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MESSENGER

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Refugee resettlement
Hope, heart, hospitality



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on the cover: Hser Law Eh Paw and Ma Thay are welcomed to the United States by their host congregation at Middle Creek Church of the Brethren in Lititz, Pa. Sharon Bollinger took this picture. With her husband, Glen, she serves on the church's committee for refugee ministry. One of her personal ministries to refugee families is to document important moments on their journey.

Sharon Bollinger



Back in another election year, 1932, an article in MESSENGER generated enough letters that the editor wrote a response. The original article was written by Rufus D. Bowman, secretary for the Board of Christian Education, who outlined the issue at stake (bonus points if you know what it was). He said he couldn't tell readers how to vote, but observed delicately that "there is weight in favor of" the incumbent.

The follow-up editorial, by Edward Frantz, explained that the criticism fell into three camps: The article expressed an opinion. It didn't prefer a different candidate. It didn't express the opinion decisively enough and urge it on the church. These responses were "interesting," he observed with remarkable understatement.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

MESSENGER in 1932 was more willing to state a political position than Messenger of 2016 is, but people still disagree on where to draw the line between religion and politics. How should religious conviction influence public policy? One might expect more convergence between the Christian admonition to care for the least of these and the political goal of caring for the common good, but that's not the case.

Dr. William Barber, a prominent civil rights leader and Disciples of Christ pastor, is urging people of faith to see where these two must intersect. Our country is in pain, he says, and needs a new heart to replace its heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26). Barber provides this context from a few chapters earlier:

The leaders among you became desperate, like roaring, ravaging lions killing indiscriminately. They grabbed and looted, leaving widows in their wake.

Your priests violated my law and desecrated my holy things. They can't tell the difference between sacred and secular. They tell people there's no difference between right and wrong. They're contemptuous of my holy Sabbaths, profaning me by trying to pull me down to their level. Your politicians are like wolves prowling and killing and rapaciously taking whatever they want. Your preachers cover up for the politicians by pretending to have received visions and special revelations. They say, "This is what God, the Master, says . . ." when God hasn't said so much as one word. Extortion is rife, robbery is epidemic, the poor and needy are abused, outsiders are kicked around at will, with no access to justice (Ezekiel 22:25-29 The Message).

Prophets sure don't worry about being popular.

As we emerge from a particularly bruising and divisive campaign, a word from 1932 is worth repeating. In a Nov. 5 editorial titled "After the Election," Frantz writes, "Life will still be worth living after Tuesday."

Wendy McFadden

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Children choose books from the donations collected by Sebring Church of the Brethren's Summer Reading Program.

Sebring Brethren promote reading

Sebring (Fla.) Church of the Brethren received donations to purchase books as well as give gently used books to a summer reading program. Over 750 books went to every student at Fred Wild Elementary, other students in Highlands County, and youth at the church. "The church is so blessed to have Joan Bohrer and Dawn Ziegler promote this book project," reported church secretary Pat Hollenberg. "Between the Palms of Sebring and the Sebring church, over 1,200 books were given out this summer, and they have already started collecting for next year."

All because of \$20

When Ed and Sharon Groff came home to Peace Church of the Brethren in Portland, Ore., they couldn't wait to tell us about a "reverse offering" at Madison Avenue Church of the Brethren in York, Pa. On a Sunday shortly thereafter, our offering plates were filled with envelopes containing \$20 each, and instead of putting money into the plate, each person took an envelope—including the children.

We were encouraged to use the \$20 to help someone in need. How that happened was up to the individual. When his mother explained the purpose of the \$20, 5-year-old Davis said, "I want to buy toys for children who don't have toys." They settled on a project to give toys to Randall Children's Hospital.

People from the congregation heard of Davis' project and contributed their reverse offering

to it. A woman overheard Davis and his mother talking about the project while they were shopping for toys, and gave \$10. A friend heard about it via social media and gave almost \$100 worth of toys.

Davis' mom is involved with the Ronan Thompson Foundation, founded by Ronan's family after he died of cancer at age 3. May 12, Ronan's birthday, is designated as Ronan's Day of Love, and people are encouraged to do random acts of kindness in his honor—and to do them with pizzazz. Davis' mom chose this day to deliver the toys.

They loaded the car, squeezed Davis' red wagon in, and headed to Randall Children's Hospital. When they arrived, Davis loaded his wagon with toys and pulled it through the front doors. The hospital knew they were coming and had a large cart waiting. It took several wagon loads to empty the car and fill up the cart. Davis provided a narrative about the toys to the hospital staff. He told how My Little Pony dolls aren't real, but they're fun to play with. He said which car was his favorite. He told why many of the toys were chosen.

The hospital staff were amazed, and a lot of children received toys to play with—all because a little boy got \$20 dollars to spend on someone else. —Jean Keith-Altemus

Friends with the Weather

"To be a human is to live in a world of fear, grief, injustice, and disillusionment," writes Chris Good, explaining the genesis of a new project by a trio of musicians well known for their work in Mutual Kumquat. "How do we learn and grow in those challenging times, and strive to be sources of love, hope, passion, and vision? The weather inevitably comes at us every day. . . . How do we choose to live amidst the unpredictability of the storms and the sunny skies?"

Friends with the Weather founders are Seth Hendricks, pastor at Happy Corner Church of the Brethren, Englewood, Ohio; David Hupp, youth choir director and accompanist at Manchester Church of the Brethren and adjunct music professor at Manchester University in Indiana; and Chris Good, a member at Manchester living in Ann Arbor, Mich. The project also involves a number of others including producer/guitarist Seth Bernard of Earthwork Music Collective, bassist Brennan Andes (The Macpodz), drummer Julian Allen (Theo Katzman, Michelle Chamuel), and singers Lindsay Lou and Madelyn Grant.



“Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.”

—Maya Angelou, *Celebrations: Rituals of Peace and Prayer*.

Canada celebrated Thanksgiving on Oct. 10 this year. The United States celebrates on Nov. 24.



A healthy habit of gratitude

by Walt Wiltschek

We know Christians are supposed to be grateful. “Give thanks in all circumstances,” we’re told in 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Other passages—especially many of the Psalms—are filled with thanksgiving.

But did you know that being grateful can make you healthier, too?

A 2011 article in *The Huffington Post* detailed a study by Robert A. Emmons of the University of California at Davis and Michael E. McCullough of the University of Miami, which divided participants into three groups: one that kept a journal each week of five things for which they were grateful; one that kept a journal of five hassles they had faced; and a “neutral” group that listed five random events or circumstances without further instructions.

The group that recorded moments of gratitude not only “felt better about their lives” than the other groups but also had fewer health complaints and exercised more. A later study found that daily journaling had even greater benefits than doing it weekly, including greater empathy for others.

Similar studies by others also showed benefits. *The Huffington Post* quoted Blaire and Rita Justice of the University of Texas Health Science Center, who said, “A growing body of research shows that gratitude is truly amazing in its

physical and psychosocial benefits.”

Emmons and McCullough have written *The Psychology of Gratitude*, going further in depth into their research, and Emmons has penned several other books, including *Words of Gratitude for Mind, Body, and Soul*. For children, try *The Thank You Book* in the “Elephant & Piggie” series by Mo Willems, published this year.

Want more? A host of other books, both religious and non-religious, for children and adults, have been written on the topic. Or check out happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude, where you can find a list of 31 benefits of being more thankful, including better mental health and improved sleep—in case that Thanksgiving dinner isn’t enough to nudge you toward a nap.

Thanks-singing

One of the favorite Thanksgiving-themed hymns is “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come” with words by Henry Alford and music by George J. Elvey. The 19th-century English hymn, which originally had seven verses, celebrates the harvest—both literal and figurative. Another favorite, “We Gather Together,” is of Dutch origin and dates to the late 1500s.

“Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



courtesy of Aarona Willoughby

Refugee resettlement Hope, heart, hospitality

In 35 years of pastoring, it was one of the most rewarding experiences,” says Phil Reynolds. He pastors Hope Church of the Brethren in Freeport, Mich., one of several congregations and groups across the denomination that are active in refugee resettlement, or are planning to get involved.

What does it mean to resettle refugees in the United States at this time? The world has seen an unprecedented increase in the number of displaced people—with the horrific war in Syria bringing the crisis to a boil. At the same time, American politics has brought hard questions to bear on immigration policies, and the traditional welcome mat for refugees has frayed.

Here are stories to shed light on a sometimes misunderstood ministry.

Hope

“We had a great success” hosting a family from Somalia, says Reynolds. “The Hope congregation went way beyond what was expected, and the family is doing very well. It is very exciting for us to see God at work.”

The Muslim family includes father, mother, and three children. They arrived in Michigan in February, after spending years in South Africa in a refugee camp. Circumstances prevented a fourth child, a teenage girl, from joining them.

She still lives in Somalia with her grandmother.

The family spoke quite a bit of English, which helped their swift progress in becoming independent, but that does not mean it was easy—for them or for the church. The family survived violence and trauma, and even in their new and safe life they could not shake the habit of fear. “She had watched someone murdered right before her, in the civil war in Somalia,” Reynolds says of the mother. “Even though they were living in safety, they were still afraid.”

And even with cultural preparation, the church made mistakes. All the material goods they showered on the



Libby Kinsey

Hope members gather at the airport to welcome a refugee family from Somalia.



courtesy of Joanna Willoughby

Children from Common Spirit at a beach outing with children from the refugee family who is hosted by the congregation.

family became a burden when it was time to move. They gave the youngest girl a Barbie doll, which her parents considered inappropriate. One Hope member worried about lovingly putting her hand on the little boy's head. Was that okay? The father reassured her, "God's love is stronger than any mistake we might make."

The church's role was to provide a welcome and fill in gaps not covered by other agencies. Much of this work was carried out by Libby Kinsey, who coordinated the family's core support group. Hope worked with Bethany Christian Services, the Church World Service (CWS) partner in that part of Michigan. Bethany provided services such as housing, English tutoring, and employment services. Church members and friends helped furnish the home, provided transportation, taught the rules of the road, enrolled the children in school and tutored, read, and played with them.

Kinsey was "sold on the idea" after attending an initial meeting with Bethany, where she learned that even a small church can pull off refugee resettlement with as few as eight people. Although the congregation is aging, the church had been looking for a ministry that would unite its membership.

The decision to resettle refugees has a political aspect from which Reynolds does not shy away. "We accepted this idea about one and a half weeks after Governor Snyder said no refugees are coming to Michigan," he says.

Some people have been critical—mostly because the church did not try to convert the family to Christianity. The family was welcome to worship with the church, but the church also helped them find a mosque. The family's culture is conservative, with women and girls wearing the *hijab* or Muslim covering.

Reynolds says the church quickly learned that refugees have their own priorities. Plans to assimilate them

into "typical American life" turned out not to be what the family wanted. Instead, once the family spent the required six months in the home first provided for them in Grand Rapids, they moved to an area in Nebraska where there is a strong Somali community.

