

# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

OCTOBER 2016 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

A young man with glasses and a purple t-shirt is smiling and holding a green smartphone to take a selfie. He is standing between an elderly man with a white beard and glasses on the left, and an elderly woman with glasses and a white cardigan on the right. They are all smiling and looking at the phone. The background is a soft-focus green outdoor setting.

Older adult ministry:  
The *beauty* of being here today

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# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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Photo by Edwin Remsberg.

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**T**his issue featuring older adults happens to come out the very month that I'm reaching 35 years of employment with the Church of the Brethren. Oh, the irony! The years zip by faster than one expects.

For a number of years I was the youngest staff person, and then one year I wasn't. I had headed to Elgin, Ill., to do a year of Brethren Volunteer Service, got hired, and have been here ever since. That wasn't my long-range plan, but it still feels like a calling and a privilege.

Early on, at an interchurch magazine conference during my first year or so on the job, a middle-aged male editor looked at me across the table where a



**WENDY MCFADDEN**  
PUBLISHER

group of us were eating lunch and asked, "So, what's a nice girl like you doing in church journalism?" There were so many disturbing parts to his question that it was days before I could think of a comeback.

Perhaps he meant that anyone involved in church journalism shouldn't be too refined or proper. Maybe he meant that you ought to be a certain age—that is, older than I looked—to qualify for a press card. Surely he didn't mean that females are less suitable than males for the rough and tumble of church stuff. (Actually, I think he did mean that.)

I would be most sorry if he was saying that telling the story of the church—his life's work—was so sordid that he needed to warn me away. That's the way it sounded, though.

Nowadays I spend more of my time overseeing the publishing of books and curriculum, but as publisher of both Brethren Press and Communications I continue to be happily involved in church journalism. I'm glad to say that it still strikes me as a profession that females (with or without nice white gloves) need not avoid.

Though there can be vexing moments (and sometimes vexing people, to be honest), this business of publishing is the work of the gospel—at least that's what the Bible says. I especially love the verse that (blending the NRSV and RSV to get all the right words) mentions MESSENGER: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who publishes peace, who brings good news, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isaiah 52:7).

*Wendy McFadden*

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Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, center, with Buy Local Cookout winner Keith Lewis, left, and Keith's brother Tim.

## Westernport member ramps up sushi

**K**eith Lewis was one of 17 chefs celebrated at the ninth annual Buy Local Cookout hosted by Maryland governor Larry Hogan. A newspaper headline tells the story: “Lewis wins accolades for ramped-up sushi.”

Lewis is the youngest son of the late Owen and Phyllis Lewis and grew up in Westernport (Md.) Church of the Brethren, where he serves as usher and scripture reader on Sundays.

His Wild Western Maryland Ramp Maki gives a “mountain Maryland” twist to a Japanese dish. Owing to contest guidelines, his recipe features only a half-dozen ingredients including chicken livers, bacon, barbecue sauce, dipping sauce, and ramps.

He traveled to Annapolis on July 21 for the invitation-only cookout, even though he was unable to supply his winning dish. Ramp season was over by the time he learned that he had won, and he was unable to secure the ramp, or wild leek, that is the main ingredient.

He was aware any recipe he submitted for the Buy Local Cookout would have to include home-grown ramps. Those in the Potomac Highlands are familiar with, if not friends of, the pungent, garlic/onion taste of this springtime mountain delicacy.

During his years in Keyser, W. Va., as shopkeeper of Martie’s Hot Dogs, he spearheaded the downtown RampFest. Today he is owner of Big Lew’s Cruisin’ Treats in Westernport, where he offers specialty hot dogs—nearly 20 varieties including “Bruce Bulldog,” “Pigs in the Garden,” and “Blue Lew Dog,” to name a few—along with brisket sandwiches, pulled pork, and hand-dipped Hershey ice cream. He has delighted children at the church’s Brethren Day Camp by treating them to ice cream cones at his shop.

At church, he is known for the chili recipes he contributes to “Soup-er Sunday” fundraisers. The congregation makes soups, and winners are chosen by the amount of contributions per recipe, raising money for the Union Rescue Mission. But who knows if Brethren in Westernport are ready for ramped-up sushi? —Betty Dzubba



*Keith Lewis' special ingredient was the ramp, a wild leek found in the mountains of Maryland.*

## One big week of camp

**Church camps tend to provide a typical experience for young people.** Camp Wilbur Stover in New Meadows, Idaho, is different. The comparative isolation of the Brethren in Idaho has caused Camp Stover to seek its own method of providing a camping experience for all ages. As Keith Goering, one of the directors, explains, “There are probably only 600 people total in the whole district, so to have multiple camps throughout the year simply isn’t feasible.”

The solution is to have one big week of camp. “We will have anywhere from 150 to 230 people in camp at the same time,” says Goering. Grade school, junior high, high school, young adult, and adult campers are divided into age groups. Some stay in age-group cabins, but others stay with their families.

Campers partake of typical activities by age group, but the unique nature of all groups eating together, and the freedom to intermingle with older and younger people, has created something beautiful, Goering says. “It’s really neat because you’ll see third, fourth, and fifth graders going and sitting with seniors.” While this is not an intergenerational camp, developing relationships between young and seasoned campers is a driving force.

The churches in Idaho make a point of providing camping scholarships for community children. “It’s an opportunity for us to show Jesus to those who don’t know him,” Goering says. “The spirit of the Lord is there and it’s very strong. Our bottom-line goal is to introduce people to Jesus.”

Each year, the camp invites a keynote speaker to lead morning Bible studies and evening campfires. This year’s speaker was Joshua Brockway from the Congregational Life Ministries staff. —Tyler Roebuck

## #LoveServeRepeat

**First Church of the Brethren in Harrisonburg, Va., held a “Weekend of Service”** Aug. 12-14. On Saturday, groups dispersed throughout the community for service projects. Projects included painting deck railings



at Camp Brethren Woods. A group handed out lollipops with “Thank you for your service” tags to hospital, firehouse, and rescue squad staff. A truckload of food (288 pounds, or 1,152 meals) was collected and taken to Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. Groups picked up trash and handed out bottled water at parks, then played an intergenerational game of Bingo at Bridgewater Retirement Community. The men’s area at the Salvation Army Shelter was cleaned. Food and hygiene products that had been collected during Vacation Bible School were delivered. Participants assembled 102 school kits and laid down a protective border around the church’s community garden, which is maintained in cooperation with New Community Project. Bibles were donated to the Rockingham/Harrisonburg Regional Jail, and three boxes of gently used paperback books were delivered to the Middle River Regional Jail. The day ended with a cookout and free swim at the community pool. It was a hot summer weekend, but a fantastic time to get to know each other better and give to the community. —Brenda Fox

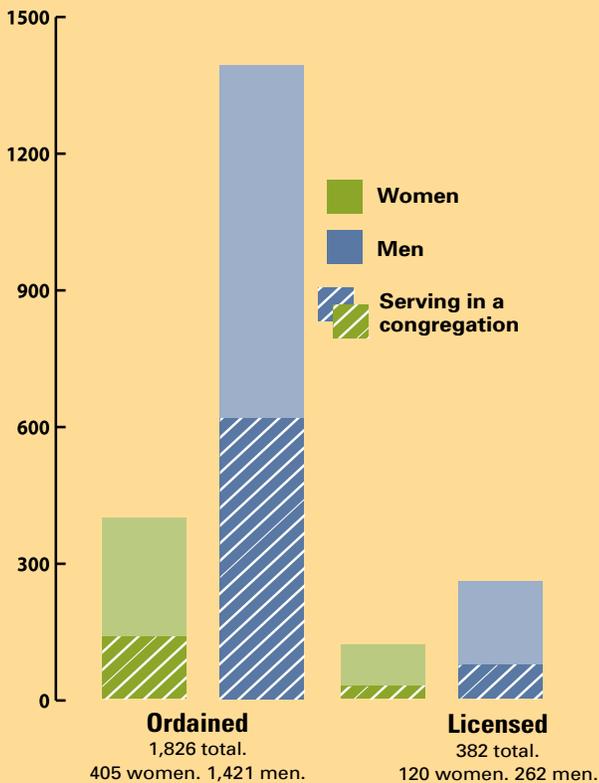
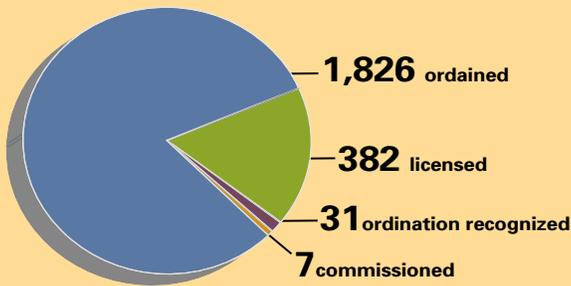
Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Short items with a photo are best. Send them to MESSENGER, c/o In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org.



**“By such a supper they portray that they are members and house companions of the Lord Jesus.”**

—Alexander Mack Sr., founder of the Brethren movement, writing in *Rites and Ordinances*. Many Brethren continue to observe World Communion Sunday on the first Sunday in October, joining with Christians around the world in taking communion as a symbolic recommitment to following Jesus Christ.

## Ordained, licensed & commissioned



## Clergy in the Church of the Brethren

**O**ctober is National Clergy Appreciation Month (as well as Domestic Violence Awareness Month) and the second Sunday in October is Clergy Appreciation Day. MESSENGER presents this information in appreciation of the ordained, licensed, and commissioned ministers, and chaplains in the Church of the Brethren. These numbers are gleaned from the denomination’s *Yearbook* for 2015:

The total number of ordained ministers as of 2015: 1,826, including an estimated 405 women and 1,421 men.

Approximately 770 of these ordained ministers—an estimated 140 women and 630 men—have been serving in pastoral roles in Church of the Brethren congregations.

In addition, 31 ministers—4 women and 27 men—whose ordination is recognized for term of service have been serving in pastoral roles in Church of the Brethren congregations.

The total number of licensed ministers: 382, including an estimated 120 women and 262 men.

Approximately 104 of these licensed ministers—an estimated 28 women and 76 men—have been serving in pastoral roles in Church of the Brethren congregations.

The total number of commissioned ministers: 7. This total includes no women.

All of the commissioned ministers have been serving in pastoral roles in Church of the Brethren congregations.

The total number of chaplains and pastoral counselors: 67, including an estimated 31 women and 36 men.

The chaplains and pastoral counselors serve in hospitals, retirement communities and nursing homes, hospices, colleges and universities, and other institutions.

# The beauty of being here today

A story inspired by National Older Adult Conference by Debbie Eisenbise



Cheryl Burnhaugh-Cayford

**W**hen we are inspired, we are called to share that with others. For more than 20 years, the Church of the Brethren National Older Adult Conference (NOAC) has been a well-spring of inspiration for participants to carry back to their congregations. Such conferences have a ripple effect felt in the farthest reaches of our denomination—it takes just one person, inspired to share.

Oneida Heffner called me this spring to share her story of inspiration at last year's NOAC and how it has affected her congregation at Brownsville (Md.) Church of the Brethren. We met face-to-face at Annual Conference this summer, most appropriately at an insight session about intergenerational ministry. Her remarks to me were simple and yet profound, in part because she was telling her story and giving life to the NOAC theme, "Then Jesus Told Them a Story."

During the NOAC week, older adults had many opportunities to hear stories and share their own. Keynote speaker and workshop leader Ken Medema was particularly encouraging of storytelling. Oneida attended his workshop and told her story to him. As he does so well, Ken reflected it back to her in song, in a session that was recorded and is now available to view online at [www.brethren.org/noac](http://www.brethren.org/noac).

He encouraged Oneida to share her story with her church. After she returned home pastor Alan Smith gave her an opportunity to speak to the whole congregation. "What an impression it made!" she said. The church had been holding two worship services, and the generations were becoming divided because people who typically attended the different services had not been meeting together. Oneida spoke at a service that brought together the generations, so that all could hear what she had to say.

Sometimes, we just need to see that we have a story to tell.

## Got inspiration?

*"One generation shall laud God's works to another, and shall declare God's mighty acts" (Psalm 145:4).*

**A**s director of **Inter-generational Ministries for the Church of the Brethren**, and a staff member of **Congregational Life Ministries**, Debbie

Eisenbise's task is to encourage caring ministries in Church of the Brethren congregations. These ministries carry on the legacy of the former Association of Brethren Caregivers, encouraging the inclusion of persons of all abilities, working to prevent and address abuse, calling out the gifts of each generation, and fostering positive views on aging.

Within this portfolio falls coordination of the biennial National Older Adult Conference (NOAC). While this is a conference for "older adults" over age

50, it also is an intergenerational conference. "Right now, there are three generations that are over age 50," Eisenbise notes, "and often adult children in their 50s and 60s are bringing their parents in their 80s and 90s to NOAC. We also see district and congregational women's groups and adult fellowship groups that include various generations. For the past few NOACs, young adult volunteers have been an integral part of the event, which encourages more intergenerational interaction and sharing."

Oneida's presentation not only touched many hearts, but also gave an opening for younger members to share their gratitude for her encouragement, and helped older members understand the important role they play as elders who contribute to the vitality of their congregation.

