

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

# MESSENGER

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



Race, place, and the gospel

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# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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## on the cover

Sankofa Journeys (pp. 6-11) include a stop at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, where this stained-glass window is prominently visible. The "Wales Window for Alabama" was a gift from the people of Wales, U.K., to the congregation two years after the bombing there that killed four girls in 1963. Created by Welsh artist John Petts, the window depicts a Christ figure who with one hand rejects injustice and with the other extends forgiveness. The text "You do it to me," inscribed at the bottom, was the Sunday school lesson the morning of the tragedy. Photo by Wendy McFadden.

Nancy Heishman



**E**very day I receive an e-mail from Google listing the places where the Church of the Brethren is mentioned online.

While the Google Alert helps me catch interesting news that I might otherwise miss, most of the articles are pretty routine.



WENDY MCFADDEN  
PUBLISHER

They're items typical for community newspapers—obituaries, worship times, rummage sales, concerts.

Sometimes the search engine vacuums up news about another group with the word "Brethren" in the name—the Brethren Church, Brethren in Christ, Mennonite Brethren, Evangelical United Brethren, Plymouth Brethren, Exclusive Brethren.

We don't want to be mistaken for that last group, actually. The Exclusive Brethren (recently renamed the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church) regularly make news in Australia and New Zealand for disturbing reasons. A few years back, a television station in Australia snagged the logo from our Church of

the Brethren website and used it on a few news stories about the Exclusive Brethren. Some of the ensuing mail from outraged viewers managed to make its way to us here in North America.

Fortunately, that sort of confusion is rare. A better kind of confusion comes from the occasional oddball headline that's so compelling that I have to click to see what the connection is. That can happen especially when the headline describes the first item in a list of unrelated community events. Hence my vague sense that somewhere there's a group of Dunkers hosting ballroom dancing.

Well, the ballroom dancers turned out not to be us, but it made me wonder what headlines we wish our local news outlets would write about us. What has your newspaper written about your congregation the past year? What's your story? If bad news can travel halfway across the globe, can good news? I like to think so.

One of my favorite passages of scripture is the one about publishing: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isaiah 52:7 RSV).

Every one of us can be a publisher. When the world searches, let's be found bringing "good tidings of good."

*Wendy McFadden*

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# District goes above and beyond in collection for Nigeria, Haiti

**S**outh Central Indiana District has raised **\$28,800** to support Brethren work in Nigeria and Haiti. The concept started at a district board retreat, when board member Brad Yoder suggested raising money to build wells in Haiti. “Then the concept, ‘We ought to give something away,’ took hold,” says district executive Beth Sollenberger.



The district established a committee, offered a workshop to share information with church members, and announced a goal of receiving \$10,000 by the time of the 2017 district conference.

With 45 churches, the initial idea was to challenge each to raise \$200. Lots of people thought this was not realistic, Sollenberger remembers, because it had been many years since the district took on such a project. But with a lot of work and enthusiasm on the part of district leaders, the project exceeded expectations.

Churches started to give generously, and many came up with unique and interesting ideas for raising funds. The vast majority of churches sent in a check, and a gift was given in the name of every person in the district. In Sollenberger’s estimation, the whole district took part.

A success like this “is amazing, in our world and our life together,” she says. “For me, the participation is the over-the-top part.” She recalls a time, not so many years ago, when South Central Indiana District “was labeled the most divided in the denomination.... So to come back with an offering like this is really fun.”

The gift will be shared as follows: half for water projects in Haiti, a quarter for digging wells in Chibok, Nigeria, and a quarter for the Nigeria Crisis Response.

“We had so much fun that we’re trying to figure out what to do next!” Sollenberger says.

## Martha’s bucket brigade

**Martha Baile of Warrensburg (Mo.) Church of the Brethren** did not want anything special as she entered her eighties. Her family and friends, however, thought it fitting to honor her birthday and her 15 years of service on the Festival of Sharing Planning Committee. They began making contributions toward Church World Service clean-up buckets in her honor. Each bucket is valued at \$75. More than 1,000 buckets were collected at the 36th Festival of Sharing held Oct. 21 at the State Fairgrounds in Sedalia. Martha said, “It was the best birthday gift I could have had.” —Becky Baile Crouse



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.

## Nigerian cloth makes for a unique quilt

**E**kklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) had its origins in the work of missionaries sent by the Church of the Brethren starting in 1923. Don Shankster, pastor of Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren in Scottsdale, Ariz., was one of the children of missionaries who helped give EYN its start. He was born and raised in Nigeria. His parents, Owen and Celia Shankster, were in Nigeria for more than 40 years.



In 2015, members of the EYN Women’s Fellowship choir attended Annual Conference. The red fabric the choir wears is specific to the Women’s Fellowship. Other representatives from EYN wear the same fabric, but in other colors. Some Nigerian fabric was sold by the group to help with their recovery efforts, but not the red Women’s Fellowship material.

I inquired about availability of the red fabric, and Carl and

Roxane Hill graciously sent some yards for a payment made to the Nigeria Crisis Fund. Since that time, I have been working to make something special with it.

The result is this quilted wall hanging. Our Papago Buttes Women’s Fellowship has offered feedback and support along the way. This summer, Suzie Evenstad referred me to a quilter in Chandler who did the machine quilting. The “Nigeria Quilt” is now completed! —Karen Shankster



Eulalah Swank



Mabel Lucille Berry

## Celebrating centenarians

**Owl Creek Church of the Brethren in Bellville, Ohio, is celebrating two members who turn 100** this January. Rick Fulton has shared photos and life stories of Eulalah Swank, born Jan. 24, 1918, and Mabel Lucille Berry, born Jan. 28, 1918.

Eulalah was born at her great-great-grandfather’s farm—it was later turned into the Sacred Heart Seminary in Shelby, Ohio. In her first marriage to John Koser, she had two children. In her second marriage to John D. Swank, she had one child. She has eight grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren. Her professional life found her working for Westinghouse, Shelmar (where she was paid 33 cents an hour), Nestle’s, Sunglow, and General Industries in Bellville. Her life story noted: “Eulalah has always been blessed with the Lord to help her get through all of her trials and tribulations in life.”

Lucille was born in Mansfield, Ohio. She married Leo L. Berry from Lucas, Ohio, in 1941. When he came home from Germany at the end of World War II they settled on a farm just south of Lucas. She began attending the Owl Creek church in 2009 with her oldest son and daughter-in-law, and, her life story says, “quickly fell in love with the beautiful country church and its people.”



## 125 Stockings

*The Night Circle of Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend, Ind., made 125 Christmas stockings for Broadway Christian Parish to give out to children.*



“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.” —Song of Solomon 8:6-7

## The surprising origin of Valentine’s day

**Saint Valentine of Rome** is considered the patron saint of love, young people, and happy marriages.

One of the legends about St. Valentine (from Catholic.com):

“St. Valentine was imprisoned for marrying Christian couples and aiding Christians being persecuted by Claudius in Rome. Both acts were considered serious crimes. A relationship between the saint and emperor began to grow, until Valentine attempted to convince Claudius of Christianity. Claudius became [en]raged and sentenced Valentine to death, commanding him to renounce his faith or be beaten with clubs and beheaded. St. Valentine refused to renounce Christianity and was executed outside the Flaminian Gate on Feb. 14, 269.”

A variation of the legend may appeal to Brethren and other peace church people: “Other depictions of St. Valentine’s arrests tell that he secretly married couples so husbands wouldn’t have to go to war.”

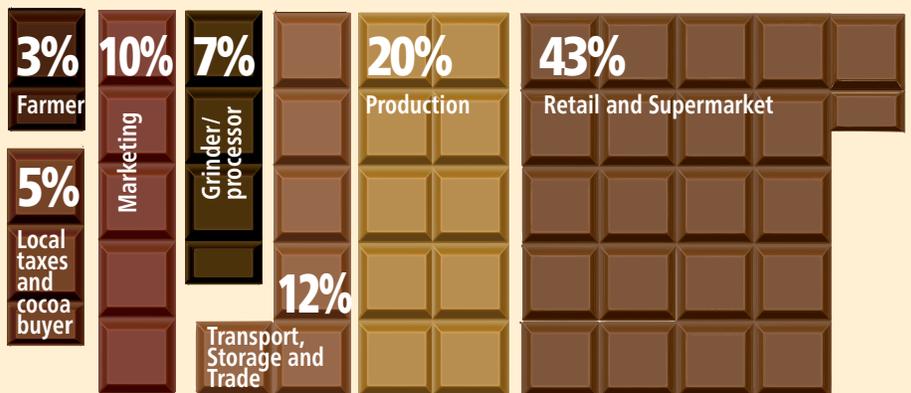
## Buying chocolate?

