



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

SEPTEMBER 2016 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

Annual Conference

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The rush of Annual Conference had barely subsided when the nation heard the news that a black man had been killed by police in Baton Rouge. A day later another was killed near Minneapolis. Then came shootings of police officers, as violence beget violence.

The violence waged against black people is not new, though it might seem to some that it's happening more frequently. What's new is the rise of video evidence, making these cases more difficult to explain away.

Even without videos, the disparity in the way blacks are treated in the US is well documented and easy to find—for those who want to know. It is clear that African Americans are significantly more likely to be targeted by police and more likely to die from the encounter than white people are.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

But there's a gulf between the way black and white perceive this violence, reports Robert P. Jones, head of the Public Religion Research Institute, in his new book, *The End of White Christian America*. Black people tend to see these incidents as part of a larger pattern; white people are more likely to see them as isolated events.

By virtually every measure there's a documented difference in the quality of life for black people compared to white people: criminal justice, health, education, employment, real estate, lending practices, life expectancy.

The well-being of blacks is 72 percent of the well-being of white Americans, reports the National Urban League.

After the death last year of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, the *Washington Post* carried out a study of life expectancy by neighborhood. The *Post* found that 14 black neighborhoods in Baltimore had lower life expectancy than North Korea. One neighborhood, Downtown/Seton Hall, barely edged out Yemen for the lowest life expectancy in the world. It sits just three miles from Roland Park, Baltimore's wealthiest neighborhood.

The disparities in Baltimore, Baton Rouge, Minneapolis, Chicago, Ferguson, and other places across America can be traced to redlining, banking practices, federal laws, the placement of interstate highways, and other race-based policies going back decades and more. The results are the historical backdrop for today's headlines.

Systemic problems may seem impossible to change and it is easy for the unaffected to look away. But Jesus told a story about people who look away, and they're not the heroes.

How can we change these big problems? The first step is startlingly simple: White people must believe black people.

Wendy McFadden

How to reach us

MESSENGER

1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

Subscriptions:

Diane Stroyeck
messengersubscriptions@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 327
Fax: 847-742-1407

Advertising:

Karen Stocking
messengerads@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 308
Fax: 847-742-1407

Editorial:

messenger@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 326
Fax: 847-742-1407

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Pokémon Go and a cup of cold water

Sebastian Noble

Phoenix, Ariz.: Wednesday, July 13, 8:07 a.m.—Coffee in hand, quickly scan e-mail. One of my pastor pals sends me an article, “How To Use Pokémon Go as an Outreach Tool.” Have no idea what Pokémon Go is, but I like outreach. Maybe I’ll sign my church up, maybe not.

9:34 a.m.—Roll into our local coffee shop, across the street from our church building. The baristas (younger and hipper than me, great tattoos) excitedly inform me that our church is a site for Pokémon Go. I’m confused, which happens easily. They explain that Pokémon Go is a mobile app, a smartphone-based video game. In order to play, you walk around to different locations and do stuff on your phone. It’s like geocaching, or a digital scavenger hunt, and it’s hugely popular. OK, maybe I’ll sign my church up, maybe not.

9:46 a.m.—Baristas inform me, again, that our church is a site for Pokémon Go. I assert that I did not agree to this. They patiently explain that nobody signs up to be a site; you either get chosen by the nerds at Nintendo or you don’t. We were chosen. I feel disoriented, and old.

9:51 a.m.—Associate minister (also younger and hipper than me, great beard) informs me that he has seen hundreds of people descending on various Pokémon Go sites around the city. I download the free game on my phone. Can’t figure out how to make it work. I consider taking up shuffleboard instead.

10:00 a.m.—Coffee meeting with a young woman who visited worship on Sunday. She’s a trauma nurse, and tells stories about people getting in car accidents because they were gaming while driving. I privately have a worst-case-scenario fantasy and wonder whether we could get sued if someone died on our property playing this Pokémon thing. Then I chill out and remember that our site is well away from traffic and perfectly safe. Hmmmm. . . .

10:30 a.m.—Meeting over, I scramble the associate minister (beard) and a barista (tattoos) and another young

adult (gamer) from our congregation. Find out that the precise Pokémon Go site is actually at a stone labyrinth—a prayer path—and cross on our property. Nice. But forecast is 111 degrees Fahrenheit and there is not a shred of shade. We set out a welcome sign, a few brochures about our church, and a large cooler filled with bottled water. Ministry of hospitality. Take pictures and post to social media. Get slight sunburn where hairline is gently receding.

3:17 p.m.—Get contacted by several peers and colleagues across the country who saw my post on social media. They ask me how they can sign up their church to be a site for Pokémon Go. They praise my expertise and amazing technological know-how. I humbly accept their admiration. I do not tell them I still can’t figure out how to make the game work on my phone.

Thursday, July 14, 9:15 a.m.—Come to church building, notice something odd. I almost expect vandalism. But someone has left a sticky note on our Pokémon welcome sign. It reads, “We saw you were running low, so we wanted to return the favor. #Teamvalor. #Giveback.” The cooler has been refilled with several cases of water and fresh ice, supplied by strangers. Consider the irony of a hashtag sticky note, and grateful for the experience.

Wednesday, July 20, 9:25 a.m.—Reflection: The Pokémon craze continues. For now. But soon it will pass. I said “yes” to Jesus a long time ago, and part of saying yes to Jesus meant saying yes to outreach. And hospitality. And being a good neighbor. And offering a cup of cold water. I have no illusions that our little cooler of water will somehow bring about God’s kingdom or create world peace. But with all of the current ugliness in our world, I am grateful to help strangers be kind to strangers. So we will be faithful in the small things. We will seize the fleeting opportunities, in hopes of building lasting bridges in Jesus’ name. And that is exactly what I signed up for. 🙏

Jeremy Ashworth is pastor of Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren in Peoria, Ariz.



Courtesy of Janet Elliott

Ilexene Alphonse pumps water from the new well at the Brethren Ministry Center in Haiti.

A well for Haiti

In April 2015, four members of West Goshen (Ind.) Church of the Brethren accompanied Evelyn Dick to Haiti. Evelyn and her late husband, LeRoy, began Vine Ministry 35 years ago and the team was blessed to witness the fruits of their labor.

The team also toured the Brethren Ministry Center in Croix Des Bouquets, which is operated by Global Mission and Service workers Ilexene and Kayla Alphonse. Pastor Norman Replogle asked, “If you had one wish for this center, what would it be?” Without hesitation, Ilexene responded, “A well would be great to have here on the

grounds, as we have to carry our water from the school across the street or have it trucked in.”

This planted a seed, and the team took the idea back to the congregation. The money was raised, and a well was dug earlier this year. Water was hit at a little over 200 feet, which was a blessing because if no water is found another well must be dug at additional expense.

Evelyn Dick recently visited the center to see the well and found that it not only supplies water for the center, it also provides water for the surrounding community through spigots on an outside wall. —Janet Elliott

Reading for Heifer

New Carlisle (Ohio) Church of the Brethren, Donnelsville Elementary School, and the Kor-rect Plumbing Foundation of Church of the Brethren members Ivan and Clara Patterson, joined in a service project for Heifer International. In the Read to Feed program, children read during the school day and collect money pledged for their reading minutes.

The initial goal was to raise enough money to purchase a Heifer Ark, but the service project netted more than \$10,000, with Heifer International matching that amount. A goal of raising \$5,000 to purchase one ark became \$10,000 to purchase two arks, and with the matching money became \$20,000. —Debi Wright



Debi Wright

Teachers kiss a pig as part of the Read to Feed program supporting Heifer International.

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



**“Light of the world,
into our darkness come. . . .
Let heaven’s will
on earth be done.”**

—This song by Annual Conference music coordinator Shawn Kirchner was sung during a procession of lights that started each Conference worship service.

AC by the numbers

230th annual meeting of the Church of the Brethren, held on June 29-July 3 in Greensboro, N.C.

2,435 registered, including 700 delegates and 1,735 nondelegates.

\$68,516 in offerings received onsite during worship services. Of this amount, \$23,043.59 was given to the Nigeria Crisis Fund, close to \$26,000 to the denomination’s Core Ministries, and about \$19,500 to fund Annual Conference.

7,400 “sessions” from 2,800 users participated in webcasts of worship and business during the Conference. These numbers may include repeat log-ins by individuals who viewed multiple Conference webcasts. Because recordings of webcasts were made available, two weeks later the numbers had increased to 9,000 “sessions” from 4,500 users. Business webcasts averaged 3,300 views each, and worship and hymn sing webcasts averaged 2,730 views. Overall, these figures represent about 38 percent more visits by 80 percent more viewers than in 2015. Cost of the Conference webcasting was \$4,155, and online offerings received toward that cost totaled \$815. To support this outreach donate online at www.brethren.org/giveAC2016.

161 people donated an estimated 160 pints of blood.

11,532 items were donated to Backpack Beginnings, one of two organizations supported by the “Witness to the Host City.” This total included 420 backpacks, 315 blankets, 800 notebooks, 632 bottles of shampoo, 1,500 tubes of toothpaste, 2,300 toothbrushes, 1,500 combs, 2,500 washcloths, among other items. Backpack Begin-

nings aids schoolchildren in need in Greensboro. Donations of gently used clothing were given to the Encore Boutique, a thrift store connected with a job training program. Brethren also made cash donations to the two organizations: \$2,793.24 to Backpack Beginnings and \$815 to the Encore Boutique.

\$10,050 raised by the quilt auction sponsored by the Association for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren. Also raised: \$877 in a silent auction of Nigerian dresses, and \$2,000 for “Gifts of the Heart.”

\$7,566 raised for Heifer International by the Ted & Co. production *12 Baskets and a Goat*.

6 new congregations and fellowships welcomed: New Beginnings Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Northeast District; Jonah’s People in Northern Ohio District; Veritas in Atlantic Northeast District; Betel International and Ministerio Uncion Apostolica, both in Southeastern District; the Gospel Assembly in Atlantic Southeast District.

6 churches and church plants joined the Open Roof Fellowship of congregations that have made strides in becoming more accessible to people with disabilities: Spring Creek Church of the Brethren and Mt. Wilson Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Northeast District, Parables Community in Illinois/Wisconsin District, Spruce Run Church of the Brethren in Virginia District, Luray Church of the Brethren in Shenandoah District, and Union Center Church of the Brethren in Northern Indiana District.

1 percent increase approved for the Recommended Minimum Cash Salary Table for pastors in 2017.



Delegates consider five queries, refer controversial items

Delegates to the 2016 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren addressed five queries, including some items of considerable controversy. Presiding over the business sessions was moderator Andy Murray, assisted by moderator-elect Carol Scheppard and secretary James Beckwith.

The five queries were “Same Sex Weddings” from West Marva District, “On Earth Peace Reportability/Accountability

to Annual Conference” also from West Marva, “Viability of On Earth Peace as an Agency of the Church of the Brethren” from Southeastern District, “Continuing the Study of Our Christian Responsibility to Care for God’s Creation” from Illinois and Wisconsin District, and “Living Together as Christ Calls” from Pacific Southwest District.

Same-sex weddings

The query asked, “How shall districts respond when credentialed ministers and/or congregations conduct or participate in same-sex weddings?”

The Conference referred the concerns of the query to the Church of the Brethren Leadership Team in consultation with the Council of District Executives (CODE).

Deliberation went on for several days, starting in pre-Conference meetings of the Standing Committee of district delegates, and continuing with a spirited and—for the most part—thoughtful discussion with the whole delegate body.

