



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

# MESSENGER

JULY/AUGUST 2017 [WWW.BRETHREN.ORG](http://WWW.BRETHREN.ORG)

**New mission,  
new methods,  
new places**

Love is not  
what you  
say...  
it's what  
you do.



*"Little children, let us not love in word  
or speech, but with action and in truth."*

*1 John 3:18*



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# 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

JULY/AUGUST 2017 Vol.166 No. 6 [www.brethren.org/messenger](http://www.brethren.org/messenger)

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Photo by Jay Wittmeyer.

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**W**hat does it mean to love your neighbor? For young adults in the Church of the Brethren, that was worth a whole weekend of study this summer. The theme scripture was Matthew 28:36-39, in which Jesus reminds the scribe of the law to love your neighbor as yourself—a commandment recorded in Leviticus 19:17-18 and utterly familiar to his listeners.

And who is our neighbor? Well, we know the answer to that question, since the story of the good Samaritan is just about the most well-known of Jesus' parables.



WENDY MCFADDEN  
PUBLISHER

The moral of the story: Be like the Samaritan.

In my focus on the Samaritan, however, I realize that I have neglected the man in the ditch. Often he's just a prop for the lesson. Instead, I have always identified with the helpers. In fact, I have *automatically* identified with the helpers. But Jesus says I am to love my neighbor and my neighbor is the Samaritan, which makes me the person who needs help.

What would it mean to put myself in the victim's position and listen to what he needs? Not to solve the problem as if he were *me*, but to learn what it is like to be *him*? To really see this man and learn his name? Could this be why the commandment includes the words *as yourself*?

The rabbis use a metaphor to help us better understand this connection between neighbor and self: If someone is chopping food and in doing so cuts one hand, does he then avenge himself on the hand which held the knife by cutting that hand too?

We are one body. If we take vengeance on our neighbors, we punish ourselves. We love our neighbor as ourselves because our neighbor is part of us.

As we see our country and our world disagreeing dramatically about who this neighbor is, studying scripture matters. If anybody tries to tell you that discussing these things is too political and not religious enough, then take them to church. Take them to the Young Adult Conference. Read them Leviticus and Matthew—and Mark and Luke and Romans and Galatians and Ephesians and James. Show them that actually we cannot be holy if we don't love our neighbors as ourselves. The Bible tells us so.

*Wendy McFadden*

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### 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.

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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 © July 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)





## Canning meat for the hungry

**F**orty years ago, in 1976, leaders in the Mid-Atlantic District decided to share some of their abundance to help alleviate hunger locally and further away. In February 1977, they butchered 44 cows at a meat market near Greencastle, Pa., and canned it in the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) pressure canner on a tractor trailer. The beef was given to Church World Service.

In 1978, Southern Pennsylvania District was invited to join the project, which is held for about a week every year, and 80 cows were processed. The two districts have worked together since then, with each providing three members to the committee. The money for the meat canning does not come from the district budgets, but is donated by churches and individuals.

After a few years, the project moved to a turkey processing plant near York, Pa. When that plant closed in 1998, it moved to Christian Aid Ministries in Ephrata, Pa., where

two stationary pressure canners hold 1,200 cans each in 3 large baskets.

In the year 2000, project leaders decided it would be better to can chicken.

Volunteers travel up to three hours to join the project, and may work two different shifts (6 a.m. to noon, or 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.). The volunteers stuff cold chicken thighs and legs into cans and weigh them, cutting pieces so that each can weighs precisely between 1.96 and 2.00 pounds. Another volunteer task is to attach labels that say, “Food Provided by Southern Pennsylvania and Mid-Atlantic Districts of the Church of the Brethren and Emergency Response/Service Ministries.”

The canned chicken is donated to people in need, both outside the United States and within each district. Since 2010, canned chicken has been sent to Haiti, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. This year, the project canned 53,125 pounds of chicken—that’s 26 tons of chicken! A total of 28,080 cans (1,170 cases) were processed in 6 days of canning. Venezuela will receive 9,600 cans (400 cases), and each district will receive 9,240 cans (385 cases) to be distributed locally. —Mary Kay Turner



## A picture of wisdom

Easton (Md.) Church of the Brethren on Easter Sunday celebrated two members of the “Peachblossom Congregation”: Doris Schwaninger (left), age 95; and Ellen Walbridge (right), age 98. Together, they represent 193 years of loving, energetic, inspiring, and influential service and wisdom at the Easton Church. —Ellen Wile

## Blessed to help others

**The children of West York (Pa.) Church** of the Brethren raised \$521 to buy a cow for Heifer International. Children's church used Heifer curriculum, and learned how God uses this organization to provide animals and many other resources for families in the US and overseas. The children learned about many of the animals God made, and how they can help families for food and work. *The Seagoing Cowboy* by Peggy Reiff Miller told how Heifer Project got started. With the help of the whole congregation, the children had a bake sale and also sold hand-made bookmarks. They celebrated with a "cupcake cow." The children were blessed to help others in need, and hopefully will pass this lesson on as they grow in Christ. —Barbara Sloat



## Renewed by trying new things

**Three Pennsylvania congregations** that participate in Springs of Living Water—Green Tree Church of the Brethren, County Line Church of the Brethren, and Pleasant Hill Church of the Brethren—have been trying new things as they seek renewal.

Green Tree, with a "Green Team" of 15 people, felt led to go into the community and share 500 small loaves of bread. An early setback came when a market where they were to distribute the bread canceled the night before. But that opened a new door. A church member who owned an art shop had the idea for a table at the monthly street fair, right in front of her store. One night at the fair, a man got up on stage and shared his life story, saying, "If you need help, go over to those folks who are sharing bread!"

County Line has a four-member spiritual renewal team that helps the pastor present new projects. On Ash Wednesday, they offered a short service before people went to work and a service at noon with a light lunch. On Valentine's Day, people exchanged "Caring Hearts" and gave small gifts to one another. Each time they include the children, and new families have been coming because of the activities for children.

Pleasant Hill some years ago wanted to reach into its neighborhood, feeling led by the biblical story of the friends who brought a sick man to Jesus by letting him down through a roof. They decided to form a prayer team, and another group made cookies. They found a trolley to use to visit in the community, sharing cookies and literature. Soon people from the neighborhood began to help, and people have welcomed them into their homes. Church members have listened, prayed, and returned when they found a need. —David S. Young



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](mailto:messenger@brethren.org).

“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.” —Hebrews 10:23

## So many reasons to hope

As the Church of the Brethren prepares for its 231st recorded annual meeting, denominational ministries so far this year give many reasons to join in the Annual Conference theme, “Risk Hope”:

**2** new mission projects approved by the Mission and Ministry Board in March, in Venezuela and in the Africa Great Lakes region (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi).

**3** states where Children’s Disaster Services responded in the aftermath of flooding and tornados: Georgia, California, Missouri. Already this year, CDS volunteers have worked at 15 locations across Missouri, following 3 separate disasters.

**up to 7** “Nehemiah workcamps” to rebuild churches destroyed in insurgent violence in Nigeria, or to build new churches for displaced people. At least 2 or more are joint efforts with Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), with EYN also holding several workcamps of its own.

**6** Ministry Summer Service interns exploring their vocations at ministry placements across the denomination.

**21** summer workcamps on the theme “Say Hello” (3 John 13-14). The Workcamp Ministry is offering workcamps for junior high youth (6), senior highs (12), intergenerational groups (2), and young adults (an international workcamp in Nepal, and “We Are Able”

for differently abled youth/young adults and young adult assistants).

**38** senior high youth and their advisors who attended Christian Citizenship Seminar in New York City and Washington, D.C., studying Native American rights and food security.

**41** people who were at the Young Adult Conference over Memorial Day weekend.

**45** current Brethren Volunteer Service workers: 33 in the US; 7 in Europe (Northern Ireland, Ireland, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina); and 5 in other areas of the world (Japan, Honduras, El Salvador).

**more than 65** students in programs of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, a partnership of the Church of the Brethren and Bethany Theological Seminary: 40 in TRIM (Training in Ministry), with 5 new students attending orientation in July; 5 in EFSM (Education for Shared Ministry) with 2 or 3 more starting in late summer or early fall; 20 in SeBAH-COB, the Spanish language ministry training program. Also, 6 ordained ministers who serve in outdoor ministries recently completed the Sustaining Ministerial Excellence Advanced Seminar. (Numbers do not include people who attend academy programs for continuing education credit, or students in Academy Certified Training Systems such as the

Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center and the Christian Growth Institute, which are regional or district-based.)

**275** youth and adults registered for National Junior High Conference, a weekend of worship, Bible study, recreation, and fellowship hosted at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College.

**\$60,510** in Global Food Initiative grants that support work in China, Dominican Republic, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, North Korea, and Liberia, as well as several community gardening projects across the US, and the Brethren Nutrition Program in Washington, D.C.

**\$187,500** in grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund, directed by Brethren Disaster Ministries to support those affected by a hurricane in Haiti and drought in Kenya, home rebuilding projects in Missouri and West Virginia, the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative, and CDS responses.

**\$500,000** released from the EDF to continue the Nigeria Crisis Response in 2017, a joint effort of EYN and the Church of the Brethren’s Global Mission and Service and Brethren Disaster Ministries working with several partner organizations in Nigeria.

Find out more about the many ministries of the Church of the Brethren at [www.brethren.org](http://www.brethren.org).



# New mission, new methods, new places

by Jay Wittmeyer

**T**he name intrigued me: **Shalom Ministries in Reconciliation and Development (SHAMIREDE)**. The location in the heart of Africa also intrigued me: Burundi, Rwanda, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. This area of Africa is the source of the Nile River. It is where pioneer medical missionary and Africa explorer David Livingston worked.

“You have to go,” said R. Jan Thompson, my predecessor in the office of Global Mission and Service. “I have been in communication with this group and promised a Brethren delegation visit, but have not been able to go.”

In early 2010, I traveled to Bujumbura, Burundi. Two men I knew only through e-mails, Itulelo Imaja and Lubungo Ron, Christian leaders from the DR Congo, met me at the airport. I began to learn about this small group of Christians who had lived through years of war and genocide. They were looking to connect with a church that focused on peace, reconciliation, and development, and they had found the Church of the Brethren.

I was intrigued, but also apprehensive. When I first asked Lubungo how he came to know about the Brethren, he simply replied, “Through the Internet.” This is not a

**THEY WERE LOOKING TO CONNECT WITH A CHURCH THAT  
FOCUSED ON PEACE, RECONCILIATION, AND DEVELOPMENT, AND  
THEY HAD FOUND THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN.**

typical missional methodology, at least not one that the Brethren have employed. Historically, we have sought to sink deep roots in mission through long-term relationships, holistic outreach, and institution building. This was precisely the opposite of conventional Brethren mission.

Furthermore, scores of church groups regularly contact the Church of the Brethren from all parts of the world seeking partnership in some form or another. While most of these are legitimate requests seeking financial backing for meaningful ministries, few are really interested in much more than what finances the partnership might bring. So, from the beginning I was somewhat skeptical of R. Jan's enthusiasm, and even Brother Ron's integrity.