In the evaluations we received after the 2015 conference,

again and again participants shared that inspiration is what brings them to NOAC and inspiration is what they receive from the experience. Inspired, participants are empowered to share and to serve. 

Debbie Eisenbise is director of Intergenerational Ministry on the Congregational Life Ministries staff.

## Touch Down Sunset

### A presentation given to Brownsville Church of the Brethren by Oneida Heffner

**There are a lot of people here—some you know, some you don't know,** and some you want to get to know. That's the beauty of being here today.

I've been told that I've been attending church here since I was 10 days old—a long time ago. Last September, I attended NOAC. The theme for the week was telling the story—Jesus' story, our story, and their story.

One of the main leaders for the week was Ken Medema, a blind musician. He spoke of Moses and the burning bush. He shared how we miss the puffs of smoke, which we should have noticed before we get to the burning bush. He also led the session, "Everybody Has a Story." He said, "If you tell a story, I'll sing you a song, your own special story." A variety of interesting stories were shared. I'll tell you my story pretty much as I did that afternoon.

About four or five years ago our church organized a small praise band. We began to experience puffs of smoke. The church

had a decision to make. The band, called Touch Down Sunset, wanted screens at the front of the church so they could have music shown as they played.

We had a beautiful cross in the front of the church. First consideration was given to a drop-down screen over the cross. Some of the older folk like myself didn't approve of that. Then other ideas surfaced. Finally the church decided to put plain screens on each side of the cross, and we as a church began to move forward.

That praise band has increased to 10 members and has become very active in the community and has been invited to share in the parks and other community activities. But that's not the only thing that happened. We added a second morning service. Attendance immediately started to increase, and we have



Oneida and Lawrence Heffner

gone from an attendance on Sunday morning of 110, to an attendance of 180.

A lot of other things have transpired. We have more Bible studies, more Sunday school classes. On a quarterly basis we invite people at the Rescue Mission to come to our church service and serve them dinner

afterward. Once a month, a group takes a meal and a program to the Rescue Mission in Hagerstown.

It's taken a little bit—I'd say a lot for some of us older folk—to make the transition, but we've seen these puffs of smoke. Sometimes it got to be a little too smoky. But when you look at all the things that have taken place in our church, you'll realize why my story is called "Touch Down Sunset."

Let the old stuff behind and go forward with the new. 

NOAC inspiration is carried back to districts and congregations not only through personal testimonies, but also through media resources on DVD and online. These recordings of sermons, Bible studies, and plenary sessions are used in many congregations as resources for adult Christian education and for worship.

Because so many NOAC participants have reflected on the importance of inspiration, the 14th NOAC is being billed as "Inspiration 2017" with the theme

"Generations" (Psalm 145:4). Dates are Sept. 4-8, 2017, at Lake Junaluska (N.C.) Conference and Retreat Center. Brethren leaders include Stephen Breck Reid, who will lead the daily Bible studies; Peggy Reiff Miller, who will speak about her work to document Heifer Project's seagoing cowboys; and storyteller Jonathan Hunter. In addition to speakers, workshops, and creative arts offerings, the setting in the mountains of western North Carolina offers opportunities for bus tours, hikes, garden

walks, boat rides on the lake, and other recreation. Registration will open in February 2017.

A four-minute video about Inspiration 2017 is online at [www.brethren.org/noac](http://www.brethren.org/noac), designed as a moment for mission to share in worship or with small groups.

In addition to NOAC and Older Adult Month each May, other opportunities exist to draw on the wisdom of church elders to enhance congregational vitality. Find resources at [www.brethren.org/oam/older-adult-resources.html](http://www.brethren.org/oam/older-adult-resources.html).

# Keeping up

## Challenges of faith-based retirement communities

by Maureen Cahill

**I love serving as administrator at Spurgeon Manor in Dallas Center, Iowa.** I love all our residents, our staff, and Spurgeon Manor's mission, "Caring with respect and dignity in a loving Christian community."

But, as with every job, there come changes and challenges—and that is certainly true in the area of health care. For administrators like me and in facilities like Spurgeon Manor, one area of increasing time and responsibility is the new reporting required by law.

In October 2014, Congress passed the Improving Medicare Post-Acute Care Transformation Act (IMPACT) and it was signed into law. This changed the role of administrators like me by adding several new reporting responsibilities. As an example, the Payroll Based Journal is now required, and nursing facilities must send to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) the hours worked by each individual direct

care staff in a 24-hour period. This information is intended to be used, in part, to verify the staffing levels reported on each facility's five-star rating, which can be found at the CMS web site called "Nursing Home Compare."

The IMPACT Act also added other reporting requirements including preventable re-hospitalizations, rate of discharges back to the community, medication reviews, and average cost per beneficiary during and after skilled nursing discharge.

And that is not the end of the list. More changes to regulations and additional requirements of participation in Medicare and Medicaid include three additional focused surveys, new Life Safety Codes such as increased inspection and maintenance requirements, and new Emergency Preparedness requirements for tested plans for different types of emergencies to meet residents' needs, among others.

When a law like the IMPACT Act is passed, it can take time

## Fellowship of Brethren Homes

**A collaboration of Church of the Brethren retirement communities** striving for excellence through collegial relationships and mutual support, these 22 facilities provide a ministry to those who are aging and their families, and are committed to providing high quality, loving care for older adults. The fellowship works on common challenges such as uncompensated care, long-term care needs, and nurturing relationships with congregations, districts, and the denomination. These retirement centers have been required to meet industry, federal, and state standards, but at the same time recognize the importance of their Brethren heritage.

This list notes location,

founding date, and website for each community. The majority are Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) that offer a tiered approach including independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing, to accommodate residents' changing needs and give them the option to live in one location for the duration of their lives. Most of these CCRCs also offer rehabilitation services and memory care. For the few that are not CCRCs, this listing notes the services that are offered.

For more information go to [www.brethren.org/homes](http://www.brethren.org/homes) or contact Ralph G. McFadden, executive director of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes, at [ralphfbh@gmail.com](mailto:ralphfbh@gmail.com) or 847-622-1677.

### CALIFORNIA

**Brethren Hillcrest Homes,** La Verne, Calif.  
Founded in 1947  
[www.livingathillcrest.org](http://www.livingathillcrest.org)

**Casa de Modesto Retirement Center,** Modesto, Calif.  
Founded in 1965  
[www.casademodesto.org](http://www.casademodesto.org)

### FLORIDA

**The Palms Estates of Highlands County, Inc.,** Lorida, Fla.  
Founded in 1959  
Offers retirement living, RV park, recreation facilities  
[www.palmsestates.org](http://www.palmsestates.org)

**The Palms of Sebring,** Sebring, Fla.  
Founded in 1959  
[www.palmsfsebring.com](http://www.palmsfsebring.com)

### ILLINOIS

**Pinecrest Community,** Mount Morris, Ill.  
Founded in 1893  
[www.pinecrestcommunity.org](http://www.pinecrestcommunity.org)

**Pleasant Hill Village,** Girard, Ill.  
Founded in 1905  
[www.pleasanthillvillage.org](http://www.pleasanthillvillage.org)

### INDIANA

**Timbercrest Senior Living Community,** North Manchester, Ind.  
Founded in 1889 in Mexico, Ind.; moved to North Manchester and reopened in 1968.  
[www.timbercrest.org](http://www.timbercrest.org)



Timbercrest



West View Healthy Living



Peter Becker Community

before all the requirements are identified and implemented. That is where our active participation in our state health care association is important, for the education and support that organization provides.

This all takes time, with many hours invested in reading and understanding regulations and the new contracts involved. The most recent contract was nearly 90 pages, and it was one of the many I reviewed and signed so far this year.

In addition to this type of work, retirement communities have been facing more and more financial challenges. Collecting state payment from Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) for residents whose support mostly comes from the state, and also from Medicare Advantage Plans, requires an inordinate amount of time and additional work to track payments and ensure collections. And there is the front-end work of obtaining pre-authorizations and reauthorizations.

In Iowa, since the state has contracted with the MCOs, payments have been delayed. Iowa is not nearly as bad off as states such as Illinois, where the state budgets have become political footballs and retirement communities simply may not be paid the money that the state owes them for the care of such patients.

So I want you to know that I have been in my office or at meetings more than ever before in my career, for good reason. Spurgeon Manor has a great team of caring individuals committed to the highest quality of care. I feel we are ahead of most of our competition and are committed to do whatever it takes to remain in front. And yes, I am competitive, I love my job, and I want Spurgeon Manor to be the best it can be! 

Maureen Cahill is administrator of Spurgeon Manor, a Church of the Brethren-related retirement community in Dallas Center, Iowa.

## IOWA

**Spurgeon Manor,**  
Dallas Center, Iowa  
Founded in 1971  
[www.spurgeonmanor.com](http://www.spurgeonmanor.com)

## KANSAS

**The Cedars, Inc.,**  
McPherson, Kan.  
Founded in 1893  
[www.thecedars.org](http://www.thecedars.org)

## MARYLAND

**Farhney-Keedy Home and Village,** Boonsboro, Md.  
Founded in 1905  
[www.fkhv.org](http://www.fkhv.org)

## OHIO

**Brethren Retirement Community,** Greenville, Ohio  
Founded in 1902  
[www.bhrc.org](http://www.bhrc.org)



The Cedars

**Good Shepherd Home,**  
Fostoria, Ohio  
Founded in 1904  
[www.goodshepherdhome.com](http://www.goodshepherdhome.com)

**West View Healthy Living,**  
Wooster, Ohio  
Founded in 1956  
[www.westviewhealthyliving.org](http://www.westviewhealthyliving.org)

## PENNSYLVANIA

**Brethren Home Community,** Windber, Pa.  
Founded in 1919  
[www.cbrethren.com](http://www.cbrethren.com)

**Brethren Village Retirement Community,** Lancaster, Pa.  
Founded in 1897  
[www.bv.org](http://www.bv.org)

**Cross Keys Village—The Brethren Home Community,** New Oxford, Pa.  
Founded in 1910  
[www.crosskeysvillage.org](http://www.crosskeysvillage.org)

**Lebanon Valley Brethren Home,** Palmyra, Pa.  
Founded in 1974  
[www.lvbh.org](http://www.lvbh.org)

**Peter Becker Community,** Harleysville, Pa.  
Founded in 1971  
[www.peterbeckercommunity.com](http://www.peterbeckercommunity.com)

**The Village at Morrison's Cove,** Martinsburg, Pa.  
Founded in 1894  
[www.villageatmorrisonscove.org](http://www.villageatmorrisonscove.org)

## VIRGINIA

**Bridgewater Retirement Community,** Bridgewater, Va.  
Founded in 1965.  
[www.brc-online.org](http://www.brc-online.org)

## WASHINGTON

**Garden Terrace and Garden Terrace West,** Wenatchee, Wash.  
Founded in 1968  
Offers independent living for low-income seniors  
[www.gardenterrace.org](http://www.gardenterrace.org)

**Northaven Retirement Residences,** Seattle, Wash.  
Founded in 1972  
Offers independent living, assisted living, wellness and fitness programs  
[www.northavenseniiorliving.org](http://www.northavenseniiorliving.org)



## Overheard

by Martha Bartholomew

Early one weekday morning  
at Village Green in the therapy rooms  
a roving reporter appeared  
and began to query the two fellows, therapists, present.

“What is it like to work every day with those  
who are in the ascendancy of their diminishments?” she asked.

“Their what?” one replied,  
the other rolling his eyes, then finding his words:  
“This place, these people are inspiring as they salvage  
what they can  
and push forward,  
sometimes from deep resources they discover within themselves.  
They inspire hope for each other, and for me,  
to keep on going when going gets tough.  
We are kind of in it together,  
encouraging one another while being with what is.”

The reporter nodded her head and said,  
“Oh, I get it! *Ad Astra Per Aspera, To the Stars Through Difficulty!*  
That’s the motto from the state of Kansas where I was born.”

And the two therapists rolled their eyes again as she left them  
wondering from where she really came  
and what publication did she represent.

Martha Bartholomew lives at Village Green, an ecumenical  
retirement community, and serves as a spiritual director.

## Smokey Mountain boys!

by Jim Kinsey

Brewed and bottled in Cahill Holler,  
nonagenarians united, celebrated,  
some seven, some eight, some nine  
decades of mountain music making.

Pete, on the banjo, Scruggs style,  
Randy, in silver wheelchair, fiddle,  
Carl, upright, picked string bass,  
mountain songs older than memory.

Program touted, mountain blues.  
Each listener prepared souls and minds,  
anticipated dirge sounds from geezers,  
as the three, with nurses, assembled.

Pete double-picked a soulful sound,  
riff moved along, listeners empathized.  
Pete played his eight decades of life,  
pain, sorrow, loss, disappointment.

Carl, bass in hand, fondled its strings,  
overrode Pete with a heartbeat cadence,  
pulled taut strings, rhythms in the key of life,  
vibrant, uplifting, renewing, bright.

Randy, tuned fiddle at chin, bow rosined,  
vibrated strings like an angelic ode of joy,  
while soulful Pete continued his riff,  
created the juxtaposition of everyday life.

