

## THE GLOBAL CHURCH

### Current Happenings, Future Possibilities

*This study guide is designed to provide questions that incite discussion, invite reflection, and inspire action. It was written to accompany The Moderator's Town Hall conversation with Norm & Carol Waggy, Interim Directors of Global Mission for Church of the Brethren.*

*Timestamps linked to the Town Hall recording are included in this guide, should a discussion leader choose a "pause and talk" approach rather than asking participants to watch the Town Hall in its entirety prior to meeting. This guide can also be utilized across multiple meetings, given that some questions might spark heartier conversation than one meeting will allow.*

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*The video of this Town Hall can be accessed by using the following link: <https://vimeo.com/522486165>*

**@4:51** The conversation begins by highlighting the 2018 Annual Conference paper, "Vision for a Global Church of the Brethren." Currently, there are 11 registered Church of the Brethren denominations around the world: Brazil, Congo, Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, Nigeria, Rwanda, Spain, Uganda, The United States of America, and Venezuela.

**Setting aside the pandemic and other concerns, to which country would you love to travel and share in mission with a global, local church?**

**Imagine yourself in that country. What are you seeing? What are you doing? What are you learning? How is God touching your life?**

**@10:00** The discussion turns to Nigeria and the insurgents' attacks. Norm shares the quote, "*if you stomp on a fire, the embers will scatter, and the church will grow.*" And that's exactly what they're seeing in Nigeria. "*There are people who are being scattered for their lives but who are forming churches.*"

**What is your reaction, when you hear about new Christian communities rising up in the face of adversity, risk, even mortal danger?**

**@14:27** The Waggys are asked what is often mentioned as the most important reason for someone wanting to join the Church of the Brethren. To which they replied, "Our theology. Our peace understanding from scripture." Along with, "Service. An understanding of Jesus as a

servant. An understanding of Jesus as a peace-maker. Along with an appreciation for the relational nature of our denomination.

**What draws you to choose the Church of the Brethren over other traditions of Christianity?**

**What are some of the first characteristics you name when describing your church to someone who isn't a part of it?**

**The Church of the Brethren is sought-out globally because of its emphasis on peacemaking and service. In your experience, do these themes have a similar attraction to Americans as they do to others in different countries? Why or why not?**

**@22:52** The churches in the Dominican Republic were started after the churches in Puerto Rico responded and assisted in the cleanup work, after a terrible hurricane season. The Dominican church then went on to establish the Spanish church. And the Spanish church is the one that's currently working in London. Earlier in the town hall (**@12:15**) it was mentioned that in just three years, the Church of the Brethren has grown from 7 countries to 11 – and counting. As Norm said, "You can't stop the Holy Spirit."

**What comes to mind as you consider the connectivity and growth of these churches?**

**Does your local church talk about the global church as a movement of the Holy Spirit?**

**How might you strengthen or begin such an emphasis?**

**What are some ways you can specifically pray for the global church, asking for the movement of the Holy Spirit, petitioning for God's blessing and power?**

**@25:29** The conversation turned to the church in Nigeria. It is asked, "how can congregations continue to connect and be supportive of the Nigerian church... in light of the unspeakable violence and persecution that's happening?" It is then shared that there are 111 girls still in captivity. Grants & political actions are being utilized in the efforts to work for their freedom.

**How does news of the horrific violence impacting the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN) affect you both emotionally and spiritually?**

**What are some practical ways you can make your congregation even more aware of the situation in EYN and other parts of the persecuted church?**

**How aware is your congregation of the Church of the Brethren's Nigeria Crisis Fund?**

**Would you consider promoting the Fund (again or for the first time) with your local church, encouraging other persons to give?** (for information on the crisis fund and the Nigerian crisis overall go to: [www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis/](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis/))

@32:24 Upon being asked, "what are a couple of things groups around the world have to teach us, as we become brethren, together?", the Waggys replied with the following list:

**"Remember: if you stomp on the fire, the embers will scatter, and the church will grow."**

- *There's a way to keep the faith amidst adversity and oppression.*
- *There's a way to run orphanages when they have nothing to do it with.*
- *Agriculture & understanding this good earth & how the good earth can serve us.*
- *There are so many ways we have become comfortable and one of the things we need to learn from our brothers and sisters is how to be comfortable in discomfort.*
- *People reach out when they have no resources and start an outreach for a people.*
- *Relationships, faith, and following God's call.*

**Of the teachings above, which one...**

**...do you believe is most needed in your community?**

**...would have the most hurdles, if your local church embraced it?**

**...resonates with you, personally, the most?**

**...makes you the most uncomfortable?**

@56:10 The Church of the Brethren, as it's found in other countries, doesn't report to the Annual Conference of the U.S. Church of the Brethren. Norm and Carol explain what the global church does look like, structurally and share that "most of the people in these other countries don't have the resources to get to the U.S."

**As you consider the idea of strengthening the connection between Church of the Brethren denominations around the globe, what benefits are there to these groups to gather together, in person, on a regular basis?**

**As you've listened to the stories of this town hall, and/or consider the counsel of scripture, would you be more inclined to encourage a global gathering here in the U.S. or in another country? Why?**

**@1:02:11** The government in Rwanda requires churches meet certain guidelines in order to re-open during this pandemic. Two such requirements are concrete floors and running water.

**Consider the hurdles your own church has discussed or is discussing in the conversation to re-open. What are the top hurdles your church has had to face? While the situation in Rwanda is very different than that of the U.S., what kind of perspective and benefit does an awareness of the Rwandan church provide for churches in the U.S.?**

**@1:08:06** Norm closes with a story from Nigeria where the church building had been burned down and the pastor got to determine the punishment of the arsonists. "The police expected him to say, 'well, shoot them.'" The pastor, though, referenced the apostle Paul and decided on forgiveness and restitution. "And that was a powerful witness, to us", said Norm.

**Share a story from your own life of one of the most powerful examples of faith you've witnessed from another.**

On the first page of the 2018 Annual Conference paper, "Vision for a Global Church of the Brethren" it is written, "**The ultimate objective of the Church of the Brethren's global mission is to redeem, heal, and lift all of life to God's intended purpose for all creation.**" The resource then goes on to outline how this might be done. As you close your time together, consider the vision, open the scriptures and read together the texts listed, after naming each theme of the paper.

**Embracing the Indigenous Church** (Read Revelation 7:9)

**Affirming Autonomy** (Read Philippians 4:13)

**Honoring Relationships** (Read Romans 1:12)

**Mutually Sharing Resources** (Read Romans 10:12-13)

**Articulating a Global Brethren Identity** (Read Acts 1:8)

**Committing to Service** (Read Ephesians 2:10)

**Bridging Barriers** (Read Acts 2:8)

**Becoming a Global Church** (Read 1 Corinthians 12:12)

**Overcoming Limitations** (Read Philippians 3:14)

Close now in the prayer for the global church, praying together the prayer Moderator Paul prayed at the end of the Town Hall:

Adapted from a prayer by Tammy Hogan  
<https://asburyseminary.edu/students/chapel/prayers-for-turbulent-times/>

Kind Father,

We thank you that your faithfulness never ceases and that your mercies are new every morning. Tonight, we ask for a fresh outpouring of your mercy on the global church. May we remember that you have lavished your great love on us so that we can lavish love on others, around the world, calling all to Christ and community.

As we walk through these turbulent times, let us walk as witnesses of Your truth, justice, peace and righteousness. We pray in particular for the persecuted church -- for those suffering unspeakable, horrific violence at this very moment. May they sense our accompaniment and our petitions at this very hour.

As we anticipate expanding our global witness, let us walk by faith in You and not by sight confident that you will give us grace and courage for the living of these days.

Thankful for all of our sisters and brothers around the world, we pray in Jesus Name. Amen.