### Thinking about making chocolate your Valentine’s Day gift?

Consider fair trade chocolate as a more just and sustainable option. SERRV and other nonprofits distribute fair trade chocolate that offers cocoa bean farmers a fair price for their product, and decent working conditions.

Most of the world’s cocoa, grown in West Africa in the countries of Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon, comes from small family farms: 40 to 50 million cocoa farmers, farm workers, and their families rely on the bean for their income. However, in spite of 2014 global retail chocolate sales totaling \$100 billion, many cocoa farmers and workers earn less than \$1.25 a day.

### Where the money goes



This system leads to bad labor practices and environmental degradation, according to Make Chocolate Fair: “Farmers stop investing in their farms, they cut salaries, cannot provide workers with proper working conditions, and in the worst cases are prone to use child labor.” Up to 2.3 million children work on cocoa farms, sometimes as slave labor in dangerous conditions, beaten regularly, and unable to attend school.

SERRV, started by the Church of the Brethren, is a founding member of the World Fair Trade Federation and the Fair Trade Federation. Find out more at [www.serrv.org/category/fair-trade](http://www.serrv.org/category/fair-trade).



# The shadow of the lynching tree

by Belita Mitchell

**T**he Sankofa Journey brought me face to face with a part of my history, my family history, and the history of this nation in a vivid and instructive manner.

In one of the resource pieces we were assigned as preparation for the journey, I became familiar with the phrase “the shadow of the lynching tree.” This was the beginning of the instructive and enlightening aspects of what would follow. Over the period of three nights and four days, I gained additional clarity about the “bubble” that has been a part of my lifelong existence.

As a native-born, black female raised in rural southern Illinois and urban Detroit, I was raised by parents and grandparents who taught me that we were a people group in the minority, subject to experience injustice and inhumanity merely because of the color of our skin. The “bubble” included that caution, added to the reality of 246 years of slavery, 100 years of legal segregation, and the prevalence of institutional and systemic racism into this millennium.

I’ve come to identify my bubble as “the shadow of the lynching tree.” This phrase is used as a metaphor to signify the importance of raising awareness about the legacy of racial injustice in America. No matter how far I’ve traveled in life and the achievements I’ve accomplished, this shadow lingers and follows my every path.

It was deeply meaningful for me to share some of my reflections and experiences with my traveling partner, sister Nancy Heishman. During our travels to several significant sites of the Civil Rights movement, I was reminded of living through those days and it was cathartic for me to share intimately with her about those experiences. These were desperately needed conversations I had not previously been able to share.

While living through many of these past times, I was careful not to get too deeply involved, lest I get drowned in the water hosing used by “Bull” Conner in 1963, or go up in the flames of the Watts riots in 1965. The journey included a rich diversity of ethnicity, socio-economic



“**SANKOFA**” is a Ghanaian term for looking back to learn from the past. It's represented by a bird carrying a precious egg on its back. The Evangelical Covenant Church's Sankofa Journeys are intentional prayer journeys of cross-racial pairs, who spend Friday to Monday on a bus, traveling to civil rights sites across the South. Seven Brethren have participated so far; Congregational Life Ministries is providing funding for additional participants. Contact Gimbiya Kettering at [gkettering@brethren.org](mailto:gkettering@brethren.org).

*Above: Through thousands of jars of soil from lynching sites, a new National Memorial for Peace and Justice developed by Equal Justice Initiative remembers victims of lynchings. Right: Edmund Pettus Bridge was the site of Bloody Sunday in 1965, a turning point in the Civil Rights movement.*

Joshua Brockway



Joshua Brockway

backgrounds, and intergenerational status. This added depth to our discussions, further expanding the meaningful impact of the experience.

I'm prone to say and believe that nothing happens by accident in God's realm; God's timing is perfect. Over the past two years, I've had an increasing awareness and growing urgency for the need to add my voice to the cause of seeking racial righteousness and engaging in the conversation regarding racial injustice. The opportunities for this engagement have been swift and consistent beginning with the 2017 Annual Conference and moving forward.

Jim Wallis, author of *America's Original Sin*, heightened this urgency in his keynote address at Inspiration 2017, the National Older Adult Conference. He issued a prophetic and deeply personal call to action for overcoming the racism so ingrained in American society. Wallis spoke to us candidly about crossing a new bridge toward racial justice and healing. For me, the Sankofa Journey was that bridge.

I am grateful for the compassion and curiosity of sister

Nancy as together we wrestled with the realities of our divergent backgrounds and experiences. At the same time, we acknowledged a common love for Christ and the church. Throughout the entire time, we were encouraged to pray, reflect, and journal about our thoughts and feelings. We were challenged to consider how we might contribute to the conversation the church needs to have regarding racial reconciliation.

Stay tuned. I believe the Holy Spirit will guide us in this quest. 

Belita Mitchell is pastor of First Church of the Brethren, Harrisburg, Pa., and a former



# A fierce togetherness

by Nancy Heishman

**I am deeply grateful for the accompaniment of sister Belita Mitchell** in a recent Sankofa Journey. While we have been colleagues in ministry for years, this journey afforded me the opportunity to look at our society’s racial history and my own experience through her eyes and those of our companions. The view was profoundly enlightening.

What words can capture such an intense experience of journeying through a weekend together as a busload of cross-racial pairs to explore the legacy of racial injustice that is an integral part of our shared American history? For me it was sobering and inspiring, eye-opening and heart-breaking, deeply sorrowful yet hopeful.

It became immediately apparent to me at the beginning of the journey through the deep South that my whiteness had spared me from learning some of the most painful facts of American history, particularly the 75 or so years from the end of the Reconstruction in 1877 to the beginning of the Civil Rights era. This was an era of legally supported terrorism for black Americans by means of forced labor, nearly 5,000 lynchings, and widespread white supremacist oppression.

The resources we studied opened my eyes to the lingering effects of centuries of systematic and institutional racism in this country. The weight and emotional burden of racial injustice that people of color carry on a daily basis is something I have unfortunately been able to avoid understanding.

This journey helped me to begin to more fully appreciate the truth of the deep, painful daily suffering of African-American persons. Sister Belita’s willingness to share about



Courtesy of Nancy Heishman

**Belita Mitchell (left) and Nancy Heishman.**

her daily experiences of carefully and continually navigating between cultures impacted me greatly.

While I have moved in and out of various cultural settings during my life, it has always been with the advantage of my whiteness. Knowing that and having time to reflect on it with a busload of wise and courageous companions was a rare gift. Visionary organizations such as the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Ala., strive to help communities remember and learn of their painful past in order to find healing. As writer James Baldwin expressed in the film *I Am Not Your Negro*, “not all that is faced can be changed but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

What next, I ask myself, now that I have stuck my proverbial toe in the waters of a deeper awareness? Will I allow my faith to move my feet to action and cause some good trouble for God’s kingdom, as I heard Rep. John R. Lewis challenge the crowd in 2013 at the 50th anniversary of Dr. King’s Letter from a Birmingham Jail? Will I simply be a well-intentioned white leader focused more on my own safety and comfort and that of the institutions I serve rather than on courageous and bold Jesus-inspired prophetic actions for racial justice? Will I stay committed to being on the journey toward racial righteousness all my life by inviting honest conversations and building communities across racial and ethnic divides?

In the midst of all the pressures that threaten to divide the church as well as society, may Jesus’ followers embrace their urgent calling to join the Holy Spirit’s passion to create unity, end racial injustice, and draw humanity together in a fierce togetherness that reflects the beautiful will of the Creator. 

Nancy Heishman is director of ministry for the Church of the Brethren and a former Annual Conference moderator.

## Resources

*Banished: American Ethnic Cleansing*: [www.pbs.org/independentlens/banished/film.html](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/banished/film.html)

Equal Justice Initiative website on lynching in America: [lynchinginamerica.eji.org](http://lynchinginamerica.eji.org)

Drew G.I. Hart, *Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Herald Press, 2016)

James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Orbis Books, 2013)

The books are available from Brethren Press.

# The stories we tell

## Race, place, and the gospel

### A conversation with Drew Hart by Joshua Brockway

**L**ast July, I boarded a bus with Drew Hart. For four days we would travel together to Birmingham, Selma, Montgomery, Jackson, and Memphis on a Sankofa Journey, “an intentional, cross-racial prayer journey that seeks to assist disciples of Christ on their move toward a righteous response to the social ills related to racism.” Below is an excerpt from our follow-up conversation.