Pete, buoyed by Randy, transformed,  
lifted his eyes, double picked a fanciful jig.  
Carl, not to be left out, sprang into action  
plucked and slapped a toe-tapping pulse.

Eyes dried, hope reborn, sunshine warmed,  
tear-soaked handkerchiefs dried on chairs.  
Partners chosen, the dance began.  
Nonagenarians remembered, celebrated life.

Pete, Randy, and Carl, like 70 years ago,  
played as if life depended on the song.  
The fountain of youth strings and fingers  
magically redeemed the festival and the day.

Jim Kinsey is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren,  
and served on the planning team for last year’s National  
Older Adult Conference.



**Volunteers repair and clean items for John's Way Medical Equipment Ministry at Clover Creek Church of the Brethren.**

Bob Neff

# The *healing* ministry of the church

by Bob Neff

**I**n Romans 12:9-13, Paul provides 10 commandments for congregational life.

We don't know how they were implemented by the church at Rome, but we do know the behaviors of the early church as described in Acts 2-3. The earliest Christians lived in close-knit fellowship and cared for the needs of one another. They also reached out to touch people throughout the Roman Empire wherever the need expressed itself, from feeding and healing to prison visitation.

In Acts 3, in the first caring act outside the Christian community, Peter and John in the name of Christ healed a lame man who was begging for assistance at the temple. They had no money, but they connected with the man by looking directly at him. Peter then said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give to you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk" (3:7-8a). Peter extended a hand and helped him to his feet. With this act the outreach ministry of the early church began.

This healing ministry to strangers is a continuation of the ministry of Jesus and has remained a hallmark of the church from the earliest times until now. In the 20th century the church built hospitals and provided primary health care around the world. Since churches are not likely to build hospitals anymore, what does this healing ministry look like today? How do we meet the

challenges of those in need when resources are scarce, much as they were in this early encounter in Acts?

Clover Creek Church of the Brethren in Martinsburg, Pa., has found a way. The congregation took the directives of Paul in Romans 12 seriously and used them as the building blocks of their outreach ministry: "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" (Romans 12:12-13 NIV).



Bob Neff

These are the guiding values for John's Way Medical Equipment Ministry, a practical ministry whose purpose is to provide medical equipment to those who are in need and do not have a way to pay for it.

How does it work? The church acts as an exchange—receiving gifts of wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches, hospital beds, bedside commodes, shower chairs, and adult incontinence products, and dispensing them to those who have a need of them. When equipment is received as a gift, it is repaired and cleaned so that once again it is useable. The ministry has drop-off points at Clover Creek Church of the Brethren and Trinity Lutheran Church in Altoona, Pa. Over 2,700 pieces of equipment were received in 2015. Un-

solicited cash gifts enable the purchase of new equipment when it is needed.

Supplies may come through unusual ways. Recently there was an accident involving a tractor trailer truck that carried incontinence products. The trucking company called John's Way to see if they could use the product



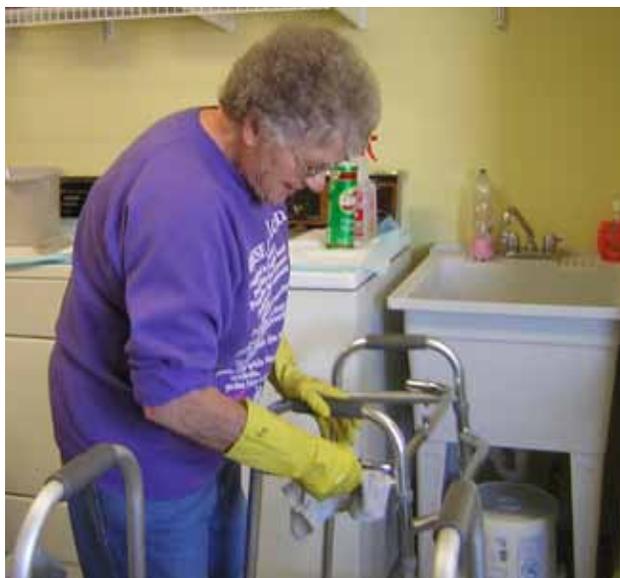
and had the space to store it. The answer was a quick yes, which resulted in reorganization of the storage space to accommodate such a large influx of supplies.

Many of the people who receive a gift want to give back in some way, says director Debbie Byler. One woman called in for a walker with a seat. When she came to pick it up, she brought a transport wheelchair and a \$20 bill. Another woman brought in a wheelchair and said, “This was my husband’s until he died. Knowing that someone else will have this wheelchair honors the memory of my husband, who had mobility because of this wheelchair.”

In six years the storage space for the ministry has grown from the back of a garage, to rented space, and finally to a storage facility of 2,700 square feet. The facility was built by church members, much like a barnraising. The number of products dispensed has grown from 146 items in 2010 to 2,770 in 2015.

Much of the work is done by some 50 volunteers. Volunteers repair and clean the equipment so that is ready for pick-up. Volunteers also staff the office to record pick-ups and gifts.

“We have the greatest volunteers on the planet, and I say that because their hearts are in what God has called them to do,” says Byler. “We would not have a ministry without them.”



The distribution now extends beyond central Pennsylvania to neighboring states. John’s Way has teamed up with Global Link, headquartered in Pittsburgh. In June, six pallets piled six feet high were sent to distribution centers all over the western hemisphere.

What is the greatest challenge for the ministry? “Growth!” says Byler. “It’s not just the growth in the number of requests for equipment but also in the number of gifts that people want to make. As the distribution has grown, so has the desire to give back to the ministry. People are grateful and want to give back. They can also see the result of their investment. Their gift matters and they receive a great return on what is given. As the request for equipment has grown, so have the investments in the ministry.”

She tells of a couple who was referred to the ministry by a visiting nurse, who said the couple had limited means—and in fact had no running water in their home. When the wife came for supplies, Byler offered her plenty. The woman replied, “I couldn’t take that many. I’ll just take two packets. Someone else may need them more than me.”

Later the woman came back for a bedside commode for her husband. Byler remembered, with a great deal of emotion: “One day when I came back to John’s Way office, I found the bedside commode in our return area with a note that said, ‘Woody died.’ It broke my heart. That is why we do what we do for those in need.”

The ministry is named John’s Way after a Clover Creek church member, John Scott Baird. Baird was born with a rare genetic disorder that made it impossible for him to walk or talk, but anyone who knew him immediately felt his joy for life. After he died at age 20 in 2004, the congregation felt that they had lost someone who was an inspiration to many and looked for a way to honor him.

When the John’s Way Medical Equipment Ministry was founded in 2009, they found a way. His inspiration continues, and so does the paradigm of the early church to reach out to those in need. 

Bob Neff is professor emeritus of Old Testament at Bethany Theological Seminary. He is currently associate for resource development at The Village at Morrisons Cove in Martinsburg, Pa., and also is president emeritus of Juniata College and former general secretary of the Church of the Brethren.



# Membership from behind bars

## The story of Raymond Johnson and the Manchester church

by Tyler Roebuck

*“Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.” – Bryan Stevenson, Just Mercy*

**P**rinted in the bulletin each Sunday at Manchester Church of the Brethren (North Manchester, Ind.) is this

**statement of inclusion:** “As a Christian Community, striving to be peace-makers, we are called by Christ to be inclusive and caring. We affirm that people of any race, ethnic identity, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, education level, ability, age, or life situation are welcome in our congregation.”

In recent years, the congregation—familiar with reaching out with love in controversial ways—has tested the “life situation” portion of this statement with the inclusion of a member who has been pushed to the farthest limit of society.

The story begins nearly five years ago with the Seniors for Peace group at Timbercrest Senior Living Community, a Church of the Brethren home located about a mile from the church. David Waas, coordinator of the group at the time, invited Death Row Support Project co-founder Rachel Gross (see sidebar) to speak at one of their meetings. She discussed the project, in which participants engage in regular letter-writing with prisoners on death row, and brought the letters of several inmates looking to correspond.

David was intrigued by the letter of a man named Raymond Johnson who was in prison in Oklahoma. “When I read his letter to Rachel saying he would like a correspondence, I thought, ‘This is someone I can relate to,’” he says. “He’s a very intelligent person, and he’s interested in social issues.”

Their relationship grew rapidly, and the two began discussing nearly everything. “We talk about theology, the government, politics, prison, the death penalty,” David says. They would talk about “absolutely anything.”

Raymond views David as a father; he had no father figure in his life, and he loves David tremendously. “He can call if somebody has put money on an account to use the telephone,

so I put money on an account,” Waas says. “He occasionally calls when he’s down or blue. His cell is underground, so sometimes he’s kind of blue and depressed and takes a little bit of cheering up.”

Eventually, David struggled to keep up with Raymond’s prolific writing, so he began to send a copy of Pastor Kurt Borgmann’s sermon each week with his letters. Raymond responded with curiosity and appreciation.

“As he read Kurt’s sermons and exchanged letters with David, he continued to express a lot of appreciation,” Rachel Gross says. “[He] really liked what Kurt had to say and wanted to know more about, ‘What is this Church of the Brethren?’ ”

About four years into the correspondence, after much discussion of theology and the Church of the Brethren, Raymond asked a question that intrigued and surprised David and the Manchester church:

Could he become a member?

This was a complicated question given the background of the unique way membership works at Manchester.

“The membership request is brought by a pastor to the church board,” Kurt explains. “Often, people have been worshiping with us for a while or maybe people know them, or they’ve been connected and involved in the church. When you bring up someone’s name and say that, (for example) ‘Tyler Roebuck is interested in becoming a member. His membership is currently at such and such a church, and he wants to become a member by transfer of letter.’ People say, ‘Oh yeah, sure.’ And somebody might say, ‘Who’s Tyler?’ ‘Well, you know, he’s the guy that plays in the hand bell choir from the college.’ It’s that kind of conversation.”

With Raymond, it was a different conversation entirely.

“People had never seen Raymond, never met Raymond; they didn’t know anything about him,” Kurt says. “It was not just that he was in jail or even that he was on death row. It was that we had a person asking for membership who had never been in our worship and congregation. For Brethren, that’s really kind of weird, because we’re used to thinking



**Worship on March 1, 2015, when Manchester church received Raymond into membership.**

of the church in terms of a ‘community of faith’ or a ‘church family.’ Any time you bring something that’s that far out of our way of thinking, that already raises questions of ‘How’s this going to work?’ and ‘Who is this person?’ ”

The board had a lot of meaningful, well-thought-out questions about Raymond and requested more information.

“The assignment fell back on me to strike up a correspondence and work at a church membership correspondence course,” Kurt says. Through this conversation, in which he and Raymond wrote monthly, he was to learn where Raymond stood and if he was ready to become a member.

## DEATH ROW SUPPORT PROJECT

The Death Row Support Project (DRSP) is a Church of the Brethren-connected program that facilitates correspondence with people on death rows across the United States. This provides a way for people to answer Jesus’ call to visit those in prison, thus bringing support to those whom society has deemed unforgiveable. It also gives an opportunity for an inside glimpse of what prisons are like and how people end up there.

In 38 years, DRSP has provided pen pals for more than 4,000 prisoners, involving more than 6,500 individuals from around the world. Of the 2,946 people currently under sentence of death in the US, 1,866 have been assigned pen pals by DRSP.

Two years ago, the Office of Volunteer Services at Manchester University (North Manchester, Ind.) invited students to participate in DRSP; more than 100 MU students now write to someone on death row. Learn more at [www.brethren.org/drsp](http://www.brethren.org/drsp).—**Rachel Gross**

Rachel Gross is coordinator of the Death Row Support Project.

As it became more apparent that Raymond was to join, the Manchester church started easing the congregation into the idea with Sunday school classes and small group discussions about welcoming their controversial prospect.

“I offered along the way that I was willing to talk with anybody at any time that had questions about this,” Kurt says.

Accepting someone convicted for a double murder did not go without its struggles, and concerned members raised their voices, and were listened to, throughout the process.

“There were some people who felt very nervous or uncertain about that—some were not happy about it—mainly because they were aware that this person had committed a horrific crime,” Kurt says. Conversations with concerned members were “matters of conscience and conscientiousness in terms of their faith,” he adds. “There was no knee-jerk reaction. It was all very thoughtful, reflective questioning and exploring.”

The issue centered on the confrontation of a Christian desire to forgive sinners and love unconditionally, versus the stark reality of welcoming someone into the congregation that society has taught is dangerous and a complete outsider.

Even Kurt had difficulties wholly accepting Raymond into his heart, a journey he spoke about during his sermon at Annual Conference in Greensboro, N.C., this summer. As he said in his sermon: “It didn’t go particularly well at first. I suppose my writing was a little formal and uncertain; his was more emotional, but also uncertain. But what we were struggling with was also the matter of what it takes to establish trust—to make a connection, a relationship.”

When most of the congregation had found peace with the idea, Kurt brought the membership request back to the board. They had a phone conversation with Raymond, and he read his membership vows. These were recorded to be played to the congregation in a public affirmation of membership. “Hearing his voice was important,” Kurt says. “It made him a real person—to all of us.”

Raymond Johnson joined Manchester Church of the Brethren on March 1, 2015, very near his birthday. The congregation’s response was prompt and full of love.