Before delegates could address the query, they had to vote to open the floor to a query related to human sexuality because the 2011 Conference had decided “to continue deeper conversations concerning human sexuality outside of the query process.”

The motion to refer finally gained the support of the Con-



Glenn Raphael



Regina Holmes

ference after delegates voted down a recommendation from Standing Committee that, because of its controversial nature, required a two-thirds majority vote. The Standing Committee recommendation that failed would have instructed districts to “respond with discipline, not with allowances based on personal conscience” and would have made termination of ministry credentials an automatic consequence for officiating or providing leadership at a same-sex wedding, for a period of one year pending review by the district.

The Leadership Team made up of the Annual Conference moderator, moderator-elect, and secretary, and the general secretary, in consultation with the district executives, will

consider the query over the coming year. The motion to refer asks these groups “to bring clarity and guidance concerning the authority of Annual Conference and districts regarding the accountability of ministers, congregations, and districts, bringing recommendations to the 2017 Annual Conference.”

On Earth Peace

Two queries asked whether On Earth Peace should continue to be an agency of the Church of the Brethren. The queries were combined in one response from Standing Committee, and referred to the Review and Evaluation Committee that was elected last year. The recommendation was made “recognizing that the Review and Evaluation Committee has the responsibility to consider the balance and unity of denominational agencies.”

Every decade, a Review and Evaluation Committee is elected to review and evaluate Church of the Brethren organization, structure, and function. Members are Tim Harvey, chair, from Virgina District; Ben S. Barlow, Shenandoah District; Leah J. Hileman, Atlantic Northeast District; Robert D. Kettering, Atlantic Northeast District; and David Shumate, Virgina District. The group brought an interim report this year and will complete its work in 2017.

Care for creation

The Conference voted to form a three-member study committee to be named by Standing Committee. The study committee will work in consultation with Brethren Benefit Trust and other relevant agencies to develop educational resources and strategies to help Brethren make financial and investment decisions and get involved in community projects to reduce greenhouse gas and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

In 2014, Annual Conference did not adopt a study committee’s recommendations on “Guidance for Responding to the Changing of Earth’s Climate,” but Standing Committee deemed this query’s focus on financial investments to be sufficiently different from the previous query to be worthy of study.

Living together as Christ calls

This query was referred to the Mission and Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren. Conversation in Standing Committee expressed strong support for the query’s call for work on the tensions being expressed across the church at this time, and for developing strategies to aid the church in “treating one another in a truly Christ-like manner.”

The news team for Annual Conference 2016 included Jan Fischer Bachman, Laura Brown, Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, Eddie Edmonds, Karen Garrett, Keith Hollenberg, Regina Holmes, Monica McFadden, Russ Otto, Donna Parcell, Frank Ramirez, Glenn Riegel, Tyler Roebuck, and Frances Townsend. More information is on the news index page for the 2016 Annual Conference at www.brethren.org/ac2016. Order the Annual Conference 2016 Wrap-Up DVD and the Sermons DVD by calling Brethren Press at 800-441-3712.



Glenn Riegel

Annual Conference

Glenn Riegel



Worship and sermons

“I would not want to be a part of a church that did not embrace and celebrate . . . the tension that arises in the interplay between progressive and conservative.”

—Moderator *Andy Murray* preaching the opening sermon of the 2016 Annual Conference.

“For a few moments at least, all our lights together will light up the world . . . and we hope that the light will reach between us and beyond us all our days.”

—*Kurt Borgmann*, senior pastor at Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., preaching on the topic, “Light Up the Darkness!” As he finished speaking, Conferencegoers received small electric candles and the room was plunged into darkness. Many held their small lights high while singing hymns together to close the service.

“And so I say to all God’s people: distribute *agape* love. It is not yours to keep. . . . If ever you forget who loves

you, remember it was God—with no conditions!”

—*Dennis Webb*, pastor of Naperville (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, who spoke for the Friday evening worship service.

“Go to the place that no one wants to go. And go with people you didn’t think you’d go with. And find Jesus there, trailing wisps of glory every step of the way.”

—*Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm*, Brightbill Professor of Preaching and Worship at Bethany Theological Seminary, preached Saturday evening.

“The only reason that we are the light—the *only* reason—is our connection with Jesus who is the source of the light. . . . Staying connected with him, abiding in him is our only hope of even a flickering flame.”

—*J. Eric Brubaker*, a minister at Middle Creek Church of the Brethren in Lititz, Pa., giving the closing sermon of the Conference.



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Regina Holmes



Regina Holmes



Conference names new leadership, Sarpiya chosen moderator-elect

In election results, Samuel Kefas Sarpiya was chosen moderator-elect. He will serve alongside moderator Carol Scheppard at the 2017 Annual Conference, and will be moderator of the 2018 Conference.

Sarpiya is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, a church planter, and pastor of Rockford (Ill.) Community Church of the Brethren. He also is co-founder of the Center for Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation in Rockford. He was born in Nigeria, though has not been part of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). He also has lived in South Africa, among other places.

He received early training in the principles of nonviolence taught by Martin Luther King Jr. and has drawn from Jesus' teaching on nonviolence and peace in his work as a pastor to influence the Rockford school system, and to do training for the Rockford police department. Recently he partnered with Nigerian and American Brethren in developing a mobile library for use among camps for internally displaced people in northern Nigeria. For a period of time beginning in 1994, he worked with Urban Frontiers Mission and Youth with a Mission serving as a missionary around the world.

Sarpiya is a graduate of the University of Jos, Nigeria, where he earned a degree in social work, and of Bethany Theological Seminary, where he earned a master of divinity in conflict transformation. He is a doctoral candidate in semiotics and future studies at George Fox University in Portland, Ore.

Other elections and appointments
Program and Arrangements Committee: John Shafer of Oakton (Va.) Church of the Brethren.

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee: Raymond Flagg of Annville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

Mission and Ministry Board, Area 3: Marcus Harden of Miami (Fla.) First Church of the Brethren; **Area 4:** Luci



Caption area

Landes of Messiah Church of the Brethren in Kansas City, Mo.; **Area 5:** Thomas Dowdy of Imperial Heights Church of the Brethren in Los Angeles, Calif.; **affirmed:** Diane Mason

Bethany Theological Seminary, representing the laity: Miller Davis of Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren; **representing the colleges:** Mark A. Clapper of Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; **affirmed:** Cathy Simmons Huffman, Louis Harrell Jr., Karen O. Crim, David McFadden

Brethren Benefit Trust board: David L. Shissler of Hershey (Pa.) Spring Creek Church of the Brethren; **reported:** Eunice Culp, Eric P. Kabler, Thomas B. McCracken

On Earth Peace board: Beverly Sayers Eikenberry of Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind.; **affirmed:** Irvin R. Heishman, Barbara Ann Rohrer

We like to think we're different

by Tim Harvey

One of the more revealing moments at Annual Conference came just after we finished debate on how we might respond to pastors who officiate at same-sex weddings. The morning business session was finished and Conference director Chris Douglas was sharing the announcements, including the unusual piece of news that there was a cow in the exhibit hall helping promote the new Brethren Press book *The Seagoing Cowboy*.

According to Chris, when these plans were being discussed at a Program and Arrangements meeting, moderator Andy Murray didn't think the convention center would approve of livestock in the building. If she could pull this off, he said, he would sing one of his Brethren folk songs to help celebrate the book. And so as Chris made her announcement about the cow, Andy quietly got up from his chair, picked up his guitar, and sang "Cowboy Dan," a song honoring Heifer Project founder Dan West.

That's when the moment happened: When the song was finished, we gave Andy a long standing ovation.

This might not seem like that big of a deal, but consider that of the several songs that Brother Andy sang during Annual Conference, this was the only time we gave him a standing ovation. Something about this was different.

My hunch is that "Cowboy Dan" gave us a chance to feel good again about being Brethren. We had just spent the better part of three business sessions debating if or how to discipline pastors who officiate at same-sex weddings. It was a painful conversation. The proposal from Standing Committee was opposed by some who feel it is time to welcome LGBT persons into full fellowship of the church, including marriage. It was supported by some who felt it maintained a New Testament understanding of marriage. It was opposed by others who may not be ready to bless same-sex weddings, but who were troubled by a recommendation that proposed a severe penalty for one particular violation of Brethren polity, while other parts of polity—such as the ordination of women and biblical peace witness—are openly opposed by some pastors and congregations. In the end we did what we often do and referred the matter to a committee.

At that moment, I don't believe many were feeling good about our church. But then Andy sang "Cowboy Dan" and it helped us remember those parts of our tradition that we



Keith Hollenberg

do feel good about: seagoing cowboys accompanying livestock to starving victims of war; disaster response teams rebuilding homes and caring for children; our significant financial support of the Nigeria Crisis Fund.

We Brethren can be a curious lot. For a denomination that puts such an emphasis on peace and reconciliation, we are stubbornly passive-aggressive and conflict-avoidant. We love referring difficult items of business to committees. There are many reasons why that is, but perhaps one is that we want Annual Conference to represent the best of our aspirations, not the worst of our fears. We want to come together each summer to celebrate what we are doing, not lament what we once were or argue over what we might become. And so we continue to refer controversial items to some other committee to wrestle with, even as we graciously yield the microphone to those with whom we disagree.

Knowing how to be in relationship with LGBT persons might yet prove to be unresolvable for the church. To pretend otherwise would be foolish. But in the midst of these times, we should remember the power that a cow in the exhibit hall and a Brethren folk song can have on our self-awareness. We may not be all that we can be. But we are certainly more than we might be. And in a world struggling with violence, the worth of persons, and even knowing how to talk with one another, we Brethren might be different in all the right ways. Let's risk hope together and see where it gets us. 

Tim Harvey is pastor of Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va. He was moderator of the 2012 Annual Conference.

Junior highs have fun with Conference business

by Tim Heishman

I can't say that I know many people who would put "church business" and "fun" in the same sentence. More common descriptions of church business include "boring," "confusing," or "frustrating." However, I am delighted to report that 40 junior high youth at Annual Conference actually had fun learning about church business!

As my wife, Katie, and I began to plan junior high activities for the Conference, we wanted them to be fun and worshipful, but also educational. After all, the 40 youth may be future Annual Conference delegates, moderators, secretaries, pastors, and who knows what else. One of the most important things we could do for them was to make the work of the church fun.

We teamed up with my mother, Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, moderator of the 2014 Annual Conference, to design an activity. First, we examined the entire query process—from the congregation to the Annual Conference—and made a list of all of the possible contingencies that could occur along the way. Next, we began to envision how a group of youth could experience the whole process in only one morning.

The day before that morning session, the youth spent time with David Radcliff of New Community Project. They learned about creation care, the global community, and justice work. We decided to use what they had learned as a starting point in creating their own queries. We divided up into "congregations" and each group adopted a query and

sent it on to a "district conference." Queries then went to a "standing committee" made up of six youth. Finally, the queries and the committee's recommendations were sent on to the "Annual Conference floor."

Queries covered a range of topics important to the junior highs. One "congregation" asked, "How do we help people who have been affected by climate change?" Another asked for Annual Conference guidance on how congregations can reduce pollution and reverse global warming. Another group began with an interest in seeing churches use reusable plates and silverware at potluck meals, but decided to broaden its question to, "How can our congregations do more reusing of the earth's resources?" The last group asked, "How can our churches help reduce unnatural pesticides to protect and preserve God's creation?" The "standing committee" worked hard to refine the queries and give helpful recommendations.