"We had to let them go. That was hard," Reynolds says. Witnessing how the Somalis prioritized community, however, "convicted us about where our true hope lies," he adds.

Kinsey is sure the love offered by Hope Church made the difference for the family's success. Six weeks after leaving, they called her to say hello. She learned that all three children are in school, the father is working a night job, the mother is learning to drive, and the family is renting their own home. —Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Heart

"There's a real heart for helping refugee families," says pastor Pam Reist of Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. "This congregation has a long history of hosting people who need a home."

Working through CWS, Elizabethtown has been hosting ethnic Karen families from Myanmar, also known as Burma, who first escaped to refugee camps in Thailand before gaining entry into the US. This summer it welcomed a family from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The church's history with refugees dates back to shortly after World War II, says Ken Chastain. With his wife, Carol, he has been helping host Karen refugees. Over the decades, Elizabethtown also helped resettle people from Vietnam and other war-torn areas. Chastain remembers that refugees lived behind the baptistry when the church was part of the sanctuary movement. He got involved after 9/11, when he was asked to help host an Iranian family.



Libby Kinsey

A Somali refugee sits in on a quilting session with women from the Hope Church.

Politics may be involved, he says, but “we can’t let that stop us from extending our help to people who need us.”

Reist highlights benefits to the church, such as learning about the refugees’ cultures. “At a potluck, what is better than food from Myanmar?” She says the church also enjoys seeing families succeed in integrating into American culture. Over time they become independent of the church’s help—for example, one family recently bought their own home. They also grow in numbers through births and by additional family members arriving in the US. And they grow as members of society—in September one of the Karen women became a US citizen.

Gina Strouse, a lead volunteer with the Congolese family, says refugees survive difficulties and dangers. The family from the DRC—a couple with two children, the father’s teenaged brother and sister, and his sister’s young child—escaped at two different times. The father was the first to make it to a refugee camp in Zimbabwe. His brother and sister, thinking he was dead, also escaped. “It was a matter of providence” that they found each other at the same camp, Strouse says. At the camp he met and married his wife, and their children were born there.

When one of the teenagers wrote an essay describing “home,” she wrote about the DRC: “I smelled dead bodies on the street.” Strouse thought to herself, “Thank goodness she doesn’t have to smell that any more.”

Elizabethtown has chosen the “all in” level of involvement, Strouse explains, helping with everything not covered by services provided through CWS.

Over the years, the church also has partnered with other nearby congregations. Chastain says, “We’ll do things for the families they are sponsoring, and vice versa.” For example, some years ago when Conewago Church of the Brethren hosted boys from Sudan, Chastain helped out.

Asked if she has had a rewarding experience, Strouse responds, “Oh my, yes!” She remembers when the Congolese women asked why she was doing so much for them. “I had to try to explain my faith,” she says. “It comes down to this. It just feels good to know you have been able to help someone.” —**Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford**

Hospitality

If you travel through Bridgewater, Va., and turn onto Broad Street near Bridgewater College, you’ll see a few blocks of houses that look like a typical stretch of small-town America. Inside one of them, though, something special has been happening for several decades.

Bridgewater Church of the Brethren purchased its first “Hospitality House” as a home for refugee families in 1991. Seven years later, the neighboring Presbyterian church wanted to expand its parking lot, and offered another house on the next block in exchange. The house has been welcoming families from Ukraine, Iraq, Central America, Somalia,

courtesy of Pam Reist



Ethnic Karen families from Myanmar are among the refugees hosted by Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren.

Sudan, Syria, and elsewhere to its two apartments ever since.

“It has always been something that’s been important to people here,” pastor Jeff Carr says. “It comes out of a sense of gratitude for what they have and wanting to create that opportunity for other people. This congregation finds its identity in service, and this has been a way to carry out that service.”

Bridgewater’s refugee ministry dates back to at least 1957. According to a refugee resettlement history written by Bridgewater member and current Mill Creek Church of the Brethren interim pastor Jim Miller, the church in that year sponsored a Dutch family fleeing war in Indonesia. The ministry picked up more fully in the 1970s and 1980s, Miller writes, when families poured in from places including Cuba, Ethiopia, Russia, and Vietnam. Naomi West and Lowell Heisey provided early leadership.

Initially refugees would stay in the homes of church members or hastily arranged affordable housing. As the ministry continued and grew, the congregation decided to purchase and furnish the Hospitality House. It was fully remodeled a few years ago with support from Vacation Bible School, a service project by the youth group, and donations from a memorial fund.

“As far as I know, we’re the only Church of the Brethren congregation that has something like that, and the only church in Virginia that has something like that,” says Dean Neher, who joined the Refugee Resettlement Committee after he retired in 1995, and became its chair in 1998. “It’s good, because we don’t have to go out and find housing each time.”

According to Miller’s history, more than 300 refugees from at least 16 countries have been assisted either solely by Bridgewater or in partnership with other churches. Neher admits he’s lost count, but he enjoys the work.

“Working with the families is always very interesting,” Neher says. “It’s something that needed to be done, and I could do it.”

Most of the refugee families move elsewhere in the US once they have adjusted, Neher says, but he still stays in touch with some families who settled in Bridgewater and nearby areas.

Church members eagerly pitch in with supplying food, taking families to appointments, helping with paperwork, donating funds, and cleaning and equipping the house to welcome each new family. The larger community has been supportive, too, Carr says.

“We’ve had no negative responses, and we get to introduce the community to some really nice folks,” Carr says. “And all the feedback I get from the congregation is very positive. We’ve had a lot of really good success stories.”

One recent family, for example, came from the Darfur region of Sudan. The father came first after escaping through the desert and eventually into Europe before making it to the US. He was initially resettled in Roanoke, Va., and found a job, but had a long commute to Waynesboro. Bridgewater, which is much closer to Waynesboro, was asked to host him. With the new arrangement, he was finally able to bring over his family, too, and met his son—born after he left four years earlier—for the first time.

The Virginia Council of Churches gave the congregation a citation in 2002 for the impressive extent of its work. More recently, CWS recognized Bridgewater as a 50-year partner.

Best of all, Carr says, is that the ministry really is owned by the whole congregation and carried out by a host of dedicated volunteers. “It’s vibrant,” he says. “It’s that sort of magic thing where I don’t have to do anything with it except brag on it.” —**Walt Wiltschek**

Excitement

“We’d been waiting for a family for six months or so. People were so excited,” says Joanna Willoughby of Common Spirit Church of the Brethren in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Their family arrived at the end of April—a mother from the DRC and her three children. She had lived in a refugee camp in Rwanda for 20 years, and all her children were born there. Her husband is still there because he could not accompany his family to the US—they were married after she had put together her refugee “case,” with all the required documentation. He is still completing his own application.

“That was one of her first questions, ‘How can I get my husband here?’” says Willoughby.

The church prepared “by collecting all the furnishings for a house,” says Willoughby. “But then our family showed up knowing very little English and speaking a language none of us had even heard of: *Kinyarwanda*.” It turned out to be difficult to find affordable housing for a family who has little English, no job, and no credit history.

The challenges of hosting “depend on the needs of your family,” Willoughby says. However, it has been less work than she expected. “A lot of us remember refugee resettle-



courtesy of Libby Kinsey

A Hope member introduces a refugee child to the joys of sledding.

ment from the ’70s and ’80s when the church was responsible for basically everything.” Today, Common Spirit is considered a co-sponsor working with Bethany Christian Services as the CWS partner organization. Co-sponsoring is “more about the personal connecting, getting to know the city, giving them rides,” Willoughby says.

Common Spirit has adjusted to cultural differences including a different Christian background—the family is Seventh Day Adventist. This has gone both ways, and Willoughby has had to explain why her two youngest children are African American—the Congolese woman could not figure out why black children would be adopted into a white family.

“You’re not trying to make them like you,” Willoughby asserts. “And you don’t want them to be dependent on you. The goal is to help them become self-sufficient. Really, your job is to make them feel welcome, and ready to care for themselves.”

The Congolese family is doing well, and Common Spirit already anticipates hosting another family.

—**Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford**

Fun

Hosting refugee families “is a lot of work, but it’s so fun,” says Sharon Bollinger of Middle Creek Church of the Brethren in Lititz, Pa. She and her husband, Glen, are on the committee for refugee ministry.

“I just love having a new family, getting all the stuff, and setting up the apartment,” she says. “It’s a lot of fun seeing it all come together.”

Bollinger first witnessed the church’s ministry with refugees when she was a child. “My parents did this when I was a girl, and the refugees were coming from Vietnam.” She remembers going with her parents to welcome refugees when they arrived. In later years, she and her family got to know the local Russian community very well when the church hosted refugees from Russia.

Now Middle Creek is hosting a family from Myanmar: a father and mother in their early 30s, who lived in refugee

camps for many years before coming to the US, and their three young children. They arrived in April 2015. Their youngest child was born in the US this summer. This is the fourth family from Burma that Middle Creek has sponsored since 2009.

Middle Creek works with CWS, which has an office in Lancaster. The agency expects a church to commit to host a refugee for three months. Bollinger says, “We usually support them for a year. As they get a job, and they start to pay for food and rent, we gradually decrease our support. It’s such a culture shock, there’s no way they can be self-supportive and adjusted to the culture earlier than a year.” Even after that, the committee continues to be in relationship with the family and may continue some support depending on circumstances.

One special service Bollinger provides is documentation of the journey to self-sufficiency—she takes photos of nearly every significant moment, from the arrival at the airport, to appointments with Social Security, to first days of school and birthdays. “It’s all a blur” for newly arrived families, she says. Her photo albums become treasured sources of important memories.

After the church completes its work with a family, the committee contacts CWS to ask for another. Middle Creek is out in the country, but it has been a good fit for refugees from Myanmar because there is a sizable Burmese community nearby. “It’s very helpful for us and the family because [members of the community] understand the language and can help explain things.”

The committee represents a core group, with many others in the congregation taking part. The committee puts requests in the church bulletin and recruits volunteers. Lists of needed household supplies are distributed to Sunday school classes. Church members go to the airport to welcome families. People show up for moving-in days.

“Everyone can get involved,” Bollinger says. “Helping refugees is a practical way to live out our faith. It is an opportunity for us to be globally minded and do mission work right here in our own neighborhood.”—Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Welcome

La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren keeps a welcoming spirit at the forefront of congregational life. A statement on the church’s website says, “We believe that true welcome is the foundation of our community.”

It seemed only natural, then, to extend that welcome to the refugee community in southern California. “It really is a natural fit,” senior pastor Susan Boyer says. “Interfaith work is important to us.”

After the shootings in nearby San Bernardino last December, Boyer says the Muslim community in the area experienced “a lot of prejudice.” La Verne members stood in front of a Muslim school to offer a different sort of wit-

ness, connecting with school officials to provide a ministry of presence and safety.

