

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

MARCH 2017 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

Why did Jesus have to die?



Jeanne Davies

More income, more tax deductions, more ministries.

How?

With a charitable remainder trust.

Charitable remainder trusts can increase your monthly income, reduce capital gains taxes, and provide an upfront Federal income tax deduction today, all while supporting ministries you love.

Would you like to make a life-changing donation, and provide income for yourself or a loved one? Call John Hipps, director of Donor Relations for the Church of the Brethren, to find out how.

Charitable remainder trusts can transform assets that produce little or no income into assets that work for you throughout the life of the trust. In fact, gifts of appreciated assets (stocks, bonds, farmland, or other real estate) may provide more benefits than a cash gift!

You can make a difference across the nation and around the world through the ministries of the Church of the Brethren. Call now to learn how you can continue the work of Jesus through a charitable remainder trust.



Church of the Brethren

Call John Hipps
Director of Donor Relations
for the Church of the Brethren
at (800) 323-8039 ext. 354 or
e-mail jhipps@brethren.org

*Please consult your tax advisor
about your specific situation.*

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

Publisher: Wendy McFadden Associate editor: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford Web editor: Jan Fischer Bachman Design: The Concept Mill
Contributing editors: Eric Bishop, Sandy Bosserman, Dana Cassell, Daniel D'Oleo, Emmett Eldred, Tim Harvey, Bob Neff

MARCH 2017 Vol.166 No. 2 www.brethren.org/messenger

departments

- 2 FROM THE PUBLISHER
- 3 IN TOUCH
- 5 THE EXCHANGE
- 17 REFLECTIONS
- 20 MEDIA REVIEW
- 21 YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS
- 22 BIBLE STUDY
- 25 NEWSLINE DIGEST
- 27 LETTERS
- 30 TURNING POINTS
- 32 POTLUCK

6 Up on a rooftop
The Bible and interpretation
by Steven Schweitzer

9 Why did Jesus have to die?
Nonviolent atonement and restorative justice
by J. Denny Weaver

12 Salvation is like a seashore journey
by Doris Cline Egge

14 A vital conversation
An interview with Stan Dueck
by Walt Wiltschek

18 From a tithe, a new church grows
by Ellen K. Layman

24 Lighting a candle of hope
Stories from the Haiti Medical Project
by Paul Ullom-Minnich

Correction: A reference to the church's statement on "Separate No More" should have dated it 2007 rather than 1997 (January/February, p. 5).

Cover photo by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Flickr.com / Vassilis Londos

Kendra Harbeck

6



12



24



FROM THE PUBLISHER

once heard someone declare, “I’m Christian first, American second, and Brethren third.”

That severing of “Christian” and “Brethren” would have been shocking to those who founded the Brethren movement more than 300 years ago. They suffered significantly for pursuing their peculiarly Brethren understanding of Christianity.

At that time, religion was decided by the ruler of the region; disagreeing with the local religion was a state offense. In the area of Germany where the Brethren movement took root, the official religion was the Reformed Church. Pietists and Anabaptists choosing to gather in small groups were hauled into court and punished. Martin Lucas, for example, was expelled in 1709, as was his wife. Their house was sold, and their children were handed over to guardians.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

What were the crimes of these sober Christians? In an interrogation in Heidelberg, Martin Lucas and John Diehl explained that the Pietists “love foremost God and their neighbor as themselves, even their enemies, and are obliged to feed them, and give them to eat and to drink.”

Andrew Boni, another conscientious objector to the state, wrote this to the mayor of Basel in 1706: “If disobeying the orders of men means opposing God’s ordinances, then the apostles also disobeyed.” (Two years later he was one of the eight baptized in Schwarzenau in an act of civil disobedience that marked the beginning of the Church of the Brethren.)

But here is a fascinating story from Mannheim. When one government official seized the Pietists and sentenced them to hard labor “without trial or hearing,” the punishment failed because of the great sympathy that the Reformed subjects showed to the Pietists. “They have defended the Pietists’ teachings, and said that nothing could be found deserving punishment in such pious Christians.” In fact, the Reformed folks gathered at the prison and spent the day listening to their preaching. Thus, a government that was trying to maintain power by promoting enmity was thwarted by Christian goodwill. You can read all about it in chapter 1 of Donald F. Durnbaugh’s *European Origins of the Brethren*.

The early Brethren would never have called themselves political. They simply remained steadfast to their understanding of God’s Word. Likewise, the Reformed subjects who protected the so-called heretics were probably not trying to be political either, but “unashamedly proclaimed and made this their own cause.” By sheer numbers they kept the civil leaders from carrying out an unjust decree.

The intertwining of government and religion produces an unholy alliance, whatever the century, and those who pledge their loyalty to God must be vigilant about competing claims. If we have forgotten how to discern the difference, we can revisit our Brethren history and Acts 5:29.

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

Subscription rates:

\$17.50 individual rate
- \$32 for 2 years
\$14.50 gift rate
\$14.50 church club rate
- \$27 for 2 years
\$ 1.25 student (per month)

If you move, clip address label and send with new address to MESSENGER Subscriptions, at the above address. Allow at least five weeks for address change.

For digital MESSENGER go to
www.brethren.org/accessmessenger.

Visit MESSENGER online at
www.brethren.org/messenger.

MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Member of the Associated Church Press. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © February 2017, Church of the Brethren.

MESSENGER (ISSN 0026-0355) is published 10 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren. Periodicals postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MESSENGER, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120-1694.

 Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)



Jonathan Ogburn

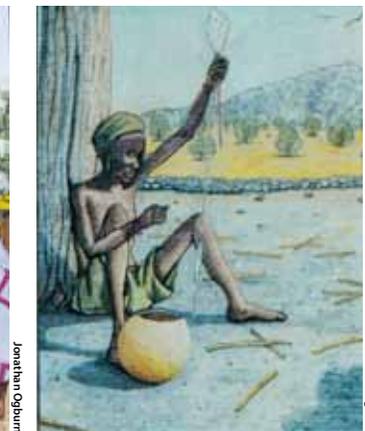
Art for Nigeria

Jonathan “Pogu” Ogburn has begun a project called “Art for Nigeria” to benefit the Nigeria Crisis Response. Impetus for the artwork was the abduction of schoolgirls from Chibok, which “resonated with me, because to me Chibok is a place I once knew as a child,” he wrote.

“My parents, Howard and Carolee Ogburn, came to Nigeria as missionaries for the Church of the Brethren Mission in 1963. I went to Nigeria at age 3 months. We moved to the small, remote town of Chibok soon after, with my three older sisters. There I was given the Chibok name Pogou, literally ‘boy with three older sisters.’ We later moved to other northeastern Nigerian towns. My parents and I left Nigeria in 1984, having lived in Nigeria the whole time excepting furloughs stateside.

“Although I left Nigeria many years ago the experience colored my life. . . . Nigeria has given me so much, I hope to give back. Using memories and sometimes old photos by CBM missionaries I have drawn pictures detailing life in remote, northeastern Nigeria.”

Ogburn is making the artwork available as note cards and prints. Half of the money earned is pledged to the Nigeria Crisis Fund. Contact Jonathan Ogburn, 584 Oleander Ln., Sylva NC 28779.



Jonathan Ogburn

Jonathan Ogburn

Church land supports charity

In 1954, Hope Church of the Brethren in Freeport, Mich., purchased an 80-acre farm adjacent to the church property. Members of the church, many of whom were farmers, worked the land, sowing and harvesting the crops.

As time went on, there were fewer and fewer farmers in the church, and now the land is rented to one of the

members. His crops are usually corn and soy beans. After his rental expense, taxes, and other expenses are paid, a portion of the profit is set aside for camper scholarships, seminar registrations, and gas money for members who travel to disaster projects. The rest is given to charities that feed the hungry. Recipients have included God’s Kitchen, DeGage Ministries, Heartside

Ministries, and Lakewood Community Council—which are local agencies, and also the Global Food Initiative and Church World Service. No profits are used for operating expenses or maintenance and upkeep of the parsonage or the church building.

In the past few years, the church has realized between \$4,500 and \$5,000 for charity each year. —B. Jean Bergy



Lisa Houff

Worship lifts up Chibok schoolgirls

A service of worship at Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren lifted up the suffering of the schoolgirls abducted from Chibok. This event was prompted by Emmert and Esther Bittinger, who commissioned John Barr to compose a choral work to honor the girls.

The result was “Two Psalms: Captivity and Deliverance” for mixed choir, timpani, congregation, and organ, based on Psalm 137, “Babylon streams received our tears,” and Psalm 27, “The Lord God is my light.” The piece was performed by the Sanctus Choir, conducted by Curtis Nolley, and accompanied by Michael Overman, timpanist, and John Barr, organist.

Peggy Faw Gish gave a presentation about her experience in Nigeria. Annual Conference secretary James Beckwith spoke for children’s worship. A poignant bulletin cover was created from a painting by artist Brian Meyer of First Church of the Brethren in San Diego, Calif., depicting two girls in front of the Chibok School, surrounded by names of the abducted girls.

A recording of the anthem and Gish’s comments can be found at www.bwcob.org.—Shannon Puffenbarger

Hottle Fund promotes community connections

The reach of gifts made to congregations from the Hottle Fund of Northern Ohio District is being felt near and far, and is bearing fruit. Having extra money offers churches new opportunities, and opens new doors in communities.

Several years ago, the district received a very generous bequest from the estate of Dwight Hottle. By action of the district board and district conference, \$2,000 was given to each congregation in 2016.

For a small congregation like Marion Church of the Brethren, the Hottle Fund has allowed the congregation to participate in more outreach into the community. The church is able to offer a free community brunch each month, create school kits for domestic violence and homeless shelters, provide personal kits for a food pantry and blankets for the homeless community dinner, and make consistent donations to Heifer International. The church also has been able to make repairs to its sidewalks and parking lot.

“Ten local acts of kindness” is the goal of New Philadelphia First Church of the Brethren, using money received from the fund. The congregation has been working with T4C to identify families in need in the area. A first gift was used to help a friend of the congregation purchase

a new microscope for work in Kenya. With increasing incidents of cholera, a working microscope is essential to identifying the illness and ensuring proper treatment. The remainder of the money was given to a mission in India.

Brook Park Community Church of the Brethren is using the gifts for general maintenance and repairs to its facilities, including new paint and carpet in the nursery.

Eden Church of the Brethren applied the money toward needed repairs to its buildings. The congregation installed new long-lasting steel roofs on the church, parsonage, and picnic pavilion.

Woodworth Church of the Brethren has been considering maintenance and repair options, such as replacing carpet or replacing the church sign when a road is widened.

Outreach to children is a priority for the East Nimishillen and Akron Springfield congregations. East Nimishillen’s annual Apple Dumpling Fest and Craft Show offer children from the area an introduction to Christ and the true meaning of Christmas. Akron Springfield supported the Back to School Blast program that provides book bags for elementary students and a scholarship fund that allows children to attend camp at Inspiration Hills.

—Staci Williams

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.



“Overall, the world’s favorite Bible verse in 2016 was Romans 8:28: ‘And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.’”

—“The Favorite Bible Verses of 88 Nations,” *Christianity Today*, January 2017.

“And beware the power of Jesus’ name—for hackers. A too-popular [password] choice is ‘jesus,’ or variants.... You want a password to be unguessable.”

—Stephen Smith’s warning not to use john316 or other popular Bible verses as passwords, in *Christianity Today*.

12

Top most-read Bible verses

According to BibleGateway.com—a website offering searchable Bible translations for online reading—the site’s most popular blogpost continues to be a list of the 100 most-read Bible verses. The list was first compiled in 2009 from 25 million Bible passage searches in which visitors to the site looked at three or fewer verses at one time. Here are the top 12 (in the New International Version):

- 1 John 3:16:** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
- 2 Jeremiah 29:11:** “For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”
- 3 Romans 8:28:** “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”
- 4 Philippians 4:13:** “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”
- 5 Genesis 1:1:** “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

6 Proverbs 3:5: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.”

7 Proverbs 3:6: “In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

8 Romans 12:2: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

9 Philippians 4:6: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

10 Matthew 28:19: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

11 Ephesians 2:8: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

12 Galatians 5:22: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.”

Up on a rooftop

The Bible and interpretation

by Steven Schweitzer

The Church of the Brethren has placed scripture at the center of its faith and practice. From the very beginning, individuals gathered together to read the Bible and apply it to their lives in practical ways. We believe that following Jesus faithfully must begin with the Bible, especially the New Testament, in its understanding of Jesus' life, teaching, and death (Annual Conference statement on "The New Testament as Our Rule of Faith and Practice," 1998).