**Josh Brockway:** You’ve done trips similar to Sankofa before. What was unique about this trip?

**Drew Hart:** The intentionality around building relationships and dialogue is built into the Sankofa trip itself. They don’t want you experiencing all that is going on in the trip without talking with others about it.

**Brockway:** Relationships and intentional dialogue, both one-on-one and in the whole group, were powerful. It helped show the thought processes as well as the general emotional response.

You and I talked about the difference when white folk would share and when people of color would share. Noticing those differences and allowing that to happen and not manage it was a helpful experience. I feel like undoing how racism and supremacy impacts us is like detox. You have to go through, at least as a white person, these steps of embarrassment, guilt, and frustration in order to undo it.

**Hart:** I think you are right. At times, I could be frustrated with how people are processing everything, and at the same time they have to go through their own journeys. We are in different places, and coming at racism from different starting points. The fact that you can see people on the journey and see them processing what it means for them is very significant.

**Brockway:** The way the Sankofa journey is structured is a helpful model. I mean, you can’t get away! You are in this conversation from the moment you walk in the building for orientation to the moment you load into your car on the way out.

How has this trip impacted your work, your writing, your teaching?

**Hart:** I have been doing a lot of thinking about race and place the last couple of years. And then more recently, lots of conversations have erupted in the wider society about Confederate statues and monuments. There was something interesting about going on this trip to these places and seeing these markers to the Confederacy. A particular story is

being told in that land everywhere you go. We had really good conversations around the Edmund Pettus Bridge and what we should do with that.

At the same time, we went to the Equal Justice Initiative, where they are quite literally taking seriously the stories that are being told in Alabama and Montgomery, and trying to tell a different story by erecting monuments to lynching.

I guess all of that didn’t necessarily change my views. It concretized my thinking and gave more clarity about how this shapes people’s lives. We are being told stories and socialized into these myths, so to speak, and we aren’t even aware of it.

**Brockway:** We should note that we went on the Sankofa Journey in July, and the large gathering of white supremacists in Charlottesville happened just a week or so later. It made our conversation about the Pettus bridge being named after a confederate general who was later elected to the Senate on a racist platform more important.

Even before this trip I was wrestling with this idea of place, but it became so clear just standing in those places—walking through the 16th Street Baptist Church sanctuary, walking across to Kelly Ingram Park, and across the bridge. Standing in those places has a very different feel to it.

Once you know the story—both the dominant narrative and the stuff you don’t get told in history class—and stand there, it felt like thin places. It’s like that Celtic phrase—these are “thin places” where the trauma of the events makes the distance in time go away. You can almost hear the things that went on there. Place matters.

And then standing in Equal Justice Initiative and seeing those jars of the soil from the locations of documented lynchings was an unreal experience.

EJI has extended their study of lynching beyond the deep South. The predominant places for lynching outside of the South were the Northwest Territory states—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri. I was just in a setting where I showed EJI’s interactive map, and I showed Illinois, where there were 56 lynchings. Then I showed the picture of a lynching in Marion, Ind., and asked, “Where do you think this was? This is a North problem too.”

**Hart:** That’s good. I have often seen that challenge, especially with white northerners as they narrate themselves. There is often a discourse that this is a white southerner problem.



The book *The Condemnation of Blackness* looks at urban northern cities in the early 20th century as black people are fleeing and moving from southern to northern cities and how they were responded to. It is a really careful and intricate historical story being told—a lot of it in Philadelphia, which is my former home.

It is helpful for folks to pay attention to how those spaces practiced race. It horrifies my students, who were never aware of the history. How do we make sense of our own land and places without just making it a white southern story?

**Brockway:** I'll name my own baggage around this conversation. That dominant narrative, or what you said is identity shaped by the dominant culture, cuts across the liberal and conservative spectrum. This isn't a progressive issue or a conservative problem. No, this is all across! There's no pass on this one. There's no get-out-of-jail-free card because you have the right theology. Honestly, I understand how that is unsettling.

**Hart:** The kind of stories that we tell are powerful. We

have to talk about different kinds of stories, like the stories that show the more overt kind of racism that everyone is shocked and horrified by is actually much more embedded in American culture and our everyday lives. And then on the other hand, in my book I tell a lot of stories that are not just the shocking or horrifying stories, but the everyday little moments that reveal our lives.

That is very powerful. It can help people see that we have all been socialized, we have all been formed. We've all been disciplined by something, and it's not always Jesus.

**Brockway:** That aspect of story is key. What made the Sankofa Journey so powerful is the ability for the group to express themselves and give a window into their personal story.

**Hart:** You have layers of stories happening during the Sankofa Journey: the big story of thinking about US history, many stories in these places where you are going, you're sharing stories with your bus partner, and the collective stories on the bus. There are layers of stories that are hopefully unraveling the lies that we have been told.

## 180 years of statements on race

by Gimbiya Kettering

**T**he Church of the Brethren has formal statements on slavery or racism as early as 1837 and as recently as September 2017. There are also transcripts of sermons and published articles that articulate a scriptural and faith-based response to racial turmoil at various points of our history. As a denomination, we were against slavery and in favor of civil rights; Martin Luther King Jr. even had an office in First Church of the Brethren in Chicago.

Yet, we also must recognize that, when there is a preponderance of queries on a similar theme, we are not of one mind. There are statements about those who own slaves, those who hired slaves, and those who have been freed from slavery. There are recommendations for the behavior of individuals and for changes in the structure of the denomination.

Despite statements that affirm Christ's teachings that there is "neither Jew nor Gentile," queries rise again and again as we struggle with the fundamental command of Christ to love.

In the work of Congregational Life Ministries, love takes many forms but is unified in this: that vital congregations can transform our world by reaching out with genuine hospitality to people wherever they are. This is not new work. It was the work of the apostles, John the Baptist, Saul who became Paul, and the prophets of the Old Testament. It was the work of Alexander Mack, Brethren who spread across the United States, and missionaries and volunteers who traveled the world.

In our history of recorded conferences and publications, the Church of the Brethren has wrestled at various times in American history with how best to be Christ's disciples. We can ask of our forefathers and mothers:

What did you believe about the worth of people during slavery? What did you do?

Did you speak up loudly or have a quiet, neighborly witness? Or did you look away?

What was your witness during the Civil War? The Civil Rights movement?

Did you risk your safety to be sanctuary with the Underground Railroad? To stop a lynching?

Did you protest? Did you preach? Did you pray?

Did you know what was happening? Were you afraid?

What did the still, small voice of God call you to do?

These are also the questions that our children and grandchildren, the inheritors of our faith, will ask of us.

**Brockway:** Part of the storytelling aspect is also the re-storying that is the gospel. The good news is something that both incorporates us into a new, different story, but it's also something that disciplines us. And by discipling, I am saying it transforms the way we live and move in the world, and transforms the relationships we have. As we tell the gospel, as we tell that story, it is, in a way, undoing the lies. But also, it is discipling us into a new story.

**Hart:** And then, pushing it one step further: As we tell that story and it forms us, we think about Jesus, who is constantly turning to those who are most vulnerable, hearing their stories, and caring about what's going in their lives. It should be turning us towards the stories of those who are the most vulnerable, and those who have been most harmed in our societies. And giving us space and courage to tell more truthful stories, even when it feels scary and unsettling. 📖

Drew Hart is assistant professor of theology at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pa., and author of *Trouble I've Seen* (Herald Press). Joshua Brockway is director of spiritual life and discipleship for the Church of the Brethren.



**Josh Brockway (in cap) and his Sankofa partner, Drew Hart (to Brockway's right), stand with their group in front of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.**

Since 2015, the US has witnessed and recorded rising levels of racial anxiety and hate crimes in communities across the country. This is a significant time. We need to be able to fully articulate and live out our faith so that our ministry can reach those whose communities are affected by the evils of racism and white supremacy, which seek to separate us from God's vision of all people before his throne. It is a vision that we have shared throughout the history of our denomination. We have the opportunity to inspire faithful discipleship based on Christ's teachings and fulfill our own statements.

Below are excerpts from those statements. The full texts can be found through links on the Intercultural Ministries page at [www.brethren.org/intercultural/resources](http://www.brethren.org/intercultural/resources).

■ **1835 Annual Conference (Cumberland County, Pa.)**

Article 1. How it is viewed to receive colored people into our church? Considered, to make no difference on account of color.