Now, the congregation is exploring ways to be more actively involved in hospitality for refugees, particularly those coming from Syria.

Josih Hostetler, chair of La Verne’s Peace and Justice Commission, says the conversations began through participation with a group called Progressive Christians Uniting. PCU and an Episcopal group called IRIS came to La Verne and led a session about refugee work, taking participants

Gina Strouse



This family from the Democratic Republic of the Congo is hosted by the Elizabethtown Church.

Church World Service partners with churches to resettle refugees

Church World Service (CWS) is the major organization in the United States serving as a partner for Church of the Brethren congregations and other faith groups wanting to help resettle refugees.

CWS invites churches to serve in a number of capacities and levels of involvement, including as host communities for refugees, as a Welcome Team for arriving refugees, by collecting a Welcome Home Kit for a refugee family, or even by welcoming a family re-

motely. A congregation should contact the local CWS affiliate office for more information.

The Church of the Brethren, through Brethren Disaster Ministries, participates with CWS and other organizations in “Refugees Welcome” at www.refugeesarewelcome.org. The website offers stories about people welcoming and hosting refugees, and resources for refugee resettlement. CWS hopes churches will continue to host and register events using the website.

through all the steps that refugees must face and the adjustments they must make.

“Out of that, we decided we would like to participate with other churches in the area,” Hostetler says.

Small steps have occurred so far. La Verne assisted a family by raising money for rent—a particular challenge with the high-priced real estate of the greater Los Angeles area. Hillcrest, a Brethren retirement community in La Verne, partnered by donating truckloads of furniture, much of it assisting a local mosque that is resettling families.

The Peace and Justice Commission is collecting signatures from people in the congregation who are willing to assist with tutoring, teaching English, taking people to appointments, and other tasks. They are particularly seeking someone who would be the point person for the outreach effort.

While the shape is still forming, the congregation is clear that this is important, and something central to who they are as followers of Christ. “It really does come back to our whole statement of welcome,” Hostetler says. “I think people ‘get it’ in the church. It’s part of our broader message.”

—Walt Wiltschek

Mercy

At the 2015 Southern Ohio District Conference, delegates approved the formation of a committee to look into adopting a refugee family in light of the current humanitarian crisis.

At the January meeting of the district board, Linda Brandon was appointed district representative to the Southern Ohio District Refugee Resettlement Task Team. Other volunteers came forward to join the team: Paula Bowser (Trotwood Church of the Brethren); Linda Brandon (Troy); Ralph Dull (Lower Miami); Wendy Noffsinger Erbaugh (Happy Corner); chair Neal Fitze, who is a Brethren Heritage Center volunteer; and scribe Isaac Zika (Oakland). Margo Royer-Miller (Trotwood) will assist the team as time and family demands permit.

Most of us have not done this before, so we hope to partner with a social service agency. The team meets monthly, and has an initial goal of helping at least one family. Because of the wholesale devastation in Syria, our

Sharon Bollinger



A refugee family receives help with groceries from Middle Creek Church of the Brethren.

desire is to resettle a Syrian family. That said, we are open to the leading of the Spirit about whether to consider other nationalities.

This past year, Bethany Theological Seminary professor Dan Ulrich conducted a series of four hour-long scripture study sessions on “Befriending the Stranger,” highlighting the biblical mandate to care for the sojourner, refugee, stranger—anyone fleeing natural or man-made disasters, drought, famine, war, hunger, or persecution.

We strongly believe that educating our team members and our district is the most important focus for us right now in light of our current political climate, and the fearmongering that has been part of recent election campaigns. We understand that we all have strong emotions on this topic, and fears—both real and imagined. We know that there has been a constant stream of terrorist activity and subsequent deaths here and abroad. We want to ensure that all concerns are carefully considered, and that our decisions are consistent with the facts and not based on overblown or irrational fears.

We do not want to harm the fabric of our community in this process, so our goal is to foster conversation and to listen carefully to the concerns of our members. We want to stress what we all can agree on: the call of Christ to show mercy. —Paula Bowser

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is someone who fled his or her own country because of persecution, or a well-founded fear of persecution, based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Millions of refugees around the world are forced to flee their homes due to violence and persecution. Ac-

cording to the UN Refugee Agency, as of the end of 2015 there were 21.3 million refugees, and a further 40.8 million internally displaced persons.

Once refugees cross a border to seek safety, there are three traditional durable solutions:

1. Integrate into their country of asylum.

2. Return to their home country.

3. Resettle to a third country.

Resettlement is the option of last resort for the most vulnerable refugees who can’t stay where they are or return home. Less than one percent of the world’s refugees are ever resettled.

—Refugee Council USA

A biblical basis for welcoming refugees

by Dan Ulrich

One of our essential commitments in the Church of the Brethren is to seek the mind of Christ together. We have promised to take our cues from Jesus, not from politicians of any stripe. If we want to understand the mind of Christ in regard to refugee resettlement, we do well to begin with Jesus' Bible, which is more or less what we call the Old Testament. From there we can move to a study of Jesus' life and teaching as remembered by his earliest followers. Although this article only skims the surface of some relevant scriptures, part of its purpose is to invite deeper study.

Jesus' Bible often mentions refugees, meaning people who relocate to escape danger, including the danger of starvation. Sarah and Abraham are refugees when they escape famine by going to Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20). This early example of refugee resettlement does not go well. Abraham is afraid of the Egyptians, so he persuades Sarah to lie to immigration authorities about their marital status. When the truth comes out they are deported. Fortunately, they leave Egypt unharmed and can practice better hospitality toward other travelers later.

Fast forward to a camp at the Oaks of Mamre, where Abraham sees three men approaching his tent (Genesis 18:1-15). This time he does not act out of fear. His culture allows for questioning strangers before welcoming them, but Abraham and Sarah forego that step as they hurry to provide shade, precious water, and a huge feast. After footwashing and a meal, guests are expected to share news, and these guests do not disappoint. They stun Sarah with the word that she will give birth in old age. Abraham and Sarah exemplify the hope that hospitality can bring amazing rewards for hosts as well as guests. Recalling this story, the author of Hebrews advises, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (13:2).

The blessings of hospitality are also evident in Ruth's relationship with Naomi and Boaz. Ruth marries into a family of refugees from Bethlehem while they are staying in her home country of Moab. After all the men in the family die, Ruth insists on following her mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem despite the widows' desperate situation (Ruth 1:1-22). The blessings begin when Boaz, a wealthy landowner, obeys Leviticus 19:9-10 by leaving some grain in the field for the poor and foreigners to glean. Boaz might have looked down on a foreign woman like Ruth, but instead he admires her hard work, courage, and loyalty to Naomi. His

prayer for her anticipates future developments: "May you have a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!" (Ruth 2:12).

When he tells Ruth to drink water that the young men have drawn, there is an echo of other stories about refugees who receive drinks at wells and end up getting married (Genesis 29:1-30; Exodus 2:15-22). We might expect Ruth to marry one of Boaz's workers; but, no! Soon Naomi is grand-mothering a baby, and the whole nation is blessed. Ruth and Boaz become the great-grandparents of King David and ancestors of Jesus (Ruth 4:13-17).

Whereas hospitality for foreigners can result in blessings for all concerned, the law obeyed by Boaz offers another motive worth considering. According to several passages in the Law of Moses, God's people should empathize with foreigners because of the memory of being oppressed in Egypt. Israel's treatment of foreigners must be better than Egypt's. The same chapter in Leviticus that provides for gleaning goes on to command, "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34). Other laws give a similar reason for allowing foreign workers to rest on the Sabbath: "You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9-12; compare Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

Such motives only work when the collective memory of having been foreigners remains strong. Fortunately, Israelite worship constantly reinforced this memory. At Passover and other festivals, Israelite families confessed their unity with the earlier generations that God had rescued from famine, slavery, and genocide. A good example is the creed that Deuteronomy 26:3-10 prescribes for an annual harvest festival:

"A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. . . ."

The law requires worshippers to recite the story of their people's experience as refugees, using pronouns that include later generations in the story. Since this practice helps to teach empathy for refugees and other foreigners, it is no coincidence that Deuteronomy 26:11 expressly includes foreigners in the thanksgiving feast.

COURAGEOUS LOVE OF FOREIGNERS TAKES CENTER STAGE IN ONE OF JESUS' MOST FAMOUS PARABLES, FEATURING A COMPASSIONATE SAMARITAN.

Such are the laws and stories that Jesus would have recited as a youth in the synagogue or during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. His self-identification with refugees has deep roots in that tradition. In addition, the Gospel of Matthew gives a more personal reason why Jesus identifies with refugees. His family escapes mass murder by fleeing to Egypt. Even as an adult, Jesus remains a refugee. He moves around to escape persecution, and he instructs his disciples to do the same (10:23, 12:14-15, 14:1-13).

Jesus repeatedly makes promises that reflect his identification with refugees and other vulnerable people. At the end of a long warning about persecution, he assures his disciples, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me" (Matthew 10:40). He goes on to promise a reward to "whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple" (10:42). "Little" in this context means lowly and vulnerable, which is how Jesus expects the disciples to carry out their mission. A similar promise refers to a child that Jesus has lifted up as an example of lowliness: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." Although Matthew 18:1-5 does not describe this child as a refugee, attentive listeners can catch an echo of Matthew's infancy narrative, which repeatedly refers to Jesus as "the child." Jesus understandably identifies with a child who needs welcoming.

The same theme resounds in the famous judgment scene of Matthew 25:31-46, when Jesus surprises the nations with the news that "whatever you did to the least of these who are members of my family, you did to me." Scholars debate who is included in "the least of these who are members of my family." The related promises in Matthew 10:40-42 refer to disciples as "little ones," and Matthew 12:46-50 describes disciples as Jesus' family. Matthew's earliest audiences could have heard "hungry," "thirsty," "stranger," "naked," "sick," and "imprisoned" as descriptions of their own needs, or perhaps the needs of other disciples who suffered while following Jesus' call to mission. It seems, then, that "the least of these" could be limited to disciples.

Nevertheless, as we seek to follow the mind of Christ, we would be wise to welcome non-Christians as well as Christians. We are not in a position to judge whom Jesus might claim as family, and other biblical calls to love and hospitality are more obviously open-ended. We have seen that Leviticus 19:33-34 includes foreigners in the command to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, and

Jesus expands the definition of "neighbor" to include even enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). In addition, if we would like to be welcomed as refugees, the implications of the Golden Rule are clear (7:12).