The Gospels and the letters of the New Testament demonstrate how these early Christians tried to make sense of their newfound faith and its practical implications for living with others, both within the church and the wider world. While some things seem rather straightforward, others are more complicated. Even 2 Peter 3:15-16 bluntly states that some things in Paul's letters are "hard to understand." (Can I get an "amen"?)

We recognize that the Bible requires interpretation. Most of us read it in translation (English, Spanish, or some other modern language) rather than in its original languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. There is always

interpretation in moving from one language to another.

Even if we read it in the original languages, we must make interpretive decisions about the meaning of words and concepts from the ancient setting into our own. All translation is interpretation. Whether the languages are ancient or modern, as readers of God's Word we are constantly interpreting as we move from ancient texts written millennia ago to individuals and communities in very different cultural contexts than our own. How can we successfully bridge this gap between us and them, so that we may follow Jesus faithfully?

There are a number of productive approaches that we may use, and I want to highlight a few, beginning with an example from Deuteronomy.

"When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof; otherwise you might have blood-guilt on your house, if anyone should fall from it" (Deuteronomy 22:8).

In courses that I teach I often use this verse, buried in seemingly endless laws, to begin discussion of the relevance of the Old Testament for Christians. This verse is part of a larger section of miscellaneous laws in Deuteronomy 21-22



THE PRINCIPLE BEHIND THIS SEEMINGLY MUNDANE COMMAND FITS WELL WITH THE ACTIONS AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS. . . WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT ARCHITECTURE COULD BE THEOLOGICAL?

covering issues of stray domesticated livestock, clothing, crops, and sexual relationships. This section cannot simply be ignored by Christians, as is often done with regulations in the law involving animal sacrifice, ritual, or ceremony (understood in the New Testament to be unnecessary now in light of Christ's death) and its restrictions about food laws (understood to be no longer binding on Christians according to several New Testament passages). There is no overt reason to dismiss this law as irrelevant. So, how should we understand it?

First, we should try to understand the words being used in the verse itself. The Hebrew word *ma'akeh* is translated here as "parapet" (NRSV, NIV, NASB, ESV), "railing," (NLT), and "battlement" (KJV). It comes from a Hebrew root meaning "pressure" and this is the only place the word is used in the Old Testament.

So, a good first question after consulting multiple translations and a Hebrew dictionary: "What is a parapet?" Wikipedia (the "source of all knowledge," as I joke with my students) states: "A parapet is a barrier which is an extension of the wall at the edge of a roof, terrace, balcony, walkway or other structure." Dictionary.com states: "any

low protective wall or barrier at the edge of a balcony, roof, bridge, or the like."

The second question: "So, why do I need one on my roof, especially since no one is ever up there?" The answer comes from ancient Israelite architecture: Homes were constructed with flat roofs that were covered by a canopy intended as extra living space (see Judges 16:27; 2 Samuel 11:2, 16:22; Acts 10:9), especially with the first floor of the house including space for animals. This wall prevented someone from falling off the flat usable space, and thereby being injured or killed when hitting the ground below. This design was common throughout ancient Near East cultures.

This historical and cultural knowledge reveals a humanitarian principle: People must maintain their property in such a way as to prevent someone else from getting hurt. In our contemporary society, many communities have a similar ordinance requiring swimming pools to be surrounded by a fence to prevent accidental drowning. However, at least in North America, we do not have stipulations requiring parapets or short walls on rooftops. Why? Because we don't typically have flat roofs used in this way. Our culture and biblical culture are not the same when it comes to architecture.

A third question: "Should Christians observe this command?" Or put directly, "Should Christians build parapets on their roofs?" I would say "no." This command about parapets is a culturally conditioned regulation.

However, the reason for the law is worth pondering: humanitarian concern for another's wellbeing (or, their *shalom*). So, if we are to be faithful to this command, we shouldn't build a parapet on our roofs (simply doing what the text seems to require, and rather clearly). Instead, the command requires us to live in ways that promote the well-



SHOULD CHRISTIANS BUILD PARAPETS ON THEIR ROOFS? I WOULD SAY NO.

being of others or work against their harm. This is also consistent with the commands to assist wandering livestock to prevent them from being hurt in preceding verses (Deuteronomy 22:1-4).

The command is culturally specific, but the principle is timeless. Our responsibility to be aware of how our actions and lives affect others is also consistent with Jesus' teachings. The principle behind this seemingly mundane command fits well with the actions and teachings of Jesus, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, a text that Brethren have traditionally prioritized within the Gospels themselves. Who would have thought that architecture could be theological?

This example from Deuteronomy illustrates several of the productive means of interpreting the Bible.

First, we *read the text*, taking seriously what it says and trying to understand the actual words being used. We *identified terms in the text we did not understand or might want to understand more fully*, especially as it might affect how we interpret the command. We looked at definitions and occurrences in other parts of the Old Testament and used comparative evidence from other cultures to give ourselves some context.

Second, in addition to linguistics, we looked to *historical context* (architecture in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East) for additional information. We noted some instances in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) that reflect a similar understanding (that is, people using flat roofs).

Third, we noticed the *literary context* of this verse, placing it within a larger set of laws on various topics and recognizing the similarity in purpose to some of them. Both the historical and the literary contexts allowed us to see a *larger principle* at work beyond the specific command.

Fourth, we looked for *connections to other parts of scripture*, particularly the life and teachings of Jesus, that might aid us in interpretation. With all these things in mind, we made *theological claims* about this command, about how it both is and is not relevant for Christians, especially those living in places without flat roofs such as North America, today. We concluded that the principle behind the stipula-

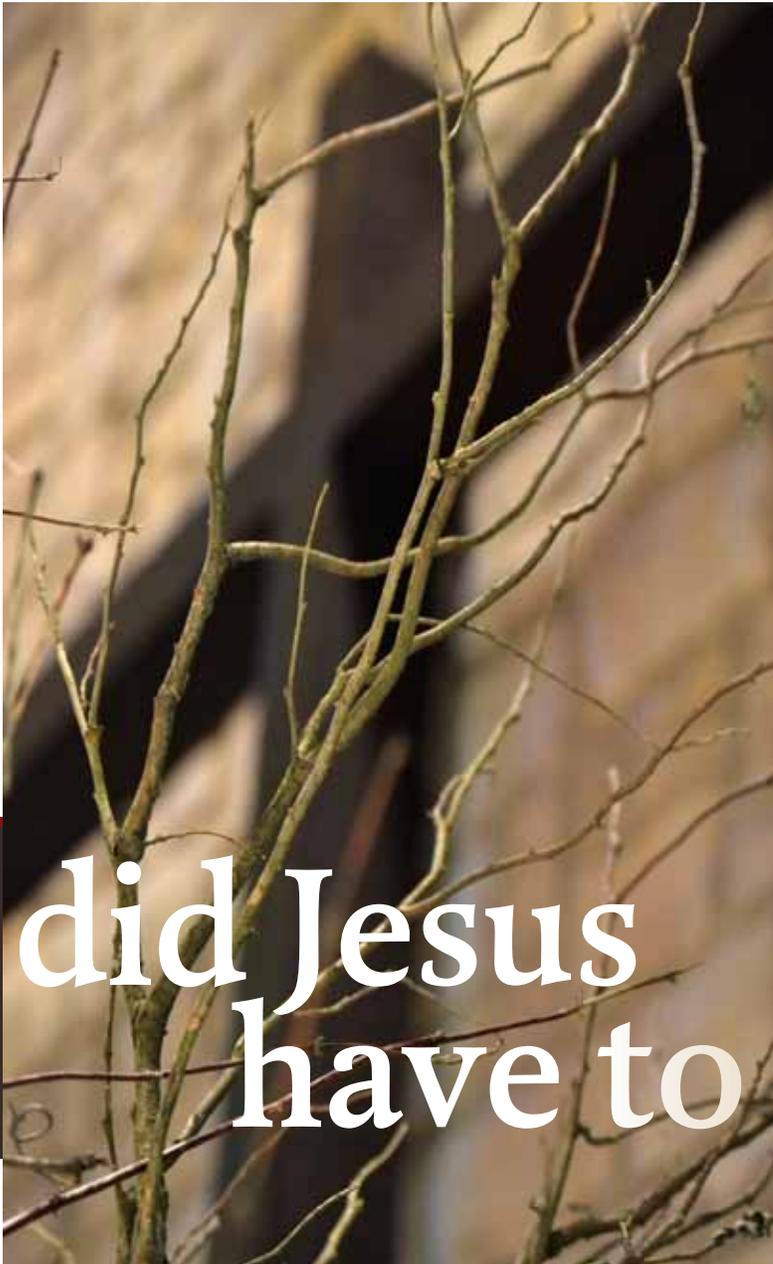
tion transcends this specific manifestation.

This is a simple (and not controversial, I hope) example, but it illustrates many of the approaches to interpretation that we may use productively in attempting to understand more difficult or controversial topics and texts. Situating the biblical text in its ancient context, both historical and literary, is extremely beneficial in helping to understand its meaning for its ancient audience and also for contemporary readers. While knowing Hebrew and Greek is certainly helpful in reading the biblical texts, comparing multiple English (or Spanish, or other) translations can be a useful approach to understand the many possible ways of representing them in modern languages.

When we encounter things in the Bible that we do not fully comprehend or that pose questions, we should engage in the hard work of trying to make sense of such complexities or ambiguities and to answer the questions being raised. We must not shy away from asking hard questions of the Bible and of our faith. We should also not be afraid of the answers that we find, even when they challenge our preconceived ideas and require us to adapt to new information discovered as a result of the good work of interpretation. This does not change the Bible, but it changes our understanding of it, and in the process we may be transformed.

Annual Conference statements from 1979 ("Biblical Inspiration and Authority") and 1998 ("The New Testament as Our Rule of Faith and Practice") both emphasize the value of historical and literary approaches to interpreting the Bible, while recognizing the limits of such methods. Our goals are to understand the inspired Word of God and to gain insight in applying it to our lives, so that we may follow Jesus faithfully as a result. As we practice biblical interpretation together, I hope that we may be drawn closer to God and to one another rather than farther apart. 

Steven Schweitzer is academic dean and professor at Bethany Theological Seminary. He has provided leadership for Bible studies at recent Annual Conferences and spoken at district and continuing education events across the denomination. He and his family attend Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren in Southern Ohio District.



Why did Jesus have to die?

Nonviolent atonement and restorative justice

by J. Denny Weaver

Why did Jesus have to die?" For centuries the church has used several different concepts to answer this question, which underlies what we call "atonement." But these concepts are problematic for peace churches, at least in part because they are answering the wrong question.

It might be surprising that the most well-known answer to this wrong question comes from a form of government abandoned centuries ago, although a remnant still influences our society. That well-known answer is that Jesus died in order to satisfy a debt owed to God by sinful humanity, that is, to satisfy the penalty of death demanded by God's law. This concept is called "satisfaction" atonement.

The first full version of this concept appeared in the book *Why the God-Man*, published in 1098 by Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The society Anselm knew was structured by feudalism and ruled by a feudal lord. In this system, when an underling offended the lord, stability of the social order depended on the ability of the ruler either to punish the offender or to require satisfaction.

In visualizing Jesus' death as a debt payment to God, it is obvious that Anselm imagined God in the role of the ultimate feudal lord. Anselm believed that human sin had disturbed the order of God's universe. To restore order in creation, God needed either to punish sinners or to receive satisfaction. Consequently, God sent Jesus as the God-Man so that his

infinite death could bear humankind's punishment and, on our behalf, supply the satisfaction God required.

In this understanding of the atonement, the act of God prompts difficult questions like this one that a 5-year-old asked his mother after Sunday school: "Parents would never put their child to death on a cross, right?"

We can find the better question and its answer in the New Testament. When we read the story of Jesus in the Gospels, we realize that it says nothing about his death satisfying a debt owed to God or paying a penalty required by God's law. Further, the satisfaction concept deals only with Jesus' death. It does not mention his life, and ignores entirely the resurrection, the real climax of the story of Jesus. Lastly, it features a vengeful God, who has Jesus killed to satisfy God's own justice. This is a violent God for whom justice depends on violence and punishment.

These images should disturb peace church people for several reasons. Let me explain.

