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MESSENGER

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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

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on the cover

The Christian calendar gives us an alternate way of marking time. We take the Christian calendar seriously because we take Jesus seriously.

Cover photo by Minette Layne

In a season of thanksgiving:

I am grateful for the cheerful orange flowers that dance higher than my head to greet me every morning on my way to work. They have vined their way, unrestrained, through a neatly trimmed hedge across from my church, and I'm glad the owner lets them run amok.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

I am grateful for the person who long ago planted the hawthorn grove next to the back door at the Church of the Brethren General Offices, where some of us eat lunch. This year picnic weather has lasted an unusually long time, but I recognize that weather has not been a friend in other places.

I am grateful for the bone-wearying efforts of Children's Disaster Services, which in the short space of a few weeks has traveled to tragedies in Texas, Florida, Nevada, and California. And for Brethren Disaster Ministries, which is on the ground in Texas and Puerto Rico.

I am grateful for people who are willing to look behind disasters to see whether they can be minimized or prevented. Ignoring political labels, they examine the human cost of climate change, gun violence, and economic and racial injustice.

I am grateful for those who wade through the rhetoric and media frenzy and try to understand the prayerful gesture of a Christian athlete making a silent protest about racism.

I am grateful for a 300-year church tradition that is clear-eyed about attempts to fuse patriotism and faith, and suspicious about forcing loyalty to flags, pledges, and anthems.

I am grateful for international awards that shine a light on worthy laborers such as Rebecca Dali, winner of a UN Humanitarian Award, and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

I am grateful for church members who are in it for the long haul and spend a lifetime mending relationships rather than severing them—who demonstrate that being a peace church starts at home.

I am grateful for words of scripture that speak for us, when our feeble thoughts and prayers do not seem like enough. "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Romans 8:26).



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Growth through gardening



Creekside Church of the Brethren in Elkhart, Ind., has been blessed with growth! Two garden plots on the property provide locally grown produce that is donated to a food pantry at Church Community Services' Seed to Feed program.

This year, Creekside has contributed more than 7,720 pounds of cucumbers, zucchini, tomatoes, and squash. With the help of local high school students, members sliced and bagged over 3,000 pounds of tomatoes to be kept in freezers at the nearby county jail, to be distributed at the food pantry through spring of 2018.

Sixty pumpkins were harvested and offered to Creekside members and neighbors. Zinnias and sunflowers were taken to shut-ins and used to decorate the worship space. —Rosanna McFadden



Tijuana, anyone?

Four Church of the Brethren congregations in Northern Indiana District were represented in a summer mission trip to Tijuana, Mexico, where a home was built during five days May 22-27. Duane Grady, pastor of Cedar Lake Church of the Brethren, organized the trip. Although the bulk of the participants were from Cedar Lake, the volunteer group also included members of the Pleasant Chapel church, Goshen City church, and Agape church.

The homes that are built during such mission trips are simple, explains Grady. The home is a "12 by 16 foot wood frame structure on a concrete slab." During the trip, participants also "teach Bible lessons for children—usually 30-50 kids, while their parents also learn a Bible lesson. . . . We participate in a long-term and ongoing Bible education program for both children and adults."

Basic skills in carpentry and painting are appreciated. Participants

report that, because the structure is simple in format, they can contribute with basic skills.

What is the expense of the project? The cost of a home is less than \$2,000. For volunteers, the expense can vary. Participants provide their own airfare to San Diego, Calif. Housing and meal costs are approximately \$250 per person, which Cedar Lake church provides.

First begun 25 years ago by Bittersweet Ministries and Church of the Brethren pastor Gilbert Romero, the Tijuana mission has been a good fit for Cedar Lake, Grady says. "Cedar Lake has been going since 2011, and has built six homes for families." Although this is primarily a Cedar Lake project, other churches are welcome to participate or to organize their own trips.

Find more information on the Bittersweet Ministries' Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BittersweetMinistries. —Cheryl Thomas





courtesy of Jennifer Hosler

On Sept. 24, Washington City Church of the Brethren and the Brethren Nutrition Program hosted a community BBQ meal as a celebration of the program and its ministry in the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

‘Laying down’ the Brethren Nutrition Program

Washington (D.C.) City Church of the Brethren has decided to “lay down” the Brethren Nutrition Program. The program, founded in 1980, has been located at the church building on Capitol Hill and fed lunch to people in need including the homeless.

“We write with hope, gratitude, and some sadness,” said the announcement from Faith Westdorp, operations manager for the program, and Jennifer Hosler, a minister at the church. The announcement added that the decision was made “after much discernment and assessment. . . . Our program was founded in 1980. Throughout the ’80s and ’90s, it was frequented by between 200 to 300 guests per lunch. Over the past 20 years, our program attendance has steadily declined.”

In recent months, attendance has averaged 22 guests per lunch service, the announcement said. “Our program’s low attendance is not able to offset our bare-bones budget, which has resulted in a \$12.55 cost per meal. We could

serve five times the number of people we do with the money we spend, but despite outreach efforts and consistent hours, we have not seen a significant increase in program attendance.”

Other factors cited in the decision to end the program include the expense of renovations that are needed in the church kitchen, and changes in the Capitol Hill neighborhood where “poverty, hunger, and homelessness . . . look very different than when our program was founded.” The neighborhood now

has more grocery stores per capita than some other areas of the city, and other service providers have been doing effective work on chronic homelessness and food insecurity.

“These facts have led our church community to decide to ‘lay down’ the ministry, giving thanks for what has been done,” wrote Westdorp and Hosler. “Many meals have been served, kind words shared, and relationships built. . . . We have volunteers and supporters who have given so much love, effort, time, commitment, and funds to the Brethren Nutrition Program. Please know that we did not enter into this conversation or this decision lightly. Thank you for what you have done and how you have supported the cause of serving hungry neighbors on Capitol Hill.

“Many within our own community are asking, ‘What’s next?’ We are going to continue a discernment process for how our church can get to know our community better and find other ways to meet community needs. We welcome your insight, input, and—most especially—your thoughts and prayers.”



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.

Brethren Woods staffs for peace and justice

Three other camps are within five miles of Brethren Woods Camp and Retreat

Center near Harrisonburg, Va. So what is distinctive about Brethren Woods, and what makes it unique? One aspect of the camp's identity is the Brethren heritage of peacemaking.

Out of prayerful reflection, the camp decided to hire a seasonal, full-time peace and justice director for the summer program that serves about 540 campers annually. This position teaches campers the biblical basis and theological rationale for peace and justice work, highlights stories of Brethren peacemakers, and teaches practical conflict resolution skills.

It was a tall task but Laura Carr-Pries was just the right person for the job, having majored in Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies and Biblical Theological Studies at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. She crafted engaging, hands-on, and age-appropriate lessons that helped campers enter deeply into the biblical text and practice conflict resolution skills that they could use in their own lives.

One reason for having a full-time peace and justice director is that conflict is inevitable. The church has dealt with

conflict since its inception. Even as early as Acts 15, there was a major conflict about whether—or how—to include gentiles. The council at Jerusalem, and the intentional spiritual discernment that occurred there, provide a model for us today. None of the church's queries, interest groups, or splits have ever ended conflict. As soon as there is a group of like-minded Christians, it becomes clear we are not as like-minded as hoped, and

conflict once again emerges.

Together with Jesus, the resources of scripture, and sisters and brothers in the faith, we begin to see conflict not as something to fear and divide, but as an opportunity to grow closer to one another and to God. Brethren Woods wants to equip the church of today, and the church of tomorrow, with the biblical, theological, and practical tools necessary to transform conflict. —Tim Heishman



Tim Heishman



courtesy of Barbara McCann

The 1,000th cow

The 1,000th cow to go to Germany through Heifer Project following World War II appears in this photo resurrected from a family collection and scanned for MESSENGER by Barbara McCann. On the back of the photo, she found the signature of her father, Alvin Walbridge, who went to Germany as a volunteer in 1953. He assisted with construction of Brethren Service's Kassel House. Shown in the photo are Roy Schmid, who was in charge of the Heifer Project program at the time, the German refugee who received the cow, and Margot Spangenberg (at right), the secretary for Schmid's office.

Seminaries chart their courses through choppy waters

by **Walt Wiltschek**

This past summer, the *Wall Street Journal* ran a story with the stark headline “Seminaries reflect struggles of mainline churches: Storied institutions are shutting their doors as enrollment shrinks.”

The article, by Ian Lovett, opened with the tale of 150-year-old Episcopal Divinity School, which decided this year to lay off all its faculty, close its doors, and put its Boston-area campus up for sale. The remnant of the school will affiliate with Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Lovett also noted some other high-profile changes:

Andover-Newton Theological School, one of the oldest in the country, has sold its campus and is moving to Yale Divinity School in Connecticut. Claremont School of Theology is looking to sell its southern California campus and move to less expensive quarters.

Other seminaries have similar stories. For example:

- Luther Seminary in Minnesota has made major cuts in recent years.
- Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pa., merged with its counterpart Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia last year.

“WE ARE FOCUSED ON MEETING THE NEEDS OF A CHALLENGED CHURCH, NOT BY WORRYING ABOUT THE FUTURE, BUT FINDING WAYS TO BE A PART OF THE FUTURE.”

- Fuller Theological Seminary this summer announced plans to close three of its regional campuses and reduce some other programs.
- Catholic-affiliated Washington Theological Union ceased operations in 2015.
- Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine, a United Church of Christ school, closed two years earlier.
- Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville closed its School of Church Music and Worship in 2009.

In sum, the past decade has been challenging for seminaries, to put it mildly. They are sailing against headwinds that include shrinking church membership, declining denominational loyalty, alternative theological training models, an increasingly secular culture, and more. That, in turn, has meant fewer students and tighter finances—especially after the 2008 financial crisis decimated many endowments.

This isn't to say all seminaries are hanging up the “for sale” sign or struggling to keep their doors open. Some are holding their own and a few—primarily in the evangelical and fundamentalist traditions—are even growing. For most, though, it is a time that requires adaptation, careful thinking, and creativity.