Paul makes clear in his interpretation of Jesus' love-command that genuine love requires concrete actions and includes people who are outside as well as inside the church. "Contribute to the needs of the saints," Paul writes in Romans 12:13. Then he continues with the Greek phrase, *philoxenian diōkontes*, which literally means "pursue love of strangers or foreigners." In contrast to the passive ways we sometimes practice hospitality, "pursue" means that we should actively seek opportunities to welcome others. Interestingly, the Greek word *xenos*, meaning stranger or foreigner, is at the root of both *philoxenia* (love of foreigners) and *xenophobia* (fear of foreigners). The contrast between these words calls to mind another apostle's teaching that "love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Courageous love of foreigners takes center stage in one of Jesus' most famous parables, featuring a compassionate Samaritan. A review of the historical context can help this parable pack more of its original surprise. Judeans and Samaritans had been enemies as far back as the split between the northern and southern kingdoms in about 930-920 BCE. Deportations imposed later by different empires increased the cultural distance between the former kingdoms. A long-standing dispute about where to worship came to a head in 113 BCE when the Judean high priest John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritans' temple on Mount Gerizim. The conflict still smoldered in Jesus' time, as many Judeans considered Samaritans unclean half-breeds, while many Samaritans considered Judeans wrongheaded.

Without being told otherwise, Jesus' listeners would probably assume that the man left for dead in the parable is a Judean. If so, he could expect help from a priest or Levite going down from Jerusalem, but not from a Samaritan. He might not even want help from a Samaritan. Surprisingly, however, the Samaritan is the one who acts as a neighbor, showing mercy courageously and sacrificially. He pursues *philoxenia* even with someone stereotyped as his enemy.

Now we are in a better position to discern the mind of Christ regarding refugees. Jesus understands that people can become channels of God's blessing by practicing hospitality toward strangers and foreigners. Jesus empathizes deeply with refugees, both because of his personal experience and because of Israel's collective memory of

escape from slavery and genocide. Since the Church of the Brethren also has a collective memory of flight from persecution, we may hear Jesus calling us to “pay forward” the welcome and religious freedom that Brethren received on first coming to America.

Jesus’ command that we love our neighbors explicitly includes people that others might stereotype as enemies.



Jesus understands that active, inclusive hospitality involves significant costs and risks, but he calls us to accept those as part of the cost of discipleship. He does not want us to act out of fear, but out of the love that drives out fear.

He invites us to trust that the blessings gained by welcoming refugees will far outweigh the costs. One of the blessings Jesus promises is that we will experience his presence more deeply when we welcome children and other vulnerable people in his name. Someday we may even find ourselves among the nations who hear Jesus say, “Come, blessed ones, inherit the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Whatever you did for the least of these who are members of my family, you did for me.” 

Dan Ulrich is Weiland Professor of New Testament Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind. This is from a presentation he prepared for Southern Ohio District, which has begun working on a refugee resettlement project.

Libby Kinsey of Hope Church with refugee children from Somalia.

Five things we may not know about refugees

Much has been said about immigrants, and particularly about refugees. While there certainly is room for differences of opinion on how our country deals with refugees from war-torn areas like Syria and Iraq, and room for differences of opinion as to what our responsibility as Christians or Brethren is to them, these differences should at least be based on real information. So here are five facts that many people do not know about refugees, and particularly about those coming from the Middle East.

1. Many people are unsure as to what refugees are, and confuse them with asylees or other types of immigrants. In the United States, refugees are those who apply for refugee status in the US through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and go through an extensive vetting process before being admitted. Asylees, on the other hand, are people who enter the US by some other method, apply for political asylum through the US legal system, and are not subject to the same vetting process.

2. Talk has focused on the need to do a better job of vetting refugees, particularly those from Muslim

countries. Refugees are already subject to an intense, multi-stage vetting process, far more rigorous than that faced by any other category of immigrant, which usually takes longer than a year. It includes iris scans and fingerprinting, as well as name checks against databases held by the intelligence community, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the State Department, at several different stages of the process.

3. Of the more than 3 million people admitted to the US as refugees since 1975, only 12, or .0004 percent, have been arrested or removed from the country for security concerns. None have committed a terrorist attack in the US. Asylees and other classes of immigrants have been responsible for several.

4. Some say most refugees from Syria are young men, and are more likely to be involved in crime or terror. However, of the Syrian refugees admitted this year, less than a quarter are men between the ages of 18 and 50. Nearly half are children under the age of 14.

5. One thing that has remained constant throughout US history is

opposition to incoming refugees and other immigrant populations: 71 percent of Americans opposed allowing more Cubans to settle in the US in 1980; 62 percent opposed allowing more Vietnamese and Cambodians in 1979; 55 percent opposed allowing more Hungarians in 1958. Before the advent of modern polling data, history records widespread opposition to the immigration of Poles, Slavs, Italians, Irish, Hispanics, Chinese, Japanese, and many other groups, even when they were fleeing violence and persecution. Even our German Brethren ancestors were met with prejudice and jealousy in 18th and 19th century Pennsylvania by residents who feared they brought “foreign ways” and were buying up too much land. What a different and lesser country we would be if those who opposed earlier waves of refugees and immigrants had gotten their way.

We hope readers will find these facts useful as they consider how best to carry out God’s instructions for how we are to treat the foreigner in our midst: “*The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself*” (*Leviticus 19:34a*).



What Muslims are experiencing in America today

by Dean Johnston

On March 7, I attended a community event at the Islamic

Foundation of Peoria, Ill., which included a brief tour of their mosque and a number of speakers, including civic leaders and clergy from the Christian and Jewish communities around Peoria. The purpose of the event was to show support for the local Islamic community, which has been experiencing ongoing and intensifying instances of bigotry.

It is hard for us as Brethren to understand what Muslims in our community currently experience, because as a group we Brethren fit very comfortably into the cradle of American, Christian culture. It is hard for us to understand what it feels like to be targeted because of our faith and

branded as dangerous outsiders in our own country.

Imagine if you arrived at church one Sunday and found “patriots” with assault rifles and demonstrators with anti-Brethren slogans standing on the sidewalk in front of the church.

Imagine if a high percentage of Brethren children experienced bullying incidents at their schools because of their and their parents’ faith.

Imagine if you turned on your TV set one day to see a news story about three Brethren students being shot and killed because one of their neighbors objected to their faith and their clothing.

Imagine if one of your neighbors made silhouettes depicting a man with a rifle aimed at a Brethren kneeling, and posted them in his front yard as

a visible display of his disdain for you and your faith community.

Imagine if you watched politicians selling fear and hatred directed at your faith community in exchange for votes.

Imagine that the front-running candidate of one of the two major parties in this country advocated registering every Church of the Brethren member, closing down “troublesome” Brethren churches, and not allowing any more Brethren to come into the country.

Imagine if a member of the Brethren faith community stood up silently as a peaceful protest at a political rally only to be thrown out amid the jeers and taunts of a howling mob.

Imagine if you were born and grew up in the United States, but are told over and over again that everything you have grown up believing is “of

THERE IS A TOXIC PARADIGM FINDING ITS WAY INTO CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT THAT IDENTIFIES ALL AMERICAN MUSLIMS AS “BAD GUYS.”

the devil” and that you should go back where you came from.

Imagine how you would feel if you watched a political town hall meeting and saw a man stand up and say, “We have a Brethren problem in this country,” followed by loud, sustained applause.

Imagine if the heresies and atrocities of your worst enemies were used by the larger society to define you, your family, and your local faith community.

If we can put ourselves into this challenging picture,

then we might understand what our neighbors and fellow Americans in the Muslim community face every day, and we might be able to understand why they need our love, protection, and support. We are all God’s children, and in that important sense we are all our brothers and sisters. In addition, we are all Americans, with the same values, hopes, aspirations, and rights.

Elsewhere in the world, Christians are being targeted. Brethren faith communities, along with other Christians, are targeted and persecuted in Africa and the Middle East. This may lead some to see religious persecution and terror attacks as a war between Christianity and Islam, but most Muslims see these actions as enacted by a relatively few, vicious, fundamentalist heretics whose beliefs and actions are abhorrent to the vast majority of Muslims. What doesn’t always make the news is the compassion of people of other faiths for their Christian neighbors.

To be clear, the point here is not to debate the relative merits of Christianity versus Islam, nor is it to rehash history. Both Christians and Muslims have committed their share of atrocities in the past and present. Islam, like Christianity, takes many different forms around the world. Islam in Indonesia, for example, is practiced very differently from the way Islam is practiced in Saudi Arabia, and both of those are very different from the way Islam is practiced in the United

States. In both Christianity and Islam the lines between culture and religion are often blurry.

There is a toxic paradigm finding its way into contemporary American Christian thought that identifies all American Muslims as “bad guys.” I wonder, if Jesus were teaching with parables today would he use a Muslim in place of a Samaritan in his parable of the Good Samaritan? I think he might.

Furthermore, America’s best defense against domestic terrorism by misguided individual extremists is an American Islamic community that is well integrated and accepted into the larger American society. Demonizing Muslim Americans, thereby pushing them out of mainstream American culture and causing them to live in fear of their own country, is not the way to do that.

The important point is that locally as well as in the United States generally, Muslims are living in fear of being targeted, bullied, and discriminated against because of their faith.

So what do I hope my fellow Breth-

ren will do? Just be Christians! We have to walk the walk before we can talk the talk. Don’t allow hate speech against Muslims and other vulnerable minorities to go unchallenged. Show friendship when the opportunity presents itself. Separate the disagreements you have with Islam (the religion) from Muslims (our neighbors). Treat others as you and your family would want to be treated. If God does give you the opportunity to discuss your faith with a Muslim friend, do so with love and respect and let God change hearts as God wills.

Last Easter, Pope Francis washed feet much as we do at love feast. He washed the feet of refugees of many faiths: Muslims, Hindus, Catholics, and Coptic Christians. When Christ told us to love each other as “I have loved you” (John 13:34), he meant an all-inclusive love crossing religious and cultural boundaries. Are we up to that challenge? With God’s help I think we are. 

Dean Johnston is a member of Peoria (Ill.) Church of the Brethren.



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Interfaith engagement

In 1991, when Annual Conference adopted the report “Peacemaking: The Calling of God’s People in History,” the Church of the Brethren publicly expressed a commitment to “explore avenues of interfaith dialogue leading toward a visible expression of God’s plan for human unity.” Again, in 2015, Annual Conference adopted a “Resolution on Christian



CHRISTINA BUCHER

Minority Communities,” which includes the recommendation that we “commit to interfaith dialogues and peace initiatives in our communities and across the globe to promote religious tolerance, understanding, and peacebuilding between religious communities.” At Elizabethtown College, we have created an interdisciplinary academic program in the study of interfaith leadership, which

we hope will prepare graduates to promote religious understanding between both individuals and communities.

The roots of the Church of the Brethren are found in 18th-century Europe, a time and place scarred by religious intolerance. Despite persecution for beliefs and practices that deviated from what was considered orthodox at the time, Brethren founders staunchly maintained a commitment to nonviolence. Three centuries later, our sisters and brothers in Nigeria practice nonviolence in the face of

religious life office connected with IFYC. Through this new program—the first undergraduate interfaith studies major in the country—not only do we want students to understand persons from different faith traditions, we want students prepared to become leaders in interfaith cooperation.