“His information was put into the newsletter and in the directory,” Rachel says, “and then other people started to write to him.” He received birthday cards and congratulatory letters. He responded to each one.

Ruthann Angle, the only person from the congregation to have met Raymond in person, offers nothing but adoration and respect for Raymond.

“He’s a very personable young man,” she says. “Pretty articulate. He’s a very good thinker. We talked for four hours on a one-day visit and had a delightful time. We had some serious moments, as he told me a lot about his past, and some fun moments and just got to know each other.”

Now that time has passed, things have settled at the church. “For most people, they’re not thinking about it very much,”

Kurt says. “It’s just part of our story now.”

So how does Raymond, who still sits on death row in Oklahoma, interact with the congregation? He writes letters constantly with a small but dedicated group. He sends birthday cards to his friends within the congregation. He prays constantly for them.

Perhaps most significantly, though, he loves them.

Kurt was still uneasy with his own reluctance to accept Raymond, however. In his Annual Conference sermon he described a phone call he had with Raymond.

“A little less than a month ago I wrote Raymond a note and asked him to call me. He did, early one Saturday morning.

He called from his prison cell, and I took the call in my living room. And I told him about this sermon, and I told him about my reluctance, and then I told him that I love him.

“With no hesitation at all, he responded: ‘I love you, too. And I love the church.’” 

Tyler Roebuck is a senior English major at Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind. A member of Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, he served as an intern with the Church of the Brethren Communications Team this summer through Ministry Summer Service.

## A letter to the editor from death row: May 2016

My name is Raymond, I am on death row in Oklahoma. Through the Death Row Support Project I met David and Becky Waas years ago. They are not pen pals or pen friends; they literally have become my parents. I never seen nor knew such loving people; the light of Jesus shines so vividly through them. They adopted me into the family, literally. I saw the entire family were Brethren, and then David (Poppa Waas) started sending me Pastor Kurt’s messages every week (Pastor Kurt Borgmann) and I was spellbound. Months later I asked Poppa Waas, “Could I become a member of the church?” I told him I wanted to be covered spiritually. My church had abandoned me, wouldn’t even send me a Bible; the people who visit here talk more down to us and don’t embrace us—I wanted to belong!

Poppa Waas put me in direct contact with Pastor Kurt, who personally began to fellowship with me, seeing where I was at spiritually, breaking down the Brethren precepts to me, building me up in fellowship. We did this for a year, then he took me before the board and I was voted in.

Now Manchester Church of the Brethren is in North Manchester, Indiana and I am in McAlester, Oklahoma, but I am a full-fledged member of the “church without walls.”

I read in MESSENGER last year about the Brethren’s take on the LGBT community and same-sex relationships, and I was surprised. After being Brethren for such a short time, I get it, and for those of you who’ve been Brethren all of your lives I don’t want you to forget it. Jesus’ love is unconditional! Jesus taught us how to love, showed us how to love, commanded us to love, but NEVER did He put rules and stipulations on love!

Excluding me from society, excluding me from church, excluding me from my kids (physically), excluding me from family and friends—none of that changed me! Including me in Jesus’ love did!

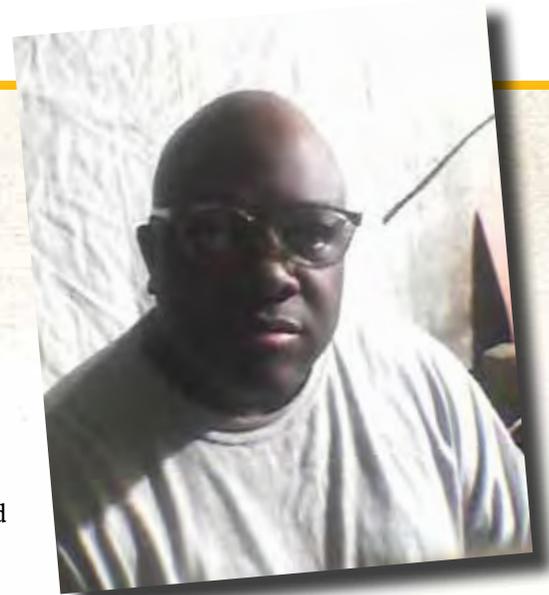
Through a Brethren ministry, through a Brethren disciple, through a Brethren pastor, and through the best Brethren church (forgive me for being partial) I wasn’t excluded; I was included in Christ’s love! Every action causes a reaction, and ours should always be love!

Let’s be real: If Jesus walked the earth right now, who would he be talking to? He’d go directly to the LGBT community, just like he did the harlot at the well, and he would include them in his love.

Whose authority do we have, to say who does and don’t qualify for Christ’s love?

Love the sinner, hate the sin—that’s stupidity, because sin is in us all. We were born in a sinful nature, so there’s something in us all to be hated!

Jesus’ love is unconditional. If Man-



chester Church of the Brethren wouldn’t have included me in Christ’s love in spite of where I’m at and what I’ve done, I would not be a disciple for Jesus Christ. I would feel excluded and be embracing the sinful nature, which is quick to embrace anyone exactly how they are!

Our relationships give others on death row hope; it holds these spiritual volunteers to a higher standard to be more proactive, and truly embrace us in Jesus’ love and walk the walk and talk the talk.

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully, Simply, Together—so if you want to shun someone and exclude them for whatever reason(s)—guess what: We are NOT continuing His work!

It’s not our place to judge; it’s just our place to love. I digress.

*Sincerely,*  
*(your Brethren on death row)*  
**Raymond E Johnson (207742)**

# A Brethren bronze

## Ohio congregation helped to shape Olympic medalist Clayton Murphy

by Walt Wiltschek

**C**ongregations are called to produce leaders, disciples, and followers of Jesus. Producing Olympic medalists, however, is a bit less common.

Yet that's exactly what Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren of New Paris, Ohio, did this year. Clayton Murphy, who grew up in the rural Darke County congregation, took the bronze medal in the 800-meter run at this summer's Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and his fans back home couldn't be more excited.

"This is a small community," Cedar Grove pastor Tony Price says. "Everybody knows everybody. T-shirts were made, and countless signs and banners of support could be seen throughout the community. It was like a piece of us was in Rio."

Price, who became pastor of the church in 2010, when Murphy was a freshman, says about 300 people gathered at nearby Tri-Village High School for a finals watch party to "support our hometown kid."

"The mood was electric," Price says. "And it got even better when he won the bronze medal."

Murphy, who recently began his senior year at the University of Akron, says he has always been competitive and pushed himself to get better. Even so, it was a reality check when he landed among the world's elite in Rio.

"Being at the Olympics was one of the most humbling experiences," Murphy says. "Most places I go I'm the best athlete, the fastest runner, etc. But at the Olympics you're just another athlete mixed in with the greatest athletes in the world. It for sure makes you appreciate what you have and where you are."

He more than held his own, though, finishing the 800-meter finals in a time of 1:42.93, behind only David Rudisha of Kenya and Taoufik Makhloufi of Algeria—all crossing the line within less than a second of each other.

It easily marked the best time Murphy has run professionally, and was the third-fastest time ever by an American in the event. He improved round by round. Earlier in the summer, he had won the US Olympic Trials in Oregon with

a time of 1:47.61.

Murphy says his distance coach at Akron, Lee LaBadie, was the one who first "really planted the Olympic 'dream' " in him.

"He always set big goals for me," Murphy says, "breaking four minutes in the mile, All-American, collegiate records—and he was always sure to say, 'And make the Olympic team.' "

Murphy's journey as a runner began long before that, though, back in the fields of Darke County. He says he started running in seventh grade as "a fun thing to do after school" with his friends, many of them from his church group at Cedar Grove. He ran both cross country and track at Tri-Village, and quickly found success.

"I remember the first time I saw him running a cross country course," says Cedar Grove member Tony Thomas, who was superintendent at Tri-Village during Murphy's high school career and now serves as superintendent for nearby Northmont schools. "I turned to a former teammate of mine, and I remember saying, 'He's special.' "

"He's light on his feet, and he could glide out there compared to most other runners," Thomas adds. "He kept getting better and bigger and stronger. You put him in a race situation, and he has the mindset that he can compete with anyone. We kept seeing that over and over."

Thomas joined about 30 people at a watch party for the Olympic semifinals race and saw Murphy come from behind to make the finals.

"The place just exploded," Thomas says. "For a small community to watch somebody on the world stage and doing so well—it's great to be part of that."

Murphy's success has had other positive effects in the area, too. Brad Gray, athletic director at Tri-Village and a member of Cedar Grove, says local youth and young adults have found a good role model in their resident Olympian.

"The cool thing about it is that our community is so small that all of our kids know who Clayton is," Gray says. "Most of them have been able to have that personal touch with him, and it allows them to know that a person they know



Michael Kepner/picture-alliance/dpa/Alamy

**“I FOR SURE USE MY FAITH EVERY DAY. FIGHTING THROUGH THE SWEAT AND PAIN OF RUNNING IS TOUGH. I AM SURE TO PUT MY FAITH IN GOD THAT MY HARD WORK WILL BE REWARDING.”**

on a personal level has achieved things at the highest level of competition. They also need to understand, though, that he was willing to make sacrifices that very few are willing to make.”

Dave Shetler, the Church of the Brethren Southern Ohio District executive, served as interim pastor at Cedar Grove in 2009. After the pastorate, the congregation asked Shetler and his wife, Marcia, to stay on as youth advisors, which they did. Murphy was part of an active group that did several workcamps and “were really open to talking about spiritual things,” Shetler says.

Murphy says those faith formation experiences and others have been important.

“I for sure use my faith every day,” Murphy says. “Working out is tough. Fighting through the sweat and pain of running is tough. I am sure to put my faith in God that my hard work will be rewarding. I always pray for good health, to allow me to smile no matter the outcome, and that I can always have fun.”

Shetler proudly watched online as Murphy won gold in

the 2015 Pan American Games and again as he took first place in this year’s Olympic trials.

“I thought then he might have a chance,” Shetler says. “It seemed like every race this past year or so he set a new personal best.”

Shetler says he has enjoyed seeing the signs and support all around the community. A local grocery store had Murphy’s picture displayed on their electronic sign out front, and the Great Darke County Fair put up a banner offering congratulations, with other celebrations planned.

Murphy, who is already thinking ahead to the 2017 World Championships in London and the 2020 Summer Games in Tokyo, admits that it’s all a little surreal.

“I still don’t think it has set in that I’m an Olympic medalist,” Murphy says. “I don’t think it will still for a while. It’s a feeling that’s hard to describe having that title next to your name.” 

Walt Wiltschek is news editor for Mennonite Church USA and former editor of MESSENGER. He started his career as a newspaper sports journalist.



# Unlocking the silence

by Staci Williams

**I have kept my secret for almost 20 years.**

I was 15 and liked the idea of attention from boys.

When an older guy started paying attention to me, I was excited and flattered. I was struck by how much he seemed to care, listening while I talked, telling me how beautiful I was. I trusted him; I believed he cared as much about me as I cared for him. But that trust was misplaced.

He had been hinting about sex for a week or so. Although I wasn't a virgin, I wasn't ready to have sex with him. That night, he didn't hint and he didn't ask; he did what he wanted despite my objections.

I felt I had brought it on myself, that I deserved what I got because my dad had forbidden me to date him. I didn't report what happened to me. I didn't even tell my family or friends. Talking about it was scarier than keeping it a secret.

I love the Church of the Brethren. It has been my spiritual home since I was a child. I attend the same congregation in rural northwest Ohio now that I did when I was little.

The core beliefs of our denomination—peace and reconciliation, simple living, integrity of speech, family values, and service to neighbors near and far—are important tenets of my faith. At the same time, I find myself disappointed by how little our church has to say about sexual violence.

The news is flooded with incidents of rape and other sexual violence, yet when I search the database of statements from the Church of the Brethren, I find nothing. Our denomination has made statements about the naturalness of sexuality and God's intention for humans to experience love and companionship, about the growing problem of gun violence, and about the problem of

domestic abuse. Never, however, has the denomination made a statement about rape culture. We need to, both to recognize those of us who are survivors, and to speak out against future assaults.

The issue is not minor. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, one in 5 women and one in 71 men will be raped at some point in their lives, and one in 4 girls and one in 6 boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18. In 80 percent of rape cases, the victim knows the person who sexually assaulted him or her. However, rape is the most under-reported crime with 68 percent of rapes never reported to the police.

The church needs to speak clearly because our culture gives both children and adults mixed messages about sex

nence. We must provide a stronger voice emphasizing the values of our tradition, not for the sake of tradition but for the health and wellbeing of the people.

The Church of the Brethren has a long history of being counter-cultural, from wearing simple clothes to being conscientious objectors. Our children also need to learn how to resist popular culture's messages about sex and sexuality. It is uncomfortable to talk about sex, but doing so should be part of our peace witness. As Quaker writer Kody Hersh puts it, "If we can't talk about sex, we leave ourselves at the mercy of the uninterrupted discourse of rape culture, because we have offered no challenge and no alternatives." Instead, Hersh argues, "We must preach a sexuality of nonviolence, in which every human is allowed

## THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN CAN NO LONGER REMAIN SILENT, WHILE MESSAGES THAT DISTORT THE BEAUTY OF OUR BODIES AND GOD'S INTENTIONS FOR SEX BOMBARD US.

and sexuality. Whether we like it or not, casual sexual encounters and sexual promiscuity are the norm in American culture. Television shows aimed at teenagers often portray sex and pregnancy as a normal part of teen life. Pictures of girls in provocative poses dominate advertising. This culture encourages us to consume sex at every turn.