There was much discussion about each query and several youth offered amendments to the queries that were discussed and voted on. Ultimately, three of the four queries were passed by the delegate body. Throughout the session, much creativity was unleashed. Queries were presented in the form of skits or dramas, passion was displayed, respect given, and laughter was abundant.

What can we learn from the junior high mock business session? First, it is possible to have a whole lot of fun doing the work of the church. Maybe adults should not be afraid to introduce joy—a fruit of the Spirit, by the way—into the business of the church. Second, every single youth felt welcomed, valued, and needed in the conversation. There was disagreement among them on the issues, but the disagreement was not a reason to stop loving one another. What a tremendous joy it will be to see these youth carry our denomination into the future with humility, love, joy, grace, and fun! **W**

Tim Heishman is a student at Bethany Theological Seminary and program director at Brethren Woods Camp and Retreat Center in Keezletown, Va.



Keith Hollenberg

Humans of Annual Conference

by Tyler Roebuck and Donna Parcell

In the vein of the popular online photo essay “Humans of New York,” which celebrates the individuality in New York City, Parcell and Roebuck interviewed people across the denomination to bring you “Humans of Annual Conference.”

Jennifer and Evelynnn Balmer

I was asked to be a delegate one year and it completely changed my viewpoint on the importance of [Annual] Conference and how we wanted our family to know about it and be involved, so we’re here with a two-year-old and having a blast. Our goal is for her to feel the love and friendship in the community that’s built at Conference, and to leave wanting to come back next year. We’re doing the best we can to give her a touch of business, a touch of worship, and keep things pretty light. I used to be an English teacher, and I was very motivated by my students and their success, and then I had Evelynnn and my motivation changed—I guess my definition of success changed—now that I’m raising her.



Norm Spicher Waggy

I have been privileged to be a family physician for the past 34 years, and I retired last August. That has given me the opportunity to travel and work in various areas for the church, for Manchester University for example. I use the word privileged but I mean it definitely. We were privileged to live in Nigeria back in the ’80s for five years and Nigeria has always been close to my heart. Since I have retired, I had the opportunity to go to Nicaragua with

the Manchester medical practicum, and together Carol and I went back to Nigeria in March and April, which is where the shirt came from—it was a gift. And we had the privilege to be able to work with Children’s Disaster Services in Orlando after the shooting. I’ve had many opportunities and I’m grateful for that.

Bradley Bohrer aka Count Dracula

I’m willing to be absolutely, totally foolish for a good cause. Something I do that some see to be a little silly is stand shoulder to shoulder with people of other faiths in my local community. I’ve gotten to know people of the Muslim, the Sikh, the Jewish, the Baha’i, and the Buddhist faith communities of South Bend [Ind.], and consider them friends. We hug in public and greet each other like we’re brothers and sisters in a way that is a witness to the greater community. You know what, we’re all just human beings and people together. I’ve got commitments from each of those communities that they’re going to come some Sunday morning [to our church]. There is a potential, if they all time it right, that we will worship with six different faith groups.





Dinah Largo

When my husband passed, I started to do arts and crafts work. I needed to take care of myself and my kids because I had four kids at the time. Three of them were in college when my husband passed. My

youngest was still at home. They're all on their own now. I had to find out a way to take care of myself and support myself, and I started to do so because no one else is going to pick me up—that's what my husband said before he passed. "You need to pull yourself up if something happens to me." I'm graduating in August next year to get my bachelor's in bilingual teaching. I've been a dental assistant for some time, and now I'm turning that job into dental education in my own Navajo language.

Sarah Minnich

Living in Maine is a little bit different than living in most other places where the Church of the Brethren is. The people there are fairly cold to religion, and the climate is a little too. There are only three Churches of the Brethren in Maine, so we're very close. We just moved to a more rural setting, so we've got goats and chickens now. That's very exciting. Ever since my youngest was born, we have been going to an inner-city ministry about 20 miles away once a week, doing sewing with a bunch of immigrant children from Africa.



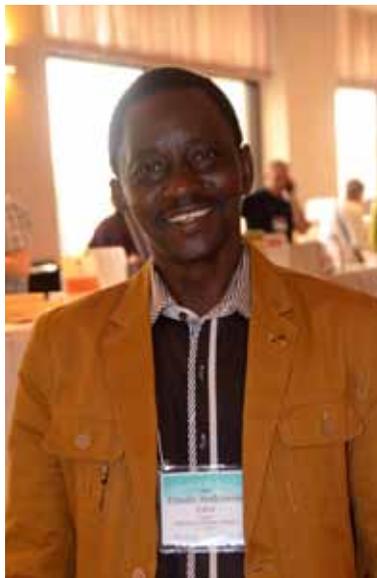
Russell Shock

I use a lot of rubber chickens in my ministry; it's my way of sharing joy. It came to me through several avenues. I have friends who do this around the world. Also, I have a German Oom-pah band—that is the Sauerkraut Band in the New River Valley [of Virginia]. For 29 years, we've produced Octoberfests, and we use [rubber chickens] in the Chicken Dance and other ways. A camp that I help produce for kids with muscular dystrophy for the last 16 years, we've used a lot of [rubber chickens] there as a way of sharing joy.

Deb Merrifield

I like to be a welcomer so that people feel engaged and invited and included. The unique thing we bring to the faith life, I think, is community: giving people a place to belong. We're inviting people into the faith community; a place to belong in a world that's not very good at inviting and giving people a place. In most of the world, we're anomalies. We bump up against a culture that isn't inviting, isn't about making a place for people.





Dauda Andrawus Gava

I came to represent Kulp Bible College* because I'm the provost of that institution. The Church of the Brethren has been helping the college both financially and with human resources, so we came to appreciate the Church of the Brethren and what they have been doing. Classes have resumed since October last year.

I'm passionate to see my students do well and achieve the standards of the academic institution. Seeing people from this country [the United States] is a source of encouragement, because it tells us that we are not alone. There are many other Brethren together with us in whatever we push through.

**Kulp Bible College is the ministry training college of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria.*

Curtis Dehme

One thing I'm trying to do at my congregation right now is an annual membership renewal instead of doing a "once-and-done you're a member."

With an annual membership renewal, it will help people remember their vows, what they committed to, what the expectations are. In that way, we'll hopefully foster more commitment within the congregation. Why are they intentionally choosing [the church]? It's not just, "I've always been a member, so I'll always be a member," but thinking creatively about how I want to be a part of the body. If you're committing to a membership, you're saying, "I'm part of this body; I'm committing to growing in my faith, and am also committing to holding you accountable in growing your faith."



Carol and Bethany Fike

Carol: There's six years between us, which really helps [us get along], and I think that we have lots of things that we each individually like. We each have our own niche, and we need each other to be like, "Oh, I'm not really good at this, Bethany's really good at this." Bethany's really smart, really good at science, and that's not my thing. I like working with people, so we complement each other and our personalities complement each other. I think that's why we get along so well, we're very different people but we love spending time together.

Bethany: I think it's also because we grew up doing everything together...Swimming in the baptistry.

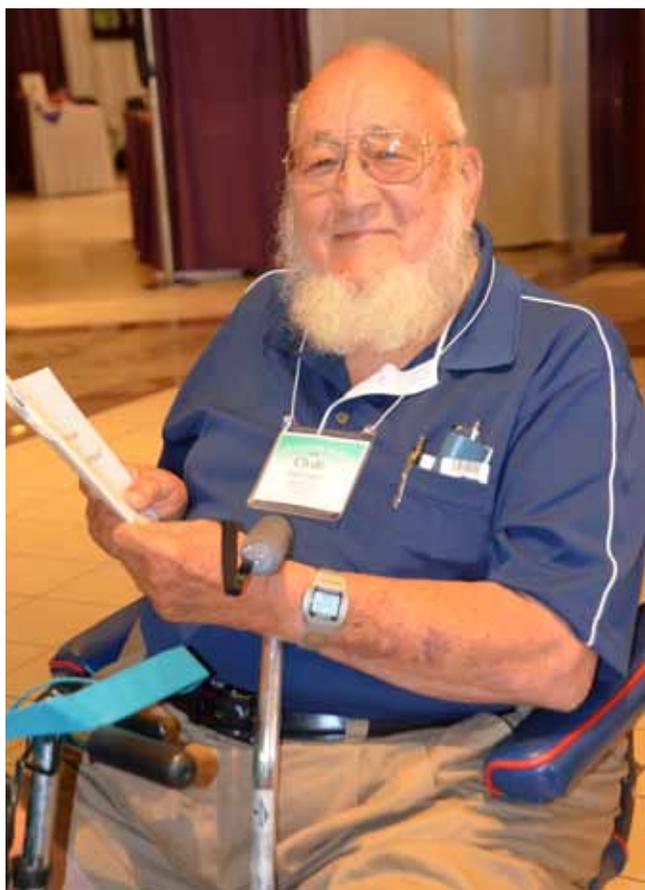
Carol: We were pastor's kids, so we moved around a lot. Often times, every three or four years we would up and move to a new location, but we always had each other. We spent a lot of time at the church entertaining ourselves or swimming in the baptistry because Dad would be like, "You're being annoying, go find something to do." So we got to the point where we could sufficiently entertain ourselves.

Vanessa Amaya

It makes my day to know that I made someone else's day by helping them out, by interpreting or even the little things. It's very important to help others and to be united and not just leave them alone because they need that help in their everyday life. To see that someone is will-



ing to go out of their way to help them is great. Nowadays, not everyone is willing to help others. They're so stuck on other things that they'll just pass by someone and keep walking. Or will tell them, "Oh no, not right now. I don't have time." I think it's necessary to take that time out of your day to help others.



Clyde Nafzinger

I do a lot with genealogy; I study it and trace ancestors. I think it's important to learn not just when they were born and when they died, but who were they? What were their lives, their passions for life? Part of what I'm working on is writing books myself. This is my mother's family, which I've traced back to 1570. My great-grandfather coming from Germany with his family, dying on his way over: I want people to know who he was, what was his drive, what made him operate? I want people to know their ancestors personally. What kind of people were they? I'm proud of my Brethren heritage, and I want to spread that message far.