In a time when the liberal arts come under fire for being “irrelevant,” Elizabethtown College Interfaith Leadership Studies (ILS) majors develop both knowledge about different religious traditions and skills in conflict transformation. Every day we see reports in the media of how religious differences contribute to hatred and violence. At Elizabethtown, students in the ILS program study concrete examples of interfaith cooperation. All students at Elizabethtown complete two “signature learning experiences” through which they connect theory and practice in concrete ways. One ILS major practiced his media skills as an intern with On Earth Peace. Other ILS majors have contributed to the knowledge base about Boko Haram violence in Nigeria. Collaborating with the Church of the Brethren Office of Public Witness, these students also practice teamwork skills as they collect information.

As Brethren we know what it means to be “different.” Some of us dress differently than our neighbors or co-workers, a difference that may elicit questions or raised eyebrows. Some of us have refused to go to war, a difference that has sometimes met with our neighbors’ disapproval. We may find ourselves explaining why we don’t fly a US flag on the Fourth of July or why we have grape

AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS, WE COMMIT OURSELVES “TO BEHAVE TOWARDS OTHERS AS WE WOULD LIKE OTHERS TO BEHAVE TOWARDS US.”

fierce persecution. We are a community who knows religious discrimination and religious persecution. Our own experiences of intolerance no doubt inspire us to work for peace between religious communities that “orient around religion differently” to use the language of Eboo Patel, founder of Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC).

Given the Brethren heritage of Elizabethtown College, it seemed only natural for the religious studies department to develop an academic program that examines interfaith cooperation. Although interfaith understanding has long been an implicit goal of the department, we saw an opportunity to strengthen and deepen that commitment when the college’s

juice, not wine, at communion.

When we explain how our actions are rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus, we hope for toleration, if not understanding, appreciation, or agreement. As followers of Jesus, we commit ourselves “to behave towards others as we would like others to behave towards us.” Students in the Interfaith Leadership Studies program at Elizabethtown explore avenues of interfaith cooperation that express appreciation of the myriad ways that God moves in our midst. 

Christina Bucher is Carl W. Ziegler Professor of Religion at Elizabethtown College in Elizabethtown, Pa.



Nigeria's long journey home

by Markus Gamache

"The Israelites . . . said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?'" (Exodus 14:10-11a).

Camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) began to form in northeast Nigeria in the city of Maiduguri and in Yobe State by late 2009, after Boko Haram started launching deadly attacks that July. Since then, the population of the camps has been on the increase. Camps later spread to all parts of the country.

People took displaced relations and friends into their homes, but there were not enough places to accommodate everyone. Camps were the only answer, and the camps were established by various sectors, non-governmental organizations, the government, individuals, churches, and mosques.

Many people who survived the violent attacks of Boko

Haram, and were privileged to be alive, took refuge at IDP camps hoping for things to improve. Most had witnessed killings of spouses, children, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, or even military personnel.

Those terrible acts are what they will always remember. Many still don't know exactly what happened to their houses, animals, and everything else that made up their former lives. Some have been out of their homes for three years, some for two.

The IDP camps are solely dependent on the food supplies that are being donated. Boko Haram has made matters worse by attacking IDP camps in the Maiduguri area and at the town of Bama. Another problem is that government corruption crept into the handling of relief materials, and some materials meant for the camps were diverted by people vested with the responsibility to manage or deliver them.

The people living in IDP camps have been rescued from violence, but now are in danger of losing their lives to



Donna Farrell

severe hunger. Mostly it is women and children who are malnourished. Some have contracted illnesses due to poor feeding, some have died due to lack of treatment of their protracted illnesses.

Returnees must begin anew

Displaced people have begun to return to their villages, which have been reclaimed by the Nigerian military, but many are regretting it because they have nothing to eat. They may find the assets they toiled for all their lives destroyed—buildings, food, farms, churches, animals. There are reports of some people going into fresh trauma, sickness, and loss of memory because of what they see on their return.

After returning home there is still fear of attack, since so many places are still under the control of Boko Haram. Many people also are afraid of political enemies, business enemies, ethnic enemies, and religious differences.

In the past months, places like Madagali have continued to be under attack, with insurgents coming at frequent intervals to take their little amounts of food, mats, mosquito nets, and any other valuables. In Damboa area of Borno State, some people were discovered digging and eating roots and the leaves of trees in order to survive. Damboa is close to Chibok, and Lassa, and all those areas have not been free from attacks, although the military has been chasing Boko Haram away.

Those who have accommodated dozens of displaced people in their houses also face the threat of hunger. Their facilities have been overstretched, resources have been exhausted, and they are not able to meet the demands of their own families. Sickness of all kinds is affecting host families who are not able to pay hospital bills.

Nigeria Crisis Response continues

The Nigeria Crisis Response of the Church of the Brethren and EYN continues to supply food and other aid to people living in IDP camps and others in need, through the work of the EYN Disaster Team and partner NGOs including CCEPI (Center for Caring, Empowerment, and Peace Initiatives).

A particular area for food distribution has been Maiduguri, where recent distributions took place in September and October.

“The EYN churches in Maiduguri have been housing and caring for hundreds to thousands of displaced persons,” reports Roxane Hill, coordinator of the Nigeria Crisis Response. “A medical team often accompanies the food distributions to provide

limited health services to the IDPs. We also have had four trauma workshops in Maiduguri, and a training of workshop leaders is planned.”

However, Brethren have focused their main effort south of Maiduguri in southern Borno State and Adamawa State, notes Roy Winter, associate executive director of Global Mission and Service and Brethren Disaster Ministries. He visited Nigeria in September, and reports that “this is good because few organizations are working in these areas, while many are working around Maiduguri.”

Nigeria Crisis Response staff report a variety of underlying causes for a worsening food crisis in northeast Nigeria, including inflation in food prices, lack of aid for families who are hosting IDPs, and the inability of dis-

placed farmers to plant their crops.

Winter says one challenge is simply large numbers of people in need: “The Maiduguri area has around 1.5 million IDPs, more than double the normal population.” Hill also points to government corruption. “There has been government money set aside in Nigeria for feeding the people in the northeast,” she says, “but due to corruption of the system, the needy people are not receiving the help.

“We are confident that our EYN Disaster Team funds allocated for food are reaching the most vulnerable in the areas where we do the food distributions.”

For more information and to support the Nigeria Crisis Response go to www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis.

—Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

WE MUST STRUGGLE TO SEE HOW WE CAN DEAL WITH THE PRESENT SITUATION, OR ELSE TOMORROW MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT.

Many IDPs who decided to go back home have to pay a fortune to reach the nearest hospital, or stay at home and wait for their final day to meet their ancestors. Going back home may mean giving up for death.

Our situation is proving that before the attacks of Boko Haram, and the destruction of oil facilities in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian system as a whole was on the verge of collapse. The fight between the government and the militants has succeeded in bringing this country to almost a standstill, with no progress in any sector of life. Unemployment is high, poverty is eating more and more people, religious differences are growing and even spreading. Trying to build understanding between Muslims and Christians is becoming more complex.

So many efforts have been put in place to address the issues facing Nigeria, but because of the destruction caused by the violence much of the impact of these efforts is not felt.

The needs of the present

Sometimes it is not good to talk about the past, because the moment you start you see trauma glaring from the faces of the people. Trauma has its stages, and some have more effects than others. For example, I know there are things that I do now that are not in line with my natural way of life. Since the beginning of this madness, my mind has not been the same, but I have to pretend just to encourage those who have seen the killing and the burning.

Support from the Church of the Brethren, SHARE Foundation in Germany, Mission 21 in Switzerland, and others brings healing to our hearts. We equally commend the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Alhaji Aliko Dangote for their support to IDPs. The support is building a new hope. We know that we are not alone. People from afar are thinking of us, and we feel loved and secure in God's love.



Danna Parcel

We must struggle to see how we can deal with the present situation, or else tomorrow may be more difficult. Monies have been donated, we have been consoled over and over again, but returning back to the villages and starting from scratch is more difficult and scary.

Now that we are going home, do not tire of taking care of us. The needs at the present time are more than the ones you have met. The rebuilding of churches, houses, schools, hospitals, farms, wells, businesses—these surely will take time. Is it just too much for people who have worked hard to give millions of dollars to Nigerians whom you do not know and have never even seen?

The problems of this time are too many to address, but we must start somewhere, at least to show to the world that we are still alive, and we can do our part.

Markus Gamache is staff liaison for Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). He is a founder of the Gurku intentional inter-faith community for displaced Christian and Muslim families.

Alarming numbers

In September, humanitarian aid groups involved in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa that have suffered Boko Haram violence reported its continuing effects. The violence has contributed to a worsening food crisis in northeast Nigeria that affects young children in particular. These figures are from an Associated Press interview with the UNICEF chief in Nigeria, unless otherwise noted:

- As many as 75,000 children will die over the next year in famine-like conditions
- Severe malnutrition is found in 20 to 50 percent of children in pockets of northeast Nigeria
- Most of the estimated 2.6 million IDPs are subsistence farmers who have been unable to plant for at least 2 years
- Of 4 million people in desperate need of food, about 2.2 million are trapped in areas where Boko Haram is operating or in areas that are still dangerous, with 65,000 living in famine-like conditions
- In special need of assistance are the 2.5 million IDPs who are children under 5, pregnant women, and nursing mothers (21st Century Wilberforce Initiative and the Stefanus Foundation)
- Across West Africa more than 6 million people in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon face severe hunger, including 1 million on the edge of famine (International Rescue Committee, Oxfam, and other humanitarian groups)

Africa Great Lakes

Joint work yields harvests and blessings

by Jeff Boshart

In 2011 the Global Food Initiative (GFI, formerly the Global Food Crisis Fund) of the Church of the Brethren began supporting food production efforts in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Violence and insecurity abound in this region. Three Christian groups in three different countries—the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Burundi—independently and without knowledge of each other, were working at peacemaking and trauma healing. Each group felt it was time to add an agricultural component to the work.

The main focus of these projects revolved around inter-tribal and ethnic conflicts, particularly among the Twa or Batwa people, who are sometimes known as pygmies. The Twa are found throughout the Great Lakes region. They have lived for centuries as hunter-gatherers, surviving in the forest. Other ethnic groups have treated the Twa poorly and even at times took them as slaves. Modern armed conflicts have driven the Twa from the forests and into refugee settlements. Displaced and without access to the life-sustaining forests, the Twa began to steal from local farmers, leading to increasing clashes.

In the eastern part of the DRC, a group called Sha-

lom Ministry for Reconciliation and Development (SHAMIRED) began teaching farming techniques to the Twa in 2011, under the leadership of executive director Ron Lubungo. SHAMIRED is headquartered in the town of Ngovi, in South Kivu Province, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. To date, this project has received a total of more than \$35,000 in GFI grants for banana and cassava production along with funds for a cassava mill. More than 100 Twa families work side by side in these fields with other ethnic groups.

