On Earth Peace featured the original team of JOYA (Journey of Young Adults) of ten years ago, in a reunion celebrating On Earth Peace's 30th anniversary. Bethany Theological Seminary president Gene Roop outlined challenges facing the seminary as it begins its 100th anniversary celebration. A haunting capella performance by The Guys, a high-school male quartet from Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill., accompanied slides and video of children ministered to by the General Board. Brethren Benefit Trust lifted up principles of mutuality and financial stewardship that guide its ministries.

## Cross cultural meal gathers church of Rev. 7:9

"You won't hear any boring sermons here," warned Duane Grady, of the General Board's Congregational Life Teams, as he greeted people arriving at the annual Cross Cultural Ministries Luncheon. He was right.

Gilbert Romero, pastor of Bella Vista Church of the Brethren, Los Angeles, Monday night's preacher James Washington with James Washington, Jr., General Board member Jaime Diaz, and Pacific Southwest District staff Joe Vecchio took the stage to lead more of a worship service than a luncheon. It wasn't long before the stage was packed with the likes of Brethren musicians Linda Williams and Shawn Kirchner. More than 20 individuals took turns leading "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me," "Guide My Feet," and many other songs.

The words were primarily in Spanish and English. Faces were black, white, and every shade of

brown. Participants were reminded of Rev. 7:9, in which God's true church is revealed as one that includes believers "from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages, standing before the throne..." Once the plates were cleared, chairs emptied too as attendees took to their feet in praise. "We need crazy," Romero said, as he invited Brethren to move their hands and feet.

The next Cross Cultural Meeting is in April 2005 at Bethany Theological Seminary.



Photo by Jesse Reid

Those in attendance at the Cross Cultural Luncheon had "a rockin' good time."

## Prayer and praise, study and discussion

Enthusiasm for prayer and praise, study and discussion, abounded in Charleston.

An urban prayer walk blessed the streets of the city; the Brethren Revival Fellowship held its prayer and fasting session; Bible studies and theological studies were offered; and the many insight sessions gave opportunities to learn about current issues for the church and its members.

Young adults were even escorted from the Civic Center at midnight one evening, hav-



Photo by Regina Bryan

Brethren Revival Fellowship held a prayer and fasting session.

ing been discovered in the prayer room still praising God when the building was supposed to have been closed for the night.

For many Conference-goers, the music was a spiritual experience. From the "souped up" Bluegrass version of "Brethren We Have Met to Worship," to the heartfelt solos of Larry Brumfield, to the a capella group The Guys, music bathed the gathered body in a sense of God's presence.

## Children visit Ronald McDonald House

It was a warm Sunday afternoon for 61 children participating in the Ronald McDonald House service project.

Through a recycling fundraising project, over 76,020 pull tabs from aluminum cans were collected--that is 60 pounds of tabs. Funds will support this "house that love built" providing temporary lodging for the families of children receiving treatment at Charleston area hospitals. Ronald McDonald House charities began with one Ronald House in Philadelphia in 1974 and today is a global organization reaching millions of children.

"We were looking for an experience for the children that would last a lifetime," said Nancy McCrickard, coordinator of children's activities for kindergarten through second grade. The children were transported by school bus to deliver the pull tabs and enjoy a happy meal lunch with Ronald McDonald. After the pull tabs were presented, Ronald talked with the children about how the house helps children and their families.

Nancy Jones, assistant house manager, said four full-time staff and over 60 vol-



Photo by Jesse Reid

unteers provide housing, food, and emotional support to families staying in the 10-bedroom house. "We have seen a lot of miracles and we celebrate when children are able to return home," continued Jones. A large kitchen and stocked pantry are available to the parents staying at the house, but several times a month local churches provide meals. The children returned to the Civic Center with a better understanding of service.

## CHARLESTON BITS

**SITE:** Charleston (W.Va.) Civic Center and Coliseum

**REGISTRATION:** This year's attendance of 4,038 was up from the 2003 total of 2,844 in Boise and included 920 delegates and Standing Committee members. In Baltimore in 2001 registration reached 5,029.

**FUTURE SITES:** San Diego, Calif., will be the 2009 site. Next year's Conference will be July 2-6 in Peoria, Ill.

**NEW FELLOWSHIPS:** Koinonia Fellowship, Charlottesville, Va., and Sunrise Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

**AWARDS:** The Association of Brethren Caregivers presented its first "Open Roof" award to Lansing (Mich.) Church of the Brethren.

**GIFTS OF THE HEART:** Conference-goers brought 2,500 Gift of the Heart kits and Clinic Boxes in a collection sponsored by the General Board's Emergency Response program. Brethren donated 164 pints of blood.

**BBT FITNESS CHALLENGE:** First-place finishers in the annual Brethren Benefit Trust 5K Fitness Challenge were Courtland Howard (17:40) and Deb Morris Crouse (21:30). First place walkers were Bev Anspaugh (33:23) and Don Shankster (34:01).

**QUILT AUCTION:** Three quilts and three wall hangings were sold during the 30th annual Quilt Auction sponsored by the Association for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren. The auction raised \$20,400.

**ECUMENICAL CITATION:** Kira Marriner of the Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren received a citation from the Committee on Interchurch Relations.