Yet we also see increasing public outcry against "rape culture." Rape culture, according to one definition, is how "society blame[s] victims of sexual assault and normalize[s] male sexual violence." Part of rape culture is silence about the common, everyday nature of sexual assault.

Our church's silence reflects discomfort with this discussion. Traditionally, the church's stance on sex has been abstinence outside of marriage, yet even if we hold to this ideal we cannot ignore the reality of the world we live in, and that I grew up in. According to a survey conducted by the US National Library of Medicine, 75 percent of American people have had premarital sex by age 20. Most young people are more influenced by cultural norms than by the church's teaching.

We must find a new way to address sexual violence. We must teach young people respect for their own bodies as well as respect for others—even while encouraging absti-

to choose freely how, when, and whether to use their body for pleasure and connection."

The thing I appreciate most about Brethren is that we take the example and teachings of Jesus as the model for our lives. Jesus did not shy away from the difficult issues of his day. He didn't just maintain the status quo, because dealing with problems was uncomfortable. Jesus made waves. He pushed people out of their comfort zones, and made them realize the world needed to be changed for God's will to prevail. The example Jesus set in the first century still holds for us today.

The Church of the Brethren can no longer remain silent, while messages that distort the beauty of our bodies and God's intentions for sex bombard us. Brethren cannot continue to ignore the thousands of women, men, and children devastated by sexual abuse and rape. The problem will not disappear if we do not acknowledge it. The church must provide guidance in navigating the world of sex and sexuality.

That might have made a difference for me 20 years ago; it would make a difference for all of us now. 

Staci Williams is a member of Poplar Ridge Church of the Brethren, Defiance, Ohio, and a student at Bethany Theological Seminary.



*Olympic View Community Church youth make lanterns at Hiroshima to Hope event.*

# In these young people, Jesus is here

by Bobbi Dykema

**A**s school was letting out for the summer of 2013, Olympic View Community Church in Seattle, Wash., received an opportunity to host an outreach youth group on Thursday nights. The first gathering had just seven junior high and high school youth, but over three years the program has grown to serve 20 to 30 youth each week. More than 100 different young people walk through our doors.

This is not your parents' church. With church vans, young people are picked up from two north Seattle public housing complexes and returned home at the end of the weekly gathering. Evenings begin with a simple meal followed by an interactive worship time studying the scriptures and listening to one another during "prayers of the people." Activities after worship may involve arts and crafts, pick-up basketball, or a service project. Throughout each gathering, church staff, a few parents, and adult volunteers are working to meet the needs of youth whose lives often are characterized by crisis.

The "prayers of the people" can be heartbreaking. Youth

offer prayers for a parent, aunt, uncle, or friend in prison. There are prayers for those struggling with alcoholism and addiction, not in the abstract, but specific family members and friends. High school classmates have made suicide attempts, successful and not; have run away from home; are living daily with the intersecting challenges of poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia, and/or transphobia.

Around 80 percent of the young people who participate are people of color, mostly African-American but also Native, Asian, and Latino/a. A number of immigrant families are represented, especially from the Caribbean—Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica—as well as from Sudan and Ethiopia.

Even when prayer time is somber, gatherings overall are characterized by energy and joy. Seattle museums are free on the first Thursday of the month so we begin each month with a field trip to experience great history and culture, at places as diverse as the Seattle Art Museum, the Museum of Flight, the Northwest African-American Museum, and more.

Service projects are a source of inspiration. Seattle high schools require a number of service hours from each student, and the church gives the youth lots of opportunities to fulfill that requirement including all-church work days, set up and clean up for potlucks, music and worship leading for Sunday services. Reaching beyond our church walls, we have helped buy groceries and pack Thanksgiving baskets for needy families in the neighborhood, tended a Pea Patch with food going to the local food bank, served a hot meal for a homeless tent encampment, participated in the annual CROP walk, had fundraisers and clothing drives for an orphanage in Liberia.

Sometimes activities involve welcoming and listening to special guests, such as Ben Bear from Brethren Volunteer Service, John Braun and David Niyonzima from Trauma and Healing Reconciliation Service in Burundi, and Japanese women from the World Friendship Center in Hiroshima. We participated in a youth retreat led by David Radcliff of the New Community Project.

Youth have opportunities to travel beyond Seattle as part of the group. Camp scholarships for Camp Koinonia (Church of the Brethren) and Camp Gwinwood (Disciples of Christ) are made available each year—the highlight of the summer for many. Seven youth went to National Youth Conference in 2014. Ten went to Western Regional Youth Conference at the University of La Verne, Calif., this January over Martin Luther King Day weekend, learning about the principles of Kingian nonviolence and how to apply them in our lives and world. The YMCA offered full scholarships to participate in a week-long Boys or Girls Outdoor Leadership Development hiking, backpacking, fishing, or river rafting trip. The charitable foundation of the local Tulalip Tribe has helped cover expenses for some of these opportunities.

Most of the youth who participate come from families who don't have a church home, so some of our Brethren practices are very new for them. Love Feast falls on a Thursday during Holy Week, so the youth have the opportunity (but absolutely not required) to participate. There always is some reluctance to remove one's own socks and

shoes as well as to wash someone else's feet. The first year, Love Feast with the youth included the following negotiation in the women's circle: "Do we have to have our feet washed?" "No, you can just watch if you like." "Well, how about just one foot?" So one foot it was. Last year, a few opted to wash hands rather than feet. The point is to be as welcoming as possible, while preserving the deep meaning of Brethren ritual and practice.

We've learned some incredible lessons from the youth. The public housing complexes where they live are true neighborhoods, where neighbors not only know one another but take care of and vouch for one another's children. They share rides, food, opportunities, and space.

The youth are incredible pray-ers; after hearing women

from Hiroshima share their stories, they lifted up prayers for those affected by atomic radiation in Japan, knowing instinctively that the best response to the hurts of the world—past, present, and future—is to pray.

Although no one makes these young people go to church, they choose to do so—not only on Thursdays but also sometimes on Sunday mornings, week after week. They share joys and concerns in a way that is

inspiring to the lifelong Brethren adults in the congregation. They are teaching us how to be a multicultural church, with an original rap song performed as a call to worship on Youth Sunday, and readings from scripture in the native languages of the youth including Spanish and Amharic.

One evening as we gathered for prayer in the sanctuary, sunlight streaming through the skylight illuminated the cross. One of the girls took a picture and texted it with the caption, "Jesus is here." And it's true. Every week, in the faces, lives, and energy of these young people, Jesus is here.

These youth are not "the least of these." They are beloved children of God, and the future of the church. It's a future with a lot of energy, a lot of challenges, and a lot of faith, hope, and love. 

Bobbi Dykema is youth pastor at Olympic View Community Church of the Brethren in Seattle, Wash.



**Olympic View Community Church youth play basketball.**

# Here I am

by Bob Bowman

**R**emember the Bible story of young Samuel? He was sleeping in the temple when he heard the Lord call, “Samuel! Samuel!” The young Samuel said, “Here I am!” (1 Samuel 3:4). He thought his guardian, Eli, was calling so he ran to Eli again saying, “Here I am.”

I imagine Samuel’s mother had taught him to respond in that way when he was very young, even before he was sent to be raised in the temple under the guardianship of Eli.

It is just one word in Hebrew: *hineini*. When it is a response to being called, it is usually translated “Here I am” or “Here am I” in the Bible. The phrase comes up frequently and it is worth close examination. It is more than a polite response that says, “I hear you.” It is a declaration that I am present, totally present to the one calling.

Woody Allen once said, “Eighty percent of success is just showing up.” The challenge is not only to show up, but to be fully present, to be mindful of who, where, and with whom you are.

Pastors often discover that words, even when quoting

scripture, are never adequate in the face of tragedy. Words also pale into insignificance in the presence of great joy. What is most helpful at those times is personal presence. “Here I am.”

“Here I am.” This phrase turns up other places in the Bible. Isaac called his son and Esau answered, “Here I am” (Genesis 27:1). When Jacob wanted someone to take a message to Joseph’s brothers, he said to Joseph, “‘Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.’ He answered, ‘Here I am’” (Genesis 37:1).

Being totally present is hard! It involves being present in space but also being present in time, in the “now.” My mind often wanders between anticipation for tomorrow and second-guessing my yesterdays. Saying “Here I am” means relinquishing my obsession with past and present and accepting who I am and where I am in the present. Here I am, at this precise moment in time: a moment that has never been before and will never be repeated in my life. It is, as it always is, a holy moment.

Saying “Here I am” also involves being present within



## EVERY HUMAN RELATIONSHIP AND ALL OF CREATION CONTAINS GOD’S QUESTION, “WHERE ARE YOU?” AND YEARNS FOR A RESPONSE.



Trekking Bhujana / iStock.com

myself, identifying my emotions, owning my failures, confessing my sin, and accepting my strengths. Here I am, all of me, just as I am. I may not be where I wish to be nor where I pretend to be. I may not be where others wish me to be, but if I could be nakedly honest with myself, I could come out of hiding and answer, “Here I am!”

There is one glaring spot in the Bible where the phrase “Here I am” is shockingly absent. In Genesis 3:9 after taking the forbidden fruit, the man and the woman hid from God. God called, “Where are you?”

God’s call still rings through the world, “Where are you?” God’s question does not always come in words or even in clear categories of thought. More often it is a small echo of mystery, intangible and indescribable. Every human relationship and all of creation contains God’s question, “Where are you?” and yearns for a response. And each time we answer this persistent call with “Here I am,” we discover God’s “Here I am” in response.

We find that God may be more ready to say “Here I am” than we are. Isaiah 65:1 is especially telling. “I was ready

to be sought out by those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that did not call on my name.” As Meister Eckhart said, “God is at home, it’s we who have gone out for a walk.” But if we return home—that is, return to ourselves—then we return to the presence of God. There is a deep connection between learning to become totally present and learning to recognize the presence of God. When one becomes completely “here,” it is not far to recognize that God is “here” also.

If “Here I am” is about finding one’s self, it is also about finding one’s task. When we say “Here I am” to God, it is not only self identity, it is a commitment to action. This is how the phrase feels when God called Moses. “When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he [Moses] said, ‘Here I am!’” (Exodus 3:4).

The same was true of Abraham. “After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am!’” (Genesis 22:1). And, again, “The angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am!’” (Genesis 22:11). Jacob experienced the same: “Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am!’” (Genesis 31:11).

When “Here I am” is used this way as a response to the call of God, it is a declaration of willingness: “I am ready to be of service.” In the temple vision (Isaiah 6:8), God said, “Whom will I send? Who will go for me?” Isaiah’s response was, “Here am I! Send me!”

The most common prayers are “Help!” and “Thanks.” Think about letting yet your next prayer be “Here am I” with all that phrase means. 

An ordained minister, Bob Bowman is professor emeritus of religion at Manchester University, North Manchester, Ind.

# Eulogy for White Christian America

**Y**ou're not imagining things: America isn't like it used to be. Coming to grips with this massive societal shift is the focus of *The End of White Christian America*, by Robert P. Jones.

By "White Christian America," Jones is referring to the cultural dominance of white Protestants in this nation's history. As he noted in an Aug. 31 PBS NewsHour interview: "If you were in charge of something big and important in the middle of the 20th century, chances are you were white, you were Protestant, and you were male."



WENDY MCFADDEN

While "Christian" might seem like the wrong word if he's referring primarily to Protestants, Jones points out that for much of the 20th century Christian and Protestant were virtually the same.

As he traces the history of mainline and evangelical Protestantism, he's intentional about calling them the two "survivors" of White Christian America: He begins the book with an obituary for White Christian America and ends it with a eulogy. Using extensive polling data (he's CEO and founder of the Public Religion Research Institute), Jones demonstrates how the dominance has ended and how nostalgia and grief for the past are affecting America today.

In one chart, Jones compares responses to this question: "Since the 1950s, do you think American culture and way of life has mostly changed for the better, or has it mostly changed for the worse?" The responses sort people dramatically by religion and race. Americans as a whole check in close to the middle, with 46 percent saying American culture has changed for the better. People of color (groups such as blacks, Hispanics, Hispanic Catholics, and black Protestants) all say it has gotten better, and white groups say that it has gotten worse. The most positive response, at 63 percent, is from the religiously unaffiliated. The most negative response, at 27 percent, is white evangelical Protestants.

Jones spends an entire chapter on each of two topics that

divide Americans—same-sex marriage and race. In the first, he tracks the rapid change in opinion on same-sex marriage in general across the country and specifically within religious groups. "By 2014," he observes, "battle lines on the issue of same-sex marriage were no longer between religious and nonreligious Americans. Rather, debate was raging among religious groups" (126-127).