Also in 2011, Evangelistic Training Outreach Ministries of Rwanda (ETOMR), a ministry of the Evangelical Friends Church of Rwanda, initiated a potato growing project among the Twa. This effort, introduced to GFI through pastor Marla Abe of Carlisle (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, is spearheaded by pastor Etienne Nsanzimana Gisenyi in Rubavu District in western Rwanda. Participants raise Irish potatoes in the rich volcanic soils common in the region. A success of this program is the ability of participants to purchase health insurance, along with increased incomes and food security. To date this effort has received more than \$35,000 in GFI grants.

A new partnership developed with Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services (THARS) of Bujumbura, Burundi, in 2014. GFI provided funds to purchase a cassava mill for an initiative with a women's group called RAMIRIZADUKORE, which means, "Let us get serious with our work." Founded in 1999 by David Niyonzima, THARS works with various ethnic groups including Tutsi and Hutu. However, its Farmer Field School project focuses on the Twa, as well as trauma healing with women's groups affected by violence in the country. THARS has received nearly \$40,000 from the GFI for farmer training classes, a cassava mill, and water filtration projects. Church of the Brethren member John Braun of Wenatchee, Wash., is executive director of THARS International.

With support from GFI, all three groups sent delegations to several agricultural conferences in the region. The first was the East Africa Highlands Symposium sponsored by Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization (ECHO) in Burundi. Out of this conference grew a desire on the part of agronomists working with each group to learn more about a mulch-based or conservation farming technique called Farming God's Way. Once again with





support from GFI, representatives of the three groups traveled to Kenya for a week of hands-on training with staff from Care of Creation, Kenya. The goal of Care of Creation is to instill a creation care or stewardship ethic among churches and farmers in East Africa.

Most recently, in August, a Twa conference was jointly funded, together with the Emerging Global Mission Fund, for representatives of the three groups to come together to share their unique challenges and successes.

Each of the three groups has implemented new strategies for not only conserving but building soil through the addition of organic materials at planting time, as well as maintaining mulch cover throughout the growing season. They are reporting increased yields of all crop varieties planted.

The agricultural and trauma healing work of these organizations and the Church of the Brethren involvement through visits, trainings, and workshops has led to an unexpected interest by church leaders in all three countries to begin planting new churches among the Twa. There is strong desire for these new churches to be affiliated with the Church of the Brethren in the United States. In Rwanda and the DRC, these groups already are calling themselves the Church of the Brethren in Rwanda and Eglise des Freres au Congo. Denominational leadership here in the United States is in a process of discernment over how best to relate institutionally with these emerging Brethren groups.

Against the backdrop of increasing political tensions in Burundi, the DRC, and South Sudan, refugees are once again on the move in the region. The Food and Agricultur-

al Agency of the United Nations estimates that nearly six million people were already in need of urgent humanitarian assistance in the DRC before the newest refugee crisis. In the past year alone, Rwanda received more than 80,000 refugees from Burundi, and the World Food Program is working to provide food for numerous refugee camps.

According to leaders from each of the three GFI partners, many refugees are not living in camps but are finding their way to urban areas, putting increased stress on local communities to deal with the newcomers. Brethren Disaster Ministries recently directed some grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund to SHAMIRED for emergency supplies for refugees, such as clothes, soap, food, cooking oil, and maize flour.

The Church of the Brethren witness in the Africa Great Lakes region is growing as more families are touched by a holistic approach to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ through word and deed. These actions may seem to be ordinary acts of kindness to Brethren in the US, carried out by ordinary people trying to be faithful with the resources they have been given by God. However, half a world away in the DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi, they are being received as anything but ordinary. In fact, these actions may yield more than bananas, potatoes, and corn. They may yield spiritual harvests and blessings in Congolese, Rwandan, Burundian, and American lives for generations to come. 

Jeff Boshart manages the Global Food Initiative and the Emerging Global Mission Fund for Church of the Brethren Global Mission and Service.



How are we called to build peace?

by Bryan Hanger

“Whenever I saw a human need which Brethren could fulfill I tried to get my church to see it and answer it. . . . I tried to mediate between new ideas and traditional practices. I tried to be a bridge to the future. This is the heart of Brethren peacemaking.” —M.R. Zigler

These words of Brethren leader and On Earth Peace founder M.R. Zigler express the call to build peace that he embodied. They were published in 1983, but the spirit of these challenging words lives on through the creative and inspiring celebration of Peace Day.

Peace Day is an annual event celebrated across the world, inspired by the calls of the World Council of Churches and the United Nations to observe an international day of peace. Since On Earth Peace started organizing faith communities to celebrate

Peace Day in 2007, Brethren have been seeking and imagining new ways to build God’s peace in their congregations and communities.

This year, more than 80 congregations and communities connected to On Earth Peace celebrated Peace Day by answering the question, “How are we called to build peace?” This theme came from the many biblical stories of God calling specific people to specific peacebuilding tasks. This year, communities responded to this call in many different ways:

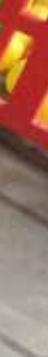
- Staunton (Va.) Church of the Brethren organized a community-

wide interfaith event where Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Muslims came together to share in music and build bridges for the betterment of their community.

- Virlina District held a Peace Day service at Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va.

- The Gathering Chicago, a new church plant in Illinois, launched a monthly Healing Racism Book Discussion series.

- Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo., held a Peace Fest to End Gun Violence, which included educational sessions,



Communities observe Peace Day 2016 (from left): City Montessori School in Lucknow, India; Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa.; Oak Grove Church of the Brethren, Virlina District; Brethren in the Democratic Republic of Congo; Bridgewater (Va.) College and Bridgewater Church of the Brethren.

Photos courtesy of On Earth Peace.

worship, crafts, recreation, and food.

- Juniata College’s Campus Ministry in Huntingdon, Pa., invited students to come together to share their visions, poetry, and music in order to imagine how they can build peace together on campus.
- A group at Bridgewater (Va.) College walked from the college’s peace pole to the peace pole at Bridgewater Church of the Brethren, where they worked to assemble the puzzle of a dove, symbolizing how the work of building peace is done together.
- Carlsbad (N.M.) Mennonite Church held a Peace Weekend, which included the forging of decommissioned weapons into useful garden tools.
- Heeding God’s Call in Harrisburg, Pa., held an Interfaith Witness that commemorated lives lost to gun

violence, and educated community members on the importance of building peace to overcome gun violence.

- Durham (N.C.) Congregations in Action sponsored Sounds of Peace, a community concert. Proceeds went to re-entry services helping formerly incarcerated neighbors get back on their feet.
- These events are just a tiny taste of the tremendous creativity and spirituality of this year’s Peace Day. The community that participated extended far beyond the Church of the Brethren in the United States. On Earth Peace also connected with Peace Day organizers in Cameroon, Nigeria, India, Mexico, Brazil, Northern Ireland, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Canada. Our peace pilgrimage is truly interconnected and worldwide.

As this year’s Peace Day organizer for On Earth Peace, it was humbling and inspiring to see congregations take the theme and run with it toward the goal of building God’s justice and peace in their own communities. There are many human needs that must be met, and there are still Brethren and others seeking to answer God’s call to meet these needs.

That’s what Peace Day is all about: carrying forth our peace witness into the needs of today, coming together to serve our communities, and building bridges to the future where God’s peace and justice shape the world. 

Bryan Hanger was the organizer for Peace Day 2016, serving as an intern with On Earth Peace. He is a student at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind.

More stories and pictures from Peace Day 2016 are at <http://peacedaypray.tumblr.com>. Share your Peace Day stories or set up a conversation about your congregation’s work for peace and justice by sending an e-mail to peaceday@onearthpeace.org.

How do you know my name?

by Bob Bowman

Zacchaeus was literally up a tree when Jesus came by. The story is told in Luke 19. He went up the tree by choice. It was safe. He wanted to be an observer, a critic and not a participant of the scene unfolding in Jericho. I recognize the posture. He was certainly not prepared when Jesus stopped by his tree and called him by name, “Zacchaeus, come on down from that tree. I am going to have lunch with you today.”

Jesus called him by name. That is surprising. There are a limited number of places in the Gospels where Jesus calls someone by name. The use of a name makes Jesus’ call personal and direct. It makes it harder to ignore that call.

Zacchaeus, we are told, scrambled down from his tree immediately and welcomed Jesus into his home. We admire that. Perhaps we even envy that. Would it truly be that easy to abandon our safe non-involvement?

What if Jesus called me down from my tree? “That’s enough evaluating, observing, and critiquing. Let’s have lunch. I want to talk with you.” Is the threat of intimacy too much? If Jesus called me by name, would it give me the strength to break open my shell? Would it shatter my safe position as observer? I would no longer be observing faith from outside, but intimately and personally drawn into the heart of God.

Lazarus was not in a tree. He was already in a tomb. From John 11 we read of Jesus standing outside a tomb and calling, “Lazarus! Come out here!” Lazarus knew he was dead. He had grave windings, a tomb, and the whole nine yards. He was disengaged from life, isolated and alienated. I recognize that posture as well. Sometimes life just drains out of a person. Toxic relationships, routine, past pain not released—a thousand things can simply drain our life until we feel we are roommates with Lazarus.



ognize him. He asked her the same question, “Why are you crying?” She thought he was a maintenance worker. “Tell me where you’ve taken the body, sir, and I’ll care for it.”

Jesus replied with just one word; he spoke her name, “Mary.” That is when she recognized him. Two angels and a vision are not enough when you are looking for the one who once called you by name down from the tree, out from the tomb, or away from the grip of seven demons. Two angels and a vision are not enough to get me out of the tree. But someone who knows my name can reach me. Jesus calls his own sheep by name and they know his voice (John 10).

Someone told of hearing a child pray the Lord’s Prayer this way: “Our Father, who art in heaven, how do you know my name?” Matthew did not write the Lord’s Prayer that way, but the child uncovered one of life’s most profound questions. Does the Eternal know me? By name?

The question “Does the Eternal know me?” may be profound, but so is the other question: “Do I know myself?” Many children in early adolescence say they don’t like their name. They say their name should have been something different. It is a part of the struggle for self-identity, the

JESUS STOPPED BY HIS TREE AND CALLED HIM BY NAME, “ZACCHAEUS, COME ON DOWN FROM THAT TREE. I AM GOING TO HAVE LUNCH WITH YOU TODAY.”



Barry Chinnell / iStock.com

Jesus called Lazarus by name. Jesus brought new life to the dead. Suppose we put our personal names into that call. It is not just a general call, “Come out from your tomb.” Rather it is a command with our name attached.

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb of Jesus to finish the preparation of his body for death. When she found the tomb empty, she was heartbroken. She stooped to look inside and saw two angels. One said to her, “Why are you weeping, my lady?”