We proceeded, however, in what became a nine-year process focused on building relationships and slowly and systematically getting to know each other—always questioning whether this group was a good fit for us. While the work initially focused on the Congolese, through contacts with Brethren active in the region the work soon began to stretch into contacts in Burundi and Rwanda. It has proven advantageous to include individuals from all three countries in theological trainings as well as other outreach and



Rwanda

Jay Wittmeyer

development projects. To date, the Church of the Brethren has funded agricultural projects, disaster relief efforts, some scholarship programs, and church construction.

The process has culminated in a firm conviction that mission in the Great Lakes region of Africa has the potential to extend the Church of the Brethren witness and



Rwanda

Jay Wittmeyer



Rwanda

Jay Whitmore



Burundi

Jay Whitmore

establish churches. The Mission and Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren received and approved this proposal in March. Significant participants in the initial stages of the mission, and the discernment to proceed with a formal mission proposal, included Cliff Kindy, Gary Benesh, Galen Hackman, John Braun, Marla Abe, and Christian Elliott.

### AFRICA GREAT LAKES

**W**hy the Africa Great Lakes? The region has been plagued by Hutu-Tutsi violence, ethnic cleansing, sexual and gender-based violence, and poverty. Crucially, the mission already is showing strong impact as it reaches out to the largely unreached Batwa (Pygmy) people group.

The mission has had a promising beginning. In the DR Congo, six churches are associated with the emerging Church of the Brethren group. The largest community is in Ngovi, where the Brethren have partnered with local

believers to build a fairly large worship center to serve as a gathering site for theological training and conferences. The ordination of two individuals is recognized by the government of the DRC. The Brethren also have supported the peace trainings of SHAMIREDE.

In Rwanda, there are two ordained ministers and four churches located near Gisenyi on Lake Kivu in the far western region of the country. While the anchor church is in the regional town of Gisenyi, the other three are in the mountains above the lake.

In Burundi, there is a movement toward establishment of a church, but it is slower. The Church of the Brethren has identified several individuals to move forward with church planting, but it will take more time than in other locations. In Burundi, the Brethren support a peacebuilding institu-



Congo

Jay Whitmore

**THEY ARE KEEN TO UNDERSTAND HOW THEY MAY JOIN TOGETHER TO FORM A DENOMINATION, AND WORK TOGETHER TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE.**

tion called Trauma Healing and Reconciliation (THARS), participate in workcamps, support a feeding program for Batwa school children, and provide scholarships for theological training.

**VENEZUELA**

**A**long with the proposal for the Africa Great Lakes, the Mission and Ministry Board also approved a mission project to start the Church of the Brethren in Venezuela. Just as the Africa Great Lakes proposal began unconventionally, Venezuela has been unique and significant.

Initial connection for the project began in the Dominican Republic. Venezuelan evangelists had come to the DR to



Joel Peña

preach, and met pastor Ariel Rosario Rosario Abreu of the Church of the Brethren at Los Guaricanos, Santo Domingo. On hearing more about his faith and the Brethren in the DR, they invited him to Venezuela to teach and preach.



Joel Peña

**MISSION COMES IN MANY DIFFERENT SHAPES AND SIZES. WE SEEK TO BE ATTENTIVE TO THE MOVING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHILE ADHERING TO A CIRCUMSPECT MINDSET.**



After a successful first visit in 2015, he was invited to return with American Brethren.

In March 2016, Global Mission and Service sponsored American Hispanic leaders to join Abreu for a visit to Venezuela. These included Joel Peña, who is of Venezuelan descent, along with Fausto Carrasco, and Daniel D'Oleo. As the meeting, teaching, and worship went well, a larger meeting was planned for August to include Alexandre Gonçalves from the Brazilian Church of the Brethren. Gonçalves was invited back in November for more detailed teaching.

The first theological seminar in Venezuela was held in March 2016 with 48 representatives from 14 churches. In August, 43 churches sent representatives. In November, 64 churches participated with over 200 members. The worship included a feetwashing ceremony and several people reported that, next to the day of their baptism, this was the most significant spiritual event in their lives.

Many of the representatives have come from churches of Pentecostal or Baptist persuasions. The Brethren are offering them a more holistic understanding of the gospel, teaching heavily from our Anabaptist-Pietist roots. They are keen to understand how they may join together to form a denomination, and work together to serve the needs of the Venezuelan people.

Economically, Venezuela is in shambles. It began a journey toward a socialist state based on the model of

Cuba, funded by its oil industry. However, the economy fell into depression as the price of crude oil bottomed out, and hyper-inflation began to run rampant. Recent reports suggest that due to food shortages, the average Venezuelan has lost up to 19 pounds of weight, and 88 percent of Venezuela's young people are seeking to emigrate.

### MISSION IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

**M**ission comes in many different shapes and sizes. We seek to be attentive to the moving of the Holy Spirit, while adhering to a circumspect mindset.

While the mission projects in Venezuela and the Africa Great Lakes region are emerging differently than other Brethren mission efforts, I am firmly convinced we will build meaningful relationships with deep theological discussions and projects of service to address human suffering—together as one body in Christ. 

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





# Risk Hope

*Reflections inspired by an invitation for MESSENGER readers to submit short essays on the Annual Conference theme for 2017, "Risk Hope" (Hebrews 10:23).*

## Hope in forgiveness

by John Braun

**I**t was the fall of 1993, five months before an explosion of genocidal killing in Rwanda would catch the world's attention. Burundi's chaos brought about the death of about 300,000 people, with many more victims severely maimed and traumatized, and hundreds of thousands more becoming refugees—but the world barely noticed. In Rwanda, the killing spree ended in 100 days. In Burundi, civil war continued for 12 years.

David Niyonzima was a leader in Burundi Friends Church. He is Hutu. His wife is Tutsi. When Tutsi soldiers approached, led by two men from town, he was with 12 young candidates for ministry. They were Hutu and Tutsi. It was a sunny afternoon and the group was lounging on the lawn. Without warning, the soldiers turned and began firing their rifles at the group. The group scrambled. David found a hid-

ing spot but feared the worst when gunfire continued for a long time. Then soldiers broke into his hiding place. He could see their feet all around. They did not see him.

When all was quiet, David fled to his parents' house and asked to hide in their attic. They informed him that his wife and young daughter were safe. With horror, however, he realized that his parents could be at great risk because of him.

After hiding for a couple of days, he heard a voice speak clearly: "What are you doing here? Were you not protected from all of the bullets?" David dared to come out of hiding and found the bodies of eight of his students, murdered. He buried them together, and set a memorial marker. Later came news that four of the students had been captured and sent home.

Grief and despair set in. His faith was in turmoil. Why was he alive, but not his students? The voice visited him again to say, "You must forgive them!" "What?" he asked. "You must forgive them!" Surprised and bewildered by such a command, he asked, "Do I have to tell them?" "Yes," was the answer.

David knew the instruction was about the two men who had led soldiers to the massacre. All he could think of was

**"RISKING HOPE IS VISION WITH FEET ON IT." —David S. Young**

revenge, but, on a chance meeting with one of the men, these words came out of his mouth: “I know that you are one who led soldiers to kill my students. By the grace of God, I forgive you.” The impact was powerful for David. He understood then that God had a mission for him to promote forgiveness and healing.

Through civil war, danger, opposition, and violence against loved ones, David Niyonzima has been unwavering in his mission of healing for his people. He is executive director of THARS (Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services), vice-chancellor of the International Leadership University, and a mentor for two young church planters in Burundi. 

John Braun is a retired clinical pastoral counselor and a Church of the Brethren minister who currently serves as executive director for THARS International.

## Hope in relationship

by Sandy Bosserman

*“... A warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save” (Psalm 33:16b-17).*

**W**aldo came to us already named. None of us would have conferred such a name on a white horse. Okay, Waldo was splattered with little grey spots, too, and he was a Shetland-Welsh pony, not a “horse.” But Waldo met many other horse criteria a kid could love: flowing mane, soft muzzle, willingness to stand still for a pat or two—and a carrot.

Our son Kelly claimed Waldo among the motley collection of ponies on the farm because he was willing and able to provide a faster ride than some of the others. He also bucked when he felt the ride too long and the rider too demanding.

Sometimes Waldo ran crazy wild and bucked Kelly to the ground for no apparent reason. On those occasions, Kelly got up, rubbed the inevitable scrapes and scratches, yelled (in the manner of television cowboys), “No count bag of bones!” and climbed back on the moment he caught up to the cantankerous little equine.

Kelly just never could shake the confident hope that a boy and a white horse, even one named Waldo, could overcome relationship difficulties as well as address the evils of the world. They shared many miles before Kelly grew past pony-bearing weight and Waldo grew old and worn out. But then, Waldo was no war horse and, thus, Kelly no warrior.

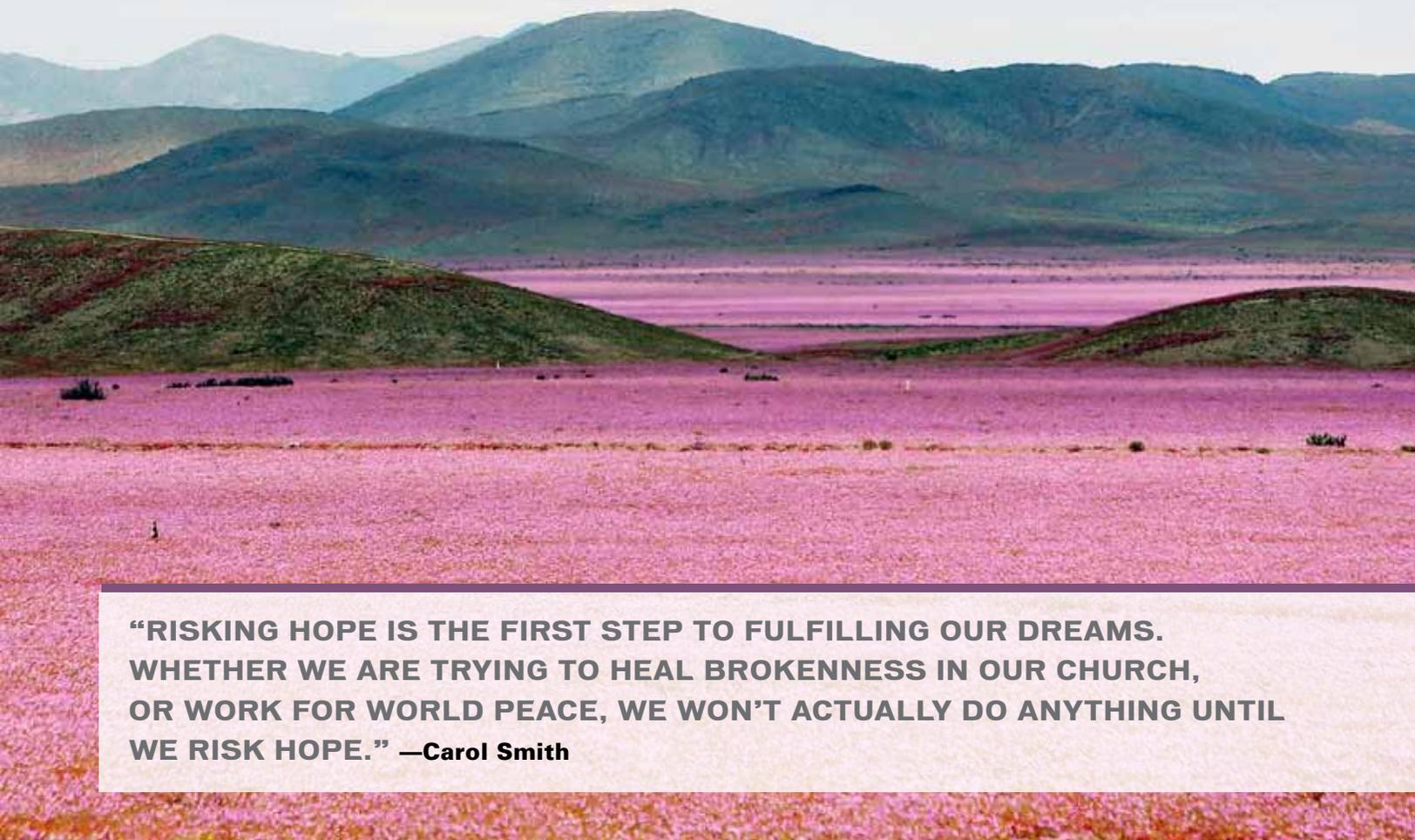
We pass over a lot of perfectly fine Waldos on our way to secure a war horse. We skip multiple possibilities to experience racing through sage-filled fields holding only to a white mane when insisting our destination is a showdown in full armor. We avoid the essential nature of being bucked off and landing hard, yet having too much common life invested with the “no count bag of bones” not to chase him down and ride, together, again. We escape the danger of developing the interdependence, mutuality, and respect that nurture relationships too big to fail under threat of spat, split, and injury. We miss the opportunity to study war less and know a vain hope-of-a-horse when we see one.