Article 12. How it is considered to receive colored persons into the church? It was considered, that

inasmuch as the gospel is to be preached to all nations and races, and if they come as repentant sinners, believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and apply for baptism, we could not consistently refuse them. But inasmuch we receive our fellow members with the holy kiss, and there is a repugnance in some of our white members to salute colored persons in this manner, the colored members should bear with that weakness, and not offer the kiss to such weak members until they become stronger, and make the first offer, etc.

■ **1837 Annual Conference (Rockingham County, Va.)**

Article 10. How it is considered if a brother buys and keeps slaves, and sells them also again? Considered, that it could in no wise be justified in a brother, according to the gospel.

■ **1845 Annual Conference (Roanoke, Va.)**

Article 2. In regard to receiving colored members into the church, it was considered, to leave it to the counsel of every individual church,

as it is done in all cases; but if colored persons are once received as members into the church, the members should be at liberty to salute them in like manner as white members, at the same time having patience with those who may be weak in the faith, and can not do so. The assembled elders, however, consider it as the more perfect way, to which we all should strive to come, viz., that love, which makes no distinction in the brotherhood, in this respect. (See James 2:1-10.)

Article 3. In regard to hiring slaves, it was considered but little better than purchasing and holding slaves, and that it would be best for a follower of Jesus Christ to have nothing at all to do with slavery.

■ **1845 Special General Conference (Elkhart County, Ind.)**

Article 3. Whether a brother has a right to withdraw the kiss from a brother without the decision of the church? Considered, that inasmuch as our Savior directs us in a case of offense to use all means to *gain* our brother (see Matt. 18), the gospel allows no brother to withdraw the kiss until the church has so decided.



## ■ 1846 Special General Conference (Washington County, Tenn.)

How, and whether a brother can be received who had been expelled from the church for selling and bill-of-saleing away his slaves; and afterwards wishes to be received again? Considered, that such a brother cannot be reinstated until he has used every exertion in his power to liberate them, and make full satisfaction to the church.

## ■ 1849 Annual Conference (Somerset County, Pa.)

Article 31. How are we to conduct, with colored members, at communions? Considered, that this ought to be left to the individual churches, in which such members are, only that these ought not to be debarred from the Lord's table, on account of their color.

## ■ 1849, Samuel Weir, first African American elder, from an 1897 tract "The Life of Elder Samuel Weir," by Landon West

And after the trial sermon was delivered, the members present were asked if they were willing that the colored brother should take part in the ministry, and their voices were unanimous in his favor. He was then given his charge as a minister, and instructed to go to his own race and hold meetings wherever appropriate.

## ■ 1963 Annual Conference (Champaign-Urbana, Ill.), "The Time Is Now To Heal Our Racial Brokenness"

The time is now to understand that racial reconciliation is built only on the foundation of racial justice, that justice delayed is justice denied. The time is now to heal every broken race relationship and every segregated institution in our society—every church, every public accommodation, every place of employment, every neighborhood, and every school. Our

goal must be nothing less than an integrated church in an integrated community.

## ■ 1963 Annual Conference, statement by Tom Wilson

What is at stake in this growing racial conflict? Apart from the restoration of human dignity and worth, and the need for bringing relief to those who have suffered long and patiently at the hand of injustice, nothing less than the integrity of the church itself



is at stake. The world, and more specifically, the Negro communities, have grown weary of the church's lofty pronouncements and pious platitudes. They await our answer today. They want to see, to feel, and to taste of the redemptive love of Christ.

## ■ April 25, 1968, MESSENGER, obituary for Martin Luther King Jr., by editor Kenneth I. Morse

Who was he? He was the Amos of his time. To a prosperous, hardhearted people, more attuned to property values than human values, more spiritual and law abiding than just and compassionate, he pleaded, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

## ■ 1975 Annual Conference (Dayton, Ohio), "Criminal Justice Reform"

Most of our correctional centers—prisons, jails, and lock-ups—dehumanize and brutalize individuals,

especially those who are poor, members of minority ethnic groups and generally the helpless members of our society.

## ■ 1982 Annual Conference (Wichita, Kan.), "Addressing the Concern of Undocumented Persons and Refugees in the United States"

In the biblical tradition the alien is under the special protection of God. The alien is among those who receive the special protection because they do not have land. This means that the alien is to be dealt with in the same manner as the native. This is true of religious rights and of civil rights. Furthermore, that which is set aside for the alien, the widow, and the orphan (such as the gleanings of the crops) is not an act of charity but an obligation on the part of Israel, who, in truth, is an alien in God's land.

## ■ 1989 Annual Conference (Orlando, Fla.), "Inclusion of Ethnicity into the Church of the Brethren"

The vision of greater ethnic participation in the life of the denomination is a church growth issue as well as a justice issue. . . . The vision is more than something outside of us. Rather the vision empowers us. The best example of this is found in the Pentecost story (Acts 2). The ethnic diversity and the challenge for inclusiveness were a witness to the work of the Holy Spirit then as today. We strive for a denomination with passion for the gospel to all people. Pentecost without passion is not Pentecost. Diversity without passion will not happen.

## ■ 1994 Annual Conference (Wichita, Kan.), "Community: A Tribe of Many Feathers"

Unity and reconciliation in Christ are central teachings of the New Testament. . . . We find people from different racial, cultural, or religious

groups, as well as former enemies, brought together in Christ.

Jesus exemplified this commitment to inclusiveness in a variety of ways. He gathered a diverse inner circle that included tax collectors for the Roman government, Zealots, and fishermen. He taught his disciples to love others, including those considered enemies. In his ministry he reached out to welcome Samaritans, Romans, and others from beyond Israel.

### ■ **1991 Annual Conference (Portland, Ore.), “Brethren and Black Americans”**

Because racism is built into our way of life, it is extremely difficult to unmask it and honestly face the radical changes that need to be made in ourselves and our institutions if it is to be eradicated. . . .

The Church of the Brethren has affirmed that war is sin. It is time we acknowledged racism as sin—sin against God and against our neighbors—and mount a concerted effort to combat it. If we do not take on this struggle, there is little hope we will ever become an authentic multi-racial, multi-cultural denomination.

### ■ **2001 Annual Conference (Baltimore, Md.), “Ethnic Representation”**

Standing Committee recognizes that the need for ethnic/minority involvement, regardless of culture, at all levels of the church goes beyond issues of fairness and equal representation but is a necessary movement for the life and vitality of the church in this day and the future.

### ■ **2007 Annual Conference (Cleveland, Ohio), “Separate No More: Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church”**

After much prayer, study, research, and deliberation, our committee concluded that one essential part of the answer to that question is for us to be SEPARATE NO MORE. We accomplish this by deliberately and



intentionally moving toward becoming much more intercultural than we currently are. Our reasons for this conclusion are biblically based.

We began with the Revelation 7:9 vision: “After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.”

The text goes on to describe the profound worship experience of God’s angels and people of diverse backgrounds. We believe that this vision is not merely a description of God’s church at the end of time, but a revelation of the true intended nature of God’s church in the here and now.

### ■ **January/February 2015 MESSENGER, “The Ongoing Debate,” by Eric Bishop**

The protests, anger, and frustration go beyond Eric Gardner and Michael Brown. They are about Trayvon Martin and Rodney King as well. But, to some degree, they also are about Emmett Till and James Chaney. The feelings of fear and frustration are so deep that they transcend a single generation. At the root of our problem is that our society does not consider black men to be educated, upstanding human beings. Our society has gone from once viewing black men as property, to today seeing them as thugs and criminals. And so black men in America know that, regarding Gardner and Brown, “There but by the grace of God go I.” Good,

law-abiding black men live with this constantly. Day in and day out, we must choose whether to stay safe or to stand up for our rights and demand to be treated as equal human beings—as men. The latter may get us detained, arrested, beaten, or even killed. But the former doesn’t guarantee safety, either.

### ■ **July 12, 2016, Congregational Life Ministries statement following the Charleston church massacre, “When Lamentations Are Not Enough”**

In a sense, we are praying for ourselves, a nation caught in a cycle of racialized violence. We are being asked to forgive and to be forgiven, though we barely understand our transgressions.

We Brethren are a people whose Christian faith finds expression through work—by rebuilding homes, building schools, replacing pipes, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and washing feet. Throughout our history, this is often how we have made peace. Today, we do not know how to be peacemakers for our country when the source of the violence seems as unpredictable as a storm—and like a storm, the violence seems destined to come again.

### ■ **September 2017, Northern Indiana District Conference, “We Reaffirm that Racism Is a Sin Against God and Our Neighbors”**

We confess that we as the church have not taken the lead in transforming the understanding or the agency of racism in our society whether to African Americans or to people of other minorities. We confess our need to recommit to Bible study, prayer, and lament, and to reaffirm the witness of Jesus Christ in response to white supremacists, hate crimes, and an awareness of social injustice; we must connect our faith with our actions. 