Online programs and other new degree models have proliferated rapidly, while some seminaries have been merging or affiliating with like-minded colleges and universities, as Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary did with Fresno Pacific University in the past decade.

Amid this whirlwind of change, MESSENGER asked some key current and former seminary administrators for their insights on the challenges. Their responses follow:



**Jeff Carter, president,
Bethany Theological
Seminary, Richmond, Ind.**

“When I arrived at Bethany, the Association of Theological Schools and other professional organizations were studying how seminaries survived the financial downturn of 2008 and what were the keys to success

for schools like Bethany who were able to maintain their staff, faculty, and program. We didn't anticipate that the real crisis was the decline of student numbers and how the lack of admissions would affect tuition revenue and classroom quality.

“It has been sobering to read of schools both well-known and respected, such as Andover-Newton, deciding to change their mission, merge, or close. The number one challenge is admissions. A whole host of reasons—the changing place of religion in America, the bitter and



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

About Bethany

Bethany is the only seminary of the Church of the Brethren. It began in Chicago in 1905 and occupied several locations in the Chicago area over the years before moving to Richmond, Ind., in 1994. It shares a campus in Richmond with the Quaker-affiliated Earlham School of Religion, on the edge of the Earlham College campus.

Accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and the Higher Learning Commission, Bethany currently enrolls 52 graduate students in its two degree and four certificate programs.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Many ways to learn

Following are ways that students can engage in study at Bethany Theological Seminary:

Traditional on-campus study: Students can commute or move to Richmond, Ind., and live in one of Bethany's housing "neighborhoods" or elsewhere in the community, taking classes with faculty at the Bethany Center as they pursue a master of divinity, master of arts, or graduate certificate. The new Pillars and Pathways Residency Scholarship provides a debt-free option to earn a degree for those who are eligible.

Distance learning: Bethany's distance education program, "Connections," provides students with flexibility in completing one of the degree programs. A third of the coursework still must be completed on campus, but this can typically be done through weekend intensives or other concentrated, two-week modules.

Hybrid approaches: In addition to courses that are fully online or fully on-campus, students also can take hybrid courses that combine those two formats—"blended" courses, in which students join on-campus courses in real time via synchronous video.

Multiple locations: Beyond the Richmond campus, Bethany offers regular courses through its Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center in Elizabethtown, Pa., and occasionally at other locations. Some cross-registration or transfer options also are available.

Non-degree programs: For people who can't or don't want to pursue a degree-granting program in ministry, several non-degree options are available. Offered through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership (a partnership of Bethany and the Church of the Brethren), these options include Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM), Training in Ministry (TRIM), and Spanish-language training programs.

contentious debates and divisions of the church, the lack of secure employment for pastors in a shrinking church, the lack of calling churches encouraging and empowering future ministers—together have created challenges seminaries are not prepared to meet. Granted, the challenges facing seminaries are similar to those of smaller colleges and universities, but the connection to the church presents an even greater challenge beyond cultural attitudes towards education and demographic shifts. . . .

"Stepping into the role of president in 2013, I knew the church was strained by a decline in membership and funding, but I was unaware of the serious challenges seminary education was facing. Much like the church, seminaries are facing a challenge of both funding and student enrollment. No longer can seminaries just try harder to recruit students without making dramatic and institution-changing programmatic changes. . . .

"A gift is our size and our values of community, simplicity, and peace. We have built a neighborhood for our students, are renovating classrooms to enhance classroom technology, and are living into a new strategic vision. Due to our small size, Bethany remains nimble and adaptive. The trustee board is extremely supportive of emergent thinking, which bears new ideas to meet pressing needs. Such a way of thinking is more Spirit-led and enables us to address the needs of our students, denomination, and seminary. . . .

"I do see the seminary as a leader in our denomination and within seminary education. We are focused on meeting the needs of a challenged church, not by worrying about the future, but finding ways to be a part of the future. We are very grateful for our past and those who have provided for our financial stability. Being good stewards of the trust and support of our partners means investing with courage and creativity in pathways that will bring greater vitality to the seminary. These pathways will be both new and familiar, serving both today's church and tomorrow's faith community, allowing space for well-known tradition and creative innovation. This both/and attitude guides the seminary: grounded in our tradition and open to new ideas.

"In the future, I see our seminary engaged in new methods of ministry as we strengthen congregations. Students will engage in multiple internships as they experience their classroom education adapting to their ministry context. Bethany will be an educational partner in Nigeria and those places where God's Spirit is moving with vibrancy. And the witness of our Anabaptist-Pietist tradition will continue to impact the world through the students that graduate from Bethany."



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

“MAKING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE TO A WIDER GROUP OF STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND LIFE EXPERIENCE REQUIRES CREATIVITY AND AN OPENNESS TO NEW POSSIBILITIES.



Steve Schweitzer, academic dean, Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind.

“During my Ph.D. program, I had a pedagogy course, but it did not require teaching online or other forms of instruction besides ‘traditional’ classroom lectures, discussions, and seminars. The landscape has shifted. Now, when hiring a faculty member, experience with online instruction is valued, and the expectation to teach fully online courses is clear. In addition, the rise of synchronous video and the ability to connect students ‘real-time’ into an on-campus course has again changed the questions about pedagogy and how to effectively communicate and build community in a new learning environment that did not exist a decade ago.

“Part of these shifts in technology involves the location of students, who are increasingly choosing to stay in their current settings rather than to relocate for school. Making theological education accessible to a wider group of students with diverse backgrounds and life experience requires creativity and an openness to new possibilities. . . .

“All seminaries are struggling with admissions. This is not something affecting only Bethany, only ‘free-church’ institutions, only progressive, or only conservative schools.

Churches can help in the process of call: to encourage individuals of all ages to consider theological education, whether a full degree or certificates or even occasional courses. All of us need to think about ministry in all of its various forms—pastoring, music, youth, writing, social work, non-profit, and more. Having a congregation that is theologically informed and whose individual members/attendees desire to go deeper into scripture, theology, and ministry is a good thing for themselves, the church, their community, and the wider world. . . .

“Theological education is changing rapidly and that change will continue for the foreseeable future. The primary accrediting agency for seminaries (the Association of Theological Schools) is currently engaged in a multi-year project of collecting data and creating new ‘models’ for theological education. This will inform the revision of the accreditation standards to which all schools are accountable, set to begin in 2018. I expect dramatic shifts in these standards to allow more flexibility and the ability to respond more quickly to these shifts that affect theological education across the board. . . .

“At Bethany, the faculty will be undertaking a review of the MDiv curriculum this coming year (2017-2018), with the MA in the subsequent year. This provides us with an excellent opportunity to think creatively and to try to envision how to best prepare graduates for this ever-changing world.”



Steve Reid, professor of Christian Scriptures, Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, Texas, and former academic dean of Bethany Theological Seminary

Reid noted a series of changes he has seen since he first began as a seminary student in 1973: the demise of Christendom, the decline in

denominational loyalty and infrastructure, fewer residential students, declining enrollment, increasing gender and racial/ethnic diversity, and fewer major donors.

“Going to seminary is not considered ‘cool’ the way it

was in the mid- to late-20th century. Even ‘church’ families do not aspire to send their brightest children, or any children, to seminary. They will remark that the conflict in congregations and the low salary cause parents to devalue ministry as a vocation. . . .

“Those who go to seminary have fewer venues for full-time gospel ministry. Congregations will accept the ‘right’ person even if it means transgressing what were denominational boundaries. To be blunt, some congregations would prefer almost any man to a Church of the Brethren-trained woman.

“One thing that seminaries do well is prepare women and men for ministry in the tradition. No place trains Brethren clergy to be true to Brethren traditions better than Bethany. Truett trains people to be Baptist. Princeton trains

A global curriculum

Bethany Theological Seminary has long been using technology to deliver high-quality instruction and create virtual community. Now, the reach of that technology is spanning the globe to provide new opportunities for theological connection with Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria).

This summer, Bethany broke ground on a technology room in

Nigeria that will allow students from EYN and elsewhere the ability to appear in the same virtual classroom as their American peers in real time.

“With Bethany’s well-developed synchronous online program where students appear in the same classroom on screens and in person, this format is being expanded to Africa,” Bethany president Jeff Carter said. “For the first time in January, Nigerians and US-based students will study in one

virtual space—face-to-face. It is an emerging aspect of Bethany’s work, and it is unique within seminary education. It leverages online education, our growing use of values-based technology focused on community, and intercultural competency.”

The first formal steps toward the program, which will be a joint effort between EYN and Bethany, took place at the 2016 Annual Conference in Greensboro, N.C., when Carter and EYN president Joel Billi signed a memorandum of understanding. It will launch with courses for the certificate of achievement in theological studies.

“As we continue to develop our synchronous video technology, which we have pioneered in a distinctive way here, this should open up new possibilities and new groups of potential students,” said Steve Schweitzer, academic dean. “I imagine that the partnership with EYN will have lasting impact on our programming, courses, and even structure. Continued changes in technology will be a driving force behind how we adapt and use it to our advantage in service of our mission.”

—Walt Wiltschek



courtesy of Bethany Theological Seminary

“WHEN A SEMINARY DIES THERE IS ONE LESS RESOURCE FOR DISTINCTIVE CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS. A DENOMINATION CANNOT LONG PROSPER WITHOUT A VIBRANT SEMINARY.”

people to be mainline Protestant. When a seminary dies there is one less resource for distinctive Christian traditions. A denomination cannot long prosper without a vibrant seminary. . . .

“When I went to seminary in 1973, there were two women in the class of about 30, if I remember correctly. Today the typical mainline Protestant seminary is half or more women. I was the only African American, and there was one Latino student. Nonetheless, the seminary curriculum and the shape of the faculty often have not kept pace with the growing diversity in the classroom. . . . Seminaries are scrambling to keep a curriculum that builds a ‘cultural competency’ necessary for the church at our doorstep.”



Nancy Heisey, associate dean, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.

“When I was a seminary student (in the 1990s), most of the students were men, the majority were full-time and residential in the seminary community, and there were two apparent reasons for seminary study: to prepare for (or further equip for) pastoral ministry in a congregation, or to explore one’s theological questions and future vocation in an academic setting.

