Defining the Church

Given as his “assigned topic” the theme “Embracing One Another Amidst Our Diversity as a Faith community,” Nathan Rittenhouse said his task has three parts.

“The first is defining the church. The second is discerning the will of God. And the third is the delighting in harmony.”

The church will be defined by those who do the will of God. The important part of this is that Jesus uses family language to define the church. Rittenhouse said, citing Mark 13:35, “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

“Jesus’ definition of the church is a family that does the will of God. And what is the will of God?”

In answer, Rittenhouse cited Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

“The discernment community is about conforming to what God wants for us, not what the world wants for us.”

Rittenhouse is one of five preachers who are part of the team at New Hope Church of the Brethren in Green Bank, W. Va. “The way it works is we’re all bivocational, a team of five rotating through three preaching points.”

He and his wife, Erin, share a daughter and three sons. In his spare time, he said, “We grow a lot of vegetables. We do extensive gardening. And we’re attempting to keep bees.” He also enjoys biking, reading, and the great outdoors.

Nathan Rittenhouse

Tonight the Children’s Choir will debut “God Made Them All,” written by Michael Stern for this year’s Annual Conference. The choir, under the direction of Stern and his wife Carol, also will lead the children in “One World.” Carol, an education specialist, worked with the children and their group leaders to develop the signs used in tonight’s songs.
**About the Artist**

You’ve probably noticed the sculpture assembled piece by piece during the processional before each worship service.

The artist is Dave Thornburg, who works from a studio in Indianapolis. His kinetic sculptures are often fashioned from repurposed and recycled materials. Each of the figures in the worship center includes a drum of a different type representing commonality and culture differences. Music is one of the things we all have in common, and at the same time it is one way a culture declares its identify.

In the design of this sculpture, Thornburg tried to symbolize many characteristics of diversity including ethnic identity, size, age, and disability. He is “excited and honored” to be invited to participate in Annual Conference through sculpture and wishes to thank, among others, “the youth of Northview Church of the Brethren... for assisting with the ‘hair’ of the bucket drummer, for engaging in conversation about diversity and the chal-

**Belita Mitchell**

**Tonight’s Offering**

As we all prepare to go our separate ways, it is appropriate that our Thursday offering will go to transportation for international guests attending Annual Conference. Each year representatives from the International church are invited to join us at Annual Conference. Their presence provides us with an opportunity to build relationships with our brothers and sisters across the globe; to share our joys and sorrows, struggles and triumphs; to challenge and inspire one another to continue the work of Jesus. Peacefully, simply, together. Your generous gifts will help underwrite the transportation costs for our international guests.