Amid all the talk of unity, diversity, propriety, purity, authority, and conformity, it might be good to recall we were sent to overcome relationship difficulties and address the evils of the world armored only in truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Spirit (see Ephesians 6). Since some of the greatest foreign and domestic conflicts occur over differing perspectives and interpretations of that “armor,” we can yet hope that the only horse left in the stable is a Waldo. 

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

Ricardo Moraleida/flickr.com





**“RISKING HOPE IS THE FIRST STEP TO FULFILLING OUR DREAMS. WHETHER WE ARE TRYING TO HEAL BROKENNESS IN OUR CHURCH, OR WORK FOR WORLD PEACE, WE WON’T ACTUALLY DO ANYTHING UNTIL WE RISK HOPE.” —Carol Smith**

## Hope in the wilderness

by Paul Munday

**W**hen you hear the word **desert**, what comes to mind? Dry sand dunes, prickly cactus, aridness, and barrenness. But what about abundance and new life? Can that break forth in the desert?

In the fall of 2015, a counter-intuitive thing occurred in Chile’s Atacama Desert, one of the driest places on earth. An El Niño weather system appeared unexpectedly, drenching the desert with some of the heaviest rainfall ever. The result: vegetation began to grow. To be exact, acres of vibrant flowers began to blossom, suddenly popping up in abundance throughout the once arid and barren landscape. Underneath the desert landscape were dormant flower seeds that had been hidden there for years. As the heavy rains came, the seeds burst forth, giving birth to radiant beauty.

In 1 Samuel, Hannah was in a barren place, lacking any prospect of birthing new life. The result: a sense of aridness,

and hopelessness. Hannah prayed to the Lord with “deep anguish . . . weeping bitterly” (1 Samuel 1:10), and for good reason. In Hebrew culture at the time, a barren woman was a shamed woman, unable to produce the children who were considered a sure sign of the blessing of God.

Hannah kept praying, relentlessly, in animated and demonstrative fashion. In fact, she was so demonstrative that Eli, the priest sitting nearby “thought she was drunk, and said to [Hannah]. . . . Put away your wine” (1 Samuel 1:13-14). “Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied. “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking . . . I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. . . . I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief” (1 Samuel 1:15-16).

The result: hopelessness turned to hope. Dormant seeds burst forth. Hannah blossomed, giving birth to a son she named Samuel, meaning “asked of God” (1 Samuel 1:20). Hannah didn’t give up on hope, and she didn’t stop asking for new birth and new life.

When did you stop asking? Where have you stopped seeking new life? Most of us go through seasons of hopelessness, when we don’t seek new life and barrenness seems to go on forever. For some, it is literal barrenness, as infertility continues with much anguish. For others, it is unemploy-

ment, as job inquiry after inquiry is ignored and devalued. Or it is relational angst, as efforts to reconcile appear futile and fruitless.

Whenever we feel hopeless, Hannah's hope challenges us: be more passionate about prayer than despair. But not just any prayer—poured-out prayer that is so heart-felt and so demonstrative that people might believe we're intoxicated. Hope that is intoxicated not with wine, but with the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, those first believers were so filled with God that they, too, were thought to be drunk because of the hope pouring out of their hearts (Acts 2:13).

As we risk hope with our Annual Conference theme, may hope pour out of our hearts, and barrenness be drenched with the Living Water—and break forth with new life! ❧

Paul Munday is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren. Most recently he served as a visiting scholar at Princeton Theological Seminary.

## Hoping in hope

by Angela Asamoah

**A**ll my life I've felt like I wanted more, hoped there was more. Not the kind of "more" you would think people want. I didn't want more money, more power, more recognition. I wanted more God, more peace, more unity, more opportunities to "do" something for God.

Instead of doing more, when I turned 13 I filled my time with teenage adventures. Drinking alcohol until my head spun and the world was insanely funny. Getting into cars with strangers to drive to parties where I only knew my best friend, and drinking the night away just because I could.

Reality generally catches up, and I realized I was making quite a mess with my life. By age 15 I was an alcoholic, partying with so-called "friends," blending pitcher after pitcher of margaritas while playing truth or dare with people who were nothing more than strangers to me.

When I dropped out of school my freshman year, my dad had a heart-to-heart talk with me. I remember having it, I just don't remember what he said. That's what my teenage adventures did—blurred out conversations I know were important. I do remember that my dad loved me, and he loved the Lord.

Just like my dad never gave up on me, neither did God. I know that God as a father scares many people who have been hurt badly by their own fathers, so let me share a secret. My dad wasn't my dad. I didn't even know him until I was 13 years old, the year my teenage adventures started in earnest. My

biological father was an abusive, alcoholic, military officer. When this new man suddenly decided he loved my mother and wanted to marry her, I wasn't sure whether to hug him or shove him away. So, I did both. And he still loved me, still loved my siblings, still stuck around when we were out of control.

We do this to God every day. We love him, we're scared of him, we hate him, we want more of him, we want to love like him. God hopes in us every day. God hopes we will choose him, that we will choose love.

My father risked hoping that I would grow up and I would see how much the Lord loves and forgives, that I would see how much hope God placed in me, and that I would do the same for others.

Now, at age 41, I have lived through a lot of times when all I could do was risk hoping that God would make it better—death, waiting, fear, anticipation. And I have learned that God's love and hope in us can be shared with those whom the world believes are hopeless.

If I can pass this along to even one person—this ability to risk hoping in the people everyone else has written off as being beyond hope—then maybe I have accomplished getting the "more" I have always wanted. ❧

Angela Asamoah, a life-long member of the Church of the Brethren, is a seminary graduate with a master of divinity degree who has been approved for ordination pending a call.

## Hope in God's promises

by Lisa Krieg

**T**he present overwhelms with fear and uncertainty. Nations make a show of might.

Unjust systems create economic insecurity and perpetuate poverty. Hate and violence flail out against the alien. Over the storm, Jesus speaks: "Peace, be still." God is our help and our hope, the calm in the midst of the storm. Step out in faith.

### **Risk hope.**

When there is so much wrong in the world and evil seems to have the stronger hand, hope trusts in the goodness of God.

### **Risk hope.**

When fake news and the false prophets of national supremacy or doom seem to dominate the airwaves and the headlines, hope reminds us of the One who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life."



**“HOPE CLINGS TO THE ETERNAL GOD OF WISDOM, IN WHOM IS FOUND ALL KNOWLEDGE AND WHO HOLDS ALL THINGS IN THE HEIGHT AND DEPTH AND WIDENESS OF UNFATHOMABLE LOVE AND MERCY.” —Lisa Krieg**

***Risk hope.***

Wars, bombings, and acts of terror destroy cities and places of worship. Children, women, and men are left dead or maimed and homeless, mourning and weeping. Hope looks to the One who sees the sparrow fall and counts each person as precious in the sight of God.

***Risk hope.***

When morality devolves into issues, we take stands and draw lines that shut our ears and hearts to the pain and needs of others in the name of purity. Hope points us to the One who ate and drank with sinners and drew them in with love.

***Risk hope.***

When fear and judgment arise because of difference of opinion or ethnic identity or lifestyle, hope recalls the One who traveled into Samaria to have a forbidden conversation with a woman, breaking cultural and religious barriers to share living water.

***Risk hope.***

Scripture recounts ancestors who lived in hope, though they faced hardship and atrocities and many died without seeing the fulfillment of God's promises to them. Many witnesses in the church's history lived and died by faith

in God's promises, but God is not contained by the past. Hope looks forward to the fulfillment of God's promises.

***Risk hope.***

God is at work in the world today through the lives of faithful believers, many in danger of bodily harm and death at the hands of evil powers, but God is not constricted by the powers of the world. In God alone are resurrection and eternal glory. Hope points to greater things than we can even imagine.

***Risk hope.***

The world today looks much different from the world of the Bible in many physical aspects and in terms of technological developments and scientific understandings. The world will keep on changing and will look much different for future generations. Hope clings to the eternal God of wisdom, in whom is found all knowledge and who holds all things in the height and depth and wideness of unfathomable love and mercy.

Risk hope, for God is our hope, whose steadfast love endures to all generations and to the ends of the earth. Amen. 

A retired teacher, Lisa Krieg is an ordained minister and a member of Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.



# Reflections from ordination Sunday

by Angela Finet

**O**n Sunday, Jan. 15, I was ordained into the ministry of the Church of the Brethren in a public worship service as prescribed by *For All Who Minister*. Even now, six months later, I'm still giddy from the celebration, and quite honestly, I'm a little surprised by that.

There were so many hoops to jump through to get to that point: 5 1/2 years of education resulting in a master of divinity degree from Bethany Theological Seminary, 4 interviews, 2 lengthy applications, 2 congregational votes—all while I was doing the job I had just been ordained to do for the last year and 8 months, having been called as pastor of Nokesville Church of the Brethren in May 2015. The cynical side of me wondered if folks would think this was just another

left feeling cold and unwelcome. And still they came, some from a very great distance.

There were friends from Pittsburgh and Philadelphia and Tennessee and Mississippi and Maryland. There were friends from my craft store and from different faith traditions and from no faith tradition. In all, there were 14 Churches of the Brethren represented from 4 districts.

This gathering of people, all dear to me, reflects our society. I see many of them so rarely. Over the last several years, in all of my work on building community, I have known that we are becoming more isolated and disconnected from one another, from God, and from a sense even of who we are.

The ordination service reminded me of who I am, and I

**FOR ME, AND I THINK FOR MANY WHO WITNESSED IT, THE ORDINATION SERVICE WAS A POWERFUL REMINDER OF HOW VERY NOT ALONE I AM, AND WE ARE.**

ploy to get one of Nokesville's famous potluck meals and some presents.

Silly, silly girl. Have I learned nothing after all these years?

