

# Laundry as outreach

**I**n the spring of 2019, Troy (Ohio) Church of the Brethren began a laundry outreach program. This need was discovered through the local Partners in Hope. Some folks in the community were unable to do laundry due to lack of funds, transportation, unemployment, illness, etc.

The program is funded by the church, grants from the Troy Foundation, Southern Ohio and Kentucky District, and individuals who have recognized this vital need and contributed.

Currently the program operates in a laundromat one day a month. Detergents, softeners, and quarters are provided, and all COVID-19 rules are observed. Church members are there to assist and offer encouragement. Often people arrive with as many as 10 bags of laundry.

Bev Johnston of the Outreach and Evangelism Committee and coordinator of the Laundry Outreach shares



these stories:

A young mother came to launder bedding for her children, which she admitted she had not been able to do for two years. She sat and cried as Johnston helped her clean and fold her laundry.

Another woman came in with bushels of laundry. When Johnston explained what the church was doing, she told her story. Her mother had died

and was buried just the day before. She herself had delivered a baby who was just six weeks old. Joyfully, her mother had been able to hold her new grandchild before she died. The woman telling the story had very little funds because she had taken off work to care for her mother and her newborn child. When Bev explained that they were there to help in any way they could, the woman looked at her and said, “I need a hug.” Johnston responded and everyone cried happy tears. —Mary Ann Cornell



## Storytelling for 50 years

**F**ellowship Church of the Brethren south of Martinsburg, W.Va., celebrated its 50th anniversary on Sept. 12—one year late because of COVID-19. The congregation began meeting in September 1970.

Robert Alley, the first fulltime pastor from January 1971 until October 1981, was the keynote speaker. He is a member of the Shenandoah Valley Biblical Storytellers and delivered the message through storytelling. Alley closed with this responsive benediction:

“Fifty-one years ago, a few families decided to start a new church.

**God called them to take a risk.**

The church was built on relationships.

**Relationships with God and with one another.**

We continue the work to which we were called.

**To love, to serve, to grow, and to evangelize.**

We are Fellowship Church of the Brethren.

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**Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully.**

**Simply. Together.” —Carolyn Graham**

Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Short items with a photo are best. Send them to MESSENGER, c/o In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org.