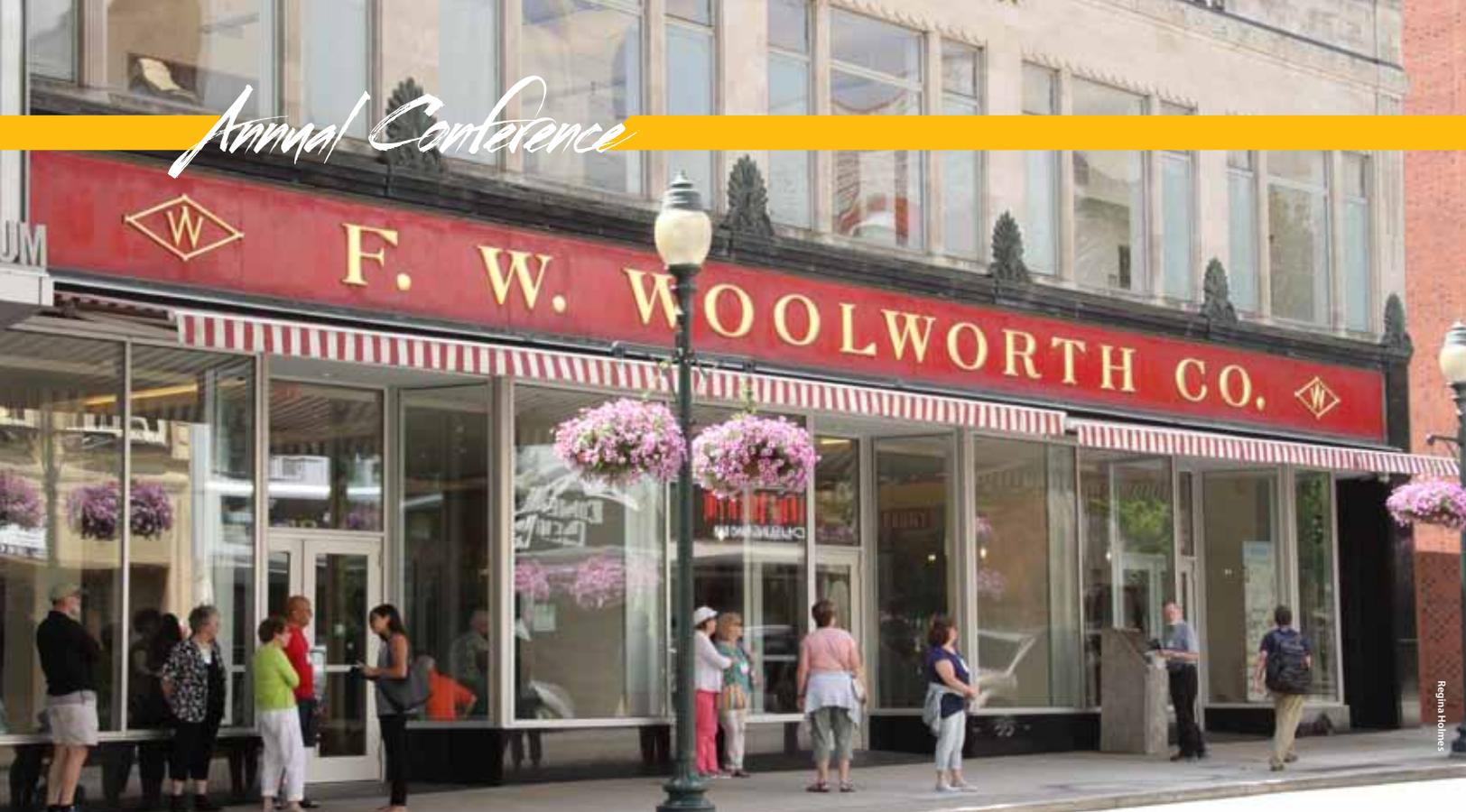
Bryan Mahler

The Holy Spirit brings me joy. I lead mission trips with youth, and have been with them to Kentucky and Honduras. I've been a leader and a worker for 30 years. Even though I have a speech problem, it doesn't stop me from spreading the joy of Jesus to youth!

Marilyn Brubaker

I'm a pastor's wife and a grandma to 10. What's most fun as a pastor's wife is when there's a new baby that we go visit. Getting to know people in the congregation—it's a smaller church so it feels like a family, and you get to be a part of their lives. I enjoy that. I enjoy cooking and baking and hospitality. I'm certainly passionate about people coming to know the Lord. Not only that they come to know the Lord and stay, but that they actually grow, and come to love the Lord, and serve him, and be a light and joy. 🙌





On sacred ground Greensboro's civil rights legacy

by Monica McFadden

A group of Annual Conference attendees stepped through a set of double doors and onto the tiled floor of a mid-20th century lunch counter—"sacred ground," as the tour guide said. It was like stepping into a time capsule, into a time when a cup of hot coffee cost 15 cents and a Pepsi-Cola cost five.

The group was visiting the International Civil Rights Museum in Greensboro, N.C., and had walked into a preserved part of the old Woolworth's department store. In that very room on Feb. 1, 1960, four students from the historically black North Carolina A&T State University—Ezell Blair Jr., David Richmond, Franklin McCain, and Joseph McNeil, called the Greensboro Four—staged a legendary sit-in at the lunch counter. The lunch counter sit-in, while not the first, was the one that launched sit-ins and protests across the country during the civil rights movement.

The group toured winding exhibits exploring the American history of segregation and racism. The museum was filled with historical artifacts. A train station Coke machine charged 10 cents on one side for black consumers, and 6 cents on the other side for white consumers. Guidebooks listed hotels that accepted black travelers. Reenact-

ments of the sit-in and its planning played out on large screens. Significant churches and ministers were highlighted, as well as court cases and lawyers, schools, and prominent activists. Exhibits led visitors from the origins of Jim Crow up to recent history, including chilling photos of a lynching, and a 1980s Ku Klux Klan cross-burning.

"Racism has no time limit and ignorance no set location," said a tour guide. "[The museum serves to] inspire a need for progress in all of us."

About 135 Conferencegoers took tours of the International Civil Right Museum as one of the Jubilee activities of the Conference, and many more visited the museum on their own. For tour groups, the bus ride to the museum offered anecdotes about Brethren involvement in the civil rights movement. One group heard the story of an incident at a restaurant in Bridgewater, Va., in which a visiting sports team from another Brethren college got up and left after the waitress refused to serve a black student. A passenger on the bus added her personal take on the story—in her youth she had been a waitress at that same restaurant, and recounted the wait staff's role in forcing the desegregation of the restaurant.

The museum and the tour experience was a living reminder of the historical significance of the city chosen for Annual Conference this year, with a few of the tour guides themselves having been students at North Carolina A&T.

Greensboro also has seen other significant events in the struggle for civil rights, including the 1979 Greensboro Massacre when Ku Klux Klan and American Nazi Party members shot and killed 5 protestors and injured 10. All of the injured and killed were demonstrating against the Klan in support of the predominantly black laborers in the area.

The massacre was the focus of an Annual Conference insight session led by Nelson and Joyce Johnson. They organized the truth and reconciliation committee to help heal the community's relations in the face of tragedy. Another insight session explored Brethren involvement in civil rights throughout the years, assisted by stories from

attendees. Stories ranged from the summer when Martin Luther King Jr.'s office was at First Church of the Brethren in Chicago, to the busloads of Brethren who drove hundreds of miles to join the March on Washington. **W**

Monica McFadden is a university student in Denver, Colo., where she attends Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton.



'The gospel we preach produces the church we have'

Alan Cross, a Southern Baptist minister who has served congregations in Mississippi and Alabama and currently works for the Evangelical Immigration Table, told an Annual Conference insight session about his moment of epiphany about immigration. It was "like a grenade that explodes in your midst," he said of the following statement he read in a resource: "The gospel we preach produces the church we have."

His church neighborhood was changing, and he told himself that he was preaching the gospel, but he hadn't made the connection that the gospel he was preaching to a middle-class congregation might not speak to the population of immigrants at his doorstep. "My life was messed up by immigrants and the Bible!"

He was pastoring in Montgomery, Ala., at the time—a city he described as being at the heart of American history because it was a center of the slave trade, a center for the Confederacy, and a center of the civil rights movement. He began to ask, in the midst of all that

history, where was the white church?

"Everything you know about immigration is probably wrong," he told his audience, pointing out that the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States has declined since its peak nearly 12 years ago. There are 41 million foreign-born individuals living in the US, and more than 80 million individuals from first- and second-generation immigrant families. Many undocumented immigrants have come to the US looking for work or education, or to escape violence. Some are the abused victims of human trafficking, and some were enticed into the country on false pretenses.

Mixtec immigrants from southern Mexico, for instance, are corn farmers who come to the US because the low price of American corn has made it impossible for them to make a living at home. Almost all the Mixtec women who arrive in the US were sexually abused and traumatized on the journey.

According to Cross, "American history and culture is a story of change." He

reminded the session that there have been several major waves of immigration into North America. In US history, "whenever immigrants arrive they want to close the door behind them."

Cross also reviewed relevant biblical texts such as Genesis 1:26-28, noting that all people are made in God's image, and Acts 17:24-28 that calls on Christians to put aside all animosity, and Leviticus 19:33-34, in which the ancient Israelites were commanded to love the alien in their midst, remembering that they themselves were once slaves in Egypt.

Cross's advice for churches was to build relationships with immigrant populations, be invitational (85 percent of immigrants never enter a US citizen's home, he said), and join with Latino leaders to share their problems and serve their communities.

"We need to stop being disciplined by the media and be disciplined by Jesus," he said. "God can save us, God can bless us, God can use us in powerful ways," he emphasized, if we can love all people.

—**Frank Ramirez**

Brethren, slavery, and civil rights

by Frank Ramirez

From their beginnings, Brethren have taken an unwavering stance against the institution of slavery. The first recorded annual meeting decision made it clear that Brethren could not hold slaves. Later decisions stated that slave owners who joined the church not only had to free their slaves, but also had to see to it that freed slaves were taught a skill and were outfitted with decent clothes.

That did not mean that congregations always have accepted African Americans. Especially illuminating were the struggles of the Marsh Creek congregation located near Gettysburg, Pa. Stephen Longenecker's book *Gettysburg Religion* details, among other things, queries sent by the congregation to the annual meeting seeking counsel on the inclusion of African Americans in love feast and especially in the old Brethren tradition of the holy kiss. Conflicting decisions both affirmed the necessity of sharing the holy kiss with people regardless of race, and recognized that some Brethren had qualms in doing so. Still, it is evident that during the 1800s some Brethren congregations did include African Americans.

Perhaps the most famous African American in early Brethren history was John Lewis, the Dunker friend of Mark Twain who was born free but fled the South after being baptized Brethren in Maryland. He was instrumental in returning the Mumma Bible to the Dunker meetinghouse on the Antietam Civil War battlefield, after the Bible had been stolen by one of the soldiers involved in the battle.

Brethren, especially in the South, suffered during the Civil War years because of the church's opposition to slavery. Many

lost property and some were killed. Despite this, Brethren were unhesitating in retaining their stance against slavery. James Quinter famously engaged in a furious correspondence with a southern newspaper editor about the 1861 annual meeting, when the editor interpreted Brethren kindness as support of slavery (see *Brethren Life and Thought* articles by Dale R. Stoffer, Fall 2015, and Frank Ramirez, Fall 2012).

In the 20th century the Church of the Brethren actively took part in the civil rights movement, despite opposition from some congregations and some church members. A Church of the Brethren congregation is visible in the *Eyes on the Prize* documentary chronicling the 1963 March on Washington, and a banner carried by a Brethren group is visible in the film coverage of the march.

Longenecker has chronicled the work of Ralph E. Smeltzer—then a member of the Church of the Brethren denominational staff—who went to live and work in the city of Selma, Ala., for a period of time during the civil rights movement. Smeltzer was present at many important events in Selma, and served as an informal negotiator between African American leaders and city officials.

At this year's Annual Conference, a number of the Brethren who toured the Civil Rights Museum themselves participated in civil rights protests like Greensboro's lunch counter sit-in. Many other church members have championed civil rights in other ways. 

Frank Ramirez is the lead pastor at Union Center Church of the Brethren in Nappanee, Ind.

The pain we do not see

"Oh, it is your lucky day. You get to sit beside me," were the words that greeted Wesley Morris as he looked for his seat on an airplane. A youth pastor at Greensboro Beloved Community Center and a chaplain at Harlem Hospital, Morris was puzzled. Why would a nervous-looking white woman greet him, a young African-American minister, with those words?

As it turned out, the woman struggled with air turbulence. She counted on being able to talk to whoever she was seated with, in order to keep from

throwing up. "So we shared small light talk about racism and Black Lives Matter throughout our bumpy ride," he told the group at the Congregational Life and Intercultural Ministries Dinner.

His point was that all of us need to go forward together in order to arrive safe and sound at our destination. We need to see each other, and share our pain with each other, in order to bridge the gap that separates us.