She said, “Because they have taken away my Lord and I don’t know where to find him.” Believe me, that is something to weep about. But as the story is told in the Gospel of John, Jesus was standing right there behind her. That is often the case, but we are so immersed in our grief, our conflicts, our despair that, like Mary, we fail to recognize him.

When she turned to leave, she saw Jesus but did not rec-

continuous quest to know one’s self.

When God appeared to Jacob in Genesis 35, he blessed him and said, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob. Israel shall be your name.” God also gave Abram a new name: Abraham. And Sarai was renamed Sarah. Why did they need new names? Perhaps because God knew them better than they knew themselves.

In the book of Revelation, the promise is, “To everyone who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it” (Revelation 2:17b).

Perhaps I do not know my name. Perhaps there is a “me” so deep down that I don’t know it. If God gave you a new name, what would it be? When we receive that white stone, that new name will call forth, from within, someone who has always been only a potential, rarely realized. It will be our true name, what T. S. Eliot called our “ineffable, effable, effanineffable, deep and inscrutable singular Name.”

Meanwhile, I’ll be somewhere listening for my name. 

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

Workcamp Ministry announces staffing and theme for summer 2017

The Workcamp Ministry has welcomed Shelley Weachter and welcomed back Deanna Beckner as assistant coordinators for the 2017 summer workcamp season.

The theme for the 2017 season is "Say Hello," a phrase pulled from 3 John 13-14 in *The Message*. The theme will focus on communication with God, each other, and the world.

Beckner and Weachter began their work together on Aug. 22 as volunteers through Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS), working at the denomination's General Offices in Elgin, Ill. Beckner graduated from Manchester University in 2015 with a degree in communication studies and comes from Columbia City (Ind.) Church of the Brethren. Weachter graduated from Bridgewater

(Va.) College in May with a degree in mathematics. She grew up in Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren.

Workcamp sites and dates will be available online at www.brethren.org/workcamps.

Children's Disaster Services spends six weeks in Baton Rouge

Children's Disaster Services (CDS) in September completed six weeks of work caring for children and families affected by severe flooding in Louisiana.

The 29 volunteers who took part set up childcare centers in multiple locations in Baton Rouge, including shelters, and worked with partner organizations FEMA and the American Red Cross. The last CDS volunteers closed out the project on Sept. 26. Those five



Dianne Oxender

volunteers made up the sixth CDS team to serve over the course of the lengthy assignment that logged a total of 750 child contacts.

For more about Children's Disaster Services go to www.brethren.org/cds.

Personnel notes

Barb York has retired as Payroll and Accounts Payable specialist for the Church of the Brethren. She worked at the denomination's General Offices in Elgin, Ill., for more than 10 years. Her work included preparing checks for vendors, maintaining records on special contracts, processing payroll, maintaining the church extension notes system, and other payroll and accounts payable functions.

Terry Goodger has ended her service as office coordinator in Material Resources at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. She had been instrumental in facilitating a smooth running office working with employees and external program partners, and was especially helpful with the many compliance issues with local, state, and

federal authorities. She had been an employee of the Church of the Brethren since Sept. 13, 2006.

Lamar Gibson has been hired as development director for On Earth Peace. He has worked for nine years in both private businesses and the nonprofit sector as a fundraiser and as a consultant on business operations and development. His work for On Earth Peace will include engaging existing supporters while also expanding the community to include people from more denominations and walks of life. He was born and raised in Greensboro, N.C., in the Southern Baptist and Pentecostal traditions, but was eventually led to the Episcopal Church. He began his work for On Earth Peace on Sept. 6.

Huma Rana has begun as director

of Financial Operations for Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT). She previously was assistant director of Financial Operations. Late in 2013, BBT put a succession plan in place to seek a successor to Sandy Schild, after she announced her intention to enter retirement sometime next year. Schild will continue to work for BBT until her retirement, as Finance Project Manager and Operations Support.

Ellen Lennard has joined BBT as employee benefits specialist. Since June 27, she has worked with BBT on a temporary basis. Previously she was in Seoul, South Korea, where she taught English for two years. She has been a legal assistant for a law office and holds a bachelor's degree in English from Loyola University Chicago.



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Church of the Brethren in Spain holds fourth annual conference

At its fourth annual conference, Iglesia de los Hermanos-Una Luz en las Naciones (the Church of the Brethren in Spain) officially received two new congregations, one in the Spanish city of León, and one in London, in the United Kingdom.

Approximately 70 people attended the conference in the city of Gijón, on the theme “Now Is the Time for the Harvest” (John 4:35).

Representatives of the newly received congregations were anointed by members of the Spain advisory committee, Carol Yeazell and Joel Peña. Global Mission and Service executive director Jay Wittmeyer also attended the conference.



BVS Unit 313 volunteers begin work

Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 313 has completed orientation and the 14 volunteers have begun work at their projects. Volunteers, their congregations or hometowns, and project sites follow: Andrew Bollinger, Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren, to the Heifer Ranch, Perryville, Ark. Paige Butzlaff, La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, to the Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Elgin, Ill. Sam Crompton, Koblenz, Germany, and Sarah Uhl, Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, to Abode Services, Fremont, Calif. Emmy Goering, McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, to the Office of Public Witness, Washington, D.C. Laura Hassel, Essen, Germany, to Gubbio Project, San Francisco, Calif. Michelle Janzen, Neuwied, Germany, to SnowCap in Portland, Ore. Kristin Munstermann, Antrochte, Germany, to Sisters of the Road, Portland, Ore. Rebecca Neiman, Forsyth, Mont., to OKC Abrasevic, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Clara Richter, Berlin, Germany, to Center on Conscience and War, Washington, D.C. Travis Therrien, Tokahookaadi Church of the Brethren in Lybrook, N.M., to Capstone, New Orleans, La. Helen Ullom-Minnich, McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, and Jana Zerche, Bruhl, Germany, to Project PLASE, Baltimore, Md. Destinee Wells, Cadillac, Mich., to Primavera Foundation, Tuscon, Ariz.

For more information go to www.brethren.org/bvs.



Manchester Intercultural Center to be named for Jean Childs Young

Manchester University’s future Intercultural Center in North Manchester, Ind., will be named in memory of alumna educator and activist Jean Childs Young. She was a 1954 graduate of the school.

Weeks after graduating from then Manchester College, she married Andrew Young, who went on to become a leader in the civil rights movement, a US congressman, ambassador to the United Nations, and mayor of Atlanta.

“Jean’s life reflected brightly on our mission to respect the infinite worth of every individual and improve the human condition,” said Manchester president Dave McFadden. “A child of

the segregated South and a partner in the civil rights movement, Jean’s work dispelled stereotypes and fostered understanding. She built relationships and bridged divides.

“I can think of no better namesake for our Intercultural Center, a symbol of Manchester University’s commitment to learning from differences.”

Childs followed two sisters to Manchester and earned a degree in elementary education. She had a distinguished career as a teacher and an advocate for human rights and children’s welfare. In 1977, President Carter appointed her chair of the US Commission of the International Year of the Child. She

established the Atlanta Task Force on Education, served as co-founder of the Atlanta-Fulton Commission on Children and Youth, and helped develop Atlanta Junior College.

She served Manchester as a trustee 1975-79 and received an honorary doctorate in 1980. She died of liver cancer in 1994 at the age of 61.

The school has planted a peace pole at the site of the new center, in memory of three international students killed last winter in a traffic accident: Nerad Mangai, Brook “BK” Dagnew, and Kirubel Hailu. The pole will remain at the site until construction begins early next year.



I WAS THRILLED TO READ THE MESSENGER TELLING ABOUT ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND HEIFER PROJECT.

Thrilled to read MESSENGER

I was thrilled to read the MESSENGER telling about Annual Conference and Heifer Project. I saw a picture of my wonderful minister, Dennis Webb, who was one of the speakers this year at Annual Conference. For those who do not know, he has made an album, singing about the early Brethren. Called *The Holy Kiss*, it includes a song about Dan West and the Heifer Project.

I have been a member of the Church of the Brethren since late '49.

I have seen many changes in most of our churches today. I had a "spiritual Dad" who conducted yearly revival meetings until he went to heaven in late '86. I will always remember the many people who came forward to accept Jesus during each Sunday morning service.

Patricia Connell
Sandwich, Ill.

Thanks for speaking out

I really appreciated what Wendy McFadden wrote in September's "From

the Publisher" about violence against black people, and systemic racism.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

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It is so important that privileged/main-stream people wake up and face those realities. Thanks for speaking out about it.

Bob Gross
 Liberty Mills, Ind.

CLASSIFIEDS

Springing Forth: Growing Younger While Older. WestBow Press – A Division of Thomas Nelson and Zondervan. 2016. ISBN No. 978-1-5127-1724-2 (SC), ISBN 978-1-5127-1725-9 (e). Based on 2 Cor. 4:16-18 and a complete search of the Scriptures. 350 pages. Springing Forth brings hope, renewal, and healing to those experiencing loss, affliction, anger, fear, bitterness, loneliness, suffering, and aging. Part 1 is practical daily steps with Scriptures and songs which encourage and ways to “grow younger while older.” Essays by various people for edification and education are Part 2. Poems for praise, power and prayer written by Flora Williams are Part 3. Rev. Dr. Williams is professor emerita at Purdue University, minister, and world-wide speaker, musician, wife, and mother of three children, four grandchildren. Price discount \$20.00 when ordered from author. 765-474-4232, florawill@aol.com. Order also from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and WestBow Press (call 866-928-1240 or type WestBow Press - bookstore).