In his chapter on race, Jones shows the gulf between the way blacks and whites view police violence against African Americans. Blacks generally see these events as part of a pattern of racial injustice; whites tend to see them as isolated events. This "racial perception gap" has been around for decades, says Jones. "The racial perception gap highlights one of the most powerful—but also least discussed—divisions between Americans on the topic of race: the rift between the descendants of White Christian America and the rest of the country" (155).

What does all this mean for Brethren? We may have begun as a people outside the power structures of the day, but today we are among the heirs of White Christian America. Institutionally we have identified with mainline Protestantism, though in many other ways we have also been influenced by evangelicalism. Jones offers much for us to study and ponder.

In his closing eulogy, Jones uses the Kübler-Ross stages of grief as a model for what white Christians are facing. He systematically describes how both mainline and evangelical white Christians have been making their way through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and (for some) acceptance.

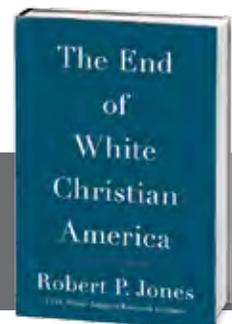
"What I hope I'm doing at the end," says Jones in his NewsHour interview, "is thinking about presiding over this very complicated loss and death in American culture, with some people who are grieving, but some people who are very much ready to move on and ready to say good riddance to this era.

"But I think the real challenge for us is to figure out how we tell a story about who America is and where we're going as a country that is faithful to its past, but makes room for the new demographics and the new place that the country is going." 

## ABOUT THE BOOK

**Title:** *The End of White Christian America*. **Author:** Robert P. Jones. **Publisher:** Simon & Schuster.

**Published:** July 2016. **Pages:** 309. Order from Brethren Press at [www.brethrenpress.com](http://www.brethrenpress.com).





## Haiti Theological Training program graduates 22 ministers

**Aug. 13 was a day of celebration for the inaugural class of the Haiti Theological Training program, Ecole Theologie de la Mission Evangelique des Eglises des Frères d'Haïti.** The graduation ceremony witnessed 22 graduates walking across the stage to receive diplomas and shake hands with professors and guests of honor.

The day marked the finish of a 12-session, 3-year training cycle that began in Aug. 2013. Each session centered on biblical knowledge and practical ministry skills with classes such as "Practices and Beliefs of the Church of the Brethren," "Church Finances," "Old Testament and New Testament Survey," and "Pastoral Leadership."

Each graduate received a small battery-powered tea light to encourage the student to carry the light of Christ; and a Bible commentary, a useful yet hard-to-acquire tool to aid ministers in their study of the Bible.

## Preachers announced for Annual Conference, nominations sought

**Preachers have been announced for the 2017 Annual Conference** on June 28-July 2 in Grand Rapids, Mich. The Conference Office is accepting nominations for all offices on next year's ballot.

Offices on the ballot include Annual Conference moderator-elect, Conference secretary, Program and Arrangements Committee, Mission and Ministry Board Areas 1 and 2, Bethany Seminary Board of Trustees representing clergy and the colleges, Brethren Benefit Trust Board, On Earth Peace Board, Pastoral Compensation and Benefits representing clergy, and representative to the World Council of Churches. Nominations are accepted through Dec. 1 at [www.brethren.org/ac/nominations](http://www.brethren.org/ac/nominations).



**Carol Scheppard**

**2017 preachers:** Annual Conference moderator **Carol Scheppard** will preach June 28. On June 29, the sermon will be brought by **Jose Calleja Otero**, Puerto Rico District executive. **Michaela Alphonse**, Church of the Brethren mission worker in Haiti, will preach June 30. On July 1, the message will be by **Donna Ritchey Martin**, a pastor at Grossnickle Church of the Brethren in Myersville, Md. The Sunday morning sermon on July 2 will be preached by **Matthew Fike**, pastor of Lebanon Church of the Brethren in Mount Sidney, Va.

## Personnel notes

**Carl Hill** has resigned as co-director of the Nigeria Crisis Response to become pastor of Potsdam (Ohio) Church of the Brethren. He and his wife, Roxane, have served as co-directors since Dec. 1, 2014, and she will continue as half-time coordinator. The Hills have encouraged and supported the Nigerian people and EYN during a very difficult time, making regular visits to Nigeria, providing ongoing reporting, maintaining a blog, assisting with financial matters, coordinating

activities with EYN and other partners, and visiting churches across the US to encourage support for the work. Previously, from Dec. 2012 to May 2014, they were Global Mission workers in Nigeria and taught at Kulp Bible College.

**Traci Rabenstein** has begun as congregational support representative for Church of the Brethren donor relations, working from her home in Enola, Pa. She will strengthen and nurture congregational relationships with ministries

of the Church of the Brethren through face-to-face, telephone, and other visits with congregations and pastors, interpreting denominational ministries and receiving feedback. She is a licensed minister at Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, and has been a leader in Southern Pennsylvania District. Since 2013 she has been eGovernment Project Manager for Pennsylvania's Office of Administration/Office for Information Technology.



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## Nigeria Crisis Response begins shift to long-term recovery

**As northeast Nigeria becomes more stable and displaced people begin to return home,** the Nigeria Crisis Response is transitioning to long-term recovery while still supporting basic needs. The response is a cooperative effort of the Church of the Brethren and Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria).

In late summer EYN leaders confirmed food shortages, and requested continued food aid at least through the end of 2016. Nigerian media reported hunger and starvation at government-run camps for displaced people in remote areas north and east of the city of Maiduguri—not areas of high EYN populations. However, food shortages have occurred in some areas where displaced EYN members have been returning.

Early phases of the response assisted with basic needs including food and shelter. By mid-2016, EYN and other partners had distributed food and household supplies to 28,970 family units. The EYN disaster team has been making monthly food distributions to people in need. Nearly 3,000 people were reached with medical care.

Housing for displaced families is still being provided at six care centers, one of which is intentionally interfaith with Christian and Muslim families. As of late summer, 220 houses have been built, and some care centers now have schools.

Through partner organizations working on education, some 2,000 displaced children including orphans, are again attending school.

Nigerians traumatized by violence have required help to heal psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. Six EYN leaders received trauma healing training in Rwanda, and began holding workshops for trauma healing. Other leadership for trauma healing has come from Mennonite Central Committee and from Church of the Brethren volunteers. Some of the first to attend these workshops were pastors. Some 32 trauma healing workshops have been held, assisting



Courtesy of Brethren Disaster Ministries

**Nigeria Crisis Response has begun a new initiative to help displaced people repair roofs of homes that were destroyed in the violence in northeast Nigeria.**

about 800 people, and training 21 facilitators and 20 listening partners. Trauma healing has begun for children through the Healing Hearts curriculum developed by Children's Disaster Services. Workshops in May trained 14 facilitators who in turn trained 55 teachers.

Livelihood support has enabled some displaced people to start supporting themselves through micro-businesses. Recipients receive skills training, equipment, tools, materials, and business training. More than 1,500 micro-businesses and 3 skills acquisition centers have been started.

An additional emphasis has been to increase the capacity of EYN leadership. In 2016, restoration of the EYN headquarters in Kwarhi and of Kulp Bible College—both of which had for a time been overtaken by Boko Haram—has allowed many leaders and students to move back to the northeast. EYN's new president, Joel Billi, has gone on a "Sympathy, Reconciliation and Encouragement Tour" to reach out to church members and support their recovery.

The shift to long-term recovery has included initiatives supporting agriculture and rebuilding destroyed homes for the most vulnerable returnees. The re-roofing work has reached 3 of 5 zones, with 250 houses receiving new metal roofs. Corn seeds and fertilizer have been distributed to more than 2,000 families, and bean seeds to 3,000 families. Other small projects are planned involving chickens, goats, and sustainable agriculture.

For more, go to [www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis).

## Workcamps will help rebuild churches in Nigeria

### **A series of workcamps will help rebuild EYN churches.**

More than half of EYN's churches have been destroyed in the Boko Haram insurgency. A Nigeria Church Rebuilding Fund has been developed to help provide support to EYN congregations working to rebuild.

Global Mission and Service executive Jay Wittmeyer reports that of EYN's 458 churches, or LCCs, 258

have been destroyed. Wittmeyer hopes to provide \$5,000 to selected EYN congregations to re-roof their church buildings. Brethren are invited to sponsor a new roof for an EYN church. Gifts are received at [www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis) or by mail to Nigeria Church Rebuilding, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Workcamps will take place over

the next six or seven months. The first are set for Nov. 4-23, Jan. 11-30, and Feb. 17-March 6. Participants will raise about \$2,500 to cover costs of transportation, food, and supplies. Those who apply are warned that they will face extreme heat, intense sun, and the rigors of life in a developing nation. Express interest by contacting [crhill@brethren.org](mailto:crhill@brethren.org) or 847-429-4329.



AT A TIME OF DOUBT FOR ME AS A BRETHERN, CHRISTIAN, AND CHURCHGOER, IT PROVIDED ME WITH IN-DEPTH STRENGTH AND KNOWLEDGE.

### Articles that searched my soul

Thank you so much for the July/August issue. As always, God provides His love and wisdom in words. At a time of doubt for me as a Brethren, Christian, and churchgoer, it provided me with in-depth strength and knowledge. I look forward to more issues like this one.

**Susan Harris**  
Nokesville, Va.

### God is present and moving

I've been trying to pray in a more personal way, speaking and listening directly to Jesus and God as in, "Jesus, how do I deal with . . . ?" Similarly, preparing to be a delegate to Annual Conference, I prayed, "Abba, how should we be dealing with your church and ours?"

Now my image of Abba is love and authority and indeed, at the Confer-

ence I saw many examples of life-giving combinations of these traits. Our moderator (and team) gave strong leadership to a group of people he knows well and loves, not controlling the decisions we made but the framework in which they were made. He guided, inspired, delighted, instructed, corrected, and even sang to us. Also combining love and authority were worship leaders, program directors, conveners, and coordinators of all

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God is present and moving in our midst. We are a blessed people.

**Joan Huston**  
Elizabethtown, Pa.

## Renewal is exciting

Hearing Andy Murray speak on the state of the church at Annual Confer-

ence, I could feel my pulse beating. He was speaking of a topic vital in our work in Springs of Living Water for the last 12 to 13 years. After 20 years of extended Saturday morning prayer, my wife, Joan, and I felt a call to spend some significant years of our lives in renewal of the church, which has led to the Springs initiative.

What struck me about Andy's message was that I saw excitement again. While he did not say the numbers were going to soar again, he did say that there was hope. Andy spoke of both a reality and a boldness that give

hope to the church.

Yes, renewal is exciting, and is happening, and the church is getting into mission. Praise God, renewal is happening!

**David S. Young**  
Ephrata, Pa.

## High quality

Thank you for the June issue, which is excellent. High-quality articles and high-quality writers. Every article is important, but the two articles by Robert Miller and Emmett Eldred remind us about the ways of God and who should be at the table.

**Daniel J. McRoberts**  
Caledonia, Mich.

## Nothing good can come of it

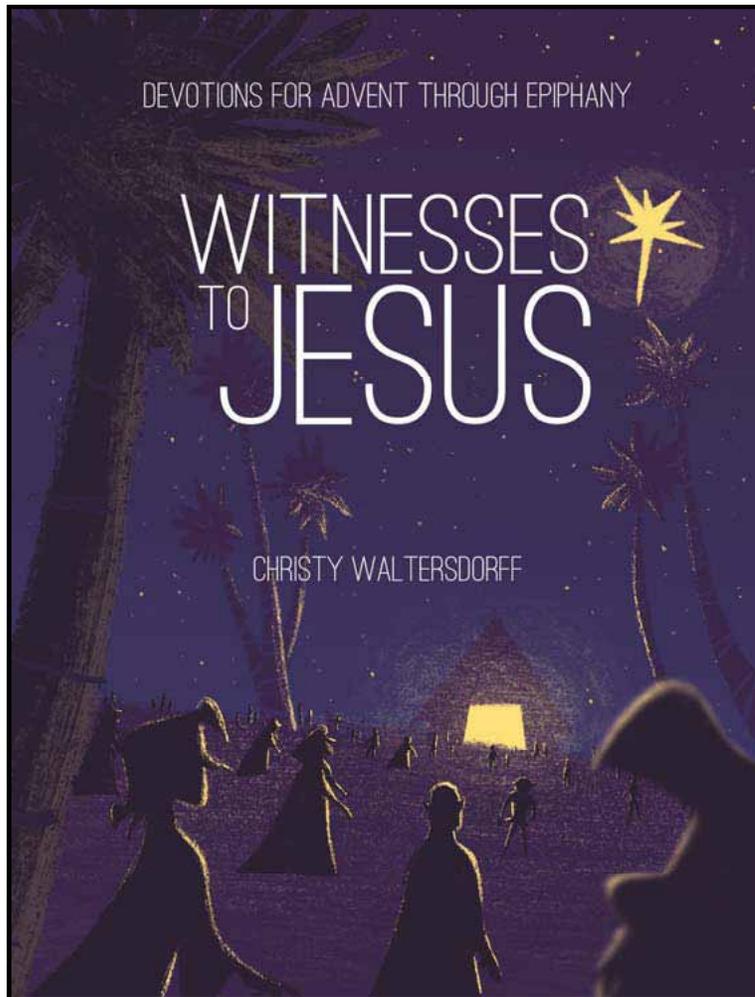
Merle Crouse in the July-August MESSENGER raises points worthy of discussion—aside from one: “Adjust the denomination’s position on inclusion of homosexual persons so that congregations can choose their own stance, and can be respected for whatever stance they adopt.”