Gimbiya Kettering is director of intercultural ministries for the Church of the Brethren.



# Practical, durable, beautiful in its simplicity

Story and photos by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

**T**he Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., last fall was on a tour of the PastForward Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. About 40 people from around the country took the bus tour from Chicago to Elgin for a “field study” of mid-20th century buildings. “Working Around the Clock to Preserve the Mid-Century” provided the theme.

Other stops in Elgin included City Hall, the Elgin Post Office, Illinois Second Appellate Court, Union National Bank, and a laundry building on the campus of the Elgin Mental Health Center, among others. In addition to architecture, the tour also paid attention to original furnishings.

Leading the tour of the General Offices were Elgin

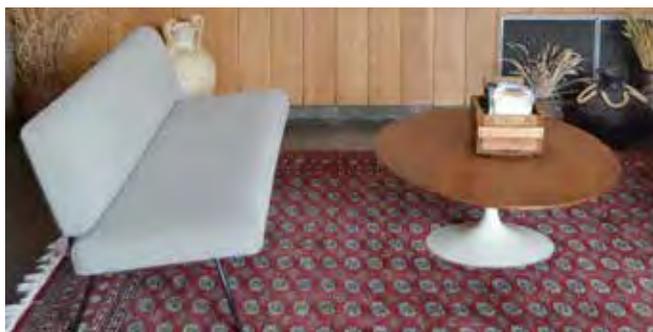
Historic Preservation Planner Christen Sundquist, Anthony Rubano of the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office, and local historian Bill Briska, with Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden hosting the group.

The General Offices is considered a fine example of the mid-century modern movement in architecture. It was built in 1959 by Frazier, Raftery, Orr, Fairbank of Geneva, Ill. As the tour made its way around the building, leaders pointed out the walls of stainless steel-bordered glass windows and doors, which also surround two courtyards. The design intentionally brings the outdoors in, and allows natural

light into almost every office space.

As a contrasting element, solid granite fieldstone makes up the walls of the chapel, considered by many to be the





building’s “gem”—a unique elliptical worship space dotted with small, jewel-like stained glass windows.

Stone also is featured on the front terrace. In another example of thin boundaries between natural and human space, glass front doors “float” in panels of glass that make visible the continuation of flagstone into the main lobby, which is floored with polished Pennsylvania bluestone.

Modular oak paneling makes up the interior office walls, and was admired for its flexibility. Rubano noted it as a precursor to the cubicle. Each panel—some with inset window or door—may be moved, which has allowed the configuration of the offices to be remade to meet different needs over the years.

Shortly after construction, the building was fully furnished with high-quality contemporary furniture. Much of that original furniture is still in use. As the tour progressed, staff found interested preservationists inspecting their office chairs, desks, and tables, delighted to discover

pieces by some famous designers.

Among the pieces pointed out by Rubano: a coffee table by Eero Saarinen, Finnish architect and designer who teamed up with architect Charles Eames to develop furniture using molded, laminated wood; sofas by Florence Knoll, an architect and designer who trained under Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Eliel Saarinen; a wall clock by architect George Nelson for Herman Miller, who founded Star Furniture Company in 1905—the two worked together to produce some of the most influential furniture of the time, said one of the tour leaders. The yellow cafeteria chairs are by Charles and Ray Eames and produced by Herman Miller.

McFadden gave credit to the Brethren leaders of the mid-20th century for working with the architects to create a building and a work space that is practical, sturdy, durable, and beautiful in its simplicity. More than a half century later, their choices still serve the denomination well. 



Kristin Flory

EWI staff with BVSer Gillian Miller, at right.

# Agents of change

by Kristin Flory

**M** meet a group of women doing incredible things

with very few resources: *Ekumenska inicijativa žena*, the Ecumenical Women’s Initiative (EWI). When Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) worker Julianne Funk told me five years ago that she was interested in working with EWI in a small town in Croatia, that name sounded vaguely familiar. I remembered that the World Council of Churches had set up an Ecumenical Women’s Solidarity Fund in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, around the time of the start of the wars there.

Two BVS volunteers and five visits later, I now know that EWI launched 10 years ago as an independent indigenous organization, shifting focus from women as victims, to women as actors of social change. It seeks “to empower

women and their role in strengthening interfaith and civil dialogue, and the potential of faith as a positive factor in social change through building peace and reconciliation processes.” The organization:

- creates safe meeting spaces for women of faith as peacebuilders in diverse post-war communities
- identifies and trains young women community leaders
- supports women to deconstruct harmful prejudices and stereotypes
- facilitates group training and mentoring for women peace and human rights activists and
- connects women from diverse national and religious backgrounds.

The region includes Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo,

Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

These EWI stories took place in the first half of 2017:

The cross-border project “**Renewing the Mind to Rebuild the World**” brought together members of different Christian denominations. Ecumenical and interreligious cooperation advanced between organization members, as well as between believers from Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Muslim community, Croatia, and Serbia through lectures, workshops, conferences, and visits to sacred sites.

One participant shared about the importance of “talking about faith, prayer, confidence, to women outside my religious tradition, without either having the need or wish to convert those around me and to convince them of being wrong. This is a significant change in my life. . . . I remember



**FORGED TOGETHER IN THESE TWO WEEKS WERE ONGOING FRIENDSHIPS ACROSS TRIBES AND CULTURES, INCREASED DEDICATION TO THE CHURCH, AND JOY AT SERVING THE CHURCH.**

being full of prejudice, of misconceptions and arrogant, self-righteous views of Islam and especially of women in Islam. After Sarajevo, all of that changed.”

“**The Power of Community**” helped reduce existing prejudices among students through lectures, workshops, visits to sacred sites, and religious activities. Students from Sarajevo, Mostar, and Banja Luka were empowered to witness to coexistence in their communities. Radio Marija documented and aired their experiences to about 700,000 listeners in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“Nationalism-patriotism-realism; the chronological order of my growing up,” one participant shared. “My primary social surrounding was family—one rooted in Orthodox tradition and customs with the enormous burden of war-refugee experience, which entailed a certain animosity towards ‘the other.’ This, supported by biased media and the company I kept, produced an atmosphere of intolerance towards those others: the non-Orthodox (Muslims and Roman Catholics). Now I know the joy of dropping by at the mosque or cathedral and seeing the beauty there, of talking to believers inside, of getting to know other cultures and traditions.”

## Our women by Gillian Miller

“My favorite thing about this region is its diversity. This region is a crossroads of many cultures. We are, at the same time, a Southeast European country, a Central European country, a Mediterranean and a Balkan country with rich cultural heritage. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early ‘90s was the first time in my life where I was faced with inter-ethnic hatred, what it means and the consequences it could provoke. One could get killed because of one’s ethnicity. Although I did not understand it, I had to learn how to live with it. I was driven to peace work by a desire to be socially engaged, to not be a bystander.”

—Alma Muratovic-Kajtaz, financial manager and assembly president, Association *Novi put*, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Gillian Miller

“I was apprehensive whether I would be able to gather women from all three religious communities,” said the project coordinator of “**Together Towards a Brighter Future**”—a project to educate women on attitudes about Islam. Through forums, work-

shops, and social gatherings, women from the Žepče Municipality gained knowledge about “the other,” thus reducing prejudice and improving coexistence in this post-war area.

“The first meeting was good, women of all three religions appeared,

## Our women



Gillian Miller

“I would suggest that future change makers do their best to meet people from all sides, speaking often and honestly. They should try to understand how other people function and what they believe. By embracing honest dialogue, they can be a bridge connecting people and helping them understand each other.”

—Amra Pandžo, *Mali Koraci* (Small Steps), Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

but sat separately in groups,” the coordinator said. “Women from my own community later asked, ‘What do we need this for? Why don’t you organize something for our women only?’ I invited the same women for a second meeting, trying to explain how important these meetings were and that if they kept coming, they would understand the importance themselves. The numbers grew. Each event was more successful and more relaxed than the previous. During one workshop I noticed two women from different religious communities and opposing sides, talking together; one had lost her son and the other her husband in the last war. My eyes welled up with tears. I had succeeded. In their loss both were sharing their sorrow and their pain. What had happened was none of their fault, but they could understand one another best.”

The “**Month of Women’s Activism**” connected and empowered women of all generations in the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County by offering education on women’s rights, gender equality, and activism, creating a foundation and basis for networking and cooperation.