My very first class in seminary was "Rituals and Reflections." In that class, we learned that the need for ritual is one of the basic human needs—every bit as real as the need for food, shelter, and love. Ritual is one of the ways we connect with one another, and it is a communal means of connecting with the Divine.

The ordination service reminded me of that in a humbling and breathtaking way. And even though it was my ordination, I was not the only one moved to tears or to dancing by the Holy Spirit.

Of the 148 people who attended, there were some who usually only found themselves in a church building for weddings or the occasional funeral. There were others whom formal religion had in some way injured or marginalized or

wish we all could have days like this. Someone said it was like a "celebrity roast," to which I responded, "No, it wasn't—it was the opposite of that!"

Someone else said it was like attending your funeral while you are still alive, to hear how the intersection of lives enhanced life for so many.

For me, and I think for many who witnessed it, the ordination service was a powerful reminder of how very *not* alone I am, and we are. God is and has always been with us—regardless of our wandering paths.

God has placed angels alongside me in human skin, to encourage me and feed me and protect me and correct me and simply to laugh with me and love me! This ordination ritual recognized all of that, as well as my calling to share the good news of God's many blessings with everyone else. 

Angela Finet is an ordained minister serving as pastor of Nokesville Church of the Brethren in Virginia.

# A big God in the small spaces

by Sarah Shearer

**remember the night when my head hit the pillow,** I shut my eyes, and the first word I said to God was, “Bonjour.”

It was about a month into my semester in the south of France, and I was starting to get impatient with myself. I’d heard that it takes about three weeks living in a foreign environment for the language to really “click,” and according to that timeline, I should have been well on my way to speaking with ease. Like a lot of things in life, it turned out to be a bit more complicated than that.

But, on a tired Tuesday night, that one word: *bonjour*. Breaking through that wall of conversation (can I call it prayer?) was not only a victory in my language progression, but also the beginning of some serious work to get the most out of those four months.

There is so much life to live on the other side of what’s easy. Press into uneasy conversations and challenges, knowing that God is with you and waiting on the other side, and one day it will become your default. When I spoke to God on my pillow, I wasn’t trying to force French out of my mouth or speak coherently for any professors who might be listening. I was just talking. Just praying.

First steps into the deep: check.

It was moments like this that I found God in France. Some were in community, like the Sunday morning I spent volunteering with a local church, Paroisse Saint-Jean-de-Malte. Each Sunday, members gather with fresh croissants, coffee, and tea to serve the homeless population. It’s all about loving the less fortunate through breakfast and some conversation.

I arrived sharply at 8 a.m., and met two nice older men who had their hands full with water jugs and a large tent. It was pretty chilly and lightly raining. Others began arriving and slipped into their familiar roles: preparing the coffee carafes, counting out tea bags, and pouring sugar cubes into styrofoam cups. I felt a little useless. I didn’t know how to be a help and I wasn’t even sure how to ask what to do.

The next thing I knew, two volunteers took my hands and we were all standing in a circle, about 20 of us. The man in charge explained how we were going to walk the streets with our breakfast trays. As he continued, I noticed people beginning to close their eyes and realized this was our prayer. I didn’t catch a clear picture of what he said, but I knew God was there in those moments—could even feel it.

On that morning, God showed up and flipped a switch in

me. I could suddenly see, praying in a foreign language with foreign people to the same God, a startlingly clear picture of his majesty. Real majesty. As real as the toast you probably had for breakfast. Real like the mailman you exchange brief weather conversation with while he delivered your bills and *Good Housekeeping*. Real like your best friend.

We hear sermons and have conversations in coffee shops about a “big” God. But it wasn’t until I was standing outside in the rain, holding hands and bowing my head with people who (some of them) could not understand the language I grew up speaking, that I realized God is much vaster than I know. Yet he is a detailed God, as close as your heart. He may speak to you in English. He speaks to a woman in France—who eats the kind of olives you’ve never heard of and prays in a language you can’t understand.

I found a big God in the little places of held hands and French prayers. If the semester in France taught me anything, it’s that I’ve seen so much and almost nothing at the same time.

France put a new face to Isaiah 55:8-9, “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’” 

Sarah Shearer is a nonfiction writing and French major at the University of Pittsburgh. She spent four months with the study abroad organization CEA in Aix-en-Provence, France, at Aix-Marseille Université.





# Giving a banquet in Flint

by R. Scot Miller

*“When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you” (Luke 14:13-14).*

**M**ary Lorah-Hammond and Jennifer Betts had been dreaming of doing dinner church, and they knew that the Flint, Mich., water crisis brought nutritional needs to the forefront. We decided to invite folks from the farm market, our Facebook friends, activists, and professionals serving the city to share dinners on Tuesday nights. We distributed flyers, extended invitations, and made preparations for a messianic banquet.

And nobody came.

But we had been reading Luke.

While Mary and Jennifer cooked, I went outside and walked around the neighborhood, inviting everyone I encountered to come to the church on Stocker Avenue and share a meal. I believe we had 12 that first evening. This continued every Tuesday night. Often our guests came as the result of someone going out into the neighborhood, embodying the text of Luke 14.

Flint is a place where the sins of unjust economics, whiteness, and electoral politics have come home to roost. In the midst of a water crisis wreaking a catastrophic effect on residents of the city, resulting in corporate trauma, the failure of the church is as evident as the failure of the water system. When their water was poisoned and the fact of the poisoning denied by authorities, the residents of Flint were abandoned to suffer the consequences of state-sponsored sin and in-

stitutionalized racism. They were left behind by a changing economy that no one prepared them for, nor explained to them, despite promising them new jobs and new prosperity every election cycle.

I felt a call to return to Flint, the home town my parents left during the recession of the late 1970s. When I heard of the water crisis, and pondered the biblical call to serve “the least of these,” I decided to go to Flint three days a week. I was welcomed by First Church of the Brethren and the African-American congregation sharing the building, NOW Ministries.

We went from distributing 3 pallets of bottled water a day to 18 pallets a day, 3 days a week. We also found the resources to provide neighbors with fresh food, diapers, and hygiene products, and up-to-date information about the water crisis. Along the way, we shared with one another our understandings of God and the Bible and talked about how to reflect the love of Christ to our neighbors.

The number of folks volunteering allowed the church to keep its doors open almost every day of the week. As such, the building on Stocker Avenue became a central location for adults and children alike to experience community. This became evident one day when my 70-year-old water distribution partner, B.B., and I were faced with a dilemma. We were the only two at the church, waiting for hours for a water delivery. The state was not sending enough truck drivers to help with water distribution, and food bank drivers were pressed into double duty. We finally received our delivery at 5 p.m.

Cars were lined up for water, and B.B. and I were having great difficulty keeping up. We were wearing down, and our instructions were to not leave water outside. The line of cars

**WE ARE SHARING THE BLESSINGS OF FAITH IN A MANNER THAT MAKES THE KINGDOM OF GOD A CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO SYSTEMATIC CORPORATE SIN FOR THOSE MOST IN NEED OF GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY.**

grew, and we were becoming exhausted. As the sun set, first one teen came over to the church to volunteer help, then a second. A third came with his sister, who set up a candy and Kool-Aid stand, using bottled water to make the drinks with sugar from her house. That evening, we recognized we were making an impact. We had folks from our block, ages 8 to nearly 80, distributing water and having fun. We had purpose together.

Over the next few weeks, we distributed water, fed children and drug addicts and homeless folk, treated a heroin overdose, and began delivering food to people who were marginalized to the point of being afraid of coming to the church because some distribution points were asking for photo identification. We served refugees and immigrants who did not know English and could not get help or were scared to seek it out. We were the church, practicing radical hospitality and welcoming people from any and every background.

We continued to talk about the Bible and what the stories of the Bible meant to us. We also talked regularly about what the church needed to be in order to be relevant in the lives of our neighbors.

One warm Tuesday evening, my son Micah and I left Mary and Jennifer cooking and walked around looking for people to invite for meal sharing. I noticed two women in a van, crying. I asked if I could help. They told us that one of their families had just moved into an abandoned house. They had lost their food benefits card, had no cash, nothing to eat, and no electricity. I told them to bring everyone to the church for a meal.

That night, we had more than 20 people eating with us, 8 of them connected to the women from the van. As everyone was enjoying food and conversation, I tried to reach out to the father of the group. He was less than interested in communicating and seemed to feel patronized by me as I served him bread and soup.

As NOW Ministries worked to get the family set up for food delivery the next day, it was evident they needed some things that night. I asked the father if he would like to go with me to Kroger to pick some things up, and I could foot the bill. He was reluctant, but decided to go. As

we drove to the grocery store, he began to open up. When he found out that we shared some experiences of city living, we began a conversation that soon turned into a warm experience of friendship.

Our hospitality came from reading the Bible and trusting that living out the stories would lend credibility to



**Scot Miller (at right) with Samuel Smith, a Flint resident and volunteer with NOW Ministries.**

our actions. We acted in faith and our faith was vindicated. But the vindication is by no means represented in a growth of church membership, or big publicity regarding our worship services, or even in miracle funding for more outreach. For scripture states that it is of no use to provide hospitality to those who somehow repay you. We will be vindicated for our faithfulness at judgment—but salvation comes immediately to those in need. They are liberated from the bondage of facing crisis in isolation.

The church responds to evident sin as well as sin that has not been properly identified. If the economics of food are unjust, the church calls this sin and offers an alternative. We are sharing or extending the blessings of faith in a manner that makes the kingdom of God a credible alternative to systematic corporate sin for those most in need of God's grace and mercy. Our voluntary sacrifice of privilege and sharing of resources supports our words. 

R. Scot Miller is a minister of outreach and education with Common Spirit Church of the Brethren, a house church in Grand Rapids, Mich. His witness includes substance abuse therapy, small farm ministry, and writing. His book *Gospel of the Absurd* will be published by Wipf and Stock in late summer.



# Not silenced in death

by Gary W. Studebaker

*“Having begun his third year as an agriculture volunteer with Vietnam Christian Service and married nine days, the house where Ted Studebaker, his wife, and his Vietnam Christian Service colleagues were living was attacked by a mortar barrage at the back door. The intruding soldiers entered the bottom level of the house from the back porch, where they shot Ted to death in his bedroom shortly after midnight on April 26, 1971. As the attack began, Ted [had] helped three VCS workers take shelter in the closet bunker. They were Phyllis Cribby, the nurse, Daisy Banares, the rice expert, and Pakdy, his wife. Questions will always remain as to how and why Ted was killed.”*

— Gary W. Studebaker and Douglas E. Studebaker in *Ted Allen Studebaker: An Enduring Force for Peace* (Wipf and Stock, 2017).

**A**s I researched a biography of my younger brother, Ted Studebaker, I was not surprised by his principled and disciplined living. He saw it as his responsibility to take a stand for human rights and back it up when necessary with logical reasoning, personal examples, and scripture, as well as volunteer work.

Ted was skilled at advocacy and educating the public. He realized that until hearts and minds are changed, peace will remain elusive—no matter where it is sought. His

advocacy for humanitarian principles began long before he served as an agriculturalist through Vietnam Christian Service.