In the Gospels, we see that Jesus' life, his actions and his teaching, made present the reign of God. He healed on the Sabbath to show how it was being misused, challenged racism

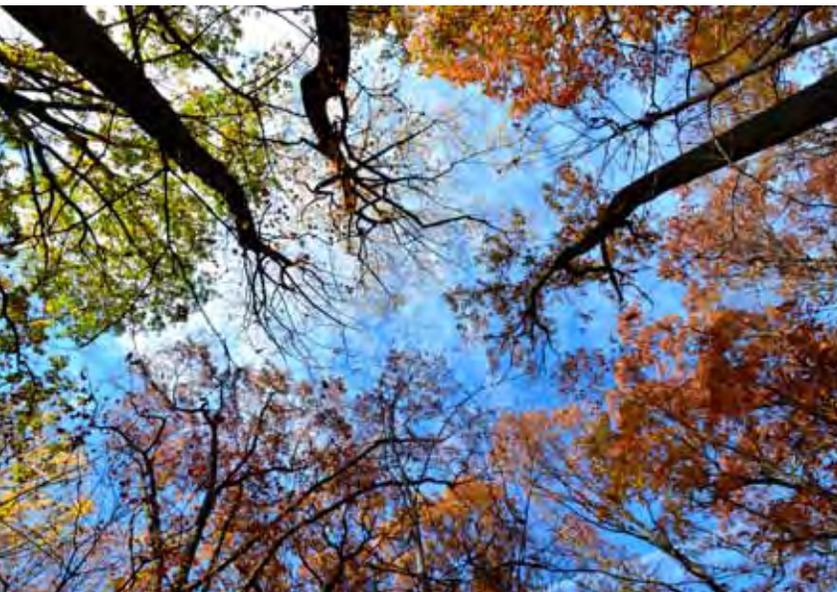
against Samaritans, and raised the status of women. These actions challenged the legitimacy of the religious authorities. If people learned from Jesus to approach God directly and find forgiveness, that would threaten the authority of the religious leadership and the system of temple sacrifices they administered. They developed a plot to have him killed. Evil powers, represented by the religious leadership in Jerusalem and above all by the Roman Empire, put him to death on a cross. But after three days, God raised him from the dead.

This brief outline of the life of Jesus presents the story as one in which the powers of evil are confronted by Jesus' life and defeated by the resurrection. When we accept Jesus and live in his story, we participate in the salvation that comes with his resurrection. Rather than asking only why he died, the real question about Jesus is, "How do Jesus' life, teaching, death, and resurrection save?" He saves by living a life that makes God's reign present, and his resurrection invites us to accept Jesus—and thus to join life in the reign of God, both now and after we die.

In classic language, the atonement image that features victory over evil and Satan through resurrection is called "Christus Victor," which means Christ the Victor. In the early church, Christus Victor described a confrontation in the cosmos between God and Satan. However, I like to bring the confrontation down to earth. On one side I picture Jesus, who represents the reign of God, and on the other side Rome and the religious leadership, who represent the powers of evil. Because my version uses the story of Jesus, I call it *narrative* Christus Victor.

Think about the action of God in this way of looking at the atonement. God does not require death. On the contrary, God acts to restore Jesus' life. From the perspective of God's action, narrative Christus Victor is a nonviolent atonement image. Humans performed the evil that killed Jesus and God acted to restore his life. Restoring life stands in sharp contrast to the role of God in satisfaction atonement, where God needed a death and sent Jesus to be killed for the death required by God.

To make clear the nonviolent role of God, I call this



shutterstock.com / Steven Pizano

THIS NONVIOLENT GOD WAITS LOVINGLY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE TO RETURN. THIS IS THE IMAGE OF NONVIOLENT ATONEMENT. THIS IS GOD'S RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.



EVEN BEFORE THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN, THE FATHER IS WAITING WITH OPEN ARMS. HE WELCOMES THE CHANGED SON WITH A FORGIVENESS WITHOUT PUNISHMENT.

“nonviolent atonement.” It is a concept that features salvation without violence by God. With this understanding, the resurrection invites people to join in the reign of God with Jesus as its Lord.

Feudalism has long disappeared, but the atonement image based on feudalism is still common. And the idea of satisfaction is alive and well under another name in the criminal justice system, in which the state has replaced the feudal lord as the one who punishes or demands satisfaction. Crimes are said to be against society or the state, and it is the state that punishes. At whatever level the trial occurs, from local to federal, the prosecuting attorney represents the state. The idea of satisfaction is clearly visible in the expectation that one who commits a crime must pay his or her debt to society. Justice is said to be done when punishment has been handed out. This form of justice is called retributive justice, in that the punishment is retribution for the crime committed against the state.

With retributive justice, nothing is done for the victim of the crime. Nothing is done to restore a broken relationship or to restore harm done. Even when a fine is levied, it goes to the state and not to the victim of the crime.

The alternative to retributive justice is **restorative justice**, which seeks to reconcile victims and offenders. It does not pursue punishment of an offender apart from the victim. Rather, restorative justice focuses on both. It stresses the needs of the victim and the rehabilitation of the offender. As much as possible, the offender brings about restoration. Restorative justice is not a way to let offenders off easy. It clearly calls offenders to be responsible for their offenses, while also focusing on the needs of victims.

Restorative justice echoes the story of Jesus. When he heals, he pronounces forgiveness of sins without punishment (Luke 5:19). He does not punish the woman caught in adul-

tery, but tells her, “Go your way, and from now on do not sin again” (John 8:11). He does not punish Zacchaeus’ dishonesty. Instead, his welcome moves Zacchaeus to repay four times the amount of money that he gained illegally (Luke 19:8).

Restorative justice corresponds to nonviolent atonement. Sinners are reconciled to God when they accept the invitation offered by the resurrection to join in the reign of God. Joining is actually taking up a new way of life, modeled on the life of Jesus. There is no punishment involved but, as with Zacchaeus, people who join the reign of God will want to restore wholeness and undo the harm of wrongs committed.

There is also a practical reason for supporting restorative justice: It is more effective than retributive justice. Restorative justice has been practiced at all levels, from justice circles in schools to programs under the jurisdiction of a judge in criminal court. Multiple research studies show that there are significantly fewer repeat offenders when restorative justice is applied rather than merely seeking punishment.

The entire discussion of nonviolent atonement, restorative justice, and the image of God is demonstrated in the parable of the prodigal son. The father represents God, and the prodigal son stands in for sinful humankind. After wasting his inheritance, the son decides to return and offer to work as a hired hand. This is repentance and taking on a new life. But the father does not seek punishment. Instead, even before the prodigal’s return, the father is waiting with open arms. He welcomes the changed son with a forgiveness without punishment.

This nonviolent God waits lovingly for God’s people to return. This is the image of nonviolent atonement. This is God’s restorative justice. 

J. Denny Weaver is professor emeritus of religion at Bluffton (Ohio) University. Among his several books are *The Nonviolent Atonement, 2nd revised and expanded edition* (Eerdmans, 2011); *The Nonviolent God* (Eerdmans, 2013); and a popular version *God Without Violence: Following a Nonviolent God in a Violent World* (Cascade Books, 2016).



Salvation is like a seashore journey

by Doris Cline Egge

There is an island in South Carolina that has been a favorite vacation spot for our family for many years. The beach that borders the Atlantic Ocean is not the prettiest nor smoothest beach ever, but for us it has a precious distinction. It offers up each year interesting things such as sand dollars, sharks' teeth, sea shells, fossils, and always the possibility of something we have never discovered before.

The beach ambles along a state park, a number of vacation condominiums, and some million-dollar homes, but since the island is more than 50 percent conservancy there are no huge developments, nor gated communities; the island is still pristine. We think it is God's country.

As we set out to walk the beach, our destination is a cove a couple of miles along the sandy beach, not always the easiest walking. On arrival, some streams converge. At low tide you often can step across the shallow water. When the tide is high one has to swim or wade across. On the other side there is an extension of sandy beach. Beyond that is private property, so when we get to the cove we have reached our destination.

In almost 30 years I have arrived only three times. Members of the family have reached the goal more often. Now I walk with difficulty, and I ask my children each time they

return, "Did you go the distance?"

I ask the question because I understand what can happen. A storm may come up. People along the way may distract you. You may leave the direct path to dig for treasure buried in the sand or stop to watch the dolphins jump and play in the water. Sea gulls, clouds, and distant shrimp boats attract your attention, and your commitment to reach your goal is abandoned for another day.

Salvation is like that seashore journey. We have no guarantees that we will stay on course regardless of our determination to do so. Distractions are all around us. Paul says in Romans 7, "*I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand.*"

I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it. I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly it's predictable.

It is this predictability that Jesus talks about in Matthew 25. Even the elect, he says, will be swayed by false prophets and lose their way. We become so mesmerized by sin we



OUR FOCUS IS THAT GOD IS WORTHY OF A LIFETIME OF OBEDIENCE AND SERVICE FROM US BECAUSE GOD IS GOD.

may not be aware when our sheep skin turns to goat hide.

We can aspire to salvation, but we can never claim it. Many will be surprised, Jesus says, and God will be our judge. We haven't arrived until we have gone the distance. The good news is that we are on the journey together.

Dick Gottshall, retired Church of the Brethren pastor, told this story one Sunday when he preached at the Williamson Road church:

A woman was invited to a banquet at which she was to receive an award. She was deeply troubled. She was a recovering alcoholic, and she knew alcohol would be served. Might she risk her new job, her career even, if she attended and lacked the will to resist a cocktail? The very thought of what might occur distressed her for days, but she had to attend.

As she was ushered to her place at the table she saw immediately that the cocktail was there right in front of her. She became so emotionally distraught she knew that she would have to leave the room. Her state was such that she could hardly rise from her chair as she excused herself.

She found no solace in the restroom. Finally, she remembered the counselor in her recovery program who told her, "You may at times just have to get down on your knees and pray." So she did, and eventually, at peace, she returned to her table. She was relieved to find the cocktail was no longer in front of her. She was sure God was at work in her life.



Flickr.com/Vassila London

Vernard Eller, a long-time professor at the University of La Verne in California, said, "We dare not be dogmatic about what God will do." God has a plan not completely revealed to us. Some bases of that plan might be:

God never stops loving us, so the fiery furnace is out for many Christians. No loving parent would punish a child by burning even one finger, much less throw him in a furnace to burn forever.

In God's time all people will be restored to God, no matter how sinful they were in life, and God will take it from there. Alexander Mack Sr. believed in and defined universal restoration for us in the Church of the Brethren.

Since it does matter how we behave, we will be held accountable in God's own way.

Our central focus as members of the faith community is not to claim salvation as a reward or something we have earned. Rather we might say our focus is that God is worthy of a lifetime of obedience and service from us because God is God.

The reality of life after death is not in doubt, but the details aren't at all clear. Our time is better spent contemplating issues in which our involvement matters, like peace and justice. We commit to go the distance until we reach the cove. 

Doris Cline Egge is a retired educator with 60 years of teaching experience, who wrapped up her career as a psychotherapist in private practice. She has served on the former General Board of the Church of the Brethren, chairing the General Services Commission, and on the denomination's Standing Com-



Stan Dueck (left) with Craig Smith and Samuel Sarpiya.

A vital conversation

by Walt Wiltschek

Stan Dueck grew up in the Mennonite Brethren Church in central California before finding his way to the Church of the Brethren. Now director of transforming practices for the Church of the Brethren, he has a passion for helping congregations realize their potential. He was instrumental in creating the Vital Ministry Journey (VMJ) for congregations seeking renewal. Recently he sat down with Walt Wiltschek to talk about congregational revitalization efforts that excite him—and offer continued hope for the church.

What sparked your interest in this field?

When I was in college, a professor said, “You’re a member at Zion Mennonite Brethren Church, aren’t you? Are those five men still running the church?” He had done his master’s thesis on that congregation. Those things spark an interest in how churches function, looking at the systems dynamic and the family relational systems that are alive and well in Mennonite and Church of the Brethren cultures.

When [my wife] Julie and I got married, we went to a congregation that had gone through a devastating split and decline. They hired a missionary who had a PhD in an-

thropology, and he helped rebuild the congregation from 30-some people to 150. It grew steadily and planted four churches. It confirmed for me the capacity of congregations is much greater than we imagine it to be.

We limit ourselves. We put ourselves in boxes, and we put our congregations in boxes, especially if they’re family churches. We have a hard time separating the values of our core families from the values of the church.