“One of the greatest lessons of this journey was realizing how to work on unity where no unity is expected,” the project coordinator said. “Through cooperation with different women and

new locations, such as the Island of Cres, we were in a position where we needed to leave our comfort zone and adapt to new situations and to learn to rely on persons with whom we had not worked before. . . . We had managed to

## Our women

“I am a person who doesn’t like conflicts. And I don’t like to cause unrest, which is precisely what I have done from the very beginning of my theological work concerning women. I am often isolated for this reason and my work is ignored. It is a challenge for me to deal with such situations and to persevere in my work. I try to view the world and my own life from God’s perspective. I know that the present is not all there is, that there is a future that God wants, a future that is to come, that we ourselves can sense on the horizon but we are unaware of the steps that lead us to it. When in doubt what to do or how to act, I seek the answer by asking myself whether my words and actions are governed by what people expect from me or what God expects. Much of the time it would be easier for me to simply follow what people expect of me. But far too often I am not able to do that.”

—Rebeka Anić, Ivo Pilar Institute, Split, Croatia

leave our narrow circle and show that bringing an end to patriarchy through different tools is something that concerns women and men alike.”

Julianne Funk was the first BVS volunteer at EWI, working there from 2012 to 2014. “The more I got to know EWI,” she remembered, “the more I thought, it’s a tiny powerhouse of an organization. It looks so insignificant but has a wide impact, not only regionally in the Western Balkans as the only women’s fund of its kind. It also has managed to reach into the global sphere of women’s funds, where its choice to include women’s religious lives initially met with strong resistance.

Nevertheless, over time and with EWI’s proven experience, even many influential women’s funds now begin to take religion seriously as an ally for peace, justice, and human rights.”

BVS volunteer Gillian Miller, who



Gillian Miller

worked at EWI from 2015 to 2017, was so impressed and inspired by the women she met that she had to do something to capture their stories to share with others. She began collecting the women's stories. When her "Our Women" project is finished, the stories will be published online and in a book created to share with the participants and EWI, to use at events and keep in the office.

I was very pleased to have been able to support EWI with two BVS volunteers during the past five years. The volunteers came in as outsiders, which inevitably brings difficulties in language learning—"one never becomes local" said one BVSer—and language is so necessary for getting deeply involved in the local projects that EWI funds. Visiting EWI partners around the region greatly impressed BVS volunteers.

During these travels, Gillian wrote: "I continue to be inspired by these women who have made peace their life's work, no matter how difficult their path has been. I've met women who lived through the war, who grew up knowing only war, who went away during the war but always knew they'd come back, who were born after the war to its legacy. Their sto-

## Our women

**“A house has bricks and mortar which keeps the bricks together. You can pile the bricks one on top of the other and make a structure of sorts. However, unless there is mortar—and it is of good quality—then the structure will fall apart. So, if you feel unseen, or like what you are doing is not significant to the bigger picture, just remember the mortar between the bricks and you will see that not everything is about being in the limelight.”**

—Ankica Dragin, EIZ Consultant, Novi Sad, Serbia



Gillian Miller

ries and their work have been eye-opening for me and I am so lucky to call them friends.”

## 25 years of BVS in the former Yugoslavia

The Church of the Brethren first became involved in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1960s. Brethren were part of ecumenical workcamps to rebuild houses after the

1963 earthquake in Skopje, Macedonia, and continued to help with ecumenical construction teams. BVS held a conference in 1963 in Split, Croatia, and Brethren Service and the Slovenian Red Cross sponsored a seminar in 1965 in Slovenia. A one-of-a-kind exchange took place in 1965-66 when a Church of the Brethren nurse volunteered for a year in a hospital in Belgrade, Serbia, while a young nurse from there went to work in the US. And a young Slovenian woman came to help with the workcamp program in the Brethren Service office in Geneva in 1966.

In the fall of 1992, I got a call from former BVSer Eric Bachman, who had worked in Germany in the late 1960s and '70s with various peace groups and remained active there. He asked for a BVS volunteer to help with e-mail connections between peace groups in Serbia and Croatia, as contacts were difficult due to the war. BVS volunteer Patrick Morgan met with Eric in Germany, and then travelled to Belgrade in 1992.

“This is the great irony of war,” Patrick reflected on his BVS experience with the Center for Antiwar Action in Belgrade. “In 1993, if you had asked the average person in the US

## Our women

**“I grew up in a small town in Bosnia. I had a nice childhood until the war. I saw my friends, teachers, and neighbors taken to prison, their houses burnt down. I felt inexplicably helpless. That feeling stayed with me for a very long time. When I started working for the Ecumenical Women's Solidarity Fund my helplessness was turned into opportunity. All of the things I felt I couldn't do, I finally had the opportunity to do. The experience made me a stronger, happier, safer person.”**

—Smiljana Kraljević, Ministry of Agriculture, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Gillian Miller

what their impressions were of Balkan people, I imagine you would hear words like aggressive, war-like, and tribal. At a certain level, this was (and is) true, but maybe it's not so different from other people around the world. I look at the situation in Spain and Catalonia today and wonder how different Iberian folks are from Balkan folks. Nevertheless, for each intimidating situation I found myself in during a very turbulent period in Balkan history, I can tell 100 stories of dinners I was invited to, of invitations to visit home villages, of offered help by strangers on the street.

“Since that first train to Zagreb, I have been back to the Balkans on several occasions, visiting towns and villages in Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. I have seen a region torn by bloody conflict start to heal. Now that generations have grown up without the memory of bombs falling on people queuing for bread, more people just want to enjoy life peacefully. Younger people may live with their parents’ emotional scars, but most of them seem to want to move forward.

“I hope and believe that with time, patience, and maybe some assistance, the people of a place once known as Yugoslavia will be able overcome their past and thrive as neighbors.”

Patrick was the first BVSer to work in Yugoslavia as the country was breaking apart. Since then, requests for BVS volunteers have come from almost 30 different peace and reconciliation, women’s, youth, reconstruction, and refugee groups, a children’s hospital, an environmental organization, and a theological seminary library. More than 40 volunteers have served in the region, a few for short-term stints of several months, most for the usual two-year overseas term of service, and some even longer. 

Kristin Flory is the Brethren Service Europe coordinator for BVS, a position she has held for 30 years. She works out of the Ecumenical Center that houses the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland.

## Our women

**“I am inspired by all women who are active** in raising their voices against all types of violence and promoting equality for all regardless of religion, race, or gender. We women engaged in peace work have to be persistent and strive towards reconciliation for the sake of our future generations. I was born in Mostar and have lived here my entire life. I survived the most horrible war that happened in Europe after World War II. My fellow citizens were the first victims of genocide in Europe since the Holocaust during World War II. Yet still people from my country who suffered the most are ready to give a hand and forgive. For that you need a great heart and that is why I love my country.”

—**Abida Pehlic**, founder and vice president, Association *Novi put*, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Gillian Miller

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# ‘Si Dios permite, alcanzamos’

by Alan Bennett

**T**welve miles long. Three thousand glued PVC joints. Four hundred and fifty threaded, galvanized steel joints. Six years. Not one drop of water in the 80,000 gallon tank. Hope, however, springs eternal.

“Si Dios permite, alcanzamos.” I heard this frequently from the beneficiaries of this project, upon meeting them in the marketplace: “If God allows, we’ll get there.” They cling to the hope that plumbed water will one day come to their small Honduran village for domestic use, and for irrigating their crops. In large part, they were counting on me and the organization I have worked for, Proyecto Aldea Global (PAG, Global Village Project), to lead the way.

When I arrived in mid-2011, the hand-dug, hand-laid waterline was already installed, but water wasn’t reaching the tank. As an engineer, I agreed to a voluntary assignment to try to troubleshoot the problem(s). I had lived the previous three and a half years in Guatemala learning Spanish, and was eager to get my feet wet in a real Latin American project. There was some consensus that it could be all straightened out before the end of that year.

Six years later, and after a total revision of the waterline in 2013, leaks at the glued PVC joints have been the project’s Achilles’ heel. The extent of the problem wasn’t obvious at first, but by the end of 2015 it was concluded that all the glued connections would need to be replaced. Since then, a diligent effort has been made to do just that in the first third of the waterline route. It is now able to sustain all the hydrostatic pressure, leaving the remaining two-thirds to be redone.

Along the way, in 2014, I got married! Kay was a recently graduated nurse from Indianapolis. She not only agreed to marry me, but also to begin our marriage in a remote, mountain village in Honduras. Whereas I’d been “overseas” for 18 years or so, Kay had not. In many ways, bringing her here was a way of re-experiencing a developing country anew through her eyes. I was reminded that the smells, the simple houses and lifestyles of the people, and litter strewn here and there were not the norm, but eye-opening and challenging to one’s sensibilities. It was an adjustment for both of us, and we have grown in our dependence, reliance, and love for each other.