How natural it was for him to connect with audiences through his candid speaking and writing as well as dialogue on a personal level. He expressed urgency when he spoke about the “non-necessity and incoherence of the war in Vietnam” (the Vietnamese call it the American War). He saw the intrusion war was making into all areas of life among the Koho people, and listed some of the many consequences of the war: a growing number of refugees, prostitution, the black market, drug abuse, the spread of crime, family problems, and the ongoing hatred and indifference between the warring countries, that has lasted long after the war ended. (When my brother, Doug, and I visited Di Linh, Vietnam, in May 2012, we heard comments that showed hatred and indifference toward Americans still exist.)

Ted lived in a war zone and was well aware of the dangers. He described them in his letters—seeing dead bodies within 50 yards of the front of his house, destruction to his crops by soldiers trampling through his test plots or eating the produce.

Political correctness would not stop Ted from addressing the immorality and futility of the war. In a letter to his home congregation, he explained that they were probably doing considerably more to further the war through the taxes they were paying, than they were furthering the cause of peace. In



**Left: Ted Stuebaker with a family in a field in Vietnam.**

**Vietnamese friends help Doug and Gary Stuebaker dedicate seeds provided by each of Ted's siblings. The seeds were scattered in his memory.**

one of his urgent letters to his parents, he wrote: "If you want to help me, tell the people to write a letter to their congressman in Washington D.C. including everybody in the church. They need to be voicing their opinions about this war now!"

He even challenged his own social work organization. After listening to a conference speaker, he wrote a letter to him. "I was disappointed that your opening speech did not include one of your priorities for social welfare: the immediate end to the destruction, corruption, social disorganization and needless suffering which accompanies war," he wrote. "Yet these stated priorities were not addressed." And he made suggestions for addressing these issues at the next conference. The speaker never responded.

From his correspondence, I discovered he always maintained confidence in his work in the Vietnam highlands. This was bolstered by his rapport with the Koho people. He was genuinely enriched by being a participant in the Koho culture.



Additionally, Ted knew who he was in Christ. His own statements display this:

"Remember the good Lord rewards only effort not success."

"If I fear God I need not fear any man."

"Thanks for running with me today Lord."

"The ultimate truth, the ultimate meaning in our lives, lies in our relationship with you, God."

Many accounts have supported Ted's outspoken criticism of the war. On one occasion he stated, "I can't by any stretch of reason, see how the US can ever hope for an honorable end to a dishonorable, illegal and immoral war that it is fully responsible for starting."

"We were wrong, terribly wrong. We owe it to future generations to explain why," wrote Robert McNamara, secretary of defense, in 1995, 20 years after the end of the war in Vietnam.

In 2014, in the *Business Insider*, Harrison Jacobs wrote that "more than 20 million gallons of highly toxic chemicals that the US military sprayed on Vietnam still saturates Vietnamese lands, wildlife and groundwater. These toxins continue to inflict birth defects on generations of Vietnamese children decades after the war."

What features of Ted's life resonate today? His vision and courage as he carried out his humanitarian beliefs. His advocacy for more responsible ways to address indifference, hatred, and war. His gift of connecting with people, even those who opposed him.

By Ted's own statements, I realize that his trust was in Christ. I have learned from him that God provides an opportunity for all of us to examine our own lives by the lives that he puts in our path. This is one way Christ refines us, so he can use us more effectively. 

Gary Stuebaker has had a long career in special education. He himself served in Brethren Volunteer Service and International Voluntary Service in Laos.

**The work for peace and justice** through nonviolence is the chosen pursuit of a small number of individuals and organizations around the world. This calls for advocating and educating the public. It sometimes means building trust while finding ways to bring some degree of economic progress to areas devastated by war, natural disaster, or poverty. Work to build peace and justice is often pursued in underdeveloped countries through projects in education, agriculture, health care, construction, cultural preservation, language development, marketing, etc.

Resourcefulness and perseverance are necessary to establish rapport, learn the local language, customs, and engage in projects that contribute to the well-being of the people being served.

People who work for peace through nonviolence often face resistance. Many of these courageous individuals are willing to relinquish their own personal liberties. They see a cause greater than self and are not intimidated to speak the truth. They are not willing to be a bystander when they see injustice and they are certainly not afraid to go into harm's way to get the job done.

What motivates these individuals to take such a courageous stand? They could have chosen to ignore these problematic areas of life. They could have taken a secure job and lived their lives away from inconvenience, poverty, and sometimes war. Isn't a life of happiness and personal fulfillment to be sought after? For these individuals, happiness and personal fulfillment can only be secured when they are engaged in efforts to bring restoration where there is oppression and injustice. 

From the preface to *Ted Allen Stuebaker: An Enduring Force for Peace* by Gary W. Stuebaker and Douglas E. Stuebaker (Wipf and Stock, 2017).

# Our greatest joy

**Let's begin with a question:** What do Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama have in common? Yes, you're right: They are both well-known religious leaders. However, the religions they represent—Christianity and Tibetan Buddhism—have significant differences. The two men come from countries with histories and cultures that bear few similarities. Yet they have authored a book that, as of this writing, has been on bestseller lists for more than 30 weeks.



KEN GIBBLE

The occasion that produced the book was a week-long meeting of the two men in Dharamsala, India, where the Dalai Lama resides while in exile from his homeland in Tibet. The timing of the meeting corresponded with his 80th birthday. Although the two had met only a few times previously, they had formed a friendship through correspondence and each considered

the other his “mischievous spiritual brother.” They asked another friend, Douglas Adams, to join them and record their conversations that would find their way into a book.

The theme of these conversations was what both men believe is an answer to so much of the human experience: sadness, stress, and suffering. That answer, they are convinced, is joy. It was Tutu who contrasted the words *joy* and *happiness*. In his words: “Joy is much bigger than happiness. While happiness is often seen as being dependent on external circumstances, joy is not.”

His words were echoed by his friend, who said: “Everyone seeks happiness, joyfulness, but from outside, from money, from power, from big car, from big house. Most people never pay much attention to the ultimate source of a happy life, which is inside, not outside.”

While their theme is a serious one and their exploration of it provokes thoughtfulness in the reader, my primary take-away from the book was delight. A wonderful sense of humor pervades the pages as two spiritual giants gently tease each other in heart-warming fashion. Especially delightful

are some pages of photographs taken of the two friends.

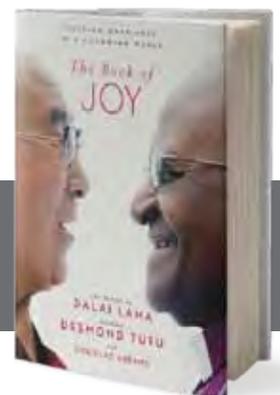
Drawing from their two different religious perspectives, both the Dalai Lama and Tutu consider what they call “obstacles of joy.” The list is long: fear, frustration, anger, loneliness, envy, illness and grief, to name a few, and each item on the list is approached fully and honestly. Both men agree we cannot control the inevitability of encountering these obstacles. What we can control, with the help of meditation and prayer, is our response to them.

Turning to the responses that can produce joy, the two friends discuss four qualities of the mind: perspective, humility, humor, and acceptance. They go on to consider what they named as four qualities of the heart: forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, and generosity. They regard the last two of those qualities, compassion and generosity, as particularly important.

What makes this book of special benefit to people who are seeking practical ways to develop spiritual maturity is the closing section, which offers numerous suggestions for meditation and prayer. To cite one example, Archbishop Tutu offers a meditation he calls “the Fourfold Path of Forgiveness.” It consists of very practical steps that can lead us past harboring resentment that are harmful both physically and spiritually. Another example is a description of a practice of prayer and fasting related to the goal of increased compassion.

The book concludes with a testimony to the importance of relationships. Both men have lived their lives in spiritual communities that have nurtured them. The result has been an awareness of the centrality of connecting their lives with the lives of others. In their own words: “Relationship is the true proving ground for spirituality. Ultimately, joy is not something to learn, it is something to live. And our greatest joy is lived in deep, loving and generous relationships with others.” 

Ken Gibble, a retired Church of the Brethren pastor, writes from Camp Hill, Pa. Read more on his blog at [www.kenslines.blogspot.com](http://www.kenslines.blogspot.com).



## ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*. Authors: the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and Douglas Adams. Publisher: Avery Press, 2016.



# Strawberry Rhubarb Cobbler Pie

Serves 8

## FILLING

2 cups fresh, sliced strawberries  
3 cups chopped rhubarb  
1 cup sugar  
6 tablespoons flour  
½ teaspoon cinnamon  
2 tablespoons butter

## CRUST

1 cup flour  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ cup butter  
3 tablespoons shortening  
2-3 tablespoons ice water  
1 tablespoon milk  
1 tablespoon sugar

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

To make the filling, pour the strawberries and rhubarb into a 9-inch deep-dish pie plate or casserole dish.

Combine the sugar, flour, and cinnamon in a bowl. Sprinkle the mixture over the fruit. Dot with butter.

For the crust, combine the flour and salt in a bowl. Cut in the butter and shortening using a fork or pastry blender until coarse crumbs form. Add 2 tablespoons of ice water and mix to form a soft dough. Add more ice water if the dough seems dry. Shape the dough with your hands into a ball.

Roll out the dough onto a floured surface to about 10 inches in diameter. Place dough on top of fruit. Flute dough over the edge and press against the inside of the dish. Brush the top with milk and sprinkle with sugar.

Cut 4 to 5 slits in the top to let steam escape.

Bake until the crust is golden brown, 50 to 60 minutes. Cool on wire rack. 

This recipe is one of hundreds under consideration for *Inglenook Desserts*, a cookbook to be published by Brethren Press in 2018. It was submitted by Norma Ross Sexton of Bakersfield (Calif.) Church of the Brethren. See [www.inglenookcookbook.org](http://www.inglenookcookbook.org).

# 'And I did not know it'

by Bob Bowman

**I**t was an unexpected place to experience a vision. Jacob, according to the story in Genesis 28, was leaving home. The announced purpose of his journey was to find a wife. But there were other factors at play. Jacob had cheated his brother, Esau, and lied to his father, Isaac. It would be better for everyone if he were away from home for a while. Going to find a wife was not really Jacob's idea. It was a convenient ploy put forward by his mother, Rebekah.

It is hard to determine whether Jacob felt more pride in outsmarting everyone at home or more shame at having irrevocably ruined relationships in his family.

It was his first night away. He slept out under the stars with a stone for a pillow. I have often wondered whether that was symbolic. Or, maybe, that's the

meaning of the phrase "between a rock and a hard place."

During the night Jacob experienced a vision: a dream of a ladder or stairway going up to heaven. In his dream there was not only a ladder. God was standing there, offering a covenant to Jacob and saying, "Know that I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go." And then the scripture says, "Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it."

What did Jacob mean? What was it that Jacob did not know? The usual interpretation is that Jacob is surprised that God would be present. Why would he be surprised? We could suggest it is no accident that the verse starts "Then Jacob woke from his sleep." The dream he had while asleep caused him to awake to God when he was not asleep. Maybe Jacob was not used to being

fully awake to life.

It is difficult to find someone who goes through life quite awake. We are surrounded by distractions. There are realities we fear to face. If we should become aware, we might find God in more places than we assumed. We image Jacob thinking, "If God is here and I didn't know, then perhaps God has also been other places where I didn't know it."