“Now, the gender balance among students has evened out, and many are studying part-time or seeking non-residential course options. Equipping for congregational leadership is still an important reason for folks to be in seminary. Apparently, for those not called in that direction, many do have a sense of vocation, and believe that deeper spiritual and theological formation will assist them to better carry out that vocation. . . .

“Many mainline Christian Protestant denominations have long assumed the necessity for formal graduate-level theological training for their pastors. That understanding is more recent and less widespread among Mennonites and some others in the free church tradition. I think both [the Mennonite Church USA and Church of the Brethren]—denominationally or at regional levels—and seminaries could profit from a more frequent and more robust interaction. Neither is as aware of the other as would be healthy or forward-looking. . . .

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Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

“In the future, I would guess there will be fewer seminaries, and more diverse curricular paths to ministry leadership. I trust that people’s needs for both priestly and prophetic words and acts will continue to be met by each generation of Christian leaders.”



Michael King, former dean, Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.

“The hybrid path at EMS, which is only entering its third year, is one that holds continuing potential, I suspect. I personally interviewed a number of students in the past year or two and repeatedly heard that they were less drawn to fully online. They

wanted face-to-face but couldn’t always work out physical presence, hence they appreciated the hybrid opportunity to be on campus for a week, get to know peers and professors, then complete during another eight weeks or so online. . . .

“There are broad trends that apply to all or most seminaries, but how a given seminary’s story unfolds is often quite individual. That’s part of the challenge and opportunity of the era. As the Association of Theological Schools often stresses, the seminaries that tend to flourish are the ones that proactively lean into the future—but there is no cookie-cutter way to do this.” 

Wait Wiltschek, former editor of MESSENGER, is a seminary graduate and an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.

Marking time with God

WHY IT'S ALMOST NEW YEAR'S DAY

by Eric Landram

Our ancient ancestors had a unique way of understanding time. They saw the beauty of time marked as a circular journey. Life and death. Budding, blossom, and harvest. The sun would make its journey across the sky marking the moments of labor and work, while the moon would supervise quiet hours of rest and rejuvenation.

Time was organic and respected. Our ancestors would note the change of colors and temperatures and with expectation they would prepare. They knew that life was

a cycle, made new again, as the earth changed its garments from snowy fields to green grasses. They could see the flourishing, and then the death and sleep of life leading to the coming resurrection.

Today we understand time far differently than our earliest ancestors. We view time as linear, moving from left to right across the weeks and months of our pocket calendars and cell phones. We mark time by workdays and weekends. By months fitted for summer vacation and early-to-bed school nights.

Time is something that gets away from us, it governs us;



THEY KNEW THAT LIFE WAS A CYCLE, MADE NEW AGAIN, AS THE EARTH CHANGED ITS GARMENTS FROM SNOWY FIELDS TO GREEN GRASSES. THEY COULD SEE THE FLOURISHING, AND THEN THE DEATH AND SLEEP OF LIFE LEADING TO THE COMING RESURRECTION.

we take it for granted. Time is money, and the race against the clock is underway. With each new year that we ring in at Times Square, we note the progress and success of another year on the books. The march continues onward.

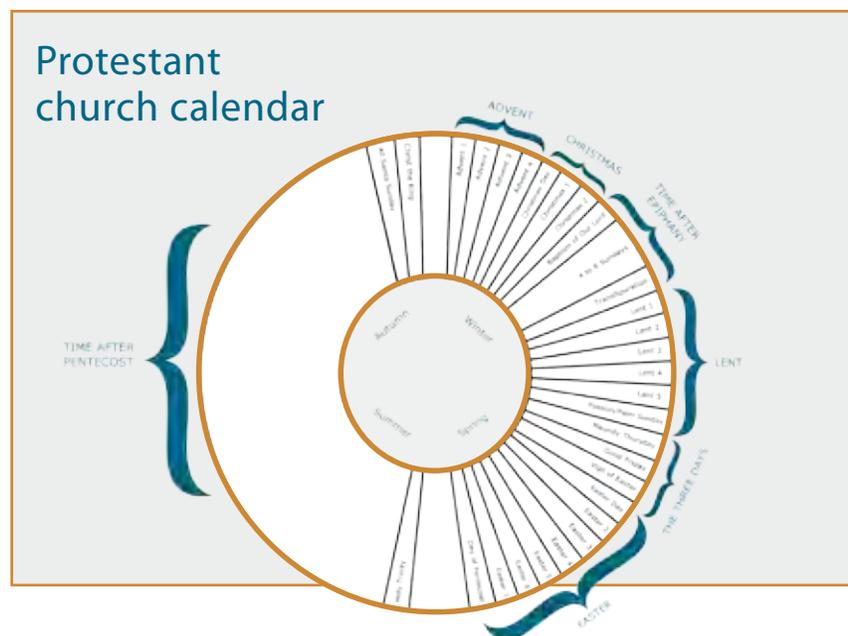
Here is the question for those of us in the realm of the church, those of us who do theology, and those of us who use our faith to see the world differently: How do we see time? We've defined the ancient and secular understandings, but what about the sacred? What is sacred time?

The Christian calendar gives us an alternate way of marking time. This calendar is a gift of the early church. It's a calendar that attributes meaning to our day-to-day journey of faith. We have chosen to mark time according to the gospel story, and our Christian adventure tells the story of Jesus again and again. We live the gospel story with Christ, and we live it together. It is this calendar that forms us as the body of Christ—but only if we pay attention to it.

More often, it's the secular calendar that we allow to form us. We know more about Black Friday sales than the cost of Good Friday. We celebrate the Fourth of July and the birth of our nation more than Pentecost and the birth of the church. We count down the hours until time off for Labor Day, but few of us know when Ascension Day occurs. How we celebrate time speaks to what we value in

our hearts.

In the Church of the Brethren, Jesus is a big deal to us. Our history has shown time and time again that we live to tell his story to the wider culture around us. His story is so big, in fact, that it takes a full calendar year to fully journey with Jesus from the manger to the tomb. It is a story worth



flickr.com/ Bob Wick, Bureau of Land Management



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THE ANCIENTS HAD IT RIGHT: TIME IS BEST EXPERIENCED WHEN VIEWED AS A CIRCULAR AND SACRED JOURNEY. THIS IS HOW WE COME TO APPRECIATE THE FABRIC OF CREATION, AS IT TELLS GOD’S STORY NOW AND FOREVER.

telling every year because of the way it can shape us and properly form us as a priesthood of believers.

Throughout the year we pray the raw and human psalms, we learn of Israel’s wrestling with God and neighbor, we glean insight and deeper understanding of the wisdom texts, we travel with Jesus and the disciples through the streets of first-century Palestine, and we have the privilege of eavesdropping in on Paul as he writes to the infant churches of the Middle East and Asia Minor. We tell the whole story together as if it were the first time.

We mark time with God by building anticipation during Advent. Our Christian new year begins four weeks before Christmas as we grow in excitement for the coming of the Messiah, the promised child of God who brings peace to every nation. We celebrate his birth through Christmas and Epiphany and rejoice in his coming for the whole world, for all people.

In early spring, the season of Lent prepares us for the difficult and solemn reality of the cross. We gather Easter Sunday in awe of the resurrection and the sight of the empty tomb to learn the truth that Christ has overcome death and is on the loose!

Pentecost, which comes in late spring, is the birthday of the church, that moment when believers gathered together as a community to begin telling this incredible story to the world.

What the church year calls “ordinary time” guides us through the in-betweens and rounds out the rest of the year, reminding us of the significance of Christ’s reign on

earth. It brings us full circle to Advent, as we begin the story again. We are spiritually nourished and properly formed as we journey with God through time and space in light of the greatest story ever told. Every year is the year of our Lord.

The Christian calendar is all about learning. As we crawl with Jesus through Advent, we learn how to hope. During the days of Christmas and Epiphany, we toddle through lessons of acceptance through God’s presence. During Lent, we walk toward death and suffering. And then we sprint in the direction of life and resurrection at Easter.

Each year the story comes full circle, only to begin again. The reign of Christ is happening this year, and it will happen next year and the year after that. Beginning at the manger, we grow up with Jesus as we mature in our own spiritual story.

We should take the Christian calendar seriously because we take Jesus seriously. When we allow the story of God to guide our days and weeks and years, we are formed more fully in relationship with God and each other. Not only has God through Jesus overcome the sting of death, but God has also overcome the limitations and finite space of our pocket calendars.

The ancients had it right: Time is best experienced when viewed as a circular and sacred journey. This is how we come to appreciate the fabric of creation, as it tells God’s story now and forever.

Here’s to a fresh start in being properly formed in the ongoing story of Jesus. Happy new year! 

Eric Landram is pastor of Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

When war was outlawed

What would happen if you made war illegal? Would it make any difference? Who would enforce it? Would this be a bold step to redefine foreign affairs or an act of extreme naiveté in the realm of Realpolitik?

Turns out, war was outlawed—who knew?—and this simple act has remade the modern world for the better. At least, this is what authors Oona Hathaway and Scott Shapiro, professors at Yale Law School, assert in their



JAY WITTMAYER

newly released *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World*.

After decades of incremental efforts in the background, a group of radical Internationalists organized a large gathering in Paris in August 1928 and audaciously signed “The General Treaty for the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy,” better known as the Kellogg-Briand

Act. The treaty agreed to ban war as a means of settling regional disputes and to advocate that nations move toward greater political and economic cooperation. Within one year, the Peace Pact, as it is called, was ratified by nearly every country in the world.

Within a decade, however, the world moved toward the most horrific conflict it had ever experienced. This included carpet bombing of civilians, suicide squadrons, and the “bomb.” World War II basically guaranteed that the Kellogg-Briand Act would be understood as idealistic folly from a previous era and thrown into the dustbin of history.

But we are wrong to dismiss it so readily, argue Hathaway and Shapiro. We have forgotten just how different the Old World Order regarding war was and how differently we regard armed conflict today. With a detailed discussion of significant people and events throughout history, the authors lay out a world that accepted war as the normal process to address disputes between states, and then demonstrate the significant changes that have taken place since the 1928 accord.