Those events were significant in sparking my interest. Since then I’ve had training in congregational development and my interest in organizational management and systems has been part of it.

Where did the idea for Vital Ministry Journey originate?

It started out of a conversation with Dave Steele [now general secretary of the Church of the Brethren], when he was district executive of Middle Pennsylvania, about a different approach to congregational vitality. But the first congregation that used VMJ was Newport, in Shenandoah District. Duane Painter, the pastor, was a leader in the

church at the time. The draft proposal was still on sheets of paper when I got a call.

Duane said, “We’re going through some changes.”

I said, “Hey, do you want to try something new?”

Many said, “This will never work,” but 60 percent of their church participated in small groups. Just as many showed up for the follow-up gathering. They had involved kids down to middle school, and we had a “Keys to Congregational Vitality” session with lots of conversation. They talked about where they were going, what their future was—it was very encouraging for them and me as well.

After that, Duane asked the leadership to follow through on key themes. They had people who would sit at the back of the congregation. Some leaders became intentional about connecting with these people. That hospitality and friendship resulted in people bringing their friends. Both men’s and women’s groups were doing creative and energizing ministries for the church and community, and in a matter of time they were growing and started new outreach ministries. So they had some immediate success, and Duane became a real advocate for Vital Ministry Journey.

It’s taken on its own life. Over a hundred congregations have participated in some form, everything from small-group gatherings, to listening/focus groups built around key questions, to interviews, to community forums. It’s more successful than I anticipated. It’s also been much more organic—which I think is very Anabaptist/Pietist—than I anticipated.

How would you define “vitality”?

To me vitality is a congregation that finds its spirit and voice in a way that brings out that God-giving life presence within the congregation, and it flows out to the community. Vitality is significantly tapped when they, in a deep spiritual way, connect to the Spirit of God. It changes the motivation to “what we’re called to do.”

When that sense of call is not our driving motivation, I don’t think we have vital congregations. And you see changes happen in congregations that become more aware of their community and needs. They make changes out of the sense that this is how we can best do ministry with the gifts we have. It’s a sense of who we are, but also a sense of God calling us in living beyond who we think we are, as well.

What leads congregations to look at this issue?

Some are at that point because of a change or a conflict, or they see themselves in a rut. It can be a change in pastoral ministry, or significant loss in terms of membership—maybe now we’re an older church feeling hopeless because typically growing churches have young families. But that’s a myth. According to the US Study of Congregational Life, two out of five growing congregations do not have a high level of children and youth involvement, and two out of five growing congregations are pastored by women. We live our life as congregations shaped by assumptions, and so part of this is conversations challenging assumptions about what it means to be the church.

What are some of the tools you use?

The core construct is built on reading scripture as a community, the model of Appreciative Inquiry, and work done by Richard Boyatzis, Anthony Jack, and Ann Weems on how people respond to change. Some people call it Appreciative Way. There’s a related model, SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results), helping congregations discern a spiritual strategic plan. Philosophically they connect well with the Church of the Brethren and our Anabaptist/Pietist sense.

Out of our theological framework there is a sense that by a really empowering presence of God’s Spirit we as Christians have the capacity to do incredible things. How can we build upon the strengths of who we are? How can this process challenge us to think about our strengths? How might we use them in new ways? How might we dream about being the church in more healthy, vital ways?

What difference does the Anabaptist/Pietist lens make in this process?

This is intentionally about involving and engaging the community. That’s why the small groups are so important. It’s much easier to change if you trust somebody. It’s much more difficult if there’s that reactionary fear—what am I going to lose out of this change? Or what do I need to fight against in this change?

Building those relationships and having conversations in safe places is important. Out of those small groups, trust begins to surface and build. You can build a dynamic from

VITALITY IS SIGNIFICANTLY TAPPED WHEN THEY, IN A DEEP SPIRITUAL WAY, CONNECT TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD. IT CHANGES THE MOTIVATION TO “WHAT WE’RE CALLED TO DO.”



Cheryl Bumbaugh-Cayford

Stan Dueck with keynote speaker Mandy Smith at the most recent New Church Planting Conference.

there that can create the change in positive directions for a congregation versus somebody saying, “This is what you need to do.” If they begin to sense it themselves, then they’re open to it.

How long does it take a congregation to move through this journey?

It’s not intended to end, just as our discipleship is an ongoing process. We want congregations to see themselves on a vital ministry journey of discernment and discipleship. So it’s an ongoing process—not just, “We’ll do this thing for six or twelve months,” and it comes to the end and we say, “OK, we checked this off.”

Congregations have done multiple small groups, surveys, retreats, follow-up processes, and other things. It’s not one-size-fits-all. Some congregations are producing materials, creating resources out of their experiences. It’s evolving as an organic process that lives out of the vision of what it means to be the Church of the Brethren.

How do you know it’s been successful?

There are always going to be churches where it doesn’t click. But are leaders beginning to help the congregation wrestle with assumptions, ask different questions, and implement ministries that move them into the community?

A congregation in Maryland went through the process. The question that kept coming up was: Did the church make the right decision 30 or 40 years ago by staying in its current location? Had God called them to be there, and what did that mean for them as a church? Part of that was this feeling that they were indeed to be there. It had an impact on their call of pastoral leadership. If the church

is committed to staying, then what might it mean for the type of leadership they need, what they are able to do as pastoral leaders?

Another congregation has done creative things and built ministries that have reached out into the community. From that the congregation has grown by 30 percent over the last few years.

Is there a deepening spirituality within the congregation? Is there growing hospitality, not just to each other but how does that extend out in mission? Is there a sense of multiplication: “Are we here to multiply disciples? What does that mean in terms of who we are and how we function?” Are small groups or other ways that people relate to each other multiplying? You see that people want to be together, enter relationships and friendships, draw closer, mature in their own spiritual walk but do it with others, as well. Those are signs of multiplication that I’m looking for.

You’re trying to help the congregation build new habits and practices—saying you’ll change is easy, but actually doing it is difficult. You start by changing some of the patterns and practices, and that begins to reshape the thinking, and then the thinking reshapes the values, beliefs, and culture so that it becomes internalized.

What else should people know?

We don’t want congregations to do Vital Ministry Journey just to do it, but to go into it with the idea of: “What is the critical question or key outcome that we want to realize as a church and that we sense God calling us to live into at this time?” I think that’s important to stress—at *this time*. It’s not a once-and-done deal, but God is continually calling us to be and to do something. You don’t need 100 percent approval. You just need a critical mass of people who have the capacity to move the congregation into a positive direction.

How do we call people out and use their gifts in service for both the church and the world, as living instruments of God’s kingdom? We want people ultimately to see themselves in that disciple-forming cycle of gathering, calling, forming, and sending. 

Walt Wiltschek, a former editor of MESSENGER, is news editor for the Mennonite Church USA.

WE WANT CONGREGATIONS TO SEE THEMSELVES ON A VITAL MINISTRY JOURNEY OF DISCERNMENT AND DISCIPLESHIP. SO IT’S AN ONGOING PROCESS.

On the subject of quality and perfection

During the years of my employment, I worked for a pharmaceutical firm where my responsibilities were concerned with quality assurance. One was the development of training programs for operating-level employees on the subject of product quality and how one could contribute to quality products.



ERNIE BARR

In the course of discussion with a group of my associates on the subject of product quality, the name of a prominent writer on the subject was mentioned. He had recently published a paper in which he described a quality product as one “fit for use.”

For example, if one were to ask, “Which is the better quality car, the Volkswagon bug or a Cadillac?” one would immediately answer, “The Cadillac, of course.”

But another person could ask, “What purpose is the car to serve?” If simplicity, reliability, and low-cost transportation were important, the answer might likely be the VW. On the other hand, if it was intended that the owner of the vehicle ride in ultimate comfort, make an impression, and arrive in style, the Cadillac would clearly be the choice. It would all depend on what use the vehicle was intended to satisfy—which car would be more “fit for use”?

When one applies this definition of quality to pharmaceuticals, one must realize that not every tablet coming off the manufacturing lines will be perfect in containing the exact amount of active ingredient stated on the label. Some tablets will contain more and some less. Chemical analysis provides the information to control that variation and keep it within effective limits. The manufacturer may then assure the user of product quality—of “fitness for use.”

From my teenage years I had been deeply troubled by

the passage in Matthew 5:48 where Jesus is quoted as saying, “You therefore must be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect.” I knew I wasn’t perfect but the commandment seemed to be so absolute!

Years later, in *Barclay’s Daily Bible Study Series*, I learned that the original Greek word *teleios* is translated as “perfect” in seven translations. Barclay goes on to say that an animal which is fit for use as a sacrifice to God is one without blemish—it is *teleios*.

Suppose in my house there is a screw loose, and I want to tighten and adjust this screw. I go out to the ironmonger and I buy a screwdriver. I find that the screwdriver exactly fits the grip of my hand; it is neither too large nor too small, too rough nor too smooth. I lay the screwdriver on the slot of the screw and I find that it exactly fits. I then turn the screw and the screw is fixed. In the Greek sense, and especially in the New Testament sense, that screwdriver is *teleios*, because it exactly fulfilled the purpose for which I desired and bought it. So then a man will be *teleios* if he fulfills the purpose for which he was created.

Whether the screwdriver has a scarred handle or the shaft is a bit rusty or slightly bent is not important. A tool that serves the purpose for which it was made is “perfect” in the New Testament sense.

FROM MY TEENAGE YEARS I HAD BEEN DEEPLY TROUBLED BY THE PASSAGE IN MATTHEW 5:48.

What a relief I felt as I realized that I could be *teleios* without being “perfect”! My responsibility, then was to become useful—to become fit for use in the Kingdom of God. 

Ernie Barr is retired from his work in the pharmaceutical industry, and lives in North Manchester, Ind. He was on the former General Board of the Church of the Brethren from 1990 to 1995, and chaired the board in 1995.

From a tithe, a new church grows

by Ellen K. Layman

What happens if a truck driver opens his lunchbox, pulls out the real estate advertisement he had tucked in there, and begins to pray?

If the truck driver is Terry Jewell, pastor of Knight's Chapel Church of the Brethren in Barboursville, Va., what unfolds is a fast-paced business transaction (and spiritual affirmation) that results in the opening of a new preaching point for the Church of the Brethren in the Shenandoah District.

On Nov. 20, 119 people attended the inaugural Church of the Brethren worship at Gordonsville Chapel, a church plant sponsored by Knight's Chapel. Attendance has remained strong at Gordonsville and is averaging about 110 between the two locations only seven miles apart. Pastor Jewell preaches at both every Sunday.

The fast pace of purchasing the church on the Main Street of Gordonsville, a railroad town steeped in Civil War history, contrasted with the step-by-step faith Knight's Chapel had demonstrated. Seven or eight years ago, Jewell had asked the congregation to consider something another pastor had raised with him: If churches encourage individuals to



Knight's Chapel in Barboursville, Va., is "a large church in a small building."

tithe, why don't congregations tithe?

Knight's Chapel accepted the challenge, setting aside 10 percent of its offerings to invest in ministries to further the kingdom of God. The congregation faced some physical limitations: A very small building on a no-space-to-spare lot hemmed in by two graveyards left no room for expansion. The Sunday school building was a storage shed often crowded to the point of having children sitting on the floor. There was no running water and no indoor facilities. But, Jewell relates, the building is "beautiful."

The congregation was growing

to the point that two Sunday morning services were needed to accommodate the crowd. He credits the growth to the congregation's focus on salvation and a vibrant prayer life. "We have strong revivals. You might say we're retro: What doesn't work at other places still works here."

About the time Knight's Chapel was committing itself to tithing, a church building on Main Street was being vacated. Built in 1853, it is the oldest existing building in Gordonsville and had been home to the Gordonsville Christian Church, affiliated with the Disciples of Christ. That congregation was aging and declining in attendance; the decision to close came about seven years ago.

After last spring's revival at Knight's Chapel, a parishioner showed Jewell an advertisement for the Gordonsville building. The price, once listed at about \$230,000, was now \$149,000.

The pace picked up.

On a Thursday, he tucked the ad in his lunchbox. As he ate, he prayed: "God, what do we do with this?" The answer he heard was, "Call the real estate lady."

He did and set up a Saturday appointment to take his wife to inspect the building. Because of a chance en-

KNIGHT'S CHAPEL ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE, SETTING ASIDE 10 PERCENT OF ITS OFFERINGS TO INVEST IN MINISTRIES TO FURTHER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.