Also along the way, Kay and I were brought under the Global Mission and Service arm of the Church of the



Brethren. The stipend we received allowed us to live simply and independently in a four-room, rented house. The conditions of our tourist visas stated we must leave the country every 90 days in order to get another 90 days, so we were able to do that as well. In short, we couldn’t have come this far without the trust and provision of the Church of the Brethren.

Kay and I lift up in prayer all those church members who intentionally give to the mission work of the church without knowing exactly where their gifts may end up. We say a big thank you to them, because that giving matters to real people in real situations, making a real difference in neighbors’ lives.

With a fresh infusion of money, the waterline will add 150 percent more galvanized steel pipe and all its PVC couplings will be reglued. The path forward is now reasonably assured and the villagers in Magueyal can expect water within eight months or so. Unfortunately, Kay and I will not be there to celebrate that joyous day. We are relocating to Oklahoma, where Kay was accepted into a doctoral program in nursing science. It’s now my turn to be her “wing man,” supporting her through the rigors of that challenge.

We leave pieces of our hearts in Belen Gualcho with the neighbors and friends we met in Honduras. We are ever thankful to the church for whom we assumed the role of ambassadors of love and a more just, peaceful, and equitable world. 



Alan Bennett and his wife, Kay, have returned to the United States after a term of service in Honduras as program volunteers with Church of the Brethren Global Mission and Service.

# Setting a place at the table

by Erik Bahnson

**A**t the University of La Verne, Interfaith Fellows are the students selected by our chaplain, Zandra Wagoner, to pursue (in her words) “high-level interfaith work.” Recklessly driven by the Pollyannic assumption that people of different religious backgrounds can get along, we plan and design events that expose our school community to diverse worldviews and the perspectives of their practitioners.

We even get people to open up about their own religion. There’s a class every sophomore is required to take called SoLVE, in which three lectures covering civic subjects command mandatory attendance—and ours is one of them. The Interfaith Fellows regularly remix the formula of the lecture to reflect what worked, what didn’t, and what sounds jazzy, but we always call for involvement from the crowd. This semester, we successfully directed audiences to reflect on and even speak openly about their spiritual journeys, the difficulty of talking about faith, the presence of privilege, and more.

The Fellows promote off-campus events that enable multicultural interactions, like SoulJourns, a series of field trips to minority groups’ houses of worship—or non-worship, in the case of the Los Angeles atheist Sunday Assembly. Fellows frequently apply to attend out-of-town conventions like the Interfaith Leadership Institute,

where education and conversation with others in our field inspire new strategies and visions for future work.

I’d like to believe every shared personal revelation we facilitate brings the student body of the university a little closer together. The true depth of intimacy our program allows is experienced only by a handful of people who get together every week in our chapel basement. This club, Common Ground, was founded principally by beloved alum Tahil Sharma (himself both Hindu and Sikh) to become a place for talking about religion with people of no religion in particular.

Tahil saw his initiative as important, not only because resulting relationships would help dispel stereotypes and defend against prejudice, but also because there will never be a club just for Wiccans, Buddhists, or Zoroastrians; there simply aren’t enough of them around. That doesn’t mean we can deny them a space to belong.

It is in this sense that I believe interfaith life at the University of La Verne most reflects the message of Jesus: when the American paradigm leaves you feeling unaccounted for, the Fellows won’t forget to set a place at the table for you. *M*

Erik Bahnson is a Church of the Brethren student attending the University of La Verne in southern California.

*Erik Bahnson (in orange shirt) with a group of students from the University of La Verne involved in interfaith efforts.*



Photo courtesy of UVU

risk is to be made flesh 🐦 reward is the Word living amongst us 🐦 risk is building a boat big enough for all the animals 🐦 reward is the covenant after the storm 🐦 risk is stepping out of the boat to follow Jesus 🐦 reward is walking on water 🐦 risk is escaping the oppression of empire for the unknown desert 🐦 reward is finding God's promised peace 🐦 risk is sending your only begotten son 🐦 reward is love that does not perish 🐦 risk is going into battle with only one sword 🐦 reward is a victory against all odds 🐦 risk is investing your talents 🐦 reward is the joy of the Lord 🐦 risk is defying the unjust laws of man 🐦 reward is safety from the jaws of death 🐦 risk is going before those blinded by their power 🐦 reward is healing the blind 🐦 risk is daring to stand before a king 🐦 reward is standing up for the people of God 🐦 risk is wading into the troubled waters 🐦 reward is the river receding at our ankles 🐦 risk is asking for water to become wine 🐦 reward is seeing the miracle 🐦 risk is refusing to worship gold 🐦 reward is dancing in the flames 🐦 risk is taking in strangers 🐦 reward is having angels as your guests 🐦 risk is going into the threshing field 🐦 reward is a new family 🐦 risk is reaching out to touch the cloak 🐦 reward is healing you need 🐦 risk is to interpret the dreams 🐦 reward is wisdom to face a drought 🐦 risk is to be made flesh 🐦 reward is the Word living amongst us

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# Refugee Jesus

by Christina Bucher

**T**hree verses. The story of the flight into Egypt takes up only three verses in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 2:13-15). How often have I rushed through these verses to get from the Christmas story to the baptism of the adult Jesus and the message contained in Jesus' teachings?

I have known about the story of the family's flight into Egypt for a long time, but I have not engaged with it—at least not at any deep level—until recently. When I did, it struck me like the proverbial bolt from the blue. Jesus was a refugee! Mary and Joseph

were refugees! How could I have overlooked this for so long?

In the New Testament, the story of the Holy Family's flight into Egypt can be found only in Matthew's Gospel. It contains two motifs that characterize Matthew's Gospel story: revelation through dreams and fulfillment of prophecy. In Matthew it is Joseph, not Mary, who receives instruction from an angel sent by God. Joseph receives this information through dreams.

First, an angel tells Joseph about the upcoming birth of Jesus to Mary (1:20-21). Second, an angel tells Joseph

to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt (2:12). Third, an angel tells Joseph when it is safe to return home (2:19-20). Joseph asks no questions of the heavenly messenger. Each time, he follows instructions without delay. When told to take his family to Egypt, Joseph apparently does not even wait until morning light, but rather gets up and, in the middle of the night, the family leaves for a foreign land.

Some Bible readers have negative feelings toward Egypt. The story of the enslavement of the Hebrews in that land sometimes overshadows other

## THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN FORCED TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES AND POSSESSIONS . . . FIND SOLACE IN LEARNING THAT JESUS AND HIS PARENTS KNEW THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE FIRSTHAND.

positive mentions of Egypt in the Bible. Popular culture may have something to do with this. Think *The Prince of Egypt* (1998), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), or *VeggieTales: Moe and the Big Exit* (2007).

In fact, in the Bible Egypt becomes a place of refuge for some, and the Bible records several “flights into Egypt” before the one we read about in Matthew (see 1 Kings 11:17, 40; 2 Kings 25:26; and Jeremiah 26:21; 41:17; 43:17). By the time of the Holy Family’s flight in the first century, a sizeable population of Jews lived in Egypt. Many lived in the city of Alexandria, but Jewish settlements existed throughout the country. Matthew doesn’t tell us where in Egypt the Holy Family went or how long they stayed. Knowing there were Jewish communities in Egypt, we might assume they found temporary shelter among other Jews who lived there.

Once we pause on these verses long enough to think about the practical realities of a flight like this, we might wonder how long such a journey would have taken in the first century. Estimates vary widely, because Matthew does not tell us precisely where in Egypt they went. If we imagine they went to Alexandria, which had a large Jewish population in Roman times, the journey would have been between 300 and 400 miles and taken them on a route along the Mediterranean coast and through the Nile Delta region.

No doubt they went on foot. Perhaps as artists suggest, Mary, holding the infant in her arms, rode a donkey. This could have taken them two to three weeks, or more. Following the completion of the New Testament, traditions arose that offered more details about this event in Jesus’ infancy, but we should probably consider these tra-

ditions as imaginative attempts to fill in the gaps of Matthew’s story.

The “flight into Egypt” has been a favorite subject for artists. In the 19th century, the American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937) painted this subject some 15 times. Tanner’s father was a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, so it is not too surprising that Tanner frequently painted biblical subjects.