We are still divided into two Americas, Morris said—one America of prosperity, freedom, and hope, and the other

of poverty, daily ugliness, and despair. Morris has experienced much of the pain of that "other" America. But what keeps him going is "a peace the world cannot give, neither can it take it away."

The voice of nonviolence addresses the pain we do not see, he told the Brethren, noting that reading a book by Brethren author Harold Row confirmed his commitment to Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolence strategy. "The struggle is difficult," he acknowledged, but "there is no greater work."

—Frank Ramirez



Michael Hodson's father, Harold (above), in his early 40s, holding Daisy at lead on the Hodson farm, and Ferdinand Böhm (left) holding Daisy at lead after receiving the gift of the heifer. Two farmers, separated by the Atlantic and a world of difference in terms of circumstance and culture, both at ease with livestock and experienced with dairy cattle.

> Subject: Daisy

A heifer connects families across continents and generations

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

The story began on a family farm in Ohio in the mid-1950s . . . but I didn't know that yet. For me, it started with an e-mail received out of the blue.

>>>>>

*From: Melinda Bell
Subject: Letter from 1956*

Hello, my family received a cow named Daisy in Germany from your 7th & 8 grade department in 1956. We would like to know if there is anyone in your church from the Hodson family still and would like to know if you have members that remember sending Daisy to my grandparents. We would love to share our story with the generosity of those children. My grandfather was Ferdinand Böhm and my mom is Edith Böhm. My brother has the original letters from your church. I look forward to hearing from you.

When I was a student at Bethany Seminary many years ago, Michael Hodson was one of my supervisors for a chaplaincy internship at the Brethren Home Community in Greenville, Ohio. I wondered if Mike would know anything about a heifer named Daisy.

>>>>>

*From: CoBNews
Subject: FW: Letter from 1956*

Hello Mike, greetings! I hope this finds you doing well! I am writing to send a copy of the following e-mail that I received from a woman whose grandparents received a heifer in Germany in 1956 from a 7th and 8th grade class with help from the Hodson family. She is looking for members of that family to connect with, and share their story. Do you know if your branch of the Hodson family is the same branch that would have been involved in the gift of the cow Daisy to the Ferdinand and Elfriede Böhm family in Germany in 1956?

It wasn't long before I got a reply.

>>>>>

*From: Michael Hodson
Subject: Re: Letter from 1956*

If my memory is accurate, Daisy was a heifer from our farm in Southern Ohio. If so, she was donated by my dad and raised on our farm until starting for Germany. She was selected from the heifer calves born to one of our 12 to 18 Holstein

dairy cows while we were living on Little Richmond Road, Trotwood, Ohio. My parents did have correspondence from the family, but I do not remember any copy of the correspondence when we cleared their home after dad died in February, 2010. I will look through photographs and papers from my parents' home. At one time we had a photograph of the heifer and the family in Germany. I will share more if/when I find anything. Greater certainty could be established if Melinda has any first names from the Hodson family. I am glad to communicate with Melinda. You may share my email address. What a surprise, I am touched by your email.

The only Hodson I knew was indeed part of the family who raised Daisy! Mike and his wife, Barbara, began researching family records. He shared with me how exciting it was that his parents had a part in providing a heifer to this German family.

>>>>>

*From: Michael Hodson
Subject: Re: Letter from 1956 # 2*

After research available in our home—I have better information. First the heifer (Daisy) was brought to our farm to be raised until time to ship her. This heifer was one of several heifers sponsored and sent by the Trotwood Church of the Brethren over a period of years. My parents were early and ongoing supporters of Heifer Project with cattle and financial support. Some Heifer Project material collected by Barbara is located at the Brethren Heritage Center, Brookville, Ohio. I will go to Brookville and see if there is more information, etc. regarding Daisy.

It was time to let Melinda know that I had found the Hodsons who raised Daisy so many years ago. Mike and Melinda kept me in their e-mail loop, and I received copies of some of their notes back and forth. I almost felt in the way, like a stranger at a family reunion.

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*From: Michael Hodson
Subject: Re: Letter from 1956 #3*

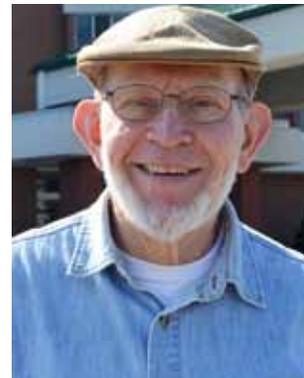
Members of the family who received the heifer, Daisy, and I are communicating by email. The most recent email is from Edith Böhm Sartain, a daughter of the family receiving Daisy. Her story is an amazing description of her family being forced from their home by the Czech Government with 50 pounds of essentials and then the very special gift of Daisy to her father whose cows and horses were taken from him by the Czech Government. It is a touching story. "Thank you" seems too small to convey how deeply I am affected by this discovery and sharing.

For some months, I lost track of the story. Then, early this summer, I had a chance to meet with Mike and talk in person.

He told me about his parents, Harold and Alberta Hodson, who for many decades were dedicated supporters of Heifer Project when it was a Church of the Brethren program, and continued supporting it as Heifer International, and encouraged their congregations' support as well.

The Hodsons raised many heifers in addition to Daisy. They started raising and sharing cows for Heifer Project in the late 1940s. Mike was the oldest of their five children, and remembers helping to feed and care for the animals. Their first Heifer gifts were Shorthorns that went to Bolivia. After World War II they raised animals for Europe.

From 1985 to 1991 they worked with Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Kettering, Ohio, where Mike was pastor, to raise two Maine Anjou beef heifers each year for a poverty-stricken area of Kentucky. In the mid-1990s they continued to raise animals for families in



Michael Hodson

Kentucky, working with the children of Eversole Church of the Brethren in New Lebanon, Ohio. In earlier years the family also raised a heifer for Messiah Church of the Brethren, a church plant started by Trotwood (Ohio) Church of the Brethren. After retiring and selling the last of their cattle, they continued to donate money to Heifer International.

Daisy was eight weeks old when she came to the Hodson farm in June 1953. She was born April 1 that year—an April Fool's baby. At the time, Mike's parents were leaders of the Heifer Project Committee of the Trotwood congregation. Church members helped provide heifers for Europe, and the committee received donations of six heifers. Two were purchased by Sunday school classes. John Shellbarger taught the class that sponsored Daisy.

Mike gave me documents related to Daisy's story, including a copy of a letter his father wrote to the Böhm family in January 1956.

Dear Mr. Ferdinand Böhm and Family:

We were very glad to receive the Christmas greeting from your family. I am sorry that we did not receive the English letter.

I want to explain to you about Daisy. The intermediate boys and girls of the Trotwood Church of the Brethren gave enough money to buy Daisy when she was 8 weeks old. The



The Böhm family shown at about the time they received Daisy.

you in regards to the Heifer Project administered by the Church of the Brethren, the year was 1956. Through the Generosity and the love of helping someone in need by the members of the Church and its Sunday School children my father Ferdinand Böhm was chosen to receive the Heifer named Daisy.

I am somewhat at a loss just how this event transpired and what the qualifications were to be chosen as I was a mere 14 years old, but what I can tell you certainly is how grateful my parents were for this extraordinary gift from so far away by a people that cared.

Our family had lived in what was known as the Sudetenland up until the Expulsion of all German Nationals by the Czech Government in an ethnic cleansing as it was called at the end of WWII. It did not matter that the 100,000 plus German Population had lived there for many Generations and built the Region into a thriving industrial Area. The Sudetenland became part of what is now known as the Czech Republic (formerly known as Czechoslovakia).

As our Family was forced to leave the only home they ever knew all of their possessions were confiscated by the Czechs and they could only take with them a mere 50 lbs. of essentials for the family

My father passed away in 1973 at the age of 64. [In a follow up e-mail Edith shared that her mother passed away in 2015, at age 97.] My mother used to tell us (I have 3 sisters) that the only time she ever saw our father cry was when some Czechs came and took his cows and horses away it broke his heart.

Receiving Daisy from the Church of the Brethren Members was very special to my father and I want you to know he pampered her always. I recall that Daisy produced an unequalled amount of milk and my parents were able to have a daily milk pickup done early in the morning by a Dairy for processing this provided much needed additional income for the family.

I also carry a vivid image of my father leading Daisy across the Highway to a Farm with a bull when it was time for her to breed and how thrilled he would be each time when a new calf was born.

This act of kindness by the American People endeared them to me at this early stage in my life, I fell in love with anything American. So it was no surprise that I would also meet and marry an American. That took place in 1960. I came here in 1961 and was sworn in as a brand new US Citizen Sept. 27, 1963 in Los Angeles, Calif. . . .

So you see Daisy was responsible for many things in our lives. The gift of her to our family by the Church of the Brethren members involved in the Heifer Project helped our family to rebuild their shattered lives and she awakened in me a love for this Nation and its people which I can now proudly call my people and my Country. 🇺🇸

intermediate boys and girls are children that are in the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades in school. They gave \$75.00 with which I bought Daisy. Our family raised her until she was ready to send to you. She will be three years old the 1st of April. How much milk did she give a day as a heifer? What was the calf a heifer, or a bull? She looked like she was going to be a large cow. Our children were very fond of her they used to put a rope on her and lead her around from the time we bought her until we sent her.

We have four boys Michael 16, Ronald 14, Lynn 9, and Dennis 6 and a little girl Karen 2 years old. We live on a farm of 200 acres. We have nineteen milk cows mostly Holsteins, some Ayrshires. Our herd give from 10,000 pounds to 18,000 pounds per cow a year. Our biggest problem is to get heifer calves. We only get two or three heifers a years that is the reason we bought Daisy. . . .

May God bless you and your family. We pray that Daisy will produce many heifers and an abundance of milk for you.

Sincerely,
Harold Hodson and family

As a teenager on a farm where Daisy was just one more heifer to care for, Mike had no idea of the meaning of the gift given by his family, and his church. It is only now, he told me, that he understands the significance of a heifer for the Böhms.

“We were doing something that’s everyday,” he said of his family’s end of this story. “You never know, on the other end, what a gift will mean.

“It was a healing thing.”

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From: Edith Sartain
Subject: Daisy, a gift to my family in Germany 1956

Let me introduce myself first of all, I am Edith Böhm Sartain the mother of Melinda who recently was put in touch with

Persistent opposition to paying for war

An interview with **David R. Bassett**

by Sara White

David R. Bassett, founder of the **National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund**, is a person of persistent faith and generous wisdom. His story begins this way:

“I was born in 1928 and I had wonderful parents. They were both in the Congregational Church. I was taught, more by my mother than either parent, that fighting was not a good thing to do. It is a simple phrase for a four-year-old or a six-year-old. I guess at age 10, in 1938, I was aware



of the invasion of the Nazis into Czechoslovakia, and of course I remember Pearl Harbor quite well, in 1941 when I was age 13.”

World War II began during his adolescent years, and David began to think about how, one day, he would be called to live out his convictions in regard to violence. He cites his church, his parents, and close friends such as a Quaker couple from Philadelphia, the Edgertons, as influential in the development of his thinking. “I came to realize quite young, I think in high school days, that I should not be a soldier,” he said. “I wasn’t made to be a soldier, I could not be a soldier.”

His convictions as a conscientious objector evolved fairly early in his life. “One couldn’t help thinking about the [cost of] paying for war,” he says. “I began to think that paying for war is a form of participation in war, and then to think about all of the extensions of that: what am I going to do when I am going to be taxed?”