Letting churches choose whatever they will on this issue sets the denomination up for disaster. It creates a house divided against itself that will be ripe for a fall. It honors church autonomy, yes, but it makes the idea that all are headed in the same direction—which is a significant part of what a denomination is—a mere pretense.

**Ronald E. Keener**  
Chambersburg, Pa.

## A false dichotomy

I read with interest “Resurrection in Clay County” on the revitalized—and booming—Rock Bible Church. It's not hard to see why this congregation is experiencing rapid growth. Charismatic leadership and a praise team, along with attention to children and



DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT THROUGH EPIPHANY

WITNESSES  
TO  
JESUS

CHRISTY WALTERSDORFF

**Brethren Press**

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## WHAT STRUCK ME ABOUT ANDY'S MESSAGE WAS THAT I SAW EXCITEMENT AGAIN. WHILE HE DID NOT SAY THE NUMBERS WERE GOING TO SOAR AGAIN, HE DID SAY THAT THERE WAS HOPE.

families, fostering personal relationships with Jesus among congregants, appearance of the facilities, and savvy advertising—these make for a winning combination.

I was taken by one phrase, however, that should something “upset this ring” in this congregation it would not be considered, no matter how beneficial. This seems to be the bottom line—things aren't done if they cause turmoil or disrupt the atmosphere the church is working to create. I find this a bit unsettling. Had our Lord shared this sentiment, he would never have given his sermon at Nazareth or repeatedly caused havoc with healings on the Sabbath.

I wonder if this same standard may not apply to the other rings around our denomination. In our interest in growth (which nowhere seems a core New Testament value—in fact, we're to worry when all speak well of us or the narrow way has suddenly become wide), do our congregations shy away not only from biblical concerns for justice, peace, simplicity, and nonconformity, but from the heritage of our own church in these areas? In this vein, I found nothing in Harvey's article to suggest anything close to a counter cultural or prophetic focus. In the same way, many of the rest of us similarly steer clear of these “upsetting” issues in our public and private faith.

We have created a false dichotomy between revitalizing our congregations and the edginess of Jesus' life and message. As they did for our Lord, these very attributes can draw a crowd. Certainly not everyone will find such a message and witness appealing—as our Lord discovered—but

many will, and especially those left behind or disenchanted by our consumer culture, dismayed by our penchant for violence, angered by the hardly concealed racism of our society, and frightened by our seeming disregard for the wellbeing of God's creation.

As it is, we often try to emulate the success of growing churches by either hiding our witness under the bushel, or tossing it out altogether in the misguided assumption this is the only way to draw a crowd. It isn't.

**David Radcliff**  
Peoria, Ariz.

### Certainly Jesus is the light

I enjoyed my time at Annual Conference this year as a non-delegate visiting with friends and spiritual siblings. The theme of “Carry the Light” was good. Certainly, Jesus is the Light of the World and we are to be his lights in a dark world. However, we were not warned about the counterfeit light and its origin (Matthew 6:23).

God's highest ranking angel was named Lucifer, meaning “light bringer.” Not satisfied in that position, he decided to be a god (Isaiah 14:12). By rejecting the true and living God of heaven, the source of light, Lucifer lost his light and is now god-of-this-world (2 Corinthians 4:4). Jesus was not deceived. Jesus warned his followers that many false prophets would come in his name (Matthew 24:4-5).

It is important that we have a clear conscience, but our conscience cannot be our guide. In 1 Timothy 4:1-2 we are warned by the Holy Spirit that

in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. For this reason, we are instructed in Ephesians 5:11 to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather oppose them.

If we want to know the mind of Christ, we must walk in the light that he has already given.

**Ben Haldeman**  
Greencastle, Pa.



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## New Members

**Bremen, Ind.:** Rhonda Kinney, Steve Harrington, Barb Harrington  
**Bush Creek, Monrovia, Md.:** Patricia Orye, Rick Fullmer  
**Chiques, Manheim, Pa.:** Hadassah Brandt, Laney Hollinger, Kristopher Kline, Olivia Shenk  
**Conestoga, Leola, Pa.:** Nathanael Cassel, Austin Porter  
**Fairview, Cordova, Md.:** Mary Dawson, Earle Dawson, Dan Erdell, Carlee Eierman, Jodi Callahan, Christine Keyton, Brandi Christopher, Madeline Christopher, Mitchell Christopher, Olivia Christopher, Bailey Riggs, Reagen Riggs, Campbell Riggs, Gabrielle Stafford, Parker Stafford, Jonathan Buchanan, Grace Buchanan  
**Fraternity, Winston-Salem, N.C.:** Gail Anderson, Tim Anderson, Donald Brown, Marie Brown  
**Frederick, Md.:** M. Jean Baker, Perry Baker, Bonnie Grossnickle, Mary Ann Grossnickle, Mark Hanak, Dustin Hottel, Scot Hottel, Ryanne King, Sophia Lertora, Susanna Lertora, Jane McGillivray, Martha O'Bryan, Judi Redoni, Emily Reed

**Leamersville, Duncansville, Pa.:** Harry Albright, Susan Albright  
**McPherson, Kan.:** Gabriel Padilla  
**Mohler, Ephrata, Pa.:** Ethan Motter, Elijah Barry  
**Mount Vernon, Waynesboro, Va.:** Sandra Miller, Donna Baylets  
**Paxton, Harrisburg, Pa.:** Kelsi Aherne, Gary Auker, Arthur Berg, Dwight Phillips, Kathy Phillips, John Piker, Lorraine Yurcic  
**Roaring Spring, Pa.:** Dominic Wagner  
**Harleysville, Pa., 68**  
**Specht, Donald and Martha, Frederick, Md., 55**  
**Stinebaugh, Vernon and Angela, Lancaster, Pa., 74**  
**Stitely, Bernie and Roxie, Frederick, Md., 50**  
**Tichnell, Bobby and JoAnn, Frederick, Md., 60**  
**Weaver, E. Mark and Thelma, Willow Street, Pa., 76**

## Wedding Anniversaries

**Badger, David and Marilyn, Polk, Ohio, 50**  
**Besecker, Donovan and Jean, Laura, Ohio, 65**  
**Cale, Bob and Bonnie, Staunton, Va., 64**  
**Davis, Paul and Betty, Staunton, Va., 50**  
**Dohner, Dean and Carol, West Milton, Ohio, 60**  
**Dotterer, Donald and Lorraine, Lancaster, Pa., 60**  
**Fogle, Jerry and Linda, Frederick, Md., 50**  
**Gearhart, John and Joyce, Myersville, Md., 55**  
**Kepler, Ron and Ruth, Pitsburg, Ohio, 66**  
**Moore, Byron and Lorene Clark, Springfield, Mo., 50**  
**Noffsinger, Walter and Shelby Jean, Continental, Ohio, 60**  
**Renfrew, Bob and Sue, Clarksburg, Md., 55**  
**Shenk, Marlin and Joyce, Manheim, Pa., 50**  
**Shultz, Glenn and Ruth, Lancaster, Pa., 60**  
**Smith, Don and Norma,**

**Kan., July 14**  
**Brubaker, Marion Z., 86, Shrewsbury, Pa., July 18**  
**Bucher, L. Gene, 79, Lancaster, Pa., July 22**  
**Burall, LaVerne, 85, Crisfield, Md., July 12**  
**Burns, David, 68, Roaring Spring, Pa., July 27**  
**Butts, Pauline Mae Blickenstaff, 97, Hagerstown, Md., May 20**  
**Campbell, Betty Jeanne Brooks, 90, North Manchester, Ind., May 9**  
**Carson, H. Louise, 81, Gettysburg, Pa., May 10**  
**Case, Duane Allen, 51, Ashland, Ohio, July 18**  
**Cassel, Jesse, 94, Greenville, Ohio, June 4**  
**Castle, Sandra Reinmuth, 68, Frederick, Md., June 29**  
**Champlin, Elizabeth Cleer, 84, Canton, Ill., May 18**  
**Clark, Janet LaRue, 82, Salem, Ohio, July 14**  
**Cline, Ruth Brubaker, 71, Frederick, Md., April 1**  
**Copeland, Frances, 95, Goshen, Ind., June 16**  
**Corl, Richard E., 86, Bremen, Ind., April 12**  
**Cosner, Elmer Richard, 87, Oakland, Md., June 3**  
**Davis, Chester Lee, 96, Stuarts Draft, Va., Jan. 24**  
**Davis, Loren, 91, Stuart, Iowa, March 10**  
**Dean, Russell, 57, Sebring, Fla., Oct. 26, 2015**  
**Dickens, Jane LuEllen Welling, 72, Westminster, Md., Dec. 8**  
**Domer, Esther Irene Brumbaugh, 89, Fort Wayne, Ind., April 5**  
**Dorsey, Janice Marie Welch, 88, Hagerstown, Md., June 11**  
**Dove, Louise Wampler, 96, Williamsport, Md., June 9**  
**Duncan, James Thomas, 91, Salem, Va., May 25**  
**Dunmire, Marlin Ira, 85, McVeytown, Pa., May 8**  
**Eikenberry, James L., 94, La Verne, Calif., July 10**  
**Elder, John Fredrick, 69, Fort Dodge, Kan., July 10**  
**Falu, Gilberto, 66, Bay Shore, N.Y., May 11**  
**Frost, David A., 82, Martinsburg, W. Va., April 16**  
**Funk, Boyd Hume, 77, Myersville, Md., April 2**  
**Garst, Doris Driscoll, 88, Roanoke, Va., July 5**  
**Gordon, Sandra L. Peffly, 80, Elkhart, Ind., June 7**  
**Grandia, Shirley F., 97, New Oxford, Pa., June 12**  
**Harden, Ann Jeannine Zenger, 67, North Newton, Kan., May 27**  
**Harsh, Lois Catherine Eby, 93, Roanoke, Va., July 12**  
**Hershey, Arlene N., 79, Bethel, Pa., March 9**  
**Hetrick, Hertha D. Slaughter, 84, New Oxford, Pa., Feb. 14**  
**Hiatt, David L., 72, Mount Airy, N. C., Jan. 8**  
**Holsinger, Martha Whitmer, 94, Broadway, Va., May 30**  
**Horn, Ronald H., Sr., 72, Dover, Pa., May 1**  
**Humphries, Dorothy Virginia Sensabaugh, 77, Staunton, Va., July 24**  
**Kahler, John Richard, 92, East Canton, Ohio, March 17**  
**Kauffman, Marjorie Louise Hanawalt, 94, Lancaster, Pa., June 7**  
**Kauffman, Michael P., 55, McVeytown, Pa., May 19**  
**Kaysen, William Henry, 87, Wenatchee, Wash., Aug. 8**  
**Keafer, Lloyd S., Jr., 88, Yorktown, Va., Feb. 26**  
**Keener, Earl, 86, Ashland, Ohio, May 16**  
**Kemble, Paul A., 87, Plymouth, Ind., June 16**  
**Kemper, W. Romayne**