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New Members

Annville, Pa.: Gavin Alwine, Alexis Kovach, Melissa Melhorn

Cedar Lake, Auburn, Ind.:

Rachel Jordan, Kelly Metzger, Sandra Ely

East Cocalico, Stevens, Pa.: Breana Ensinger

Elizabethtown, Pa.: Ellen Flury, Susan Grubb, Jennifer Hummel, Wendy Neiss

Fraternity, Winston-Salem, N.C.: Tim Anderson, Gail Anderson, Donald Brown, Marie Brown, Brandi Chappell, Kay Garrison, Kay Lee Stutzman, McKinley Wall, Liza Warner

Harrisburg, First, Harrisburg, Pa.: Laura Beth Arendt, Jonathan J. Brenneman, Sara Brenneman, Marvin D. Brummel, Anamaria Morel

Indian Creek, Harleysville, Pa.: Herman Baliles, Ruth Baliles

Keyser, W.Va.: Caleb Rice
Leake's Chapel, Stanley, Va.: Hayley Kunu, Alexis Banach, Bryanna McClung, Mya Briner

Lebanon, Pa.: Leslie McKinney, Jordyn Kenney, Harold Gingrich, McKenzie Clay

Maple Spring, Hollsopple, Pa.: Richard Mostoller, Janet Mostoller

Polo, Ill.: Curt Strauss, Ashley Person

Somerset, Pa.: Megan Oakes

Spring Branch, Wheatland, Mo.: Blake Hartle, Mary Hartle, Keeton Swearingen, Shelly Swearingen, Scott Sharitz, Barbara Sharitz

West Goshen, Goshen, Ind.: Steve Jarvis, Linda Jarvis, Dollie Catron, Krista Hunter, Kris Dirmyer, Alicia Dirmyer, Jorja Dirmyer

York Center, Lombard, Ill.: Jill Groff, Jeanne Davies, Joel Davies

Wedding Anniversaries

Alwine, Dale and Anna Mae, New Oxford, Pa., 70

Bohn, Rich and Joyce, Lancaster, Pa., 55

Breisch, Charles and Bonnie, Green Lane, Pa., 55

Brode, Robert and Marian, Harrisburg, Pa., 61

Butterbaugh, Dean and Darlene, Dixon, Ill., 70

Butterbaugh, Dwight and Marquita, Mount Morris, Ill., 69

Coleman, Edward and Doris, Orlando, Fla., 67

Detwiler, Carl and Evelyn, Nappanee, Ind., 50

Fisher, Robert and Deanna, Hollsopple, Pa., 55

Fogelsanger, Jay and Doris, Hanover, Pa., 60

Hartsough, Maynard and Gilberta, Goshen, Ind., 55

Keith, Harry and Kathy, Roaring Spring, Pa., 65

Longnecker, Dale and Maxine, Byron, Ill., 69

Shaffer, Floyd and Doris, Hooversville, Pa., 67

Shepler, Roy and Martha, Wabash, Ind., 76

Smith, Charles, Jr. and Shirley, Roaring Spring, Pa., 61

Vanderveer, Charles and Shirley, Syracuse, Ind., 60

Wojtaszek, Robert and Sherry, Hollsopple, Pa., 50

Deaths

Bothwell, Norma Stahl, 77, Windber, Pa., July 2

Burkholder, Bertha Flohr, 93, Chambersburg, Pa., Aug. 27

Cook, Lowell Eugene, 80, Bradford, Ohio, Aug. 6

Dunlap, Robert, 59, Oviedo, Fla., Aug. 19

Eller, Irvin G., 97, Eaton, Ohio, Aug. 20

Eller, Mildred Grace Meyers, 88, Eaton, Ohio, Nov. 12, 2015

Eshelman, Clarence, 89, Roaring Spring, Pa., June 26

Flory, Merrill Clair, 94, Springfield, Ohio, March 24

French, Herbert Winston, 87, Harrisonburg, Va., June 25

Good, Allen E., 84, Elizabethtown, Pa., May 29

Good, Belinda Kline, 57, Elizabethtown, Pa., Feb. 27

Hammer, Carol E., 77, Polo, Ill., Feb. 10

Hershey, Robert E., 92, Elizabethtown, Pa., Jan. 9, 2016

Hess, Pearl Constance, 91, New Oxford, Pa., July 18

Hixon, Harold E., 92, Hummelstown, Pa., Sept. 7

Holmes, Elfreda P., 85, Tonasket, Wash., May 11

Hostetter, Matora, 98, East Petersburg, Pa., Aug. 25

Keating, Helen L. Overla, 90, Miamisburg, Ohio, June 11

Leatherman, P. David, 71, Elgin, Ill., Aug. 22

May, Reed M., 90, Johnstown, Pa., Aug. 22

Miller, Jeannie K. Yoder,

72, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 22

Minshall, Bernard W., III, 62, Keyser, W.Va., June 3

Oberholtzer, Anne, 80, Ashland, Ohio, Aug. 22

Petry, Carroll M., 85, North Manchester, Ind., Sept. 8

Shidler, Walter G., 94, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 11

Smalley, Russell Dale, Jr., 76, Beaver, Iowa, March 10

Smith, Wendell Lewis, 91, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 13, 2016

Stanton, Nancy L. Stutzman, 69, Johnstown, Pa., June 30

Stegeman, Waive M., 81, Johnstown, Pa., Sept. 6

Stevens, Marian A., 90, Davidsville, Pa., July 8

Storne, Jack Ben, 72, Gridley, Calif., Aug. 27

Stutsman, David R., 86, Goshen, Ind., June 14

Weaver, Thelma G. Shank, 96, Willow Street, Pa., Aug. 29

Wilkins, Kevin A., 66, Mount Pleasant, Pa., Sept. 10

Williford, Lois Arlene Yoder, 95, Olathe, Kan., Aug. 11

Wingert, Clarence A., Jr., 90, Hanover, Pa., Aug. 11

Wyant, Waltine, 96, Stuarts Draft, Va., Sept. 8

Zurin, Jean Hollinger, 90, Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 8

Ordained

Gaunt, Craig A., W. Pa. Dist. (Conemaugh, Johnstown, Pa.), July 31

Sisitki, Kimberly A., W. Pa. Dist. (Robinson, Pa.), Aug. 7

Storne, Jack Ben, Pac. S. W. Dist. (Live Oak, Calif.), Aug. 21

Tabb, Nancy K., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Mountain View, Bunker Hill, W.Va.),

Sept. 11

Commissioned

Wust, Daniel, N. Ohio Dist. (Dupont, Ohio), Sept. 11

Licensed

Dagen, Robert, Atl. N. E. Dist. (East Fairview, Manheim, Pa.), Aug. 7

Placements

Beach, Martha R., pastor, Somerset, Pa., Aug. 7

Cooper, Scott, from pastor, Conewago, Hershey, Pa., to pastor, Mohrsville, Pa., Sept. 1

Fiske, Randall C., from interim to pastor, Pine Glen, Lewistown, Pa., Aug. 28

Gutierrez, Libia, pastor, Betel International, Morristown, Tenn., May 21

Gutierrez, Petra Ivis, pastor, Ministerio Uncion Apostolica, Sevierville, Tenn., Nov. 14, 2015

Holsopple, William, from pastor, Lakewood, Millbury, Ohio, to pastor, Lick Creek, Bryan, Ohio, Sept. 11

Kinnick, C. Scott, from pastor, Trinity, Blountville, Tenn., to district executive/minister, Southeastern District, Johnson City, Tenn., Sept. 1

Payne, Deborah L., from co-district executive/minister, Southeastern District, Gray, Tenn., to associate minister, Spindale, N.C., Sept. 1

Payne, Russell R., Jr., from co-district executive/minister, Southeastern District, Gray, Tenn., to pastor, Spindale, N.C., Sept. 1

Spire, Steven R., pastor, Sangerville, Bridgewater, Va., Sept. 1

Wust, Daniel, pastor, Dupont, Ohio, Sept. 6

Grit, grace, gratitude

doubt that a well-worn Kansas City restaurant was exactly grateful to mark the arrival of our family entourage during the Sunday morning breakfast rush; a party of eight, three of them children capable of emitting 117-decibel cries for prolonged periods, including diminutive 1-year-old twin girls still wobbly in their high chairs. With their energetic 3-year-old brother, they worked the crowd in ways large and small, positive and negative, from our corner table and the immediate area around it.



SANDY BOSSERMAN

The waitress who drew the short straw that morning, however, proved to be an unflappable wonder woman named Tara. We were set for an experiment in grit, grace, and gratitude. Menus were passed, and menus thrown, especially the paper ones that come with crayons ripe for nibbling. A pitcher of hot water spontaneously appeared to heat bottles. Orders were taken, juices served, along with a box of cereal that Wonder Woman volunteered. It is amazing how the challenge of removing shiny shoes and ruffled socks, coupled with an abundance of sugar-coated cereal, appeases babes. Miniature cars raced across the table, some landing in the next aisle. They were retrieved on different occasions by an amiable golfer, a less-than-amused restroom-bound matron, and Tara. Spilled juice and “recycled” formula

check and claimed she had enjoyed being a part of the grit and grind of our gathering.

All I could claim was humble appreciation—and not solely because I could now go change my formula-stained church clothes. Tara labored way beyond her job description for us, in kindness, mindfulness, and generosity. We thanked her, tipped her, and wished her a good shift, but remembrance of her evokes my gratitude for the extension of herself, along with her considerable skills. She bade us welcome, for better and for worse, gave us permission to be ourselves, and thus honored our family.

Gratitude surpasses mere thanks; it wells up spontaneously as people show up to accompany us in amazing ways on ordinary days. With “holy day” seasons looming, we might do well to allow gratitude the opportunity to surface and surprise us, and allow it a triumph or two over complaint and lamentation.

The two months preceding a new year often present opportunities to cross paths with people we seldom see the rest of the year—but schedules are tight, children and adults are exhausted, time passes, and old tensions wait in the wings. This season reminds me of Paul’s often quoted and eloquent words to the Philippian church to bring everything by “prayer and petition, with thanksgiving to God,” and to concentrate on whatever is “true, noble, lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy” (Philippians 4). This advice was preceded and perhaps prompted by a call to encourage two sisters in the faith who had “contended at [Paul’s]

GRATITUDE SURPASSES MERE THANKS; IT WELLS UP SPONTANEOUSLY AS PEOPLE SHOW UP TO ACCOMPANY US IN AMAZING WAYS ON ORDINARY DAYS.

required every napkin from our table, but Tara appeared with a roll of paper towels and another pot of coffee. Food followed, including cartoon-character chocolate chip pancakes made to order for the 3-year-old.

The children were tolerable, the breakfast crowd tolerant, and Tara hovered closely, anticipating the next crisis with precision and good humor. Almost coincidentally, the rest of us ate too, enjoying company and conversation amid the chaos.

It took 20 minutes to gather our belongings and to make a symbolic effort to tidy up our corner. Tara brought the

side in the cause of the gospel,” but were now in contention with each other.

Such realities are present in many families and friendships, yet wonder-filled folk hover about, evoking deep appreciation rather than grievance. We are invited, each of us, to model ourselves after Wonder Woman Tara, with grit and grace, that gratitude may abound. **W**

An ordained minister, Sandy Bosserman is a former public school teacher, pastor, and district executive. She is a member of Cabool (Mo.) Church of the Brethren.

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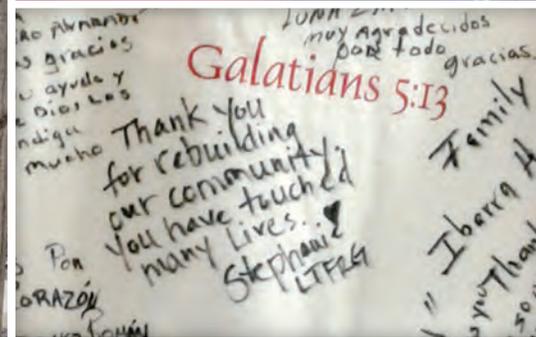
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our doors and
hearts, and
saints of God
walked in!"*



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how the Church of the Brethren
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