Upon graduating from medical school in 1953, he faced the doctor’s draft and was asked to report to the military. After exchanging upwards of 60 letters with the Selective Service System, he was granted conscientious objector status. He spent the following two years doing alternative service through the American Friends Service Committee. He went to India with his wife, Miyoko Inouye, and their newborn child, to work as a doctor.

For the next several years, David deeply engaged with the idea of how a person of conscience is called to act in regard to paying for war. He discussed this with fellow Friends and interested people throughout the faith community.

The National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund was founded in 1971 (with a different name at first). The organization’s purpose was to encourage legislation creating a legal option for those who conscientiously object to paying for war. David, although himself a war tax resister, understood that not all nonviolent people are inclined to such civil disobedience, and most wish to pay their taxes in full.

The bill, which was first introduced in 1972 and continues to be reintroduced every two years, seeks “to affirm the religious freedom of taxpayers who are conscientiously op-

posed to participation in war, to provide that the income, estate, or gift tax payments of such taxpayers be used for nonmilitary purposes.” One who feels compelled to declare this conscientious objector status would pay the equivalent amount in taxes as other citizens, but these funds would be marked in such a way that they could be used only for nonmilitary purposes.

The organization’s work in Washington, D.C., often interacts with similar movements throughout the world. David explains: “I had a feeling that there were other locations holding up this interest starting, I think in some cases, with very little influence from the Washington office, and in other cases with a good deal of back-and-forth.” Specifically he mentions work in Brussels, Belgium, another active group in England, and a group in Japan.

David appreciates the many ways that the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund has been fortunate, including use of space provided by the Friends Meeting in Washington, and a generous budget. Most of all, he appreciates the dedicated people with whom he has worked. He tells heart-warming stories of the human aspect of the work,

particularly highlighting the spirit of Marian Franz who for a long time was executive director of the campaign.

How does he see the organization moving forward into the future? Through hard work, “as it has always been,” he says. But the work is “inspiring if one is committed. Those who stay with it are infused and enthused with the spirit from the beginning. . . . I don’t think it takes a great deal, aside from recognizing the importance of who we are and what we are doing.”

His advice? “Just carry on and do what you know there is to be done,” remembering that “you can be creative and you will not be morose or depressed. . . . You may have some new ideas.”

He repeats the classic Quaker conviction to speak the truth. “That is simple to say, but you do that in a way that does not turn people away [and] opens some eyes.” 

Sara White has been an intern at the Church of the Brethren Office of Public Witness in Washington, D.C. For information about the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund go to www.peacetaxfund.org. A collection of the David R. Bassett papers 1963-2004 is available from the Bentley Historical Library of the University of Michigan at <http://quod.lib.umich>.

Imagine if forgiveness and love were commonly spoken, if conflicts were resolved with a healing touch and everyone felt value and worth. Our children are ready to learn that language and we have been given the words of life. So let’s speak to them of peace and justice. Let’s tell them of Jesus and God’s shalom. Let’s teach our kids to shine in this world.

** Start small*



A hole in the roof

by Bob Bowman

Some of us had a hard time finding Jesus through the front door. It was the crowd around him that turned us off. But then we discovered a hole in the roof, an alternate opening to Jesus.

Mark's version of this story is found in Mark 2:1-12. It starts with Jesus "at home." He had just completed a tour through the villages of Galilee, healing, preaching, and freeing people from their demons. Perhaps Jesus was looking forward to a few days at home to rest. However, when news got around that he was back in Capernaum, folks started dropping by.

Soon there was such a crowd inside the small Galilean house that it could hold no more—people sitting in the windows, crowded around the door, and filling the courtyard.

There are a variety of ways the "crowd" may prevent us from coming close to the source of spiritual healing, but this time it was purely physical. Up the road came a quartet of young men bringing a friend to see Jesus, but they could find no way to get through the crowd.

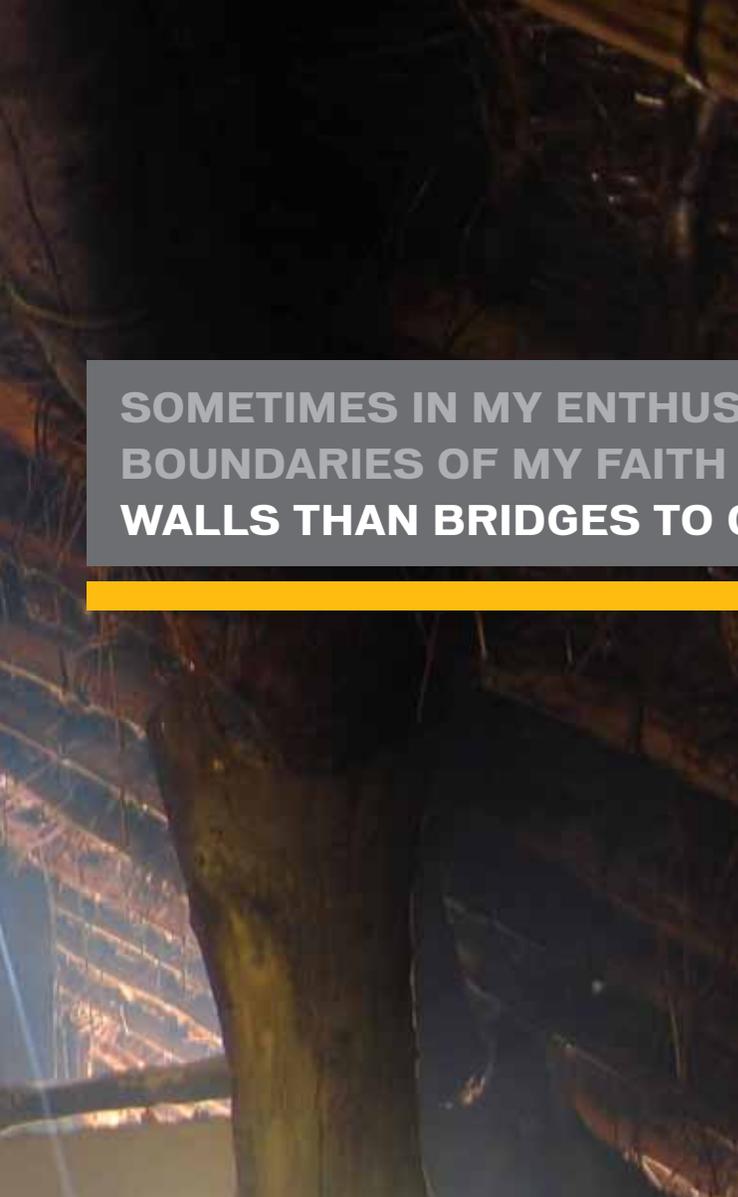
The friend is described as a *paralytikon* which is usually translated as "paralytic." In Greek medical literature of the

time the word was broader, referring to loss of strength, loss of sensation, or even loss of will. It covered what we call depression as well as physical disease.

The story does not tell us who initiated this man's visit to Jesus. Did he want to see Jesus and enlisted his friends to carry him there? Or did his friends decide he needed to see Jesus whether he wanted to or not? Did they pick him up "willy nilly," and was he hauled to the home in Capernaum complaining all the way?

The crowd did not thwart the determination of the four friends. Their creative solution was to lug the weak man up the outside stairs to the flat roof of the one-story house. The roof of a typical Galilean home was made of timber cross beams filled with brushwood and packed with clay. In Mark's delightful phrase, they "unroofed the roof," digging through the mud and clay to make an opening large enough to let the man through.

I imagine Jesus reaching up to help from below as they lowered their friend down amid a shower of dust and rubble. I imagine this because I imagine Jesus welcoming those who come in unusual ways.



SOMETIMES IN MY ENTHUSIASM TO PROTECT THE BOUNDARIES OF MY FAITH I END UP BUILDING MORE WALLS THAN BRIDGES TO CHRIST.

When Jesus saw the faith of those four friends, the perseverance and creativity that marked their friendship, he said, “Cheer up, my son, your sins are forgiven.”

As a reader, I am surprised. I expected Jesus to say, “My son, your handicap is cured.” I was sure of two things. First, that the “paralytic” was there because of his physical condition and not because of guilt. Second, that Jesus said there is no simple connection between unforgiven sin and physical disability. It was in John 9:3 that I read it. Yet, the first word of Jesus to the paralytic is about forgiveness.

If I am surprised, so were several other theologians sitting around Jesus at the time. Called “scribes” in Mark’s Gospel, they may need a word of introduction. Scribes were the faithful biblical scholars of the day. The patient, meticulous, and accurate work of the scribes gave us the Old Testament. If I had been there that day, I would have been sitting with the scribes, charmed by the teachings and interpretations of Jesus.

With the scribes, I also would have questions in my mind. My question would be different from the scribe’s in Mark. Perhaps they were wondering why Jesus used a

form of the verb indicating that the man’s sins were already forgiven, not that they *would be* forgiven. Perhaps they wondered, “How does he know?”

I would wonder about the connection between forgiveness and healing. I would have noticed the way Jesus admired the faith of the four companions and wondered, “What is the connection between the faith of his community and the forgiveness of the paralytic?”

This would have been the perfect occasion for Jesus to make a connection between faith and healing or between forgiveness and healing. But the only connection made is that both are offered by Jesus. The pronouncement of forgiveness and the call to pick up his bed are two separate actions. Both sin and disability lose their power over us in the presence of Jesus.

A helpful way to get inside biblical stories is to identify with the characters in the story and reflect on what message that brings.

I could have been a scribe. There was nothing wrong with the questions the scribes were pondering. The challenge is whether we are open to answers that lead us in unexpected directions.

I could have been part of the crowd. Sometimes in my enthusiasm to protect the boundaries of my faith I end up building more walls than bridges to Christ. Sometimes I am so eager to meet my friends at worship on Sunday morning that I neglect visitors. Sometimes my church is structured in such a way that people with disabilities cannot enter.

Could I have been a friend? How unorthodox a path would I be willing to take to help someone who has been shut out of the presence of Jesus by “the crowd”? Would my faith be enough to cause healing in someone else?

But most often I find myself on the litter carried into the presence of Christ by the community of faith whose prayers, love, and support bear me up when I can’t walk. And I come away healed in spirit and body. 🙏

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

Great hope for the church

An interview with general secretary David A. Steele

David A. Steele begins Sept. 1 as general secretary of the Church of the Brethren. He has been Middle Pennsylvania District executive minister since 2005 and is a former Annual Conference moderator, among other leadership positions in the church. Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford interviewed him in late May.

MESSENGER: *The Search Committee asked what scripture passage most influences your view of the church. What was your answer?*

The 1 Corinthians 12 passage about the body having many parts. For me, that has been a significant scripture for a number of years, going back to the summers I was program director [at Camp Blue Diamond]. That was the scripture I referred to often because of the diversity of not only the staff, representing the different churches and different parts of the country and international counselors, but also the kids. You look different, you understand things differently, but that uniqueness is a gift of God, and in that gift we need each other. No one is greater or lesser than another.

Q: *What are key challenges facing the denomination? And what do you see as opportunities?*

The challenges are very real. Declining membership and real connection to the church, challenges related to same-gender marriage, the strain with On Earth Peace—all of those pulled together offer some really significant challenges. As for opportunities, are we able to set aside personal agendas, and really be intentional about having conversation? If we're willing to have some conversation—and people don't like to talk, I've been around long enough to know we're done talking and ready to make decisions—but opportunities are there if we would recognize that we're more than an issue, or more than a position, we're the church. That sense of identity, that sense of what makes us somewhat uniquely the Church of the Brethren, from my vantage point is community. If we're willing to take the risk to live into that, we could end up in different places on some of the issues we're facing. That doesn't mean we're going to agree on everything by any means, but we might have a different respect for one another.