Berry Jewell

The first worship service at Gordonsville Chapel attracted 119 people, and attendance has remained strong.

counter with someone who saw them with the real estate agent, Jewell knew he had to tell his congregation on Sunday that he was looking at the vacant Gordonsville building.

Good thing he did, because on Monday about 12:30 p.m. he learned that someone was about to make an offer on the building. The real estate agent advised him to get an inspection, estimate what repairs were needed, deduct that from the asking price, and make an offer.

But it was a really busy day at work. Perhaps hesitantly, he asked his boss if he could take the afternoon off. Not only did his boss agree, he offered to drive Jewell to the meeting with the agent and two contractors. Although the building was in great shape, some repairs were needed. The contractors suggested offering \$110,000.

By mid-afternoon, Knight's Chapel's three trustees had joined the discussion, all agreeing that at their present location they were "a large church in a small building."

As he and the real estate agent had done each time they met, they

prayed, with Jewell declaring his desire that the building would remain a house of worship.

When it came time to make an offer, Jewell was almost apologetic. "We'll offer \$110,000 for the property and furnishings," he recalls telling the agent. "I know it's worth more, but \$110,000 is what we have."

The agent advised that the negotiation might take a few months. Later that day, however, she called to say the offer had been accepted. Jewell believes that "if you follow biblical principles" in your dealings with people, the end result will be the right one.

The Knight's Chapel congregation pitched in to make the needed repairs. The hum of activity in the once-vacant building attracted the attention of passers-by, some of whom accepted the invitation to come inside and see what was happening. Gordonsville Chapel has a lot of the amenities Knight's Chapel lacks—a larger building with classrooms and indoor plumbing, Main Street visibility, and parking.

At the first morning worship service, on Nov. 20, the realization of the dream came with an added personal touch for Jewell. Greetings from the district were brought by Charles Simmons, who had been Jewell's mentor for the Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM) program. "He's got sweat equity in it here" because of that relationship, notes Jewell, and he "is familiar with the struggles of small churches."

District executive minister John Jantzi sees the benefits of having another preaching point in Orange County. Not only does it "extend witness to an area not formerly served," but it also provides opportunity for leadership development.

As the two congregations grow, he notes, more people will be growing in leadership. Jewell likens the growth to a "runaway horse, and we want to go with it."

"Small churches are sometimes limited, but God's going to show us the way. We're learning." 

Ellen K. Layman is communications assistant for the Church of the Brethren's Shenandoah District.

A recipe of hope and encouragement

Brian D. McLaren has written another book that challenges Christians, particularly those of us in American churches, to migrate beyond the usual way of doing things. The three sections of *The Great Spiritual Migration* give counsel on how we can move 1) “from a system of beliefs to a way of life,” 2) “from a violent God of domination to a nonviolent God of liberation,” and 3) “from an organized church to an organizing church.”



KEN GIBBLE

McLaren draws on his own spiritual journey, starting with his experience as an enthusiastic young Christian to his years as a pastor and finally to his current vocation as a writer and activist in church renewal. In the face of declining church membership in our country, he offers a recipe of

hope and encouragement to Christians who are willing to embrace migration toward a better way to be followers of Jesus and “a better way to be human.”

Of special interest to those of us in the “non-creedal” Brethren fold is McLaren’s critique of a church history that has, for centuries, emphasized the necessity for its members to hold “correct beliefs.” He reminds us that Jesus did *not* say, “This is my commandment, that you believe the right doctrines.” His “new commandment” was “to love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). McLaren urges us to speak of confessions of love, rather than confessions of faith, beginning with “We love . . .” instead of “We believe. . .”

What makes McLaren’s writing so appealing to those of us involved in the life of our congregations is his practical counsel for both worship and Christian service. A good example of the former is his 10 simple, creative suggestions for rituals such as music, prayers, and even the receiving of offerings.

In Part II, the author traces the violence in which the

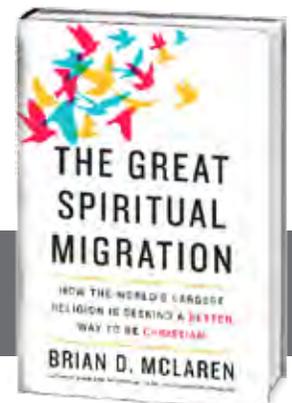
church has participated ever since Constantine declared Christianity to become the religion of the state. Sadly, it has too often been a history of a “warrior” religion. Even today, McLaren notes, there are many Christians who believe that it is all right to kill people of other religions in the name of Jesus because they can “justify it with a chapter and verse of the Bible.”

Calling us to move beyond a either a “literal” or a “liberal” reading of the Bible, McLaren argues for an “integral” approach to our understanding of scripture and the Holy One to which the Bible points. He takes his cue from the life and teachings of Jesus, who deconstructs the concept of a wrathful, violent Supreme Being and “reveals a generous God, a God whose power is manifest in gentleness, kindness, and love.”

In the final section of the book, “The Missional Migration,” McLaren describes an emerging approach to religious life, one that emphasizes cooperation rather than competition, including working side by side with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and those who are not affiliated with a particular religion. He has become convinced that the Holy Spirit has brought humanity to the point where, for the first time in history, we must “receive the differing gifts each tradition offers.”

The Great Spiritual Migration is an excellent resource for a discussion group or an adult Sunday school class. Each chapter concludes with a page of “Contemplation, Conversation, and Action” that provides ideas for personal reflection and help for group leaders who want to provoke stimulating discussion. I found the three appendices to be helpful on a personal level, especially the one that offers “Fourteen Precepts of Just and Generous Christianity.” 

Ken Gibble, a retired Church of the Brethren pastor, writes from Camp Hill, Pa. Read more on his blog at www.kenslines.blogspot.com.



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World's Largest Religion Is Seeking a Better Way to Be Christian*. Author: Brian McLaren. Publisher: Convergent Books, 2016.



Jan Fischer Bachman



Jan Fischer Bachman

‘This is how we church!’

by Jan Fischer Bachman

What would be your idea of a perfect Christian gathering?” I asked youth from my church, Oakton Church of the Brethren in Vienna, Va.

Adults bemoan the fact that youth increasingly leave the church, or are unenthusiastic when they attend—but we don’t always give them the chance to participate in design-fellowship that is meaningful for them.

At Oakton, youth said that they would like to have a short Bible reading and then spend time together serving others. Since our church includes board members for a local organization that helps people in need, we were able to overcome the problem of charities being closed on Sunday. So for the past 15 months, junior and senior high youth have spent an hour and a half on one Sunday morning a month hauling furniture, unpacking boxes, sorting food and clothing, making posters, or doing whatever is needed to help neighbors in need. They return to church in time for the worship service.

Initially we split youth by age group. We noticed that individual youth preferred different tasks, so this year we are letting them choose their project sites. We also have added in fifth graders, at their request.

This initiative, which we call Service Sunday, has resulted in the following:

—Higher attendance on Service Sundays. Youth who don’t come to Sunday school regularly make it to Service Sunday, even though it starts much earlier. We have also had a number of guests, usually ones in need of service hours for school!

—More adults are involved with the youth. The facilities we travel to are not far away, but we need extra adult drivers and chaperones.

—The charity board members at our church have felt encouraged by the increased support and participation of the congregation.

—Parents report that their children are coming home from Service Sunday quoting Bible verses, since the devotional often is just one verse rather than a whole passage, and we sometimes repeat the verse during the service time.

What do the youth think?

“I like Service Sunday because other weeks we talk about our faith, but on Service Sunday we do it,” said one youth.

Another struggled to lift a mattress into a warehouse and spontaneously created a new verb: “This is how we church!”

My conclusion about this experience: To increase youth involvement in church, ask youth what holds meaning for them and listen to their answers. 📖



Jan Fischer Bachman

The pool of healing

by Bob Bowman

The pool of Bethzatha, or Bethesda, was a place of healing. It seemed that every so often God would send an angel, a symbol of God's own presence, into that pool. The first to step into the God-stirred water would find healing. The story is found in the first verses of the Gospel of John, chapter 5.

For me, the pool of healing is Sunday morning worship. Sometimes, not often but sometimes, it seems to me that an angel, or the very presence of God, has descended into the gathered sisters and brothers in our worship.

I'd like to say that it was the sermon. Or some special music or a moving hymn. But it is not that simple. The sermon can be excellent and the music emotional but the angel is not there. Even with the best of Sunday morning worship, we can never control the angel of God. Sometimes it is there; more often not. But when it is, shivers go up my spine and my breath comes short and I know that—at least for a moment—I am in the presence of the Holy.

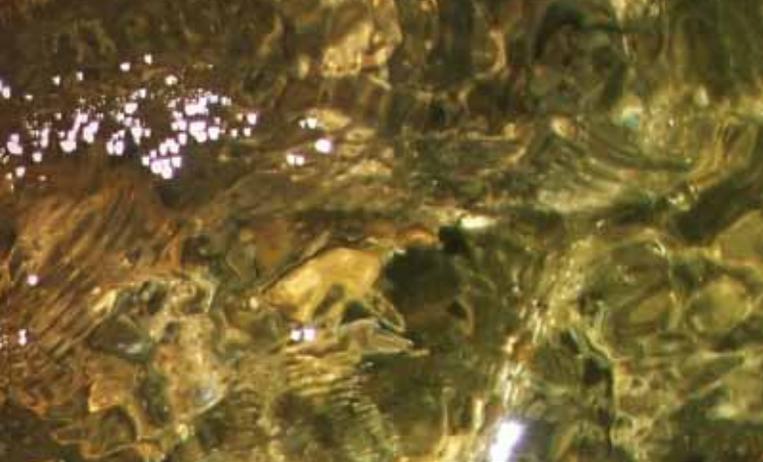
That's what the crowd waited for at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. The blind, the lame, the weak, the disheartened, the chronically ill were all waiting for the angel of God.

Jesus came by and his eye caught one man in particular.

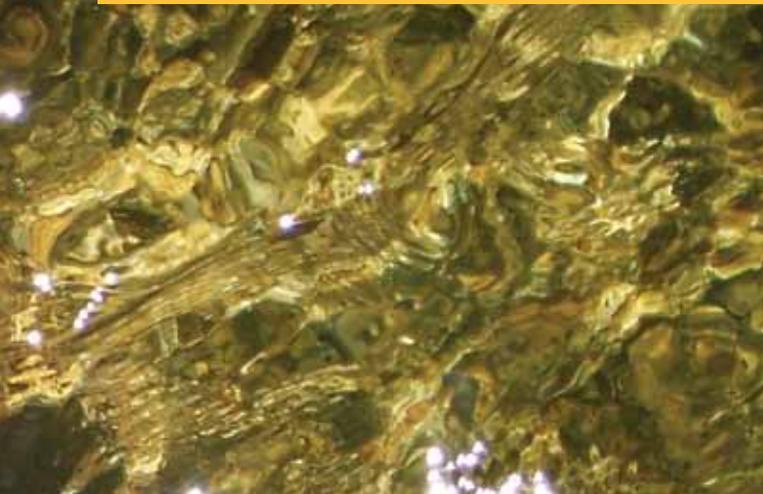
At this point in the scripture story, I want to ask questions. Why one person? Why only one when the porticoes were crowded with people needing attention? "Why him and not me," I ask because it is easier than asking, "Why me and not them?"

I don't like the answers that come. The first temptation is to say that Jesus knew that this one man, of all the crowd, deserved it most. Or, if not "deserved it," then at least he was the one who was most needy. But that answer falters when I remember that the world I live in does not work that way. It is rare when the most deserving or the most needy gets the richest blessing.

It is also a temptation to say that it is simply a matter of chance. Some are chosen to be healed; others are not. I don't like that answer much, but it is one answer given in scripture. "The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong," says Ecclesiastes 9:11, "but time and chance happen to them all." Scripture also gives other answers, but perhaps some questions simply cannot be fully answered on this side of the Jordan.



SOMETIMES, NOT OFTEN BUT SOMETIMES, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT AN ANGEL, OR THE VERY PRESENCE OF GOD, HAS DESCENDED INTO THE GATHERED SISTERS AND BROTHERS.



The man whom Jesus saw had been ill for 38 years. We are not told the nature of the illness but, whatever it was, the man draws my sympathy. Presumably, he was no longer a young man. One has to wonder what effect 38 years of debilitating illness has on a personality. I have friends who have lived longer than that with a disability but who have lived lives of such abundant joy, optimism, love, and faith that their disability was eclipsed. On the other hand, I have known some who have allowed their illness or disability to define them. I want to know more about the man whom Jesus saw.