They cite the example of dueling. Historically, when two individuals could not resolve a dispute, they would choose

pistols and have a duel. Numerous “codes” dictated how and when duels could occur. In an effort to decrease the number of duels, countries established more elaborate laws to make them more “humane.” The codes assumed that, fundamentally, dueling was legal. However, once dueling was declared illegal, it became extinct, since dueling was considered murder.

For centuries, nations reserved the right to declare war and were obligated to abide by certain just-war behaviors. The Peace Pact intended to say that no nation has an inalienable right to declare war—that war, like dueling, is an unacceptable means of resolving grievances.

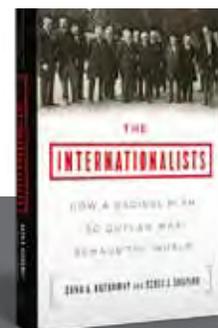
In the pre-1928 Old World Order, war was considered the next step in the political process. “Resorting to war did not signal a failure of the system: It was how the system worked. War was an instrument of justice,” say Hathaway and Shapiro. They cite the common use of economic sanctions and embargoes as an example of how the Peace Pact has influenced the way states manage disputes in the modern era.

A powerful chapter titled “The End of Conquest” argues that the age of colonization and acquiring new territories through warfare is simply over. The authors demonstrate this by showing maps of 1910, 1928, and then 1950. We tend to forget that maps were constantly being redrawn as nations built empires through the acquisition of territory. Through the outlawing of war, the global map has been set.

Seldom is peace the optic through which we see the world. But it should be. And we, the Church of the Brethren, of all people, should be hopeful. “The Internationalists were transformative figures. They were transformative because of their ideas—and because they were willing and able to use their ideas to change the world.” Each had a conviction about the way the world should be organized. And each was willing to fight for years, even decades, against long odds to take small steps along the path to constructing a new global order grounded in the rejection of war.

Perhaps it is August 27, 1928, that should be celebrated as the International Day of Peace. 

Jay Wittmeyer is executive of Global Mission and Service for the Church of the Brethren.



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World*. **Author:** Oona Hathaway and Scott Shapiro. **Publisher:** Simon & Schuster. **Publication date:** September 2017. Available from Brethren Press.



This is unimportant

by Jay Wittmeyer

This is unimportant. In a remote corner of one of the world's most poor and most densely populated countries, sits a small ocean town, Cox's Bazar. It is highlighted in regional guidebooks as a tourist destination, but that is only because there are so few tourist attractions in Bangladesh that something had to be chosen. "Come to Bangladesh before the tourists do" sums it up.

The town sits on the very southeastern tip of Bangladesh on a thin strip of land. The mountains and paddies of Myanmar are just a few miles away. The beach there is long, but the sand is ugly and the color of the Bay of Bengal is an industrial grayish brown. The area is tropical not in the Caribbean fruit drink sense; it is tropical in the malaria, jungle-rot, python sense.

Cox's Bazar is unpleasant, but not insignificant, at least to me. My first child, Alysson, was born there in June of 1997, while Sarah and I were serving with Mennonite Central Committee. More precisely, Alysson was born in Malumghat a few miles north of the bazaar in a small Christian hospital run by the Association of Overseas Baptists.

Whether it was the novelty of becoming a parent, the joy of seeing our first child, or the sheer trauma of an extremely difficult delivery, Cox's Bazar is so deeply etched in my mind, I can almost feel the crunch of roaches under my bare feet to this day.

Sarah's water broke on a Friday night and she went into labor, but labor did not progress on Saturday. Early Sunday morning our American doctor asked the midwife to step in, an older Bengali woman. She immediately recognized that



IT GRIEVES ME DEEPLY TO SEE THE SUFFERING IN A COMMUNITY THAT I HOLD IN SUCH HIGH ESTEEM.



the amniotic sac was not completely broken, preventing pressure on the cervix and prolonging labor. She ruptured the sac and labor progressed.

In the delivery room, we encountered more challenges. The doctor tried forceps and then reverted to a suction device to attach to our nine-pound infant. After a third and unsuccessful try to form a seal on little Alysson's head, the room began to grow more desperate.

By now hours had passed. An O. T. tech was called in. Slight in stature and extremely gifted, the tech deftly attached the suction cap and literally pulled our child into this world.

Twenty years later, images of Cox's Bazar are back in the news. Some 420,000 Rohingyas have been driven from their small farms in Myanmar and forced to seek refuge around Cox's Bazar. The Rohingyas are a Bangla-speaking, predomi-

nantly Muslim, ethnic group that are native to this region. Few earn \$2 a day. This act of ethnic cleansing by Myanmar has left them homeless and hungry and wet and suffering.

I cannot look at those photos without remembering our midwife, the nurses, and other medical staff who helped Alysson come into this world and saved my wife from perhaps becoming a maternal mortality statistic. It grieves me deeply to see the suffering in a community that I hold in such high esteem.

While there is so much happening in world today, I want to at least remember that as insignificant as Cox's Bazar might seem, and as distinct as the story may feel, the Rohingyas are important to God. 

Jay Wittmeyer is executive of Global Mission and Service for the Church of the Brethren.

Providing calm and assurance

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHILDREN'S DISASTER SERVICES' KATHLEEN FRY-MILLER

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

I t has been an unprecedented year for the disaster ministries of the Church of the Brethren. Kathleen Fry-Miller, associate director of Children's Disaster Services, is something of a "newbie" who has been leading CDS for a little more than three years. However, her "boss"—Roy Winter, who heads up Brethren Disaster Ministries—has been in the job for enough years to take the long view.

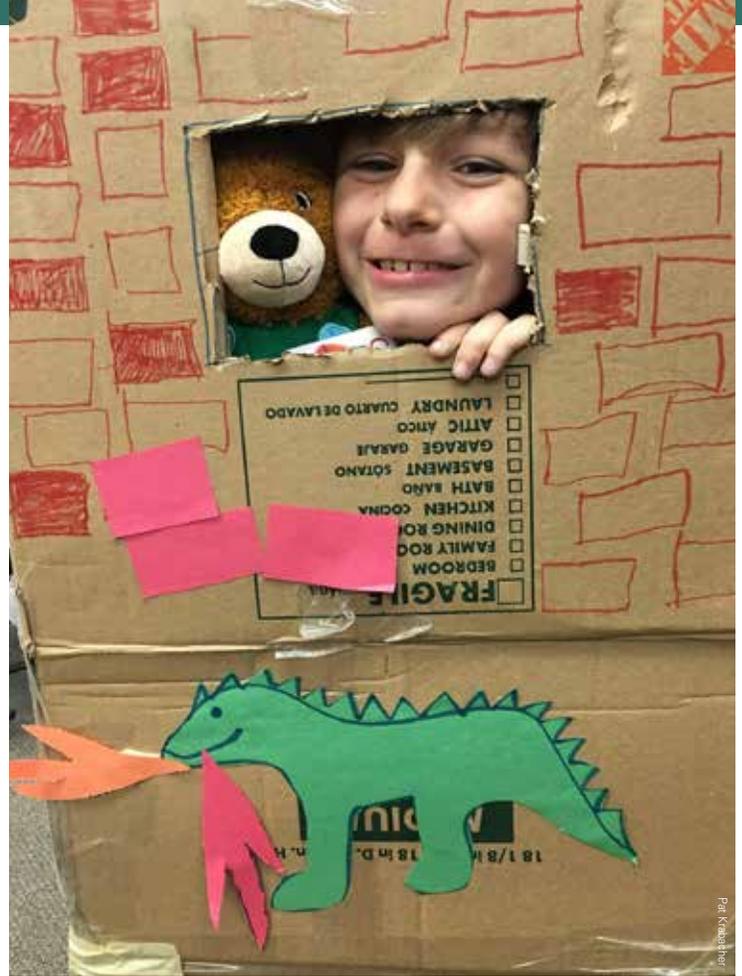
"Having three of these huge hurricanes happen at once is more than Roy can remember," Fry-Miller says, "and he's been through Katrina and 9/11."

I caught her on the phone just as she arrived back home in Indiana, after spending nine days serving in shelters in Florida. It was easy to sense in her voice the wear and tear of the hard work she and others in CDS had been putting in. She told me that, as of the end of September, 74 CDS volun-

teers had cared for 1,379 children in Texas and Florida, working in 17 different locations in the 2 states.

At that point, CDS was on its second wave of serving in Texas following Hurricane Harvey—three teams were living and caring for children in FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers in the towns of Beaumont, Port Lavaca, and Katy. Several other CDS teams had made up the first wave that aided children and families in shelters immediately after the hurricane and the severe flooding in the Houston area. Then, just about the time Irma was threatening Florida, and CDS was positioning caregivers there in advance of the hurricane, the organization was asked to send more volunteers back to Texas.

Not too many days later, the mass shooting in Las Vegas prompted a request for CDS's assistance there. After that, wildfires sprang up in northern California. By the time this issue of MESSENGER went to press, two teams of CDS



volunteers had served a week in Napa and had moved on to a new location in Sonoma.

This is par for the course for disaster relief work, by its nature very fluid and responsive to the needs of particular situations and the requests of partner organizations, according to Fry-Miller. CDS works at the invitation of the American Red Cross and FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency). The mission of the program, which began in 1980, is to meet the needs of children by setting up childcare centers in shelters and disaster assistance centers across the nation. Fry-Miller emphasizes this means more than “just providing childcare,” which is one of the misconceptions people sometimes have.

In reality, CDS offers trauma healing for children. “In our volunteer training we really do focus on what helps children through the healing process and what helps resilience in children,” she explains. The childcare centers and play areas that CDS sets up in shelters and disaster assistance centers give children a chance to explore their experience of disaster through creative play. While the children are in CDS care, their parents and caregivers get a break from having to watch their children, and are able to spend time applying for government assistance or carrying out other tasks necessary for people who have lost homes or businesses.