David Steele (at right) with Mission and Ministry Board chair Don Fitzkee.

Q: *You've been in a number of leadership roles in the church. How do those experiences help you with this new responsibility?*

Various leadership roles have given me different insights into different segments of the church, everything from

-serving on a camp board to being around a board table, to serving the denomination as moderator. Each has given me a different window into the heartbeat of the church, and some insight into what makes the church tick.

Q: *What do you look forward to with this new job?*

In general the challenges, and the new opportunities that come with

a new role. To dig in and really get a sense of some of the needs and the struggles—not only administratively and structurally, but also the struggles and stories out in the church—and how to make the connection. I'm looking forward to meeting more people, working alongside the Mission and Ministry Board, working alongside international partners and ecumenical partners.

Q: *Brethren are so practical, they're going to want to know, "Where will he live?"*

I will be finding a place to live in Elgin [Illinois], and my wife Sarah and daughter Aubrey will not be leaving Pennsylvania immediately. We're going to assess how a long-distance relationship will work, taking opportunities with my travel to the East to spend an extra day or two with family.

If it helps people understand why we're not moving the family from the outset, Aubrey has Down syndrome and we've worked hard to get her established in a job that is really suitable for her. Our daughter Abby is older than Aubrey and is a graduate of Elizabethtown College, and just accepted a position as a science teacher at a junior high school. Sarah works in the medical field, directing a pain management clinic.

Q: *Is there anything you'd like to make sure the denomination knows about you?*

My great hope for the church.

Church leaders call Brethren to be ‘landmark of refuge’

Church leaders released a statement calling the Church of the Brethren to provide spiritual refuge following a spate of shootings that rocked the nation in early July. The statement was signed by Annual Conference moderator Carol A. Scheppard, moderator-elect Samuel Sarpiya, and interim general secretary Dale E. Minnich.

“When Lamentations Are Not Enough” expressed grief for those who died in the shootings and prayed for their families, including “black families who have lost a loved one to police violence” and “the families of the police who were attacked and killed.”

The statement continued, in part: “In a sense, we are praying for ourselves, a nation caught in a cycle

The Dunker meetinghouse on the Civil War battlefield at Antietam is a symbol of the kind of refuge the church can offer in a time of crisis and violence.



Terry Hatfield

of racialized violence. . . . Today, we do not know how to be peacemakers for our country when the source of the violence seems as unpredictable as a storm—and like a storm, the violence seems destined to come again.”

The statement lifted up the Dunker meetinghouse on the Civil War battlefield at Antietam as a symbol of the kind of spiritual refuge the church can provide today. Find the letter at www.brethren.org/news/2016/church-leaders-call-brethren-to-be-refuge-during-violence.html.

‘Risk hope’ is theme for 2017 Annual Conference

After her consecration as moderator for the 2017 Annual Conference, Carol Scheppard announced the theme for the next annual meeting: “Risk Hope” (Hebrews 10:23). “He who has promised is faithful,” Scheppard affirmed, speaking at the closing worship service of this year’s Conference. “As we carry the light in the darkness, risk hope that the dawn will come! . . . Risk hope for our denomination in the world. . . . Risk hope for the life of the light of Christ in our hearts.”

The 2017 Conference takes place in Grand Rapids, Mich., on June 28-July 2, a Wednesday through Sunday schedule.

Personnel notes

Atlantic Northeast District executive minister **Craig H. Smith** has announced his retirement. He has served in the position for 19 years. He concludes full duties as district executive on Dec. 31. In the following three months he will serve a semi-sabbatical ending March 31, 2017. During the semi-sabbatical, he will continue to consult with district staff and work with a transition team. Atlantic



Regina Holmes

Northeast District is the oldest of the Church of the Brethren’s 24 districts, and during most of Smith’s tenure also was the largest in terms of membership, only recently taking second place to Shenandoah District. It covers considerable territory geographically, including the eastern half of the state of Pennsylvania, with some congregations also in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Delaware, New York, and Maine. Emphases on growth of the district staff, new church planting, welcoming of ethnically diverse congregations, and support for the mission efforts of the denomination have marked Smith’s leadership.

Bethany Theological Seminary has hired **Amy Beery** of Indianapolis as part-time admissions counselor. She earned a master of divinity degree from Bethany in 2013 and has worked in chaplaincy for Riley Children’s Hospital in Indianapolis. Traveling throughout the country, she will be a spokesperson for the seminary with an emphasis on making contacts with prospective students.

Karen Warner has begun work as customer service representative for Brethren Press, working part-time. She also continues as administrative assistant at St. Hugh of Lincoln Episcopal Church in Elgin, Ill.



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EDF grants go to refugees, Rwanda, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras

Brethren Disaster Ministries has directed grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) to assist with refugee resettlement in the US, Burundian refugees in Rwanda, Heifer International response to the earthquake in Ecuador, Church World Service (CWS) emergency preparedness in Haiti, and Proyecto Aldea Global (PAG) emergency preparedness in Honduras.

An EDF grant of \$15,000 went to CWS for refugee resettlement in the US. In response to the international refugee crisis, the US has agreed to take in additional refugees, and in turn CWS Immigration and Refugee Program will be resettling more refugees. The US plans to resettle 15,000 more refugees in 2016 than the 70,000 resettled in 2015, and up to 100,000 in 2018.



Roy Winter

A grant of \$14,000 supports the work of the fledgling Brethren church in Rwanda to aid Burundian refugees. Burundians continue to flee into neighboring countries trying to escape violence and a potential genocide.

A Syrian refugee family receives aid after fleeing to Lebanon.

Brethren in Rwanda, led by Etienne Nsanzimana, are supporting 219 at-risk families numbering 1,750 people. The majority are women, children, and youth. In March, a grant of \$25,000 provided emergency food and supplies to 325 families or 3,125 refugees.

A grant of \$10,000 supports the Heifer International response to the April 16 earthquake in Ecuador. Heifer partners, farmers, and families in Muisne, Manabi, Calceta, and Fortaleza del Valle sustained significant damage. This grant supports counseling and trauma support to families with children, housing reconstruction, and economic and ecological recovery including entrepreneurship for women.

A grant of \$10,000 supports CWS emergency preparedness and home construction in Haiti, in a continued response to the 2010 earthquake. Funds will help support long-term recovery and development, emergency preparedness, and construction of 135 homes.

A grant of \$8,700 supports emergency preparedness in Honduras. Storms in 2015 depleted PAG's emergency response supplies. This grant helps provide food, hygiene supplies, and medicine to prepare for upcoming storms. Also covered is the shipment of canned chicken provided by Mid-Atlantic District and Southern Pennsylvania District.

For more about the EDF or to donate online go to www.brethren.org/edf.

Creation care study committee is named

The Standing Committee of district delegates has elected a Creation Care Study Committee. Three members have been elected to the new study committee: Duane Deardorff of Durham, N.C.; Laura Dell-Haro of Beatrice, Neb.; and Sharon Yohn of Huntingdon, Pa. The study committee has been formed in response to the decision of Annual Conference "that a Creation Care study committee be appointed to work, in consultation with Brethren Benefit Trust and other relevant organizations, to develop ways to

support and extend our knowledge of renewable energy production with our financial investments and involvement in community projects to reduce our contributions to greenhouse gas concentrations and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels."

Bhagat receives intercultural award

At this year's Annual Conference, former denominational staff member Shantilal Bhagat was honored with the Revelation 7:9 Award. Now in his early 90s and living in La Verne, Calif., Bhagat is originally

from India where he worked with the Church of the Brethren for 16 years at the Rural Service Center in Anklesvar. He came to the United States in 1968 to take a position at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. He served with the former General Board for over 30 years, in a variety of roles including coordinator of social services for the Foreign Mission Commission, community development representative, Asia representative, representative to the United Nations, and more. He wrote three books during his career, and made a focus on small church concerns, environmental concerns, and racism an important part of his ministry.



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My morning reading

I always look forward to receiving MESSENGER every month, to keep in tune. It's my morning reading on the train between Marburg and Frankfurt. Thank you to your entire team.

Krista Kay Hamer-Schweer
Marburg, Germany

Befriending death

Thank you for a very fine June issue. The general topic of "Befriending Death," combined with several finely written articles, makes this for me (and I trust the whole denomination) a stimulating and nourishing issue. In the midst of daily reports of war deaths, suicide bombings, refugee drownings, displacements, and life-destroying interpersonal and interfaith hostilities, befriending death pulls us beyond the mortality of our own and our beloved ones' lives. It leads us frequently to lament. It calls for healed eyes and heart

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LETTERS

to see all people as carriers of the divine. It strengthens us to accompany and advocate for the weak and frightened. And it surrounds us in the mystery of the Holy Presence.

Ruthann Knechel Johansen
Granger, Ind.

Barely recognizing the church

I am a “cradle” Brethren, my DNA going back into the early days of the church. Over the last several years I have watched my beloved denomination undergo a transformation that now prevents me from barely recognizing the church I grew up in, in the 1950s, one that expressed our commitment to peace, love, and justice, to the “imitation of Jesus” as our goal.

Now I see a church that is, for all intents and purposes, split. We have congregations that won’t send their young people who are interested in

ministry to Bethany Seminary, who have their “own” BVS units, and who now focus on condemnation of those who are “different,” who are clamoring to punish and even exclude from the denomination all who disagree with them, or who have expressed a deep concern about such discrimination, even calling those who disagree “apostates.” The church is becoming an institution that seems too often obsessed with judgment rather than peace, love, and justice, and finding ways to communicate the healing love of Jesus to the world.

With deep sadness, I finally have chosen to leave my beloved church. But, through what I believe to be the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I have found a denomination that feels very much like the Church of the Brethren that I grew up in.

Sharon Henne
Lee’s Summit, Mo.

CLASSIFIEDS

We at Brethren Press would like to thank all the volunteers who helped us out at Annual Conference. To all of you who helped, from unloading the books to helping customers, to tearing it all down at the end, we are grateful for and humbled by your generosity. Thanks to each and every one of the Brethren Press bookstore volunteers.

The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center (www.vbmhc.org) invites applications for the position of full-time Executive Director. The successful candidate should have expertise in program visioning, strategic planning, fundraising, marketing, administration, public relations, volunteer coordination, and interpreting the vision of the Center to the church and community. The Director should be committed to the heritage which Brethren and Mennonites share, especially in the Shenandoah Valley. Salary and benefits as determined by the Board of Directors. Send letter of application, resume, and three recommendations to J.D. Glick, Chair, Search committee, 14 Joseph Court, Bridgewater, VA 22812 (jdglick@Verizon.net). Position open until filled.