Jesus asked him, “Do you want to get well?” It is only three simple words in Greek. Surely it was obvious that the man wanted to be well; that is why he was there at the pool of Bethesda in the first place. Why did Jesus feel the need to ask?

Perhaps Jesus wanted the man to articulate his own need. It is not as easy as it sounds to name one’s deepest need. Sometimes we think a different job, different location, or different spouse would solve all our problems. What would “being well” mean for this man? What would wellness look like for me?

It is not too strange, then, that the man refuses to answer the question of Jesus. Instead he says, “Sir, I have no one. I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up. While I am making my way, someone else always steps in front of me.”

That “I have no one” pierces my heart. Is it really possible that in his 38 years of illness there was not one friend, cousin, or neighbor whom he could count on? Was there truly no one? We remember one of God’s first observations in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good that a person should be lonely.” Throughout the New Testament Jesus is portrayed as a friend of the friendless and a helper of the person who has no earthly help. That’s why we sing the old song, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”

Were this man’s illness and his loneliness related? Did he lack friends because of his disability? Or was he ill because he had no friends? I said he refused to answer the question of Jesus about wanting to be well, but perhaps the man had more insight than I gave him credit for. He may have realized that if he had to choose between wellness and friendship, he would choose friendship.

My pool of healing is Sunday morning worship. Granted, the angel stirs waters at other times and places. In nature I sometimes feel God’s presence. Strangely, the death of someone close often brings me to reflect on life so deeply that I feel the angel’s presence hovering near. But Sunday morning worship is special. And what is very special are those times when it is neither the powerful and moving sermon, nor the brilliant and soaring music—as meaningful as these are—that causes the descent of the angel of God’s presence. But a chance and fleeting conversation with a friend at the door of the church building will cause me to step right down into that pool and the presence of God. 

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

Lighting a candle of hope

Stories from the Haiti Medical Project

by Paul Ullom-Minnich



Dr. Emmerson Pierre is one of the three original doctors who started working for the Haiti Medical Project in 2011. His first connection with the Church of the Brethren was through a Brethren missionary at the orphanage where he grew up in Haiti's central plateau. He strongly believes in the role of the mobile clinic to bring health care to people who have never had it before.

He recounts an incident in one remote village. After the dusty journey in the back of the clinic truck, the clinic team arrived at a site they had visited only a couple of times. People already were crowding outside the tiny church, hoping to be one of the 150 who would be seen that day.

One woman pushed a shy 5-year-old boy in front of her as they crossed the dirt floor to where Dr. Emmerson had placed his things at a table. The boy couldn't manage his own bowel movements and had a history of soiling himself. His mother had all but given up.

"How long has this been going on?" Dr. Emmerson asked.

"Ever since he was born."

"Was he ever examined before?" the doctor wondered.

"He's never seen a doctor."

Since his birth, and through five years of illness, she never had been able to afford medical care for her son.

After a brief exam, Dr. Emmerson discovered that the boy had been born with a condition in which his rectum never formed. His stool had been leaking out through a tear, or fistula, near the end of his colon. The young physician arranged for surgery to fix the defect at a charity hospital some distance away.

Months later, still in disbelief, the doctor told me this story. This is why the clinics are so important. Even if we get to the village only once a year, for some it is their only opportunity for medical care. These clinics light a candle of hope, and that light draws thousands of patients a year.



Dr. Emmerson Pierre treating a patient.

Hurricane Matthew relief

Georgia Altenor is a church leader recently ordained to the ministry in the growing Haitian Church of the Brethren (l'Eglise des Freres Haitiens). She expressed such gratitude at being able to respond for the church when Hurricane Matthew struck Haiti earlier this year. "It is such a blessing to be able to serve," she said.

When the hurricane struck, average rainfalls totaled about 25 inches across the country. Some areas were flooded by more than 40 inches. Tree-snapping winds destroyed buildings and crops.

Church members went in groups to areas hit hardest by the storm, surveying the damage in regions they'd never been before. A truck broke down on one of these trips, leaving that group stranded alongside the road. Eventually they slept beneath the truck since it was the only sort of shelter available.

"It's not normal in our culture to have women out in the middle of the night," Altenor recounted. "But we were all working together helping people."

They pulled into towns where the homes had been flattened, and they went wreckage by wreckage, offering food, water, and hygiene kits provided by Brethren Disaster Ministries. Even the Haitian congregation—whose members were all affected by the storm, and whose incomes averaged \$2 per day—contributed clothes and shoes from their families.

Altenor told how people began pulling clothes out of the mud to try and salvage scraps of normal Haitian life, with the

detergent supplied in the health kits.

The people in these little towns were surprised by groups coming from a church instead of a big relief organization.

"Most churches in Haiti focus just on the wellbeing of their members," she said. "We were reaching out to strangers." 

Paul Ullom-Minnich is a physician from central Kansas, and a founding leader of the Church of the Brethren's Haiti Medical Project. More information is at www.brethren.org/haiti-medical-project.

Donita Keister and Roger Schrock top AC ballot

The denomination's **Standing Committee has released the 2017 Annual Conference ballot**, which includes two nominees for moderator-elect and nominations for a number of other offices to be filled by the delegate body.

The Standing Committee also has chosen Liz Bidgood Enders as delegate for the World Council of Churches and Glenn Bollinger as alternate.

■ Annual Conference Moderator-elect

On the ballot for the position of moderator-elect are Donita Keister of Mifflinburg, Pa., and J. Roger Schrock of McPherson, Kan.



Donita Keister

J. Roger Schrock

Keister is an associate pastor at Buffalo Valley Church of the Brethren in Southern Pennsylvania District. She currently is a member of the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board, and serves on the board's executive committee, but will complete her term of service prior to the 2017 Annual Conference.

Schrock is a member of McPherson Church of the Brethren in Western Plains District. He is a retired pastor and former denominational staff mem-

ber. He has served the Church of the Brethren as executive of World Ministries, as Africa representative, and as a missionary in Sudan, among other appointments. In a volunteer capacity, he has been a member of the Standing Committee of Annual Conference and currently serves on the Mission Advisory Council.

Following are nominees for other positions to be filled by election in 2017, listed by position:

■ Annual Conference Secretary

James M. Beckwith (incumbent) of Lebanon, Pa., Annville Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast District

Paul Schrock of Indianapolis, Ind., Northview Church of the Brethren, South/Central Indiana District

■ Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee

Jan Glass King of Martinsburg, Pa., Bedford Church of the Brethren, Middle Pennsylvania District

Jan Orndorff of Woodstock, Va., Sugar Grove Church of the Brethren, Shenandoah District

■ Mission and Ministry Board, Area 1

Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey of Hagerstown, Md., Hagerstown Church of the Brethren, Mid-Atlantic District

Colin W. Scott of Harrisburg, Pa., Mechanicsburg Church of the Brethren, Southern Pennsylvania District

■ Mission and Ministry Board, Area 2

Christina Singh of Freeport, Ill., Freeport Church of the Brethren, Illinois and Wisconsin District

Frances Townsend of Onekama, Mich., Onekama Church of the Brethren, Michigan District

■ Bethany Theological Seminary Trustee, Colleges

Celia Cook-Huffman (incumbent) of Huntingdon, Pa., Stone Church of the Brethren, Middle Pennsylvania District

Shane Kirchner of McPherson, Kan., McPherson Church of the Brethren, Western Plains District

■ Bethany Theological Seminary Trustee, Clergy

Paul Brubaker (incumbent) of Ephrata, Pa., Middle Creek Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast District

Dana Cassell of Durham, N.C., Peace Covenant Church of the Brethren, Virginia District

■ Brethren Benefit Trust Board

Sara Huston Brenneman (incumbent) of Hershey, Pa., Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren, Atlantic Northeast District

Katherine Allen Haff of North Manchester, Ind., Manchester Church of the Brethren, South/Central Indiana District

■ On Earth Peace Board

Bobbi Dykema of Seattle, Wash., Olympic View Church of the Brethren, Pacific Northwest District.

Cheryl Thomas of Angola, Ind., Pleasant Chapel Church of the Brethren, Northern Indiana District

■ Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee

Barbara Wise Lewczak of Minburn, Iowa, Stover Memorial Church of the Brethren, Northern Plains District.

Daniel L. Rudy of Roanoke, Va., Ninth Street Church of the Brethren, Virginia District

For more information about the Annual Conference go to www.brethren.org/ac.

Post this page

You are welcome to photocopy this page. For more Newsline stories and to subscribe to Newsline's free e-mail news service go to www.brethren.org/news

General secretary among 2,000 religious leaders signing letter supporting refugee resettlement

In mid-January, general secretary David Steele on behalf of the Church of the Brethren signed a letter to President Trump and members of Congress expressing support for refugee resettlement. The letter, which was signed by more than 2,000 religious leaders from across the country, was an initiative of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition.

The coalition is connected with Church World Service (CWS), a long-term partner organization of the Church of the Brethren and the denomination's disaster ministries.

"As religious leaders from a variety of backgrounds, we are called by our sacred texts and faith traditions to love our neighbor, accompany the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner," the letter said. "War, conflict and persecution have forced people to leave their homes, creating more refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people than at any other time in history. More than 65 million people are currently displaced—the largest number in recorded history.

"This nation has an urgent moral responsibility to receive refugees and asylum seekers who are in dire need of safety."

The letter added, among other points, that "The US Refugee Resettlement program has been and should remain open to those of all nationalities and religions who face persecution on account of the reasons enumerated under US law. We oppose any policy change that would prevent refugees from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen, or individuals who practice Islam and other faiths from accessing the US refugee resettlement program."

Called for a Greater Cause: Jonah's Journey



National Junior High Conference to call youth to a 'greater cause'

National Junior High Conference 2017 will invite youth and their advisors to consider Jonah's story through the theme "Called for a Greater Cause: Jonah's Journey." The conference will be held June 9-11 on the campus of Elizabethtown (Pa.) College.

The event will be enriched by worship speakers including Katie Heishman, Rudy Amaya, and Jeff Carter. Kyle Remnant will coordinate music. Worship will be coordinated by Rebekah Houff and Trent Smith. In addition to four celebrations of worship, there will be time for learning during workshops, and time for play during recreation and evening activities.

Register at www.brethren.org/njhc. Through March 31, the cost is \$175 per person. After March 31, the cost for regular registration is \$200 per person. Travel scholarships are available to those who live west of the Mississippi River.

Young Adult Conference to address 'Loving Neighbor'

"'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:36-39).



What do those words mean? How do I love God with all of my heart, soul, and mind? Who is my neighbor? Young adults are invited to join in conversation about Matthew 22:36-39 and the idea of being a "Loving Neighbor" at Young Adult Conference on May 26-28 at Camp Harmony, near Hooversville, Pa. The event will

include worship, music, Bible study, theological conversations, workshops, recreation (including an optional canoe trip), and fellowship. Speakers include Emmett Eldred, Dennis Lohr, Wendy McFadden, and Monica Rice.

The registration fee of \$125 (\$150 after April 30) includes food, lodging, and programming. BVS scholarships and local church scholarships are available by contacting Paige Butzlaff at pbutzlaff@brethren.org or 847-429-4389. Register at www.brethren.org/yac.



IT'S JUST SO HOPEFUL. FROM COVER TO COVER
THERE IS HOPE WRITTEN ACROSS THE PAGES.

We are known by our deeds

One of the principal tenets of the Brethren faith has been that we are known by our deeds. It isn't enough to profess our faith; we have to live it. Every decision we make and action we take need to be seen in light of their effects on others and on our own souls.

Even as a young person, I was struck by the profound meaning of having the New Testament as our creed. We didn't set up man-made

rules but took Jesus' teachings as our guide. Those teachings are very clear as to our responsibility to others.

There are basic rules about treating others as we ourselves would like to be treated. There aren't caveats that

allow us to select, based on our own prejudices, who we will treat well.

We also are instructed to minister to the sick, care for the infirm, feed the hungry, and seek justice for those who are persecuted.

Send letters to messenger@brethren.org or MESSENGER, Attn: Letters, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Please include hometown and phone number. Letters should be brief, clear, and respectful of the opinions of others, with strong differences handled in the spirit of Matthew 18. Preference is given to letters that respond directly to items in MESSENGER. Anonymous letters will not be considered.