Children “play out” their fears following disasters through acting out the sometimes life-and-death situations they have lived through using toys and dolls, expressing their feelings in artwork, and telling their stories to the CDS volunteers. Fry-Miller gave the example of children



taking trucks and cars and turning them on their sides to show what their neighborhood looks like. Other children may draw and paint what the storm looked like. One little boy wrote a dramatic poem that he gave to CDS volunteers.

The volunteers get a lot of training in attentive listening, Fry-Miller says. Often while a child plays out their experience, they explain it verbally to the volunteers. In Florida, where she and her husband, Paul, were on CDS teams working in shelters for nine days, English was not the first language for many of the children and they spent more time doing drawing and expressive play.

Sometimes the CDS teams simply give children and families a sense of comfort and hope—and something fun





to do during what can be a very tense time for both children and adults.

“During the next hurricane, I’m going to come back and play again,” one little girl told Fry-Miller, after having a good time playing at the CDS childcare center in an evacuation center in Florida. The girl’s father told Fry-Miller that the feel of the evacuation center changed for the better after the CDS team arrived and started playing with the children. The level of anxiety went way down, he told her. The CDS presence was a signal for parents that everything was going to be okay.

CDS aims to provide “a sense of calm and assurance that needs will be met,” Fry-Miller says. “Keeping children safe is our number one priority.” And then, supporting their emotional and spiritual wellbeing comes next.

CDS has had some extra help during the large response required this summer and fall, and Fry-Miller is grateful. In something new for the program, volunteer Child Life Specialists have been involved and participating alongside CDS volunteers in shelters, particularly in Texas. These medical specialists who usually work in hospital settings have come from across the country to add their expertise, and are among a cadre of more than 750 volunteers. The number of trained and certified CDS volunteers has gone up considerably during Fry-Miller’s tenure, having been at around 550 when she started in the job in early 2014.

Despite the heavy schedule, CDS volunteers just keep on volunteering. “People are excited, they want to go serve. And we’re trying to get new people involved.”

Most volunteers are asked to serve on location for two weeks, but CDS may be able to place volunteers for just one week if they have tight work schedules or other restrictions on their time. The Child Life Specialists, who have been

doing joint trainings with CDS in preparation for such a response, sometimes work locally and may step in for just a day. Others have traveled from across the country to put in a one- or two-week volunteer stint.

Florida was Fry-Miller’s first personal experience of a hurricane, and it gave her a new perspective. She traveled to Florida on a moment’s notice, cutting short her participation at National Older Adult Conference, and ended up riding out the hurricane in an evacuation center.

“We were in the same enclosed building with 500 people,” she remembers. “You just have a sense of: we’re all in this together, we all need to survive this together. It’s a really different sense of community.” 



Love meant we didn't have to know what was coming next

by Pat Krabacher

Served for the first time on a Children's Disaster Services (CDS) team in Texas, as part of the Hurricane Harvey response. We never made it to Houston as planned, because the entire American Red Cross headquarters there was flooded out. We were rerouted to San Antonio, where we began serving with the San Antonio Red Cross on Aug. 28—a day later than planned.

This change in location was the first of many changes or lessons that we experienced. Interestingly, my CDS “adventure in change” started three weeks earlier, when I prepared a community prayer for worship. Those words seemed to predict the lesson I was about to learn: “Change is hard, Father, help us to love even when change is upon us. When we think we have it all figured out, Lord, things change again. Help us to rest in the comfort of your arms instead of wanting to know what comes next.”

As our days in Texas began to unfold, we twice sent three teammates off to other cities to start other CDS shelters. In San Antonio, we were moved to three different shelters. I realized that not only did we not have it figured out, but I was not in charge.

Love meant that we didn't have to know what was coming next.

As we grappled with the challenges of establishing new play spaces, and dealt with parents who were tired and stressed, we also were overwhelmed by the generosity that we experienced. A Hispanic couple arrived at the San Antonio Red Cross and donated cash to help others. Two young drug store employees asked what they and their co-workers could do to help. Later, they returned with pacifiers and sippy cups for the babies and young children.

Another family and a local church asked Mary, our program manager, what they could do to help. Mary mentioned rocking chairs. By the next morning, we had five rocking chairs or swivel/glider chairs, which were a wonderful gift for comforting a sleepy child. Eventually, two of the rockers and some pacifiers and sippy cups were sent off to the Dallas shelter, which was located in a parking garage.

Help us to love, even when change is upon us.

My sweetest memories are of the children, the youngest disaster victims, who undoubtedly were experiencing much more change than we experienced. They had lost their homes, and in most cases were being relocated permanently by the storm. They slept in giant rooms with several hundred other people, and they endured the stress of having no familiar surroundings.

On our first day, Stephanie (not her real name) and her younger brother, who was developmentally delayed, came to us. She was about 6 years old, and she had ringlets like Shirley Temple's. Stephanie loved to sing and dance. She drew especially close to one of the CDS team members, and at the end of our second day we closed our afternoon with a talent show, and Stephanie was beaming!

What we didn't know was that her grandmother took care of Stephanie and her brother because Stephanie's mother was pregnant, and an addict.

After we moved to a second location, Stephanie didn't check in, and we were disappointed. The next day, we learned that



Stephanie's mother had delivered a baby and a local church had arranged for the family to use a house for the next week. We never had the joy of working with Stephanie and her brother in our CDS play space again, and we all missed them. Before leaving San Antonio, we learned that the local authorities took the newborn baby away from Stephanie's mother.

I often think of Stephanie and the sparkle in her eyes, and the many other children we served who blessed us with shy smiles after a day of play. I am grateful to have loved the children, to have served with a team of strangers who became friends, and to have learned to love even when change was upon us. 📖

Pat Krabacher was one of the dozens of CDS volunteers who responded in Texas following Hurricane Harvey. She also is a Brethren Volunteer Service worker and is a volunteer for Global Mission and Service and the Nigeria Crisis Response.

Coffee with Elijah

by Bob Bowman

I'm not very comfortable with the prophet Elijah. He is not the sort of person with whom I'd like to have a cup of coffee and talk about life, faith, and morality. He is so gruff. And I'm sure he'd accuse me of something or other and I'd be uncomfortable.

I could have coffee with Jesus. As Jesus is pictured in Luke 7:43, he would welcome a good cup and good talk. Jesus would challenge me too—perhaps

even more intensely than Elijah—but through it all I'd feel accepted.

Elijah would scare me into being more serious about my faith. Jesus would love me into it. Elijah calls down fire from heaven. I can believe it. That's why coffee with Elijah is an uncertain affair.

Elijah invited himself to stay in the home of a poor widow. He asked her to feed him when the woman had practically nothing in the cupboard.

He promised everything would be all right; and it was, but he doesn't appear very sympathetic to her. Even when he healed the widow's son, Elijah seems to lack "a good bedside manner."

Despite my discomfort with Elijah, I'm glad his stories are in the Bible. In fact, I learned about clarity, spirituality, and responsibility from the stories of Elijah.

The story of Elijah that first caught my attention was his contest with

HE MADE A JOURNEY TO THE MOUNTAIN WHERE MOSES HAD RECEIVED THE GREAT COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND ISRAEL. IT WAS THE MOUNTAIN WHERE “MOSES WOULD SPEAK AND GOD WOULD ANSWER HIM IN THUNDER.”

hundreds of prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. I watched entranced when the story was dramatized around our unlit campfire when I was a nine-year-old at church camp. At the right time in the story, just like on Mount Carmel, fire came down from above and lit our campfire. Of course, our fire came as a flare sliding down a long wire attached from a nearby height, but that didn't spoil the surprise or the story for this camper.

There was something more ominous than children's fireworks on Mount Carmel, however. Elijah had gathered the people together, accusing them of compromised lives. "How long," he roared, "will you go on hopping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him."

The contest with the priests of Baal was not a simple religious rivalry. Nor was it a struggle for power or supremacy. We become like the gods we worship. Therefore, this was a choice of society goals. It was a collision between two different ways of living. Historically Baal was a god of violence, sexual brutality, and oppression. The God of biblical faith represented freedom from slavery, respect for all persons, and a society of justice and compassion.

The "Baals" of my world are just as potent: consumerism, nationalism, tradition, power, and racism. In the world in which I live, I can still hear Elijah roaring at me, "How long will you go

on hopping between two different opinions?" This is the challenge of loyalties, of competing life goals. Elijah calls me to clarify my life goals and the values that guide my daily decisions.

Elijah did not have long to boast about his triumph over the priests of Baal. As soon as Jezebel heard it, she sent him a warning. "You may be Elijah, but I am Jezebel" she said, "and by tomorrow you will be dead!"

That is the beginning of the most mysterious of Elijah's stories. He made a journey to the mountain where Moses had received the great covenant between God and Israel. It was the mountain where "Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder" (Exodus 19:19).

On that same mountain, Elijah witnessed earthquakes, fires, and winds strong enough to splinter rocks. But, the text says, the Lord was not in the earthquake, wind, or fire. I've wondered what Elijah thought about that. Did he wonder why Moses got thunder but he didn't?

When God did communicate with Elijah, it was not thunder but "a sound of sheer silence." That is a phrase so strange that it leaves us in mystery. The King James Version translates it "a still small voice." Other versions are equally baffling: "the voice of a gentle breeze," "a soft whisper," "a quiet gentle sound," "a soft murmuring sound," or "a sound of minute stillness." It was like that delightful phrase of John Keats, "a little noiseless noise among

the leaves."

There is enough mystery and ambiguity here to give us pause. Was the voice of God heard in the heart and not the ear? Was Elijah familiar enough with silence that he could hear it? And, if the message of God is only in silence and in one's heart, how do we know when we interpret it correctly? Perhaps the interpretation, too, takes great familiarity with silence. Can the sound of deep stillness transform a person?

I am attracted to the fact that the stories of Elijah contain both the challenge to strive toward the type of society represented by the teachings of the God of Moses and the Exodus. At the same time, the stories of Elijah contain the quest for a spirituality that is sensitive to the "still small voice" of God.

It suggests that efforts to promote social justice, witness for peace, and combat racism become harsh and unloving unless they issue from a spirituality that is attentive to that "still small voice." And any spirituality is empty that does not show fruit in striving for a society guided by biblical values.