Shank, 96, New Oxford, Pa., March 30

**Kessell**, James Robert, 71, Damascus, Md., April 5

**Kinzie**, Doris Elizabeth Hay, 94, Salem, Va., June 1

**Kline**, Betty V., 93, McVeytown, Pa., Dec. 19

**Krug**, Dora B., 94, La Verne, Calif., May 6

**Kump**, Margery Lucile Ries, 91, Mount Morris, Ill., June 27

**Kuntz**, Kline, 92, Lancaster, Pa., July 21

**Kurtz**, Robert William, 63, Potsdam, Ohio, June 20

**Layman**, Robert H., 97, Roanoke, Va., Feb. 3

**Lee**, Frances, 86, Modesto, Calif., June 29

**Lehigh**, Daniel G., 74, East Berlin, Pa., May 26

**Lovelace**, Joyce, 92, La Verne, Calif., April 29

**Manley**, Libby Robinson, 87, Staunton, Va., April 29

**Marshall**, Lowell, 94, Adel, Iowa, April 6

**Marshall**, Peter Phillip, 65, Minburn, Iowa, June 30

**Martin**, James Arthur, II, 48, Hagerstown, Md., June 20

**Martin**, Paul Moser, 94, Pemberville, Ohio, April 11

**Martin**, Rosella, 73, Keyser, W. Va., April 7

**Mayer**, Betty, 94, Lancaster, Pa., May 24

**McCaman**, Donna Maxine Jehnsen, 89, Sebring, Fla., Oct. 13, 2015

**McCray**, Jack Cameron, 91, Kenosha, Wis., July 24

**McDaniel**, Alton Leigh, 91, Saint John, Kan., June 18

**Melton**, Alice, 93, Modesto, Calif., June 22

**Messamer**, Fredric R., 78, Adel, Iowa, May 8

**Miller**, Albert K., 93, Weiser, Idaho, March 19

**Miller**, Donald B., 85, Corvallis, Ore., Aug. 12

**Miller**, Wayne Lowell, 91, Lancaster, Pa., June 24

**Mitts**, Earl Wayne, Sr., 80, Staunton, Va., May 6

**Montauban**, Verel, 66, Brooklyn, N.Y., June 21

**Morgan**, William, 94, Roanoke, Va., May 19

**Moyer**, Lloyd M., 77, Bethel, Pa., May 12

**Musser**, J. Harold, 88, Mount Joy, Pa., July 31

**Naff**, Mabel Ramsey, 89, Roanoke, Va., Feb. 23

**Naylor**, Elizabeth, 93, Frederick, Md., May 26

**Nees**, Opal E. Pence, 91, North Manchester, Ind., June 23

**Nichols**, Perry, 101, Modesto, Calif., May 18

**Nissley**, Corinne H., 92, Lancaster, Pa., June 6

**Nusbaum**, Mary Ellen Fogle, 83, Mount Pleasant, Md., June 3

**Patrick**, Ralph H., 87, Lafayette, Ind., June 8

**Platt**, Phyllis Helen, 86, Cedar Falls, Iowa, June 30

**Powers**, Robert, 66, McPherson, Kan., May 3

**Rea**, Tabatha Dawn, 20, Bassett, Va., April 12

**Reeder**, Barbara Ann Brandenburg, 80, Boonsboro, Md., July 16

**Rogers**, James C., Sr., 83, Cloverdale, Va., July 18

**Shaffer**, Pauline M., 92, Hollidaysburg, Pa., April 5

**Shell**, Shirley White, 82, Roanoke, Va., July 17

**Sigler**, Elma Harshbarger, 94, Lewistown, Pa., March 17

**Singh**, Daisy, 85, Salida, Calif., Aug. 9

**Slaybaugh**, Bennard Wilson, 90, Hanover, Pa., May 6

**Sluss**, Cline, 94, Clintwood, Va., June 4

**Smalley**, Marjorie Mae Hanley, 78, Beaver, Iowa, May 20

**Smith**, Joseph L., 76, Spring Grove, Pa., May 28

**Smith**, Robert J., 78, New Oxford, Pa., April 16

**Smith**, Robert O., 68, Eldora, Iowa, April 22

**Snyder**, Graydon F., 86, North Manchester, Ind., May 26

**Sowers**, Ella Ruth, 97, Salem, Va., April 5

**Spera**, Barbara Ann Baugher, 74, Hanover, Pa., May 9

**Staggs**, Ervin Lee, 86, Keyser, W. Va., March 18

**Staggs**, Olive Rosalie Junkins, 82, Keyser, W. Va., March 18

**Stangler**, Zoe Smith, 33, Colledgeville, Pa., June 16

**Stout**, William T., 92, Greens Fork, Ind., April 5

**Stupp**, Neal E., 76, Bethel, Pa., Feb. 8

**Wentz**, Gene M., 91, Martinsburg, Pa., May 8

**Wicks**, Dale F., 97, Adel, Iowa, July 17

**Wisotzkey**, Freeda J., 89, New Oxford, Pa., May 23

**Wolf**, Tom L., 76, Lancaster, Pa., July 19

**Yinger**, Susan Mears, 67, Frederick, Md., May 1

**Ziegler**, Brian L., 53, Lansdale, Pa., May 11

**Zimmerman**, Emily, 26, Brunswick, Md., Jan. 20

## Ordained

**Combs**, Matthew E., W. Marva Dist. (Romney, W. Va.), July 31

**Hackett**, Karen M., Atl. N. E. Dist. (Wilmington, Del.), July 24

## Commissioned

**Louis**, Banon, Atl. S. E. Dist. (Unify Christians, Miami, Fla.), Aug. 7

**Ortega**, David A., Pac. N. W. Dist. (Larchmont, Tacoma, Wash.), July 17

## Licensed

**Moore**, John H., Southeastern Dist. (New Hope, Jonesborough, Tenn.), July 17

**Skopic**, Beverly Jane, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Rockhill, Rockhill Furnace, Pa.), July 31

## Placements

**Barnhill**, Charles, from interim to pastor, Owl Creek, Bellville, Ohio, June 21

**Belknap**, Barry A., pastor, Jonah's People, Fostoria, Ohio, June 24

**Crain**, Steven D., pastor, Lafayette, Ind., July 26

**Fox**, Kenneth E., minister of congregational life, Mount Zion, Linville, Va., Aug. 1

**Hicks**, Rick, pastor, Marion, Ohio, June 22

**Johnson**, Anthony Leo, Sr., from pastor, New Bethel, Chatham, Va., to pastor, Green Hill, Salem, Va., Aug. 1

**Johnson**, Dan L., from pastor, Brook Park, Ohio, to pastor, Copper Hill, Va., Aug. 2

**Johnson**, Robert C., pastor, Middle River, Fort Defiance, Va., Aug. 1

**Kinsey**, Kevin L., from pastor, Easton, Md., to pastor, Central, Roanoke, Va., Aug. 1

**Lam**, Donnie R., Jr., pastor, Rileyville, Va., June 19

**Liepelt**, Brandy E., from co-pastor, Somerset, Pa., to co-pastor, Annville, Pa., July 15

**Liepelt**, Paul A., from co-pastor, Somerset, Pa., to co-pastor, Annville, Pa., July 15

**Longbrake**, Joshua, associate pastor, Circle of Peace, Peoria, Ariz., June 19

**Mayer**, Robin Wentworth, pastor, Marion, Ind., Aug. 1

**Miller**, Neill M., from team to pastor, Pleasant Ridge, Needmore, Pa., Jan. 1

**Morton**, David, from interim to pastor, Adrian, Mich., June 20

**Myers**, Matthew L., from associate pastor, Peru, Ind., to pastor, Mexico, Ind., July 31

**Neuwirth**, Richard, from interim to pastor, Swan Creek, Delta, Ohio, May 22

**O'Brien**, Shawn, director of youth ministries, West Green Tree, Elizabethtown, Pa., June 19

**Reinford**, Christopher, associate pastor, Akron, Pa., April 1

**Ross**, Matthew, associate pastor, Hanoverdale, Hummelstown, Pa., June 19

**Slusher**, Jessica Allen, from interim to pastor, Bethany, Boones Mill, Va., June 1

**Stoller**, Keith E., pastor, Ross, Mendon, Ohio, June 10

**Sutton**, Michael, pastor, Sugar Ride, Custer, Mich., May 8

**Wason**, Harvey J., pastor, James Creek, Pa., Aug. 7



# True colors

*“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).*

**I always find myself eager for fall weather,** my favorite season! Recently I read a fascinating and very scientific article about the changing colors of leaves during fall. Essentially the individual who wrote this article argued that when the leaves change their colors we are actually seeing the trees’ “true colors” instead of our typically held belief that tree leaves are naturally green.



NATHAN HOLLENBERG

Without going into too much scientific detail the point is that leaves get their green appearance during the spring and summer because they produce high levels of chlorophyll, which aids in photosynthesis and helps the plant produce food. As the days grow shorter and fall arrives this process breaks down and the chlorophyll dissipates, causing the green color of leaves to fade and the “true color” of the leaves to be seen.

It’s interesting that it is this time of year, when the tree dies back, that we often think trees are at their “peak” beauty. I have always found the changing of the leaves

to be awe inspiring and especially beautiful here where I live, in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Perhaps we would rather leave the science out of it and simply appreciate the miracle of the seasons God has included in creation.

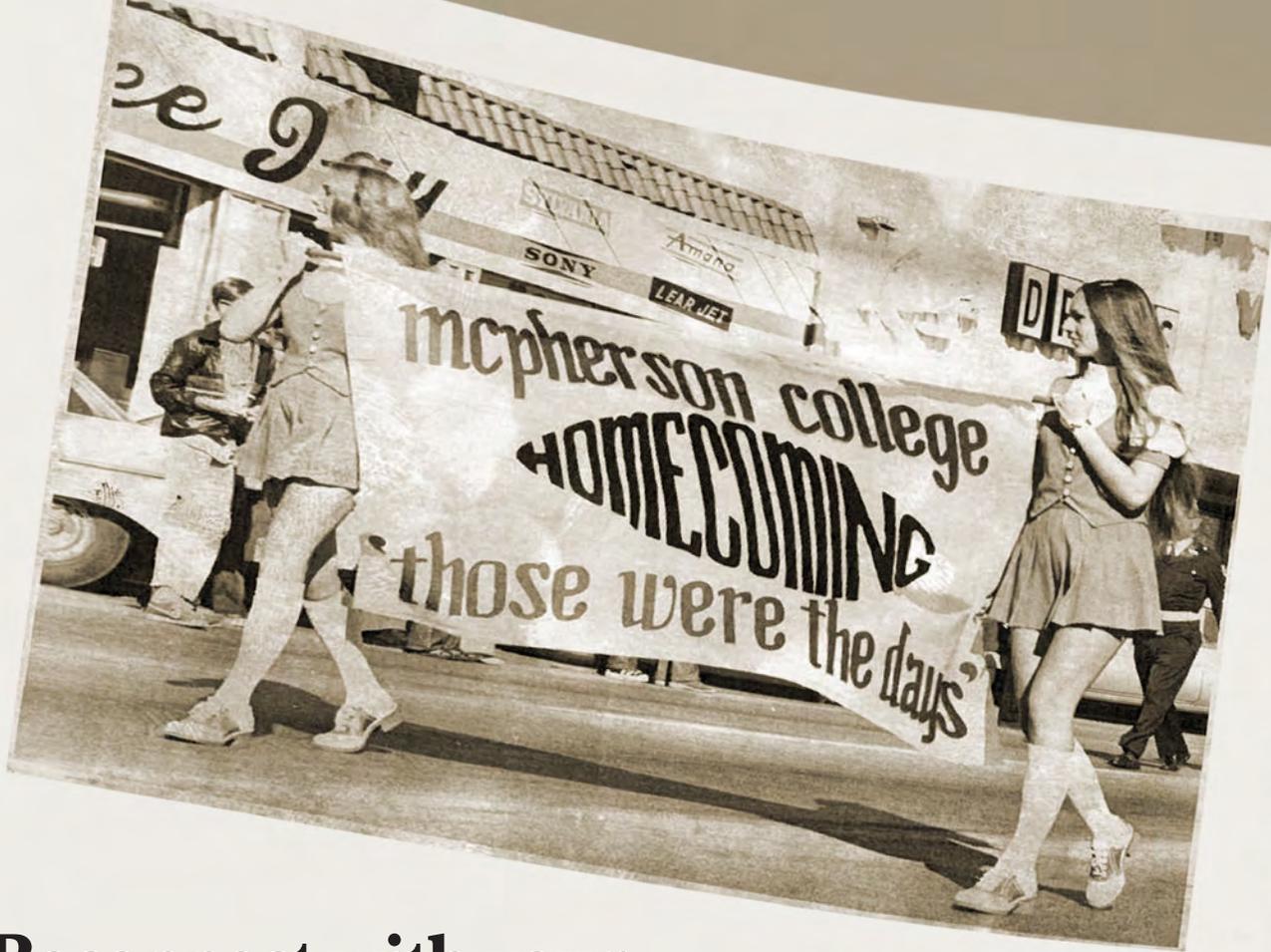
However, for me, this idea of the trees showing their “true colors” reminded me of a reality of faith mirrored in the Galatians passage above. Just as trees show their true beauty, their true colors, through a process of letting go, we too have been called to die to self and to let go so that the glory and beauty of God may shine through. We have been “crucified with Christ” so that Christ would become visible in our lives.

It seems sometimes that it is in letting go of all our busyness and the hard work that so often distracts us that we allow our true beauty found in Christ to shine forth. Fall is often one of these busy seasons as school starts back up, sports seasons get under way, and our yards need attending. Perhaps then this season of autumn is an appropriate time to remember to slow down and rediscover the beauty of Christ in you.

Recognize that it is Christ who lives in and through us in order to reveal the beauty and majesty of God. May we never be afraid to show our true colors, giving God the praise and adoration as we discover that beauty in us and in others. 

Nathan Hollenberg is pastor at Linville Creek Church of the Brethren in Broadway, Va.

**MAY WE NEVER BE AFRAID TO SHOW OUR TRUE COLORS, GIVING GOD THE PRAISE AND ADORATION AS WE DISCOVER THAT BEAUTY IN US AND IN OTHERS.**

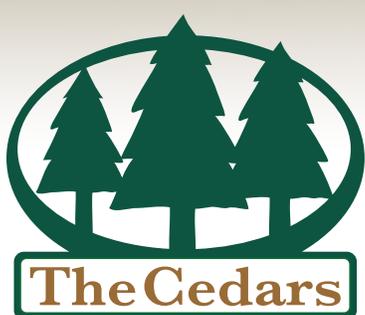


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Vision for new hope



# Advent offering

“A shoot shall come from the stump of Jesse, and . . .  
the spirit of the Lord shall rest on him.” ~Isaiah 11:1-2

Find worship resources at [www.brethren.org/adventoffering](http://www.brethren.org/adventoffering)

*Suggested date:*

**December 4**



Church of the Brethren



Learn more about special offerings at [www.brethren.org/specialofferings](http://www.brethren.org/specialofferings)