"Then some people came, bringing to Jesus a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him..." Mark 2:3-4



Your congregation is invited to join

The Open Roof Fellowship

If you are committed to and actively engaged in ministry to and with persons with disabilities.

This might include:

- Facility modifications allowing persons with physical limitations to fully participate in church life
- Program changes to meet the needs of those with developmental and/or learning disabilities
- Staff hires or volunteer designations to advocate for and assist those with varying abilities
- Building relationships with local agencies serving persons with disabilities or mental illness

Go to www.brethren.org/openroof to submit an application and share your story by **June 1**.



Other inspiring stories can be found in *Circles of Love: Stories of Congregations Caring for People with Disabilities and their Families* available from Brethren Press: www.brethrenpress.com.

For additional information contact Debbie Eisenbise: Disabilities@brethren.org or 800-323-8039 x306. Sponsored by Congregational Life Ministries.

I AM ASKING MY FELLOW BRETHREN TO BE SOURCES OF LIGHT AND HEALING IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND TO STAND FOR WHAT IS RIGHT. DO NOT LET FEAR AND DIVISIVENESS RULE.

When I was eight years old, I learned an important life lesson. My father worked in a factory in addition to farming full time. He worked with a Baptist minister and they became friends. Since my father was a deacon in Salomonie Church of the Brethren, he suggested a pulpit exchange with his friend's church in Marion, Ind.

The Baptist church came with their choir and minister. He was a fiery preacher and the choir was great. When we went downstairs to have a carry-in

dinner, out of our large congregation only four or five families brought food to share. My father was furious and he had everyone go to our farm instead. The women prepared a feast with our freezer and canning cellar playing major roles.

I was excited to have these city kids to show around the farm and play with. The color of their skin wasn't even a consideration. After the meal, we were out in the front yard playing. Cars began driving by and people were yelling at

us. I realized then that these kids were different in other people's eyes. I knew that they were like me, it was just that they were city kids. But that fall when I went back to school with my skin dark brown from working outside and my straight hair permed into tight curls, I had a new nickname, "N---."

A difference in the amount of melanin in our skin and differences in culture should be opportunities to broaden our understanding of the world, not reasons to fear or demean. We must



**ministering.
proclaiming.
living.**

NEW - Specialized Graduate Certificates

- Biblical Interpretation
- Conflict Transformation
- Theopoetics & Theological Imagination

FIVE COURSES • MANY FORMATS

Fall admissions process deadline: **JULY 15**

bethanyseminary.edu/certificates

stand against this kind of ignorance and hate.

I am asking my fellow Brethren to be sources of light and healing in our communities and to stand for what is right. Please do not let fear and divisiveness rule. We have come far, but have more work to do.

Carol Glover
Durham, N.H.

Hopeful from cover to cover

Regarding the January/February MESSENGER, this is a home run. It's just so hopeful. From cover to cover there is hope written across the pages. Congratulations to all who put the MESSENGER together.

David S. Young
Ephrata, Pa.

A great year

This last year of MESSENGER has been great. The themed issues, Bob Bowman's Bible studies, Wendy McFadden's bold invitations, and the editorial team are all working well. We didn't debate, this time, about whether or not we would renew.

Thank you for this important ministry.

Dylan and Laura Dell-Haro
Beatrice, Neb.

CLASSIFIEDS

Remembering Muted Voices: Conscience, Dissent, Resistance and Civil Liberties in World War I through today.

Centennial international conference at National World War I Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, October 19-22, 2017. Need Brethren stories of struggle, conscience and courage acting in events that shape war and peace today. What can we learn from these examples for acts of conscience as disciples in a trouble world today? Call for Papers - Proposals by 3/20/2017. More information: theworldwar.org/mutedvoices or email johnhr@goshen.edu

**speak
peace**

a collection of 366 daily readings on peace and peacemaking.

800-441-3712
www.brethrenpress.com

Where are you headed?

We're all walking along a financial path – with goals and challenges unique to each of us. The key is to figure out our next steps, and how they fit with our faith and values.

You don't have to take this journey alone. Everence® is here to walk alongside you, so you can meet tomorrow's opportunities with confidence. It's one way we're **doing better together.**

(800) 348-7468
everence.com



 **Everence®**

Banking | Investing | Retirement | Financial Planning | Insurance | Charitable Giving

Everence offers credit union services that are federally insured by NCUA. Investments and other products are not NCUA or otherwise federally insured, may involve loss of principal and have no credit union guarantee. All products are not available in all states.

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

Blue Ridge, Va.: David Beckwith, Becky Fitzgerald, Clara Orange
Cerro Gordo, Ill.: Michelle West
Chambersburg, Pa.: Bill Abbott, Eric Brandt, Faith Brandt, Andrew Brindle, Dawna Brindle, Makenna Brindle, Linda Hawbaker, Ashley Helman, Rachel Noble, Landen Noble, Randy L. Hockenberry, Kaitlynn Kylor, Kendra McMullen, Cindy Pyles, Joe Pyles, Debbie Stouffer, Jere Stouffer
Chiques, Manheim, Pa.: Kevin Becker, Dawn Becker, Lauren Becker, Thomas Gingrich, Caleb Wise, Kim Wise
Evergreen, Stanardsville, Va.: Bobby Graves, Barbara Graves
Eversole, New Lebanon, Ohio: Emma Simonton
Faith Community, New Oxford, Pa.: Anna Peirce, Ronald Strausbaugh, Phyllis Strausbaugh
Fraternity, Winston Salem, N.C.: Daryl Crews, Kathie Crews
Freeport, Ill.: Greg Spengler, Janis Spengler, Sherri Verneti
Friendship, Linthicum, Md.: Jason Gonzales, Evan Butler, George Davis, Tyler Davis

Goshen City, Goshen, Ind.: Rebekah Houff
Green Hill, Salem, Va.: Charlotte Johnson, Leo Johnson
Green Tree, Oaks, Pa.: Kathy Bieski, Katie Blain, Al Funke, Eric Pyne, Deanna Robbins, Abby Simon, Emma Smith, Jenna Yeager
Grossnickle, Myersville, Md.: Brenda White, Emily White, Deborah Pugh, Donald Pugh, Jonathan Cornell, Jenna Grossnickle, Declan Kehlbeck, Catherine Mahoney, Michele Riggs, Cameron Wells
Hanover, Pa.: Sandy Avery, Stephen Hershberger, Nancy Mummert, Bonita Sexton
Harrisonburg, Va.: Lee Kinsey, Sandy Kinsey
Heidelberg, Myerstown, Pa.: Leroy Miller, Eileen Miller, Carlissa Heisey
Holidaysburg, Pa.: Gary Drenning, Cindy Drenning
Kokomo, Ind.: Tim Swisher, Camille Swisher, Tim Buckley, Linda Buckley
Lakewood, Millbury, Ohio: Bob Purney, Kathleen Purney
Lebanon, Pa.: McKenzie Clay, Harold Gingrich, Jordyn Kenney, Leslie McKinney
Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.: Jarrett Miller, Seneca Breisch, Bryan Fahnestock, Alex Gladhill, Seth Graybill, Noelle Rohrer, Madison Saylor, Caitlyn Ackley, Joanne Lefever, Willis Lefever
Middlebury, Ind.: Jerry Hydorn, Betty Hydorn, Mary Jackson, Ramsey Smith, Tommie Smith, Joe Saddison, Stephen Saddison, Sierra Petterson,

Mckenzie Saddison, Ethan Bickel, David Rodriguez, Brooke Rodriguez
Midland, Va.: Kayleigh Alford, Taylor Alford, Gillian Tochny
Mill Creek, Port Republic, Va.: Kathy Ipok, Carol Griffith
Mohican, West Salem, Ohio: Megan Hottel, James Reichard, Bob Brazis, Brenda Brazis, Kim Ott, Larry Crebs, Michelle Denny, Karen Nunez, Manuel Nunez, Caroline Shadburn, Dan Shadburn, Mid White, Roger White, Helen Smith, Kate Johnson, Bob Ballou, Tamala Ballou, Evan Brazis, Noah Brazis, Samuel Brazis, Jamie Firebaugh, Heidi Topp, Allie Stoltz, Dylan Stoltz, Nathan Stoltz, Westley Stoltz, Karen Anderson, Tim Anderson, Kelly Roberts, Todd Roberts, Kim Tanner, Bill Sulzer, Maria Sulzer
Monroeville, Pa.: Mary Ellen Cartia
Mount Wilson, Lebanon, Pa.: Phyllis Buck
Nappanee, Ind.: Howard Losee, Ryan Miller, Heidi Miller, Emily Roy, Jack Yoder, Betty Yoder, Greg Gessinger, Hanna Miller, Shawn Miller
New Fairview, York, Pa.: Jeremy Sprenkle, Adam Beach, Christian Lehman, Darren Sciortino, Levi Lehman, Kendra Eveler, Daniel Eveler, Joel Deardorff, Shawn Cleaver, Musa Mambula, Sarah Mambula, Dale Blocher, Grace Blocher, Jack Deardorff, Samuel Deardorff, Faith Ilyes, Shane Ilyes, Natalie Billet,

Tyler Billet, Michael Cleaver, Olivia Cleaver, Caleb Grim
Plymouth, Ind.: Tom Anders, Rachel Anders, Ann Anders, Taylor Pruiett, Sally Smith, Carol Nye
Pottstown, Pa.: Addie Youse
Ridgeway Community, Harrisburg, Pa.: Micah Bidgood Enders, Ryan Griffin, Kristiana Griffin
Roaring Spring, Pa.: Dylan Butler, Eliana Eicher, Ariadne Madden, Miranda Madden, Abigail Garber, Norma Jean Stiffier, Paul Longenecker, Bill Hagstrom, Georgia Hagstrom, David Hagstrom
Rossville, Ind.: Candy Silverthorn, Jerry Silverthorn
Rummel, Windber, Pa.: Mark Weaver, Judy Weaver, Amanda Weaver, Connie Wyandt, Karen Ruffner, John Karlinsky
Snake Spring Valley, Everett, Pa.: Joel England, Kendall Ferguson England, Crystal Imler, Valerie Smith, Arissah Mickey, Gabriel Weicht, Sylvia Weicht, Denny Whitcomb
Spring Creek, Hershey, Pa.: Nancy Gamber, Sofia Howe, Alexander Snyder, Cara Snyder
Sunrise, Harrisonburg, Va.: Diane Bowman, Kelly Burns, LaDonna Burns
Waynesboro, Pa.: Phyllis Hammaker, Roy Leckron, Audrey Smith, Bill Smith, Payton Sampson, Logan Sampson
West Goshen, Goshen, Ind.: Jim Long, Cherrill Long, Donna Howell, David Holderman, Randy Pressler, Linda Pressler
White Oak, Manheim, Pa.: Leah Patches, Kiera Zook,

Jared High, Jesse High, James Martin, Isaiah Alspaugh, Caleb Fahnestock
Williamson Road, Roanoke, Va.: Terri Luzynski, Stephen Vassar
Woodbury, Pa.: Kayla Ritchey, Caitlin Curfman, Ben Parker, Shelby Over, Lauren Over, Aaron Shawley, Benjamin Gable
Wyomissing, Pa.: Darlene Dunn, Nancy May, Melissa Stief, Brian Felker, Jill Fleker, Deborah Smith, Dorothy Smith
York Center, Lombard, Ill.: Taylor Hisey Pierson, Anna Lee Hisey Pierson, Willy Hisey Pierson

Wedding anniversaries

Barkdoll, Stanley and Hazel, Kearneysville, W.Va., 66
Berg, Clarence and Marg, Hanover, Pa., 70
Berwager, John and Bonnie, East Berlin, Pa., 55
Boose, Raymond and Mary Beth, Martinsburg, Pa., 70
Bowe, Forrest and Jeannine, Roanoke, Va., 65
Burkholder, Bruce and Jean, Harrisonburg, Va., 50
Fife, Dick and Sharon, Galveston, Ind., 50
Hancock, John and Sandra, Vinton, Va., 50
Kensinger, George E. and Dona K., Martinsburg, Pa., 66
Kline, Dale and Audrey, Myersville, Md., 55
Kover, Virgil and Floy, Lancaster, Pa., 67
Lauterbach, Melvin and Joyce, Bartonville, Ill., 50
Lockhart, Frank and Ellen, Staunton, Va., 50
Long, Robert and Sharon, New Oxford, Pa., 50