Perhaps I might reconsider a coffee conversation with Elijah. Anyone who has entered so deeply into the silence of God and addressed so boldly the wounds of society has something to say to me and to all of us. 

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

Bursting with joy

by Deanna Beckner

Watching Julia's passion for compassion deepen into so much more was nothing short of touching. It takes bravery to come to a workcamp by yourself, but she came to Knoxville by herself for her first workcamp, and was sporting crutches when we picked her up at the airport. In that first car ride, we learned that she had aspirations of becoming a doctor and wanted to spend her life serving. I could tell right away that she was the best kind of different.

We needed the tables cleaned? Julia was often helping before anyone asked. She snuck in and washed dishes with the other groups nearly every day. We were going for a hike? She of course wanted to do the steeper hike, injury and all. She was inspiring and encouraging.

The Knoxville workcamp's relational service often provides for unexpected stories and outcomes as workcampers interact with people experiencing homelessness. I would hear these stories when I was preparing for dinner and groups were just coming back from their days of working. Though the workcampers were weary from the work and sometimes the heat, their hearts shone through their tired faces. I heard their excited stories. I heard proud advisors speak of the hard work the youth put in. I saw friendships forming out of shared experiences. I saw the children of God being hands and feet. These connections, these reactions, are part of what make workcamps an incredible time.

After working at the Love Kitchen a couple of days, Julia was one of those bursting to tell her story about the

people she met. With her injury still being a factor in how long she was able to stand or do certain work, Julia had unique experiences sitting with people who came to receive a bite to eat. They and she left with much more than filled stomachs.

Because she spoke with joy and a sense of honest personal connection, I can still remember the names of some of the people she met. I stood next to her as we spoke to an intoxicated man without a home while serving at the Under the Bridge program. We prayed together and helped him look for his misplaced Bible. She wore her heart on her sleeve as she listened and truly cared about what he had to say.

Julia spoke of wanting to take these moments with her, to work at improving the lives of others. It's not that she was changing her mind about wanting to be a doctor; rather, it seemed to become even more pertinent and important to her.

While doing my part to collaborate in coordinating the Church of the Brethren Workcamp Ministry, I learned to expect to meet some simply incredible people. I kept finding them everywhere I went. Every new experience brought more kind people. Julia was one of those people.

I pray for her and all the other volunteers who participated in this season of workcamps. The workcamp may now be just a memory, but I hope that it's the best kind of different for every one of them. 

Deanna Beckner is the guest services director for Camp Mack in Milford, Ind. She recently completed two years as co-coordinator of the denomination's Workcamp Ministry, serving through Brethren Volunteer Service.



CDS team serves in Las Vegas after mass shooting

Children's Disaster Services (CDS) deployed a team of **Critical Response** Childcare volunteers to Las Vegas, Nev., following the mass shooting. The team was requested by the American Red Cross, and served in a Family Assistance Center.

Team member Patty Henry reported that "this center is expecting up to 27,000 people who have been affected by this tragedy." Her report noted the privacy regulations in place. The CDS team was only able to take photos of the center before people arrived, and photos of

the team itself, and cell phones were silenced out of respect.

To help in their work, the CDS team received donations of play-dough, paint, and other supplies from Child Life Specialists at a Las Vegas hospital, and Save the Children.

The Critical Response Childcare team receives specialized training to care for children following situations of extreme trauma, or mass casualty events. Since 1997, the team has responded to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, 8 aviation incidents, 1 train incident, the Boston Marathon bombing, and the mass shooting in Orlando.



Don Nerssen

Children's Disaster Services' Critical Response Childcare team in Las Vegas.

Brethren response in Puerto Rico

Brethren Disaster Ministries is responding in Puerto Rico, after the island was devastated by Hurricane Maria. Planning included—in the short term—the shipping of a container of disaster relief supplies and a visit by Roy Winter, associate executive director of Brethren Disaster Ministries and Global Mission and Service. In the long-term, plans include relief and long-term recovery programs, and home repair.

Supplies were gathered at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., where Material Resources staff filled the container. It included canned chicken from Mid-Atlantic and Southern Pennsylvania Districts, generators, tarpaulins, flashlights, batteries, and chain saws.

"Our resources, support, and programs will be much more effective when we can gather the church leadership," Winter said. In late September, he was able to talk by phone with Puerto Rico District executive Jose Calleja Otero, for the first time since the hurricane. Otero was working to assess the situation and to connect with pastors in the district.



Andrea Victoria

Brethren in DR Congo threatened by violence

Global Mission and Service in late September requested prayer for the Church of the Brethren in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Word was received from Lubungo Ron, leading minister for the Congolese Brethren, that violence was "on a high level" in areas where church members live. He reported by e-mail that violence was affecting "South Kivu province, especially in Fizi and Uvira territories" and that "people are killed day by day, it is like a massacre." Mai-Mai rebels had moved close to towns, and the military forces of the government had begun to flee.

Venezuela church gains official recognition

"Praise God for the official government recognition of the Church of the Brethren in Venezuela!" said an announcement from Global Mission and Service. The Venezuelan government has approved incorporation under the name Asociación Iglesia de los Hermanos (ASIGLEH). The board of the Venezuelan Brethren will visit each congregation to officially register them. More than 60 congregations have expressed interest in joining the church.

Leadership Team issues statement to the denomination

The following statement was issued by the Leadership Team on Sept. 21. The group includes the Annual Conference officers—moderator Samuel Kefas Sarpiya, moderator-elect Donita J. Keister, secretary James M. Beckwith—with general secretary David A. Steele, district executive representative David D. Shetler, and Conference director Chris Douglas.

“The Leadership Team is aware that a district in the Church of the Brethren has made the decision to license to the ministry an individual who lives in an openly committed homosexual relationship. A new fellowship pastored by that individual was recognized by its district conference and was introduced at Annual Conference 2017. Since that time many questions have been raised regarding the accountability of districts. The Leadership Team has sought to clarify that in Church of the Brethren polity, the authority to credential ministers and to establish new congregations and fellowships belongs to the districts. At the same time, the Leadership Team is certainly aware that the intention of our polity is that districts will work within the covenant of our life together and abide by the decisions of Annual Conference.

“The 2002 Annual Conference action established the policy that the Church of the Brethren will ‘consider it inappropriate to license or ordain to Christian ministry any persons who are known to be engaging in homosexual practices, and will not recognize the licensing and ordination of such persons in the Church of the Brethren.’ It is the intent of denominational leadership to act in accordance with all the policies established by Annual Conference.

“The Leadership Team has been studying our polity to discern what actions might be taken when districts choose to act outside the covenant of Annual Conference decisions, and

we find that our polity does not specify how the larger church should respond to this particular circumstance. We continue, however, to research Annual Conference minutes and plan to discuss the results of our research with Standing Committee at its next meeting. In the meantime, the moderator and moderator-elect are seeking opportunity to visit with the district that has made this decision, in order to discuss the various expressions of concern we have heard and to seek mutual understanding with district leadership as to why the district has made a decision in apparent contradiction to the 2002 Annual Conference decision, which was adopted by the church as a whole as a part of the covenant for our life together.

“Regarding the introduction of new fellowships at Annual Conference, our polity calls us to respect the district’s authority to grant fellowship and congregation status. And at the same time, our polity calls us to abide by the policies established by Annual Conference. Our best way of responding to the introduction of this fellowship in light of its pastoral leadership is Brother David Steele’s response as general secretary:

“‘As staff, we are carefully evaluating our practices of recognizing new fellowships at Annual Conference and will make adjustments to make certain that any recognition at a future Annual Conference more closely aligns with our Annual Conference statements.’

“In the face of these conflicts, it is our deep desire to continue to strive for common ground that can lead us to a compelling vision for our life together. We hold in tension the need for a unified purpose in the midst of diverse points of view. We pray that we all will continue to strive together, seeking peace through love and grace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Personnel notes

Pete Kontra begins Jan. 1, 2018, as district executive in Atlantic Northeast District. He has been in pastoral ministry for more than 20 years, currently is senior pastor at Hempfield (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, and has served as chair of the district board for the past two years. He holds a master of divinity degree from Bethany Seminary.

Debbie Roberts has resigned as assistant professor of reconciliation studies at Bethany Seminary, as of Dec. 31, in order to pastor Sunnyslope Church of the Brethren in Wenatchee, Wash. Hired in July 2013, she was the first to hold this faculty position and developed the seminary’s academic program in reconciliation studies. Her

courses in conflict transformation, mediation, and restorative justice showed strong enrollment, and in fall 2016 became the core of a new certificate in conflict transformation.

Melissa Fritz began Oct. 2 as a packer for Material Resources, working at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.