A favorite line from Elizabeth Barrett Browning: "Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God. But only he who sees, takes off his shoes. The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries." So far, in his life, Jacob had only been plucking blackberries.

Perhaps Jacob meant he was surprised God would appear to him, given the unsavory character of his history up to this point. One is not surprised to find God on Vesper Hill at church camp.

**EVEN THOSE WHO ARE GROWING AND EVOLVING CAN SOMETIMES STAY ATTACHED TO PARTS OF THEMSELVES THAT THEY NEED TO LEAVE BEHIND.**

And when one witnesses those rare and sacred moments of life such as grace, or forgiveness, or deep love, then one instinctively senses the presence of God. It is more rare to find God when life is in a jumble and there is nothing but a stone for a pillow. Only the most observant know that God is present at all times.

The usual interpretation—that Jacob did not know God was there—makes good sense from our English translations. Understanding Jacob’s comment grows more complex when we learn that there is an extra word in the original. Literally translated, the Hebrew sentence would read: “Surely the Lord in this place and I knew not I.” Faced with sentences like that, it is easy to see why translation can be difficult business. Lawrence Kushner wrote a book in which he explored at least seven different ways Jacob’s sentence could be understood.

With that extra word “I,” Jacob’s sentence could mean, “God is here, but I did not know myself.” I believe Jacob is right in recognizing that a meeting of God leads one to ask “Who am I?” I also suspect that Jacob has only just begun to ask that question. He will have miles to go before he wrestles with God enough to discover his real name in Genesis 32:22-32.

Once I read that prayer involved “fearless self-inventory,” I think that’s rather optimistic. Even in prayers of confession, I suspect that very few of us have the courage or the ability to probe deeply into the mystery of ourselves. And it seems that the world connives with us to avoid “fearless self-inventory.” As Jeremiah observed (Jeremiah 17:9), “The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse—who can understand it?”

When Jacob had a vision of the ladder between himself and heaven, it may be the first time he recognized that there is a dimension in his life that he did not know.

Yet there is another way to understand Jacob’s words. “Surely the Lord

is in this place and in me. I did not understand that.” I believe there is a sense in which we are in God and something of God is within us. It may be related to the invitation of Jesus, “Abide in me as I abide in you” (John 15:4). The Sufi spiritual writer al-Ghazali once said, “Know that the key to knowing God is to know your own self.”

The Quakers have frequently chal-

lenged us to respond to that of God in everyone. I have tried, with a minimum of success, to rise to that challenge. But, like Jacob, I find the hardest part is to respond to that of God within me. Jacob would be transformed if he could realize that his name is a part of God’s name. 

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

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Keith Hollenberg



Church of the Brethren

# When good intentions are not enough

by Dana Cassell

**don't think it was coincidence that the Sunday** after I read Bob Bowman's Bible study from the April MESSENGER someone quoted one of his helpful scriptural interpretations during our congregation's regular time for responses after the sermon. It wasn't just any helpful interpretation, either: It was a clear, paradigm-shifting insight that this person had heard from Bob 35 years ago. It had been so transformative that this person remembered it across the decades.

I have long appreciated Bowman's scriptural commentary and knack for shaping our denominational reading of scripture. But I found "Sarah, My Sister" problematic. Bowman follows a reading of the Genesis 16 text by Cat Zavis, a contemporary Jewish commentator writing in the magazine *Tikkun*, to explore the relationship between Sarah and Hagar. Zavis and Bowman contend that perhaps Sarah's attempts to give Hagar to Abraham as a "wife" and not a "concubine" indicate Sarah's good intentions, an attempt to change the inherent injustice in the relationship of slave and slave-owner.

There are two problems with this reading. First, the scripture itself does not support it. Sarah's actions—giving Hagar to her husband as property, forcing her to bear a child, eventually

death, and resurrection.

When we realize that our own good intentions are not enough to change broken relationships, unjust systems or a fallen world, it is not enough to simply shake our heads, return to our old patterns, and ignore the larger realities that shape our behavior. Sarah did not seek metanoia. She remained oblivious to the ways her power and privilege were direct causes of Hagar's pain. When her good intentions failed her, she retreated into her stale and broken worldview, content to live comfortably in her own power and privilege instead of acknowledging and allowing Hagar's pain to change their relationship for the better.

We Brethren are a people of very good intentions. We know that we are called to witness and to serve. We have lived this way of service for so long that our good intentions have obscured opportunities for our own metanoia. Too often, we are like Sarah, resting on our own good intentions and refusing to acknowledge the pain of the other. When our actions fail to enact healing or justice, we say "well, we meant well," and refuse to turn our regret into true repentance.

This is especially true when it comes to racism and power. As a denomination with historical and demographic

**WHEN OUR ACTIONS FAIL TO ENACT HEALING OR JUSTICE, WE SAY "WELL, WE MEANT WELL," AND REFUSE TO TURN OUR REGRET INTO TRUE REPENTANCE.**

casting her out into the wilderness as the single mother of a defenseless infant—are not the actions of someone invested in a relationship of mutuality. When Hagar does return to Sarah, she does not do so in order to participate in a utopian sisterly ideal. Verse 9 clearly reads that Hagar is to return to the woman who owns her and "submit" to her. Focusing on Sarah's "good intentions" obscures the overarching unjust and oppressive context of slavery: one human being owning another.

Second, and more importantly, reading the story this way obscures our own discipleship. Good intentions are not enough. A life of discipleship involves what the New Testament authors call *metanoia*. We read this word in translation as "repentance," but the Greek word actually means a "total transformation of mind and heart." If we act on our own good intentions and simply regret that they do not produce good fruit, this is not true metanoia. This is not the way toward the transformation offered in Jesus' life,

roots in white, well-off, and privileged communities, we have barely begun to wrestle with the ways our good intentions might actually be perpetuating systems and structures of harm and injustice.

Instead of reading the story of Hagar and Sarah as a way to let ourselves off the hook—again—for failing to question the larger systems and structures that perpetuate relationships of inequality, we could begin to practice true metanoia. Instead of immediately identifying with the privileged Sarah in the story, we could begin to listen to Hagar's perspective, to allow Hagar's pain to penetrate our walls of self-deception and self-righteousness.

In the same way, we might begin to set aside our own good intentions and self-assured action in order to listen to the perspective of sisters and brothers of color, to allow their pain to penetrate our stubbornness, to seek—and genuinely desire—a true transformation of our relationships and our systems. 

Dana Cassell is pastor of Peace Covenant Church of the Brethren in Durham, N.C.



Roxane Hill

## Nigeria Crisis Response funds more relief and development

**N**igeria Crisis Response coordinator **Roxane Hill** has shared updates on the joint effort of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) and the Global Mission and Service and Brethren Disaster Ministries.

The EYN Disaster Team has been active in a number of areas this year. Some projects have been joint efforts with Mission 21, a Swiss mission. The following dollar amounts report funding from the Nigeria Crisis Fund.

- Peace and trauma healing work continues with workshops held at the EYN headquarters and in Maiduguri, and a “Training of Trainers” around the Maiduguri area (\$37,000).
- Food and household supplies were distributed along with medical services at Muni, Lassa, Dagu, Masaka, and Watu (\$31,000).
- Repairs were carried out at the Kwarhi Clinic of EYN (\$10,000).
- A Cyber Café was created, bringing Internet service to the EYN headquarters (\$2,800).
- A soybeans project to educate and encourage the growing of soybeans, and building a value chain of products for sustainability, has been underway. (\$25,000).
- Two tractors were purchased for use on large tracts of land to produce cash crops both to nurture independence and to purchase food for the needy and cover medical costs and school fees (\$67,000).

In addition, relocation villages have been receiving new families rescued from the Gwoza area; women are benefiting from Livelihood Trainings through the EYN Women’s Ministry (ZME); and 476 boxes of books were shipped to EYN, to be distributed to Kulp Bible College and other EYN schools and educational groups.

An area of continuing concern is the refugee camp at Minawao, Cameroon, which is not one of those run by EYN. Markus Gamache, EYN staff liaison, recently visited the camp with a group of ZME women. Families are trying to leave the camp for various reasons, including lack of food and water, and abuse of women.

## Grants support disaster response, food security

The latest grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) and Global Food Initiative (GFI) include the following:

**Community gardens:** GFI has provided \$1,300 to a project in Circle, Alaska, an outreach of Pleasant Dale Church of the Brethren in Decatur, Ind.; \$3,000 to Tokahookaadi Church of the Brethren in Lybrook, N.M., connected with Lybrook Community Ministries; and \$1,000 for an ecumenical group that includes New Carlisle (Ohio) Church of the Brethren.

**Missouri:** An EDF allocation of \$25,000 opens a Brethren Disaster Ministries rebuilding project in Eureka, following flooding caused by winter storm Goliath in December 2015.

**Washington, D.C.:** A GFI allocation of \$10,000 was given to replace the stove ventilation system at the Brethren Nutrition Program at Washington City Church of the Brethren.

**West Virginia:** An EDF allocation of \$35,000 funded a limited BDM project in Clay County, in response to flash flooding in June 2016.

**Africa Great Lakes:** A GFI allocation of \$12,500 continues agriculture work in Rwanda, administered by ETOMR (Evangelistic Training Outreach Ministries of Rwanda). In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a grant of \$10,000 has supported agriculture work by Shalom Ministry for Reconciliation and Development (SHAMIRED).

**China:** A GFI allocation of \$10,000 helps supplement and improve the diets of hospice patients at the You’ai (Brethren) Care ministry, led by Ruoxia Li and Eric Miller and connected to Yangquan You’ai Hospital in Pingding.

**Dominican Republic:** A GFI allocation of \$660 helped six representatives of Iglesia de los Hermanos travel to Santiago for training with Medical Ambassadors International.

**Kenya:** An EDF allocation of \$25,000 supports Church World Service response to a drought affecting 2.7 million people.

## CCS studies Native American rights and food security

**C**hristian Citizenship Seminar (CCS) on April 22-27 studied Native American rights and food security. Thirty-eight high school youth and advisers from were a part of this year's CCS.

In New York, the group met with Jim and Kim Therrien of Lybrook, N.M., who work for the Lybrook Community Ministries. Also presenting was Kendra Pinto, a young adult Navajo activist from New Mexico. They shared their experiences of serving with the Navajo community and how they have encountered issues such as oil contamination, land rights, and food insecurity.

That Sunday, the group explored New York and visited churches. Afterward, Devon Miller, who has a doctorate in anthropology and teaches at Michigan State University, led a session on the historical roots of indigenous food rights.

The next day included tours of the United Nations headquarters. After lunch, the group took a charter bus to Washington, D.C., to kick off the second part of the week.



Additional presentations were made by Joel West Williams, an attorney who works with the Native American Rights Fund and a member of the Cherokee Nation; Josiah Griffin of the Office of Tribal Relations at the US Department of Agriculture; Church of the Brethren member Jerry O'Donnell who works on Capitol Hill; Shantha Ready Alonso, executive director at Creation Justice Ministries; Mark Charles, a theologian and Navajo Christian activist; Gimbiya Kettering, the church's director of Intercultural Ministries; and Nathan Hosler and Emmy Goering of the denomination's Office of Public Witness. CCS was directed by Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, assisted by Paige Butzlaff, a Brethren Volunteer Service worker. —Paige Butzlaff

## Personnel notes

**Kayla Alphonse** is transitioning out of full-time work with the Church of the Brethren in Haiti to serve as pastor at Miami (Fla.) First Church of the Brethren. She will travel regularly to Haiti to continue building leadership capacity in the church's theological training, student scholarship, and student health programs.