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New Members

Ambler, Pa.: Robert Baltzersen, Mary Baltzersen, Elaine Weiler, James Weiler, Andrew Smith, Tessa Mountain

Annaville, Pa.: Delmar Cook, Mary Cook, Bill Miller, Ruth Miller, Lydia Fair

Bear Run, Mill Run, Pa.: James Smalley, Mary Kay Hiles, Connie Ruff, Kristin Steyer, Colby Kisner

Beaver Creek, Hagerstown, Md.: Albert Fogle, Kim Fogle

Bethel, Arriba, Colo.: Nathan Saffer, Kendyl Saffer, Lindsey Michal, Jake Michal, Stephanie Saffer, David Saffer

Coulson, Hillsville, Va.: Naomi Edwards, Sadie Lucas, Rayne Shupe, Landen Shupe, Hallie Newman, Dezirae Rodrigue, Ashlyn Griffin

Easton, Md.: Chad Whitzell

Gortner Union, Oakland, Md.: Kalei Kauffman, Jordan Martin

Hanover, Pa.: Eilish Strausbaugh, Hayley Franco

His Way, Mills River, N.C.: Marisol Zepeda, Leticia Camacho, Fernando Zepeda Camacho

Holidaysburg, Pa.: Eric Biddle, Karen Biddle, Stacy Crum, JoAnn Johnston, Susan Stuver, Alexis Wagner, Jordyn Wagner, Krista Wagner, Mary Beth Waite, Dawn Yoder

Lancaster, Pa.: Wayne Stauffer, Ron Shank

Lititz, Pa.: Betty Bomberger, David Brubaker, Brad Mummaw, Lisa Mummaw, Ryan Charles, Bush Diamond, Mason Ludwig, Mue Gay Paw

Little Swatara, Bethel, Pa.: Jessica Hartranft, Scot

Zeller, Rebecca Zeller, Marlin Ritchie, Tammy Ritchie, Debra Yordy, Greg Bryant, Mia Hussmann, Jacob Straw, Chad Henning, Dylan Himmelberger, Nathan Wengert, Jason Schwalm, Sara Schwalm, Daniel Landis, Ashly Landis

Lorida, Fla.: Evy Tumbelston, Kadin Baker

Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio: Gloria Bloomquist, Kierstan Lawson

Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.: Samuel Beamesderfer, Ruth Beamesderfer, Nathan Kapp, Barbara Repass, Vernon Repass

Modesto, Calif.: Alba VerHulst

Mohrsville, Pa.: Keena Moyer, Wade Moyer, Cole Moyer, Quin Moyer, Cody Moyer, Dane Moyer, Jake Moyer, Nikki Moyer

Monocacy, Rocky Ridge, Md.: Travis Peters

Mount Morris, Ill.: Taylor Sheely, Allison Sheely, David Kise, John Lindhorst, Lynne Wilburn

Pleasant Chapel, Ashley, Ind.: Tammy Tubbs

South Waterloo, Waterloo, Iowa: Noah Mills, Tom Mills, Camden Schneider, Jimmy Inyani, Hinsene Roba

Springfield, Coopersburg, Pa.: David Weiss, Dawn Weiss

Sunnyside, New Creek, W. Va.: F. Cody Pancake, III, Glenn Riggleman, James Lloyd, Catherine Lloyd, Catherine E. Lloyd, Andrew Lloyd

Thurmont, Md.: Rachel Grimes

Waynesboro, Pa.: Logan Sampson, Payton Sampson, William Smith, Audrey Smith, Devon Biser, Phyllis Hammaker, Roy Leckron

Wyomissing, Pa.: Darlene Dunn, Nancy May, Melissa Stief

Wedding Anniversaries

Ball, Arden and Charmaine, Goshen, Ind., 65

Beachley, Ron and Linda,

Davidsville, Pa., 55

Bucher, Wilbur and Annette, Lancaster, Pa., 68

Callaway, Robert and Verna, Ridgely, Md., 65

Clay, Richard and Jean, Keyser, W. Va., 65

Clever, Bill and Rachel, Hagerstown, Md., 50

Confer, Dan and Dixie, Palmyra, Pa., 50

Deardorff, Barry and Arlene, North Manchester, Ind., 60

Dulabaum, Marion and Jackie, Uniontown, Ohio, 65

Eberly, David and Ann, Hagerstown, Md., 60

Emmett, Johnnie and Barbara, Frederick, Md., 60

Frantz, Richard and Beatrice, Richland, Pa., 55

Gibble, Eugene and Janet, Manheim, Pa., 55

Good, Monroe and Ada, Lancaster, Pa., 71

Hangey, Jerry and Joan, Quakertown, Pa., 50

Herr, John and Theresa, Lancaster, Pa., 66

Higginbotham, Ralph and Patricia, Uniontown, Ohio, 55

Humphrey, Dave and Dee, Twin Falls, Idaho, 50

Kaylor, Earl and Harriett, Huntingdon, Pa., 65

Kettering, George and Annabelle, Ashland, Ohio, 60

Kline, Ray and Peggy, Lititz, Pa., 50

Lidston, Bruce and Carolyn, Huntingdon, Pa., 50

Light, Harry and Dottie, Columbia, Pa., 50

Lineweaver, Jim and Doris, Palmyra, Pa., 55

Locke, Daniel and Marian, Hartsville, Ohio, 50

Markle, Fred and Edna, Hanover, Pa., 50

Metzger, Gene and Barbara, Lafayette, Ind., 69

Molison, Elvin and Irene, Hanover, Pa., 60

Nash, David and Shirley, Rawlings, Md., 55

Nolen, Wil and Joyce, Elgin, Ill., 50

Parlett, Howard and Barb, Huntingdon, Pa., 55

Peiffer, Jim and Blanche, Quakertown, Pa., 69

Rice, Carroll and Shirley,

Monrovia, Md., 55

Rohr, Robert and Ferne, Staunton, Va., 70

Sanbloom, Bob and Joann, West Lafayette, Ind., 60

Siems, Norman and Anne, Huntingdon, Pa., 50

Siler, Bruce and June, Roanoke, Va., 55

Simmons, Vernon and Cleo, Staunton, Va., 70

Smith, Karlton and Peg, Phoenixville, Pa., 66

Stauffer, J. Richard and Myra, Lancaster, Pa., 68

Stewart, Meade and Dottie, Staunton, Va., 50

Swigart, John, Jr. and Martha, Huntingdon, Pa., 55

Swisher, Lamar and Mary, Columbia, Pa., 60

Thompson, Kenneth and Charleen, Freeport, Mich., 69

Troyer, Floyd and Mary, Ashley, Ind., 65

Washburn, Robert and Cheryl, Huntingdon, Pa., 50

Wert, Bob and Diane, Quakertown, Pa., 50

Zerbe, John and Maryanne, Elkhart, Ind., 50

Ordained

Bomberger, H. Todd, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.), June 26

Hunn, Von D., W. Plains Dist. (Garden City, Kan.), June 19

Johnson, Randy A., N. Plains Dist. (Dallas Center, Iowa), May 22

Lancaster, Mark, S. Ohio Dist. (Beavercreek, Ohio), June 19

Leatherman, Chris E., W. Marva Dist. (Capon Chapel, Levels, W. Va.), June 12

Ludwick, Josiah, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Harrisburg, First, Harrisburg, Pa.), July 10

McIntyre, Timothy, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Riddlesburg, Pa.), May 22

Shiflet, Jerry G., Shen. Dist. (Mountain Grove, Fulks Run, Va.), June 26

Commissioned

Dykema, Roberta J., Pac. N. W. Dist. (Olympic View, Seattle, Wash.), June 5

Licensed

Cleveland, Robert, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Hatfield, Pa.), June 5

Glenny, Jeffrey, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Spring Mount, Warriors Mark, Pa.), May 22

Horner, Tammy, W. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant Hill, Johnstown, Pa.), May 22

Lam, Donnie R., Jr., Shen. Dist. (Rileyville, Va.), June 19

Longbrake, Joshua, Pac. S. W. Dist. (Circle of Peace, Peoria, Ariz.), June 19

Martin, DelRay, S. Pa. Dist. (Trinity, Waynesboro, Pa.), June 5

Ross, Matthew, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Hanoverdale, Hummelstown, Pa.), June 19

Schwanger, Cody, Atl. N. E. Dist. (West Green Tree, Elizabethtown, Pa.), May 15

Placements

Anders, Thomas E., pastor, Plymouth, Ind., July 3

Bean, Ruby, from interim to pastor, Wilmington, Del., May 15

Cable, Vincent E., from interim to pastor, Fairchance, Pa., July 10

Crable, David E., pastor, Connellsville, Pa., June 5

Davis, Robert, pastor, Fairview, Cordova, Md., Dec. 1

Ford, T. Craig, pastor, Mountain Valley, Greeneville, Tenn., May 22

Fullen, Daniel, from interim to pastor, Olivet, Thornville, Ohio, June 5

Funkhouser, Beverly A., from interim to pastor, Round Hill, Toms Brook, Va., June 1

Glenny, Jeffrey, pastor, Spring Mount, Warriors Mark, Pa., May 22

Hall, Edward W., Jr., pastor, Peak Creek, Laurel Springs, N. C., Feb. 21

Hubbell, Donald G., from pastor of special ministries to pastor, York, First, York, Pa., Jan. 1

Huffaker, Michael J., from pastor, Osage, McCune, Kan., to pastor, Sugar Creek West, Lima, Ohio, June 26



Beautiful imperfection

With apologies to exacting engineers everywhere, there is nothing wrong with a little imperfection. The recent construction of a small retaining wall around one end of our newly established garden illustrates this notion.

Primary material for the wall consists of various pieces of calcareous limestone, the very kind that causes consternation for farmers and damage to grain drills each planting season.



KEN FRANTZ

Nearly every adjoining section of neighboring farmland seems to sport at least one pile of offending rock that has been picked from the fields. It's not exactly premium architectural stone. Relatively soft and easily broken, it is also quite irregular in both shape and thickness. However, the cost is right, something that leveled the playing field while balancing labor and resources for the project.

A laser level aided us in identifying desired contours of the wall relative to topography. Even then, it was helpful to allow the eye the final say in determining basic height and curve, a nod to aesthetics over precision.

Likewise, most of the stones were set in place without pursuing an exact fit. Our largest temptation was to overthink their placement. The most pleasing results came from discovering a rhythm as they were positioned, while trying our best not to agonize or discriminate over which stone came next.

There is something to be said for celebrating imperfection, the kind that most of us bring to the table of everyday living—in our families, our churches, even the floor of Annual Conference. Scripture is replete with God's imperfect people striving towards a beautiful perfection. Recognition of imperfection results in setting aside blame and hostile critique of others in order to accomplish something beyond the individual self. Thus, servant leadership becomes possible once again.

Are we willing to be placed alongside stone not of our choosing? Will we challenge the stonemason's vision at every turn out of conceit and selfishness? Will we dismiss others who are as imperfectly made as us?

It is ironic that God's perfect presence is most readily discoverable in tandem with that which is imperfect and incomplete. God calls us to greater spiritual awareness, to rise above vanity and self-importance, to look beyond to a perfection that cannot be attained by our will alone.

Where, then, do we glimpse perfection? In unselfish words, committed relationships, grace freely offered, love readily received. It is in communion with others, where truth is declared though conscience is honored, where kindness is a purposeful choice, and where compassion for others is never optional. If we're not careful, we might someday be confused with actual followers of Christ.

Do what you need to do when building your own retaining walls, but don't get too down on yourself if the results are less than perfect. Allowing imperfection to be part of the creative process opens the door to forgiveness across the entire project. And when the task nears

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Sixty bags of concrete premix set the back side of the wall, with the remaining sand and soil serving as backfill. The result was what we had envisioned, not because each stone was perfectly chosen and precisely placed, but because each stone's imperfection worked in concert with other imperfect stones, blending the design into a pleasing whole.

completion, take time to step back in order to view the larger picture and to appreciate how beautiful imperfection can be. 

Ken Frantz is a non-salaried ordained pastor serving Haxtun (Colo.) Church of the Brethren. He lives near Fleming, Colo., and writes regularly for the local newspaper.

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