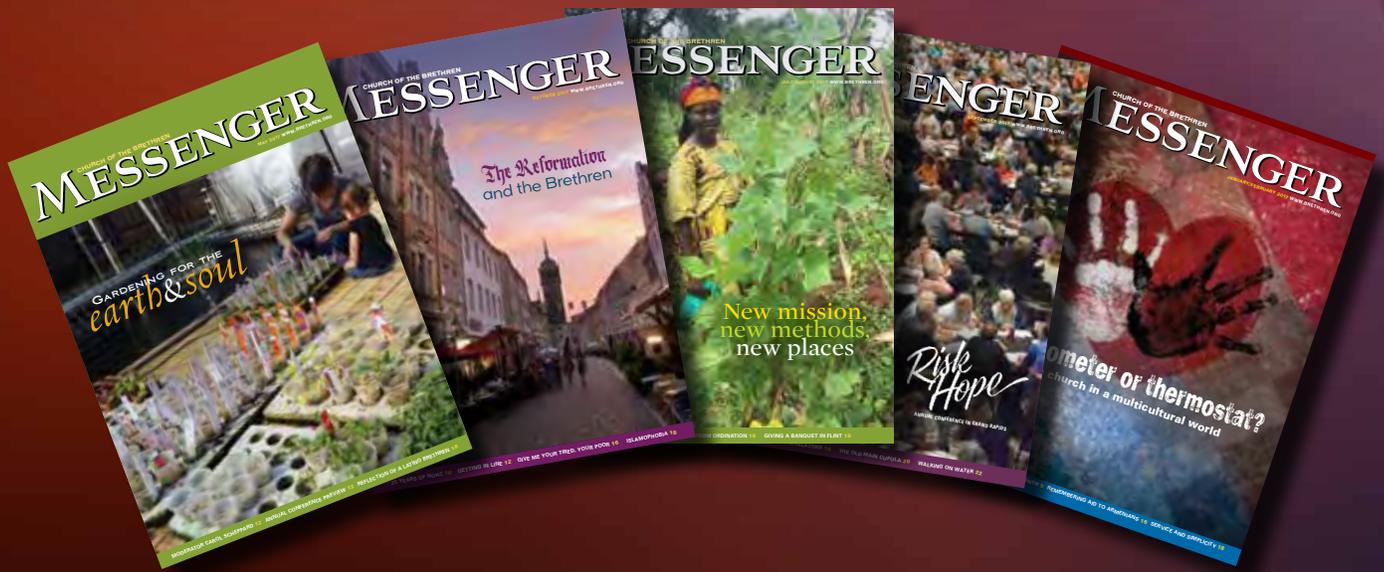
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THANK YOU FOR THE LIGHT YOU SHARE. –Elizabethtown, Pa. MESSENGER FEEDS US AND INSPIRES US. –Sebring, Fla. THRILLED TO READ THE MESSENGER –Sandwich, Ill. THERE IS HOPE WRITTEN ACROSS THE PAGES. –Ephrata, Pa. WE DIDN'T DEBATE WHETHER OR NOT WE WOULD RENEW. –Beatrice, Neb. AWESOME. –Nellysford, Va. HIGH-QUALITY ARTICLES AND HIGH-QUALITY WRITERS. –Caledonia, Mich. A JOB WELL DONE. –Mechanicsburg, Pa. I READ IT COVER TO COVER AND THEN ENJOY RE-READING AND SHARING IT. –Lorida, Fla. KEEP IT UP! – Washington, D.C. I LOOK FORWARD TO EVERY ISSUE. –York, Pa. WHAT A BLESSING! – Hagerstown, Md. I AM INSPIRED WITH HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AND FOR THE NEXT MOMENT IN MY LIFE. –Empire, Calif.



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Which mansion would suit?

I grew up in the Mennonite denomination but raised my family in the Church of the Brethren, because it was closer to my home. A few weeks ago, I came home from the Michigan District conference and a week ago received the latest edition of *Mennonite World Review*.

I am glad I have belonged to a peace church all my life, but it seems to me that the Mennonites and Brethren don't believe in fighting except with each other. Seven of the Michigan Churches of the Brethren voted to leave the present Michigan District because the rest of us don't believe right. A few years ago, the Mennonites tried to join conferences, but now more

splits than ever are taking place.

I just passed my 85th birthday, have lived in my present home for over 50 years, but sense that my time here is limited. I may be about ready to move on to one of the mansions Jesus promised me in John 14. But it seems like he should have given a little more instruction as to which mansion would be best suited for me. I could try to go to one on Inerrancy Street or Literal Bible Avenue, but some of my friends who left my district might kick me out. I always got along quite well with my parents and my siblings, who are up there in some mansion, but they didn't all believe the same as me and I'm not sure into which mansion they moved. I sure don't want to get stuck for eternity in a Catholic or Lutheran mansion—they baptize wrong. And I noticed that when the Mennonites dunk, they dunk in the wrong direction.

Wouldn't it be ironic if I got up there and discovered everyone had their own mansion because no one quite believed the same? In that case, eternity would be quite long and boring. Maybe one can move in for a trial period and then move to a more appropriate mansion after becoming more accustomed to the arrangements. I wonder if there is a welcoming mansion.

I know what I'll do. I'll get hold of Micah and see if he will take me in his mansion. I've tried to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with my God. I've also tried to live up to Jesus' two commandments, to love the Lord my

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God with my whole heart, soul, strength, and mind, and my neighbor as myself. But it's sure easier to love the Lord my God than my neighbor.

Yup, that's what I'll do, I'll just go with Micah.

Denzel Short
Livonia, Mich.

Stimulating and thoughtful

I had to look back at the cover to see if this was the MESSENGER. It was! Wonderful, and timely articles no less. Thank you for stimulating and thoughtful reading.

Charles Albert
Warsaw, Ind.

Black Lives Matter

A recent article in Newsline reminded me of a vivid memory of my Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) days in 1970. Then, as part of our training, we spent a weekend with current BVSErs at their



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LETTERS

projects. I was sent to Baltimore. On Saturday afternoon a group of young men from the neighborhood came over to talk about a concern. An exit ramp for an interstate was proposed to cut through their community, and they named some of the devastating effects this would have on relationships and economics there. I understood and identified with them because there had been, at the same time, some talk at home about a road being built either through our farm community or the local golf course. We knew, given those options, our community would suffer, and we had considered those effects.

The threatened road was never built near my home and, thankfully, it remains today a vibrant rural community. I don't know what happened to the proposed ramp and threatened community in Baltimore. What I do know is that those young men were Black Panthers, a group labeled as a Number One threat to our country by FBI chief Hoover. But they were not

talking violence or subversion; they were disciplined and informed men who cared about their community and wanted to act on its behalf.

I'm sharing this story as a way to encourage us not to take as gospel the negative hype about Black Lives Matter. That group, like the Panthers of my youth, often is misrepresented by people in power. I want to encourage white Brethren to talk seriously with—and listen carefully to—friends of color about this subject, and to explore what Black Lives Matter is doing in our communities. I have found in that organization people who share many of my values and concerns, people with whom I identify and want to associate. You may as well.

Joan Huston
Marion, S.C.

Why I love our multicultural church

This summer Annual Conference moderator Samuel Sarpiya spoke at Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the

Brethren. He had a great message, and along the way commented on the racial and ethnic diversity of our congregation. It got me thinking about why I love our multicultural church.

The late service, which my wife and I usually attend, is now majority non-white, with many blacks and some Hispanics and Asians. What's more, there is socio-economic diversity, with richer and poorer folks all represented, along with some college students. And the worship styles of the different cultures are combined in this service.

CLASSIFIEDS

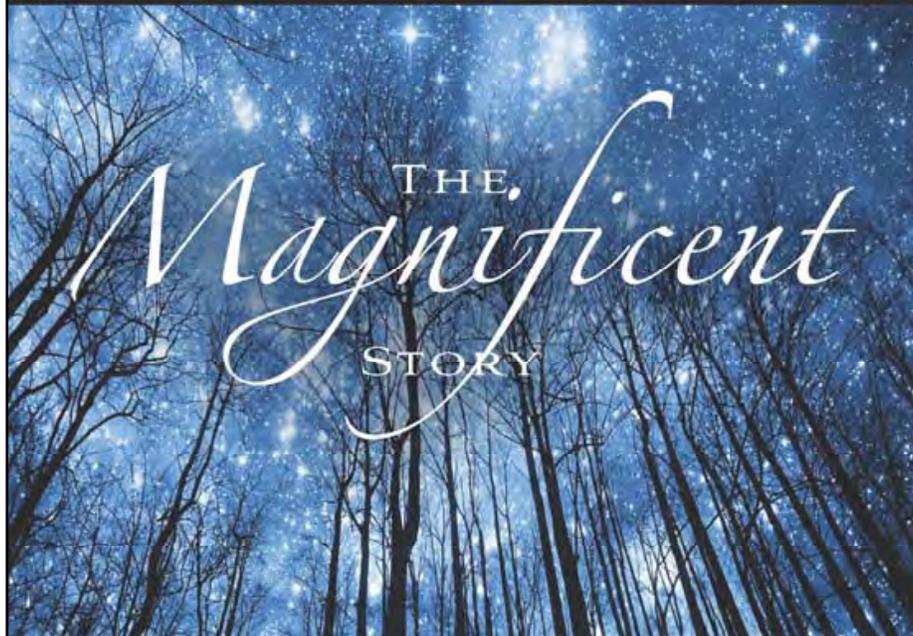
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Enjoy a unique learning opportunity on the Fresh Perspectives on the History, Church, & People of Cuba Tour January 19-28, 2018. Worship and have lunch with a local Brethren in Christ congregation. Talk to National BIC leaders about the Cuban Church. Visit a BIC Leadership Training Centre and a sustainable farm run by Christians. See Havana, Bay of Pigs, an Indian village, and Varadero beach. Discover how Cubans creatively adapted to economic hardships and life in a Communist nation. Canadian tour leaders Jack & Irene Suderman speak Spanish and have long-term relationships in Cuba that give access to RARE experiences not available to tourists. Many Americans have LOVED this tour. GET MORE INFO www.tourmagination.com/tour/cuba or 1-800-565-0451.

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We are enjoying the opportunity to develop relationships with people of color. As a result, we are learning to understand each other's cultures and perspectives, instead of stereotyping each other. We are more able to see life from the point of view of people of different racial and economic groups.

More than that, we are growing in love for each other. With all those hate groups getting so much press in our society, here we have a love group! We have discovered that what we have in common in Christ is far greater than all our differences. We are one in Christ!
In a nation that seems to be more

divided than ever, how desperately we need the church to be the peacemaker. We are in a unique position to bring racial reconciliation to America. We can be the love group in a society with too many hate groups.

Robert Vroon
Lancaster, Pa.