Mangus, Galen and Wanda, North Liberty, Ind., 65
Markham, Glen and Sue, Roanoke, Va., 55
Negley, John and Beverly, Boonsboro, Md., 55
Potter, Sherman and Loleta, Boonsboro, Md., 50
Smallwood, Wayne and Ruth, Knoxville, Md., 55
Sonafrank, John and Pat, Kokomo, Ind., 55
Stevens, Ray and Ruth, Hollsopple, Pa., 55
Stockslager, Robert and Betty, Hanover, Pa., 50
Wright, Owen and Pat, Cottage Grove, Ore., 60

Deaths

Abshire, Helen, 96, Vinton, Va., July 25
Aker, Mary Edel, 84, Plymouth, Ind., Sept. 10
Albright, W. David, 93, McPherson, Kan., Dec. 11
Baker, Roy (Judd), 79, Boswell, Pa., Oct. 24
Balsbaugh, Jesse, 59, Wernersville, Pa., Nov. 29
Bard, Helen Smith, 101, Chambersburg, Pa., Dec. 1
Bashore, Shirley A. Eiler, 81, Leesport, Pa., Nov. 28
Basinger, Dale Cleo, 93, Linville, Va., May 14
Baughman, Clarence Richard, 86, Glenford, Ohio, Dec. 9
Bell, Jennifer, 66, New Castle, Ind., June 1
Bohlender, Thomas, 85, Pleasant Hill, Ohio, Dec. 12
Boyd, Willard R., 83, Ligonier, Pa., Oct. 23
Bright, Donna Condon, 63, South Bend, Ind., Dec. 5
Brightbill, Nancy, 58, Newport, Tenn., Oct. 4
Bucher, Ruth S., 90, Lititz, Pa., Dec. 31
Carmichael, Betty Jane, 89, Parker City, Ind., Feb. 5, 2016
Carmichael, Robert, 76, Plymouth, Ind., Feb. 12, 2016
Coffman, H. McKinley, 83, New Windsor, Md., Dec. 1
Coulter, Nina, 75, Enid, Okla., Dec. 12
Dipert, Rebecca, 70, Plymouth, Ind., May 28
Dugger, Atsie Lee, 85, Olathe, Kan., Oct. 29
Eberly, Wilda Widdowson, 84, Palmyra, Pa., Jan. 14
Eichelberger, Eugene, 95, Chambersburg, Pa., Dec. 29
Fahnestock, A. Charlene, 67, Manheim, Pa., July 1
Floyd, Marcia, 62, Kokomo, Ind., Feb. 10, 2016
Foster, Janet E., 93, Harrisonburg, Va., Nov. 26
Garner, Glenn S., 92, Bridgewater, Va., Oct. 15
Gaunt, Telsfor A. (Les), Sr., 85, Johnstown, Pa., June 10
Gray, John Garland, 86, Wirtz, Va., Nov. 4
Hershey, John, 93, Lititz, Pa., June 14
Hix, Marilyn Long, 77, Plymouth, Ind., March 1, 2016
Holsinger, William, 60, New Enterprise, Pa., Dec. 31
Holtry, Dorothy, 88, Orrstown, Pa., Dec. 4
Jackson, Andrew B., Jr., 86, Pleasant Hill, Ohio, Nov. 12
Jones, Robert A., 89, Columbiana, Ohio, Nov. 28
Joseph, Mary Deal, 102, Onekama, Mich., Jan. 4
Kefauver, Mary, 83, Knoxville, Md., Dec. 8
Kenyon, E. Louise, 91, Monroeville, Pa., Oct. 15
Kirk, Frances Louise Via Cline, 86, Fishersville, Va., Jan. 9
Kline, Virginia, 92, Warm Springs, Va., Oct. 22

Koons, Lorraine, 92, Chambersburg, Pa., Jan. 11
Kornbau, George F., 88, Lisbon, Ohio, Dec. 18
Landes, Alice, 97, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 8
Landes, Olen B., 99, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 14
Lehman, Thelma, 87, McPherson, Kan., Jan. 1
Long, Linda, 68, Bealton, Va., Nov. 2
Martin, Isaac S., 52, Newmanstown, Pa., Oct. 31
Merkey, Vernon, 88, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Dec. 11
Messick, Virginia Long, 94, Midland, Va., Feb. 19, 2016
Michael, Charles, 91, Kokomo, Ind., Nov. 5
Miller, Bonnie Diehl, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 10
Miller, Miriam, 88, Lancaster, Pa., Nov. 30
Neil, John William (Bill), 82, Rockwood, Pa., June 11
Noll, Richard L., Sr., 80, West Milton, Ohio, Nov. 29
Perry, Carolyn Hedrick (Suzanne), 80, Muncie, Ind., June 26
Pletcher, Norma, 89, Elkhart, Ind., Jan. 8
Pullins, Mary Martin, 83, Greenville, Ohio, Nov. 20
Raines, Jackson (Jack), Sr., 88, McGaheysville, Va., Nov. 4
Reinhard, Gerhard, 85, Bethel, Pa., Dec. 6
Rice, Mavis Thomason, 87, Martinsville, Va., Dec. 4
Ritchey, Donald, 86, North Manchester, Ind., Dec. 6
Ritchey, Paul Raymond, 82, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 9
Rogers, Kenneth, 78, Lebanon, Pa., Nov. 19
Rohrer, Irene S., 98, Manheim, Pa., Nov. 1
Root, Bernice, 79, Wooster, Ohio, March 23, 2016

Rule, Myrna, 87, Kokomo, Ind., Jan. 7, 2016
Shinn, Dolores, 82, Boyertown, Pa., Nov. 18
Showalter, Clarence, 95, Hagerstown, Md., Oct. 1
Shumaker, Terry, 72, Indianapolis, Ind., Jan. 14
Smith, Bob, 88, Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 13
Stewart, Deborah, 63, Fairborn, Ohio, Aug. 9
Stoner, Jean, 84, New Cumberland, Pa., Nov. 25
Uhrig, Damon, 90, Troy, Ohio, Dec. 2
Walker, Ross E., 95, Somerset, Pa., Dec. 24
Weaver, Cynthia S., 54, Staunton, Va., Dec. 22
Weidman, Jay R., Sr., 90, Campbelltown, Pa., Dec. 3
Wenger, Kathryn Long, 84, Bethel, Pa., Dec. 7
Williams, Lois Evelyn Hall, 94, Eddyville, Iowa, Dec. 2
Wooldridge, Cathryn, 95, Vinton, Va., Dec. 10

Ordained

Finet, Angela, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Nokesville, Va.), Jan. 15
Foster, Dean, N. Ohio Dist. (Black River, Spencer, Ohio), Dec. 11
Harbaugh, Britnee, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Brownsville, Knoxville, Md.), Jan. 7
Ross, Matthew, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Hanoverdale, Hummelstown, Pa.), Dec. 11

Commissioned

Eley, William, N. Ohio Dist. (Chippewa, Creston, Ohio), Oct. 16
Griffith, Charles Randy, Southeastern Dist. (Erwin, Johnson City, Tenn.), Nov. 12
Gutierrez, Libia, Southeastern Dist. (Betel International, Morristown,

Tenn.), Oct. 16

Licensed

Self, Phillip, Southeastern Dist. (Hawthorne, Johnson City, Tenn.), Jan. 1

Placements

Davidson, Kenneth W., Minister of Visitation, Newton, Kan., Nov. 1
Grossnickle, Karen, pastor, Harmony, Myersville, Md., Jan. 1
Ishman, Daniel R., pastor, Monroeville, Pa., Dec. 4
Leddy, Harvey Stephen, pastor, Roanoke, Williamson Road, Va., Jan. 1
Light, Samuel T., pastor, New Bethel, Chatham, Va., Jan. 1
Mantz, Shelvie, pastor, Palmyra Fellowship, Edinburg, Va., June 1
McCaffrey, Johnathan Duke, from interim pastor to pastor, Oak Hill, Edinburg, Va., Jan. 1
Messler, Brian, pastor, Ephrata, Pa., Nov. 14
Nogle, Joel, from pastor, Martinsburg, Memorial, Pa., to pastor, Chambersburg, Pa., Jan. 8
Self, Phillip, pastor, Hawthorne, Johnson City, Tenn., Jan. 1
Shaver, B. Eugene, pastor, Mount Carmel, Franklin, W.Va., and Bethlehem Fellowship, Brandywine, W.Va., June 1
Simmons, Brian N., from pastor, Roxbury, Johnstown, Pa., to pastor, Tire Hill, Pa., Jan. 1
Vaught, Terry, from interim pastor to pastor, Paradise, Smithville, Ohio, Jan. 1
Vaught, Vassie A., Jr., from interim pastor to pastor, Mount Airy, First, Cana, Va., Jan. 8

Caterpillar soup

All things new! Sure beats the alternative: stale, repetitive life.

But newness is not instantaneous. It depends on endings. And so a question: Have you ended anything?

For the most part, we view endings as bad. But endings are just a natural part of the rhythm of life. We don't comprehend the normalcy of endings, because endings necessitate loss, and loss stinks.

So we resist endings. But remember, you can't get newness without loss. Vital life is dependent on releasing some aspect of what we've always known.



PAUL MUNDEY

Jesus teaches this: "Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat" (John 12:24, *The Message*).

So too for our lives. Unless we are willing to become "dead to the world," entering into necessary endings, we never advance.

A few years ago, *Scientific American* described the developmental process of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Most of us fixate on the outcome: the butterfly. But a butterfly

Last summer, my son married. This was a much-anticipated wedding, and you would think this new beginning would be a season of pure and unadulterated joy. Largely, it was. But ramping up to the wedding day, I also experienced a fair measure of grief mingled with my joy. Peter and I had been close for years, and I feared things would now be different.

I stewed about this right up to the wedding. Before walking out with him to begin the ceremony, I could contain my fear no longer. Turning to Peter, literally right before we processed, I blurted out, "You'll still call me, won't you? We'll still be close?"

He assured me, "Of course, Dad!"

We proceeded on, and now beyond, with my amped anxiety for naught; I not only gained a cherished daughter, I gained a reshaped, more differentiated son.

There are understandable reasons why we avoid the "soup" of life. But if we're attentive, we'll awaken to a counterintuitive discovery that endings and loss can result, in God's time, in a reshaped reality—which is good.

On occasion, God times confirmation of his goodness in the near term; your son turns and says, "Of course, Dad." But more often, God times the confirmation of his goodness in

GLORIOUS LIFE DOES NOT OCCUR FOR US UNLESS DISINTEGRATION HAPPENS, AS WE ALLOW LIFE TO "GET SOUPY" ON OCCASION.

would never emerge if the caterpillar were not willing to "die to self," disintegrating into a protein-rich soup—caterpillar soup—that fuels "the rapid cell division required to form the . . . features of an adult butterfly or moth."

A glorious butterfly occurs only if disintegration happens, if caterpillar soup is allowed to take place. In like manner, glorious life does not occur for us unless disintegration happens, as we allow life to "get soupy" on occasion.

Where does life need to get soupy for you? Where do endings need to occur?

the far term, requiring patience, perseverance, and trust.

In between, hard honesty is required, as we trust God for goodness. But acknowledge that it's a process, requiring "caterpillar soup" and the necessity of living with some gooeyness for a season. From the gooeyness, God *does* promise goodness, if we just give God some time—the time of our life. **M**

Paul Munday is a visiting scholar at Princeton Theological Seminary. He pastored Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren for 20 years, after serving as director of evangelism and congregational growth for the Church of the Brethren.



HILLCREST

A Remarkable Retirement Community®



EXPERIENCE YOUR COMMUNITY



LIVE IN COMFORT & WELLNESS



LOVE YOUR LIFE



2705 Mountain View Dr. | La Verne, CA | 909-392-4375

DSS #191501662; Certificate of Authority #069 ; www.livingathillcrest.org



Bearing one another's burdens Sharing God's love

Rebuilding hope, one family at a time
Nurturing children in crisis
Serving all God's people



Houston, Texas 2010



Columbia, S.C. 2010



Haiti 2010



Nigeria 2010



BRETHREN
Disaster Ministries

Children's
Disaster Services

Support Brethren Disaster Ministries
Give to the Emergency Disaster Fund
1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120-1694
Give online: www.brethren.org/edf

For more information: 800-451-4407
www.brethren.org/bdm · www.brethren.org/cds

Photo credits clockwise top left: Carol Smith, Sammy Deacon, Illexene Alphonse, Donna Parcell