**David F. Banaszak** has been called as Middle Pennsylvania District executive minister beginning Sept. 5. He currently pastors Clover Creek Church of the Brethren in Martinsburg, Pa. His leadership in Middle Pennsylvania has included serving as Standing Committee delegate, ministry formation director, chair of the ministers' calling and credentialing team, and on the ministers' education and support team.

**Sherry Chastain** has been hired as program assistant for Brethren Disaster Ministries and Children's Disaster Services. Her previous work at the Breth-

ren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., was for IMA World Health.

**Terry Goodger** has been hired as program assistant for the Brethren Disaster Ministries home rebuilding program, based at the Brethren Service Center. In previous service to the church, she worked from 2006 to 2016 as office coordinator for Material Resources.

**Kris Hawk** has begun as Northern Ohio District executive minister. She previously served as interim district executive, and was pastor of visitation at Akron (Ohio) Springfield Church of the Brethren. She served as moderator for the district in 2010, and from 1999 to 2006 served on the district board, which she chaired 2002-06. Her previous career was in nursing and health-care administration.

Northern Plains District has announced the hiring of **Doug Riggs** as director for Camp Pine Lake, joining

long-time staff program director/pastor Barbara Wise Lewczak and property manager Matt Kuecker.

**Grey Robinson** will be assistant coordinator for the Workcamp Ministry's 2018 season. She graduated from Bridgewater (Va.) College this May with a degree in religion and philosophy, and will begin work in August.

**Tabitha H. Rudy** began June 1 as Virlina District interim associate district executive, part-time. She is a 2017 graduate of Bethany Seminary, where she earned a master of divinity degree. She holds a bachelor's degree from Ferrum College and a master's degree from Hollins University. She taught at the high school level for several years.

**Sandy Schild** has retired as Finance Project manager and Operations Support for Brethren Benefit Trust. She began as BBT's director of Financial Operations in 2009.



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**A great read**

Thank you for a great magazine. I look forward to every issue—a great read, as they say. Thanks for your hard work!

**Sharon Sweitzer**  
York, Pa.

**God is the master poet**

We want to thank the writers and the staff of Messenger for the powerful, meaningful, and touching April issue, “Mystery and metaphor . . . God as poet of the world.” It resonates so much

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# LETTERS

with our life experience of realizing that God is the master poet and has gifted some of his “messengers” in expressing through imagery the deeper

feelings of one’s heart.

It is a joy to be back in touch with our heritage of the Church of the Brethren. After reading the April issue,

we subscribed to Messenger for two years. What a blessing!

**Karen and Dean Miller**  
Hagerstown, Md.



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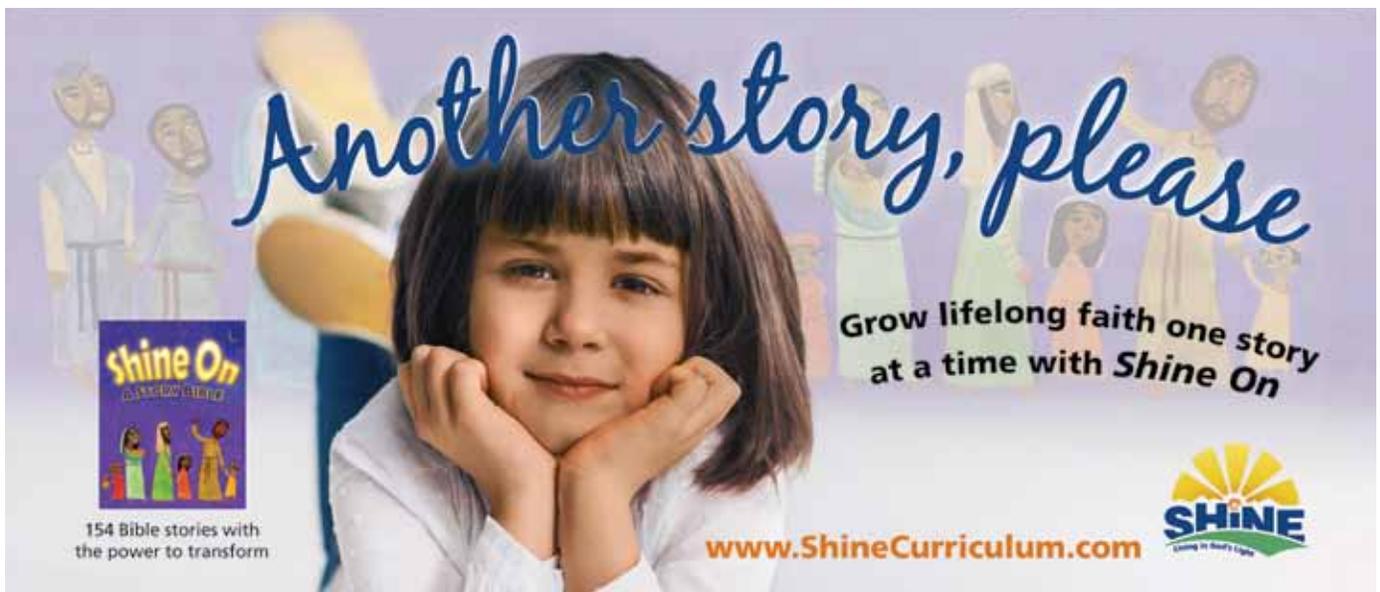
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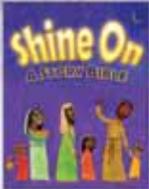
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## New members

**Bear Creek**, Dayton, Ohio: Randy Thompson

**Faith Community**, New Oxford, Pa.: Eleanor Detweiler

**Fellowship**, Martinsburg, W.Va.: Tony Crawford, Cintya Crawford, Christopher Wuest, Christine Wuest

**HIS Way**, Mills River, N.C.: Kimberly Casas, Priscilla Casas, Zeiny Chaves, Carlos Martinez, Maria Mendoza, Jorge Nunez, Luz Perez, Yesika Reyes Vasquez

**Lancaster**, Pa.: Aidan Buckwalter, Doris Cozzie, Wensela Gordon, Mariade Sanchez, Brooke Smith

**Lititz**, Pa.: Jeffrey Keller, Carter Ludwig, David Richie, Courtney Richie, Ester Sho, Tom Taylor, Jean Taylor

**McPherson**, Kan.: Mason Clark, Kenzie Goering, Rachael Hendricks

**New Carlisle**, Ohio: Michelle Barber, Gloria Gilchrist, Billy Warden, Steve Williams, Kelly Williams

**Oakland**, Gettysburg, Ohio: Terry Bengé, Cheryl Bengé, Ryan Bengé, Katie McCabe,

James Clark, Crystal McGlothlin

**Oakton**, Vienna, Va.: Fred Brower

**Roaring Spring, First**, Pa.: Aidan Baird, Reese Evans, Lucas Leslie, Jaden Myers, Wade Rhodes

**White Oak**, Manheim, Pa.: Molly Groff, Eric Lititzenberger, Caden Wagner, Jay Wolf

**York Center**, Lombard, Ill.: Jessie Marsiglio, Ann Miller, Giovanni Romero

## Wedding anniversaries

**Beal**, Albert and Phyllis, Friedens, Pa., 65

**Coffman**, Paul and Marilyn, South English, Iowa, 60

**Detwiler**, William and Helen, Norristown, Pa., 65

**Dull**, Don and Jean, Gettysburg, Ohio, 60

**Grossnickle**, Richard and Mary Sue, Woodsboro, Md., 60

**Hodson**, Mike and Barbara, Troy, Ohio, 55

**Miller**, Terry and Sharon, Bradford, Ohio, 55

**Pfaltzgraff**, David and Ruth, Keymar, Md., 50

**Seitz**, Harry and Dorothy, Phoenixville, Pa., 71

**Shank**, Delbert and Mildred, Bakersfield, Calif., 65

**Smith**, Karlton and Peg, Phoenixville, Pa., 67

**Stutzman**, Clifford and Sally, Hollsopple, Pa., 67

**Wilson**, Donald and Andrea, Union Bridge, Md., 55

## Deaths

**Adair**, Delores E., 86, Modesto, Calif., April 29

**Bowman**, J. Willard, 87, Boones Mill, Va., May 3

**Cassel**, Miriam, 98, Lititz, Pa., March 10

**Casto**, Dorothy Ohler, 86, Greensburg, Pa., May 14

**Deck**, Doris, 68, Silver Spring, Pa., Dec. 25

**Domasky**, Clayton F., 90, Greensburg, Pa., April 6

**Fourman**, James, 90, Greenville, Ohio, March 5

**Frey**, Herbert D., Jr., 91, Lancaster, Pa., April 27

**Gauby**, Martin Allen, 82, Boise, Idaho, Feb. 6

**Grittmann**, Jan, 65, Hudson, Iowa, May 7

**Hansell**, Allen, 80, Lancaster, Pa., May 10

**Hissong**, Patricia, 83, Greenville, Ohio, Feb. 21

**Jarvis**, Martha Mae, 85, Salem, Ohio, March 29

**Johnson**, Patricia Ann “Patsy” Davis, 63, Winston-Salem, N.C., April 15

**Key**, Patricia June, 92, Greenville, Ohio, Jan. 10

**Lehman**, Helen Nasser, 86, Greenville, Ohio, March 22

**Mason**, Kenneth Earl “Kenny,” 82, Bunkerhill, W.Va., Feb. 11

**McCray**, Lila, 92, Kenosha, Wis., May 7

**Miller**, Elsie, 95, Greenville, Ohio, Feb. 3

**Miller**, Marian B., 92, Lititz, Pa., April 1

**Miller**, Norman, 94, Greenville, Ohio, Dec. 7

**Orr**, Oattie Maurice, 89, Glenford, Ohio, April 12

**Pallavicini**, Betty Jo Courtney, 75, Staunton, Va., May 22

**Prochaska-Hackathorn**, Dorothea M., 94, Prairie City, Iowa, March 1

**Rosenberry**, Dennis Lee “Denny,” 75, Chambersburg, Pa., May 11

**Sauder**, Steve, 58, Oakland, Md., April 15

**Schrock**, Harry, Jr., 81, Rockwood, Pa., Feb. 8

**Seachrist**, James, Sr., 81, Sellersville, Pa., April 18

**Shaffer**, Floyd W., Sr., 87, Hooversville, Pa., April 13

**Shilling**, Carol A. Bircher, 77, Altoona, Iowa, April 27

**Shives**, Dorothy, 98, Greenville, Ohio, April 8

**Spangler**, Anna Ruth, 91, Johnstown, Pa., March 20

**Steel**, Eleanor M., 91, Hannastown, Pa., May 7

**Wagner**, Elisabeth “Betty” Sutton, 103, Ridgely, Md., April 24

**Weyandt**, Archie, Jr., 94, Hunker, Pa., Oct. 26

**Witwer**, Jeanne, 89, Greenville, Ohio, April 3

## Ordained

**Klink**, Aaron W., Virlina Dist. (Durham, Peace Covenant, N.C.), April 29

**Stutzman**, Paul Fike, Virlina Dist. (Fraternity, Winston-Salem, N.C.), April 30

## Licensed

**Polzin**, Kathryn, N. Ohio Dist. (Poplar Ridge, Defiance, Ohio), April 23

## Placements

**Benner**, Michael, from yoked pastor, Koontz, New Enterprise, Pa., and

yoked pastor, Waterside, Woodbury, Pa., to pastor, Everett, Pa., June 1

**Bollinger**, Glenn E., from pastor, Beaver Creek, Bridgewater, Va., to pastor, Mill Creek, Port Republic, Va., June 1

**Burkholder**, Connie R., from pastor, Roanoke, Williamson Road, Va., to team pastor, Monitor, McPherson, Kan., Jan. 1

**Davis**, Leon, from pastor, Tuscarora, Port Royal, Pa., to pastor, Ridge, Shippensburg, Pa., June 1

**Davis**, V. Jane, pastor, Peace Community, Windsor, Colo., Jan. 8

**Green**, Gary W., pastor, Brothersvalley, Berlin, Pa., May 1

**Kell**, Mark, pastor, Center, Louisville, Ohio, July 10, 2016

**Lovett**, Diana L., from pastor, English River, South English, Iowa, to pastor, Jones Chapel, Martinsville, Va., June 15