TURNINGPOINTS

Send information for *Turning Points* to Diane Stroyeck, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039, ext. 327; dstroyeck@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New members

Bassett, Va.: Fern Baker, Maynard Baker, Savannah Haynes, Hunter Meade, John Ramsey
Brownsville, Knoxville, Md.: Angel Foust, Brynlee Foust, Ella Foust, Evan Foust, Skylynn Mentzer
Chiques, Manheim, Pa.: Alicia Brandt, Gwen Myer, Mackenzie Peterman, Caitlin Stoeffler
East Cocalico, Stevens, Pa.: Wendy Hartl
Eel River, Silver Lake, Ind.: Ann Fourman, Larry Fourman, Sarah Letsinger
Fairview, Cordova, Md.: Timothy Cannon, Veronica Davis
Freeport, Ill.: Christopher Omarrah, Ethan Omarrah
Green Tree, Oaks, Pa.: John Hallman, Mary Hallman
Hanover, Pa.: Katherine Mooney
Little Swatara, Bethel, Pa.: Maya Bicksler, Lauren Bryant, Katie Light, Enos Loump, Roxanne Loump
Live Oak, Calif.: Linda Ashbaugh
Long Green Valley, Glen Arm, Md.: Ginger Berninger, Ron Berninger
Mill Creek, Port Republic,

Va.: Cy Alderman, Julia Miller, Will Morgan, Reagan Stone, Isaac Wenger
Monocacy, Rocky Ridge, Md.: Tyler Stephen Groneck
Myerstown, Pa.: John Martin Moyer, Rachel Moyer, Brenda Weierbach, Melissa Wilson
Peace Community, Windsor, Colo.: Melissa Chapman, Robert Chapman, Shelly Jamison
Providence, Royersford, Pa.: Anna Diehl, Samuel Diehl

Wedding anniversaries

Bates, Jim and Kay, Lafayette, Ind., 50
Claytor, Dallas and Peggy, Dayton, Va., 66
Dunn, Garland and Shirley, Mount Sidney, Va., 60
Eaton, Jerry and Eleanor, Lafayette, Ind., 50
Gillette, Allen and Mary, Bridgewater, Va., 50
Gottshall, J. Richard and Doris, Roanoke, Va., 72
Heffner, Lawrence and Oneida, Knoxville, Md., 65
Kettering, Daniel and Donna, Polk, Ohio, 50
Metzger, Gene and Barbara, Lafayette, Ind., 70
Miller, Marlin and Julie, Manheim, Pa., 50
Nantz, John and Joyce, Palmyra, Pa., 60
Raines, Jack, Jr. and Leona, McGaheysville, Va., 50
Rosenberger, Clem and Margaret, Lancaster, Pa., 60
Sine, Donald and Thelma, Maurertown, Va., 70

Spire, Ronald and Shirley, Dandridge, Tenn., 60
Walbridge, Gilbert and Marjorie, Easton, Md., 75
Williams, Jim and Judy, Manheim, Pa., 50
Young, David and Joan, Ephrata, Pa., 50

Deaths

Agee, Claudine Elois, 84, Roanoke, Va., Feb. 8
Airesman, Hazel, 95, Somerset, Pa., Sept. 4
Bates, Donald J., 93, Goshen, Ind., Jan. 3
Bayless, Margaret, 89, Timonium, Md., March 6
Bowers, Joel, 67, Rohersville, Md., Aug. 15
Bowyer, Vinal, 93, Peru, Ind., March 10
Brandt, Anna H. Wolgemuth, 87, Manheim, Pa., Sept. 17
Brightbill, Carl, 94, Myerstown, Pa., Aug. 16
Burger, Eugene, 85, Lorida, Fla., Aug. 13
Burkholder, Marjorie Ellen Spears, 75, Overland Park, Kan., Aug. 10
Butler, Judith Emma, 79, McPherson, Kan., Aug. 11
Clatterbuck, Florence, 91, Charlottesville, Va., Aug. 19
Cook, Ruby A. Geiser, 93, Denver, Pa., Aug. 4
Dudley, Larry, 69, Charlottesville, Va., Aug. 30
Edwards, Betty Gail Hundley, 68, Bassett, Va., March 28
Eichhorn, Belinda Jane Brown, 63, Glen Arm, Md., Sept. 10
Flook, Samuel, 63, Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 18

Haller, MaryAnne Martin, 82, Denver, Pa., July 2
Hamilton, Bessie F., 85, Shippensburg, Pa., Aug. 24
Hammer, George Maynard, 93, Polo, Ill., Feb. 5
Haynes, Richard, 79, Stevens, Pa., June 27
Hedrick, Bruce, 69, Towson, Md., Feb. 14
Hoch, Helen, 99, Harrisburg, Pa., July 30
Holder, Madeline Hines, 90, Knoxville, Md., June 15
Hostetler, Ida Sass, 80, Somerset, Pa., Aug. 18
Keener, Lin, 58, Ashland, Ohio, Aug. 12
Knier, Mark Edward, 63, Polo, Ill., May 30
Mack, Joseph P., 76, Royersford, Pa., Aug. 26
Mackowiak, Twila Smalley, 71, Beaver, Iowa, March 27
Mason, Cynthia, 69, Berlin, Pa., Aug. 12
Meyer, Vernon C., 86, Mount Morris, Ill., May 29
Meyers, Mary H., 84, Somerset, Pa., Aug. 26
Miller, Pearl I., 92, Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 5
Monn, E. Gale Bowser, 77, Chambersburg, Pa., Aug. 23
Morris, Robert Edward, 47, Waynesboro, Va., July 29
Mullen, Carol Ann Mosholder, 79, Boswell, Pa., June 24
Nash, Sidney, 76, Martinsville, Va., May 16
Oglesby, Laura B., 74, Greensburg, Pa., Aug. 20
Oren, James Carlyle, 88, Union, Ohio, July 26
Ritchie, Lura Strickler Garber, 98, Harrisonburg,

Va., Sept. 10
Sanner, James "Bob", 89, Rockwood, Pa., April 5
Schlegel, Franklin C., 93, Harleysville, Pa., May 31
Smith, Michael L., 61, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 17
Stewart, Don, 89, Ephrata, Pa., July 26
Strate, Margaret Wampler, 96, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 29
Tritapoc, Dorothy, 87, Knoxville, Md., April 6
Young, Nancy, 38, West Point, Miss., Aug. 29

Ordained

Leverknight, Dale S., W. Pa. Dist. (Montgomery, Commodore, Pa.), Aug. 6
Thomas, Cheryl, N. Ind. Dist. (Pleasant Chapel, Ashley, Ind.), Aug. 20
Thomas, Paul, N. Ind. Dist. (Pleasant Chapel, Ashley, Ind.), Aug. 20

Licensed

Keel, James Warren, Mo. & Ark. Dist. (Spring Branch, Warsaw, Mo.), Aug. 20

Placements

Collett, Wiley, from interim pastor to pastor, Trinity, Sidney, Ohio, Sept. 1
Polzin, Nathan, pastor, Midland, Mich., Sept. 1
Stouffer, Darlene, from interim pastor to pastor, Huntsdale, Carlisle, Pa., Aug. 21
Whipple, Charles D., pastor, Wooddale, Connellsville, Pa., Aug. 1

God and guns

don't want to talk about it either.

But in spite of the controversy, there's a heightened need to address the relationship between guns and our faith.

Back when the availability of guns translated into a hunting rifle on the gun rack or a BB gun in the closet, things were tame and controllable. But now a whole arsenal is at our disposal—legally.



PAUL MUNDEY

The recent carnage in Las Vegas has made the arsenal horribly vivid. But many of us Americans are accessing that weaponry in a knee-jerk reaction to a perceived rise in violent crime.

It's ironic, though. Violent crime overall is in decline, in spite of a recent uptick of violence in US cities in 2017. Gun acquisition has increased, as more Americans acquire weapons for self-protection, not merely for recreational use.

This translates into a climate of fear, resulting in the rise of violence, including gun violence, as people increasingly utilize armed force in an attempt to protect themselves.

But God wants us to protect ourselves more creatively. Violence doesn't work. As Martin Luther King Jr. clarifies:

Violence is "a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. . . . Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that."

For some, this sounds naïve. But a turn from violence is not equal to being a doormat. Rather, it's a doorway to a more savvy way of stopping evil.

Fifty-five years ago, America was entangled in the Cuban missile crisis. The Joint Chiefs of Staff argued for a full-scale attack. But cooler heads prevailed, and a better weapon was found: a naval "quarantine" of Cuba. The US surrounded Cuba with ships, preventing more weapons from entering from the Soviet Union and forcing Cuba to remove or destroy the missiles already in place.

Nonviolent solutions would be more evident if we applied the same research and development prowess to the creation of nonviolent weaponry as we do to conventional weaponry.

Christ-followers are to slow the cycle of violence—advancing creative weapons, nonviolent weapons, God's weapons. Thus, we advocate for the lessening of guns, to lessen the temptation to protect ourselves violently.

In 1995, Mennonite artist Esther Augsburger and her son Michael created a 16-by-19-foot sculpture entitled "Guns into Plowshares." It was created out of 3,000 actual guns, melted down after being collected by the Washington, DC, police, as part of a buy-back program.

For years "Guns into Plowshares" stood prophetically in Judiciary Square, in the heart of Washington. But in 2008, Judiciary Square was remodeled and the sculpture was replaced by a fountain. "Guns into Plowshares" was relocated behind a fence, in a maintenance yard near a sewage treatment plant. Later it sat next to a remote police evidence control facility. How easily the cause of nonviolence can ebb away.

But the Augsburgers did not give up. This fall, "Guns into Plowshares" was relocated temporarily to the edge of the Eastern Mennonite University's campus to be refurbished. The move was a herculean effort, since the sculpture weighs four tons. But the Augsburgers were determined

WE ARE CALLED TO RENEW AND CONTINUE OUR WITNESS FOR PEACE. IT'S A HERCULEAN EFFORT. BUT JESUS AND HIS MESSAGE WILL NOT BE SIDELINED.

that the sculpture not be sidelined—but renewed, so that eventually it can be returned to Washington for a continued witness for peace.

We are called to renew and continue our witness for peace. It's a herculean effort. But Jesus and his message will not be sidelined.

Jesus requires that his message be proclaimed in the public square, openly, prophetically, vividly, until the dream comes true: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. . . . they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:3-4). 

Paul Munday is an ordained Church of the Brethren minister. He is engaged in a ministry of writing and consulting, along with being a post-graduate student in family systems theory, at the School of Social Work at Rutgers University.



Photos by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, Jay Wittmeyer, Glenn Riegel, and Emily Tyler

*"The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoice" (Psalm 126:3).*

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