**Malone**, Tony, pastor, Trinity, Blountville, Tenn., June 11

**Morrison**, Don, pastor, Mountain View, Boise, Idaho, Oct. 30

**Moyer**, John Martin, from pastor, Garden City, Kan., to pastor, Myerstown, Pa., June 12

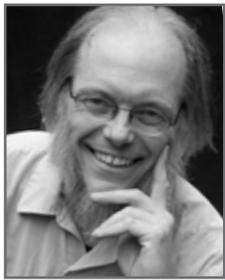
**Ritchie**, Daryl D., pastor, Cedar Grove, Brandywine, W.Va., May 21

**Saylor**, Lee D., from pastor, Fairview, Williamsburg, Pa., to pastor, Salem, Englewood, Ohio, June 19

**Stulz**, Adam Christopher, associate pastor, Roanoke, Summerdean,

# Broken hearts

**Q**uaker author Parker J. Palmer uses the **metaphor** of a broken heart to describe two very different human responses to pain. One scenario is of a heart exploding like a grenade, sending shrapnel in all directions. Out of anger and fear we inflict



TOM WAGNER

pain on others we perceive to be the source of our injury. The other image is of a heart broken open, like a fist unclenched into an open hand. Though also rooted in pain, this brokenness grows into empathy and compassion.

The culture wars of recent decades have taken their toll on relationships in local congregations and whole denominations as they have in the republic. Our disagreements on ethics and public policy are often driven by pain and fear. Consider how those emotions color our views on guns, race, gender, climate, security, and immigration.

Finding common ground requires willingness to stand in

ety of Friends had abolished slavery in its midst, used its influence to end the slave trade in Pennsylvania, and begun petitioning the new federal government to do the same.

My ruminations on controversy and decisionmaking in church settings have led me to use three words to categorize those discussions. One kind of conversation is debate. Debate is competitive by nature. There is a winner and a loser. Debate is useful in reducing a list of options to a final decision. We can learn a lot by setting facts and ideas against each other.

Dialogue is another way to communicate. In dialogue, we share information to build understanding, rather than persuade. Participants live in some level of mutual acceptance, but not necessarily agreement. While dialogue can be part of a good decisionmaking process, it might not be the final step.

The third way is discernment. In discernment, faith communities come together to seek God's will. Discernment moves us beyond majority rule and compromise to consensus. God's love is reflected as much in the process as in the outcome. It is a patient and prayerful process, not

**THE OTHER IMAGE IS OF A HEART BROKEN OPEN, LIKE A FIST UNCLENCHED INTO AN OPEN HAND. THOUGH ALSO ROOTED IN PAIN, THIS BROKENNESS GROWS INTO EMPATHY AND COMPASSION.**

what Palmer calls “the tragic gap” to hold in tension “what is” and “what might be,” or reality and possibility. The gap is tragic, not in the sense of sadness, but in the sense of classic drama. Tragedy is the “inevitable outcome of the flawed nature of human life. There will always be a gap between reality and possibility...”

In his essay “The Politics of the Brokenhearted: Holding the Tensions of Democracy,” Palmer cites John Woolman (1720-1772) as an example of one who inhabited that painful tension to abolish slaveholding among his fellow Quakers. For 20 years Woolman traveled widely sharing his testimony against slavery, holding in tension the Quaker ideal of “that of God in each person” and the reality of Quaker slave ownership.

He did not abandon his community and his community did not abandon him. They struggled together until consensus was reached. By the end of the 18th century the Soci-

hasty, but more enduring.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul addresses a congregation with members of both Jewish and Gentile origins. Paul reminds his readers that it was Christ who brought them together into one community, using the dramatic image of breaking down the dividing wall (2:11-22). Then he gives more specific advice on how to live together, pleading, “I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you were called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:1-3).

May each of us break open our hearts and share God's loving kindness with each other. 

Tom Wagner is a former pastor in the Church of the Brethren and serves Muskegon County (Mich.) Cooperating Churches as clerk and archivist.

Photo by Donna Parcell



# United

Serving the Lord together

“May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another.”

~Romans 15:5

Learn more at

[www.brethren.org/missionoffering](http://www.brethren.org/missionoffering)

# September 17

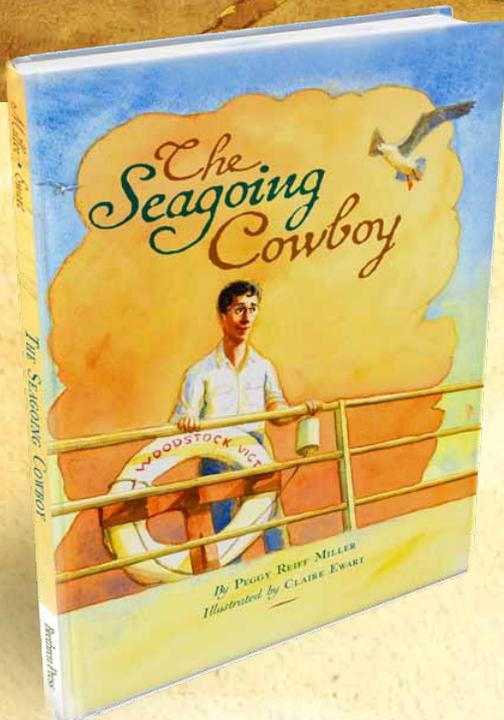
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# All aboard



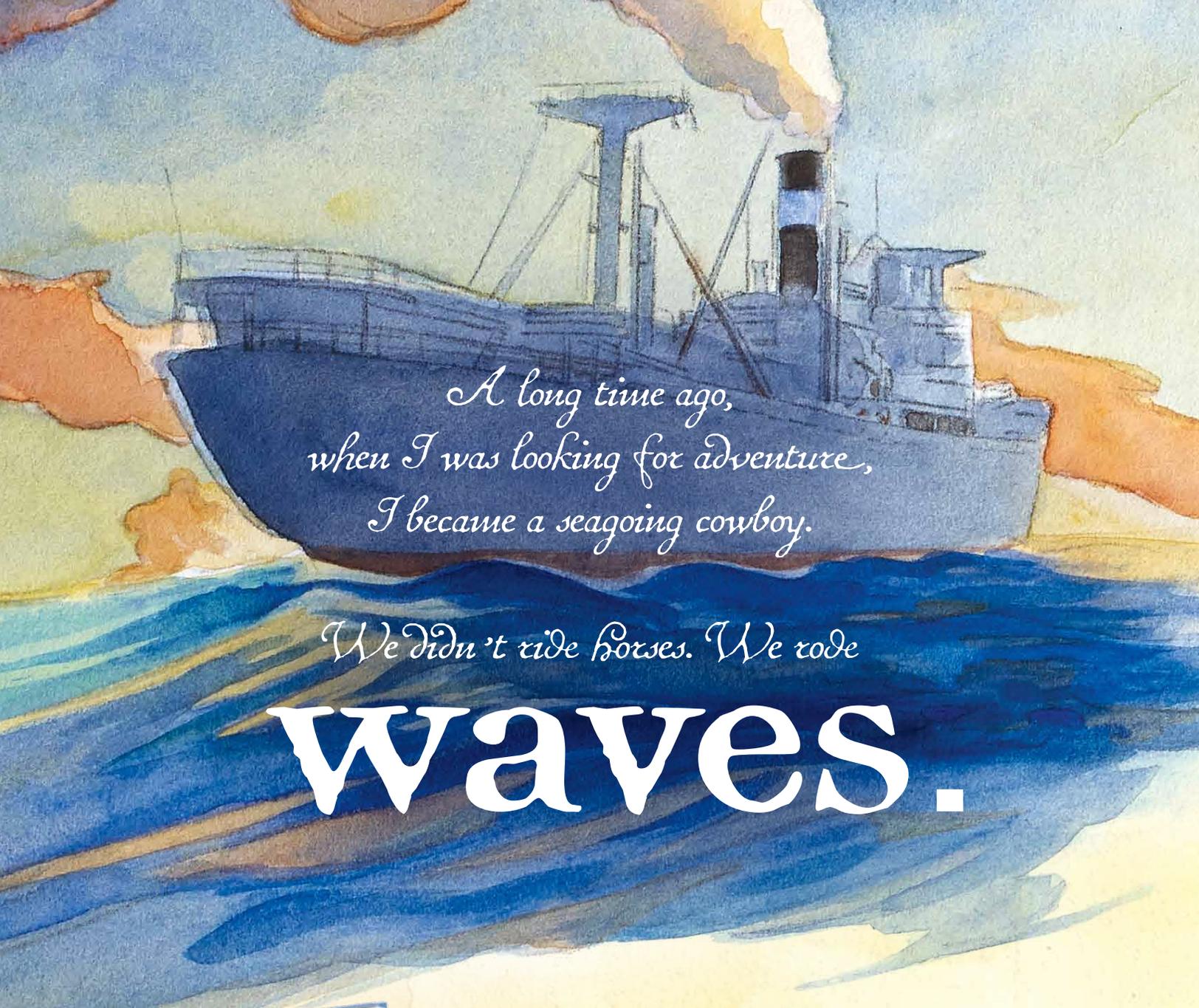
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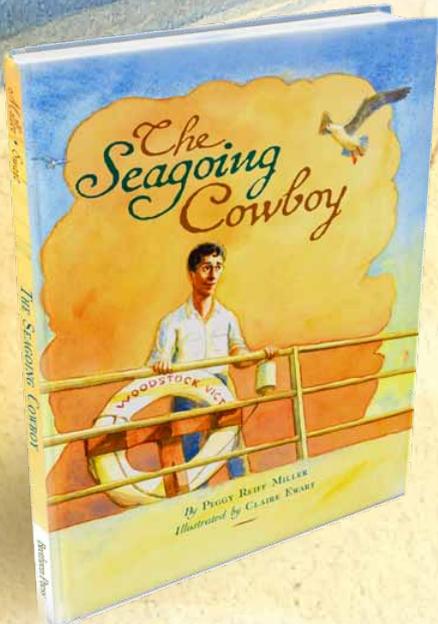
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