Tanner paints the fleeing family as ordinary folks. We see no halos or other distinguishing features that might identify this refugee family as the Holy Family. In fact, the facial features are hard to distinguish. Perhaps this allows us to recognize the universal dimension of the experience, rather than seeing it only as a one-time event in the life of Jesus. Tanner’s colors and brushstrokes give a sense of the danger this family faces and the hastiness of their journey. They run from Herod, but they also run into new and unknown territory. What will they encounter on the way? How will they be received when they arrive?

We see another characteristic Matthean motif in this narrative, especially if we expand it to include verses 16-19. Matthew tells us that what happens occurs to fulfill prophecy. The messages of the prophets of old take on new life for Matthew. The flight itself fulfills the word of God spoken by Hosea (11:1), “out of Egypt I have called my son.” Herod’s massacre of the innocent children of Bethlehem fulfills the word spoken by Jeremiah (31:15) about Rachel’s weeping for her children.

In the 8th and 7th centuries BC, when Hosea and Jeremiah delivered their messages, these words related to the experiences of the Israelites and Judeans of that time period. Matthew infuses them with new meaning as he relates them to Jesus.

The source of the third prophecy, “He will be called a Nazorean,” is less clear. Matthew may be relating Isaiah’s prophecy of a branch growing from Jesse’s roots to the family’s decision to settle in Nazareth (the Hebrew word for “branch,” which is used in Isaiah 11:1, sounds somewhat like the word Nazorean).

Having slowed down to reflect on Matthew 2:13-15, what have I learned? After meditating on Henry Ossawa Tanner’s paintings, how do I respond? Perhaps my former hasty reading of these three verses came about because I cannot identify personally with this family in flight. But I follow the news, and I know that we currently have over 65 million people who have been forced to leave their homes. As I write this, an e-mail appears in my inbox suggesting that I learn more about the refugee crisis by going to the website of the United Nations Refugee Agency ([www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)).

Those who have been forced to abandon their homes and possessions—either permanently or temporarily—may find solace in learning that Jesus and his parents knew the refugee experience firsthand. Matthew tells us that Jesus is Immanuel, “God-With-Us.” God is with refugees.

For the rest of us, those of us fortunate enough not to know the refugee experience firsthand, our challenge is this: What shall we do? Other words from Matthew’s Gospel come to mind—the words of Jesus in chapter 25. When disciples feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit prisoners, and welcome strangers, Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (25:40b). 

Christina Bucher is professor of religion at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College.

# When Dewy died

by Gary Benesh

**D**ewy died, and the world took no notice. He had a last name, but that doesn't matter, as few knew him. Although I hardly knew him, I did notice, and I found that my grief far surpassed anything I could have foreseen.

I met Dewy by chance through my wife, Diane. She had grown up in the public housing projects where Dewy lived. We ran into him occasionally when we traveled across the mountains from North Carolina to visit her brother in Tennessee, where they had grown up. It was on one of those visits, on a cold Christmas night after all of the presents had been unwrapped and tucked away, that Dewy entered our lives.

We decided to do a quick run through the projects on our way home—Diane would point out landmarks from her childhood. There was where Ricky lived. . . . There was her best friend Linda's apartment. . . . It was in the middle of this that she caught a glimpse of Dewy huddled in a corner, his thin jacket a slight cover from the chilling wind and the snow that was starting to accumulate.

We had to stop. Diane quickly pulled out one of our small

Diane said we needed to make sure Dewy received at least one present each Christmas. A new ritual was born. When we came to Tennessee for Christmas, we would try to track him down.

Trouble with the law was not far away for Dewy. He had been at a party. She was 17 and too young, and he was too intoxicated. The charge was statutory rape, and his guilt was not in dispute. Dewy was sent to Tennessee's Brushy Mountain Maximum Security Prison.

We rationalized that it was just as well. He had a bed, and regular meals, and would be away from alcohol. Perhaps it would spare him from repeating his father's early death. And it did make it easier to keep track of him. He was able to call us. We were able to send him things.

Diane encouraged him to write. His plain, broken, often misspelled words betrayed his poor education. He would include sketches he had drawn. They were quite good. They too caused a feeling of sadness—he had a rough but hidden talent that would never have a chance to develop.

Dewy eventually was released. The last time we saw him, we had some hope. As we delivered our Christmas gift, we

**LAST YEAR, THE WEATHER TURNED BAD QUICKLY ON CHRISTMAS, AND WE KNEW IT WOULD BE HARD GETTING THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS IF WE DID NOT LEAVE EARLY—TOO EARLY TO HAVE TIME TO SEE DEWY. WE CALLED WHEN WE GOT HOME.**

presents. What it was I can't remember, nor does it matter. It was what he said that would become another paint stroke in the "blue" side of the season: "Oh, thank you. It's the only present I got this year."

Like Diane, Dewy grew up poor. Clothes were rarely new. Laundromats were a weekly ritual. Expectations for life were low: survival, and making do with what you had. Dewy compounded his lot by trying to drown poorness in alcohol.

His father also had been alcoholic. Alcohol ended his father's life early on a day when he was out of alcohol and out of money. In desperation, he grabbed some after-shave lotion. He either did not know that it was the wrong kind of alcohol, or was hoping that would not matter. Dewy was a young teen when his father died. His mother would continue as a single parent, working a minimum-wage job that barely kept food on the table for her five children.

learned he was living with his brother and working steadily for the first time.

But last year, the weather turned bad quickly on Christmas, and we knew it would be hard getting through the mountains if we did not leave early—too early to have time to see Dewy. We called him when we got home, to let him know we had not forgotten him and that we had a gift for him.

That gift remains, small and insignificant.

Dewy had no earthly treasures to take with him, no accomplishments to boast of, no trophies, no fulfilled dreams, no good deeds upon which to make a claim on heaven. He was the beggar at the gates of our lives. Perhaps that is the explanation for my sorrow. As much as I thought Dewy was our little Christmas project, perhaps we were his. 

Gary Benesh is pastor of Friendship Church of the Brethren in North Wilkesboro, N.C.



## EYN team repairs houses, distributes food

**M**any homes of members of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) were destroyed by fire during the Boko Haram insurgency. The EYN Disaster Ministry Response team has been working to re-roof the houses of the most vulnerable.

Once dry season arrived in north-eastern Nigeria last fall, housing

repairs went into full gear. A total of 57 homes were re-roofed in remote areas in the latter part of 2017.

Food distributions continued during the “lean period” from July through late October, a time in north-east Nigeria when food from the previous year’s harvest is almost gone and the new crop is not yet ready. The Boko Haram insurgency compounded this problem with a decreased ability

to even plant crops.

In the last few months of 2017, the EYN team carried out eight food distributions to around 300 families at a time. Food was bought in the local market, loaded on trucks, and taken to the distribution point, often a church. Leaders of the church districts created lists of needy families in their area, and contacted them to convene for the distributions.

## Brethren staff part of meeting with Palestinian president

### A Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) delegation met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas

on Nov. 2, 2017, the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. The group included Church of the Brethren staff Nathan Hosler, director of the Office of Public Witness, who is serving as board chair for CMEP, and Roy Winter, associate executive director of Global Mission and Service and Brethren Disaster Ministries.

The historic declaration by Lord Balfour of Great Britain “[viewed] with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” and stated “that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”

CMEP executive director Mae Elise Cannon was part of the delegation. During the meeting, President Abbas expressed appreciation to Cannon for CMEP’s work.



CMEP delegation at Saint Georges Cathedral in Jerusalem.

## Workcamps repair buildings in PR

**In November, Church of the Brethren volunteers made repairs to church buildings and homes** in Puerto Rico that were damaged in the hurricanes of 2017. Two groups of volunteers, totaling seven people, assisted with the project, which received support from Brethren Disaster Ministries.

The workcamps at Caimito Church and Community Center were organized by Shirley Baker, with Jeff Bruens, disaster project leader, providing construction leadership, and other volunteers coming from churches in the continental US. These teams repaired the roof and ceiling at Segunda Iglesia Cristo Misionera, provided partial repairs to the Caimito

Community Center affiliated with the church, repaired the Brethren House, and worked on two homes in the area.

Additional work projects were being organized and planned for 2018.

Puerto Rico District, led by district executive José Otero, has been organizing a response to Hurricane Maria, with support from Brethren Disaster Ministries. As of November, more than \$28,000 in grant funds had been sent to the district, some coming from special donations received by several districts of the Church of the Brethren, and some through the Emergency Disaster Fund. The money has helped meet emergency needs in the communities around the seven Churches of the Brethren in Puerto Rico.



## Personnel notes

**Joe Detrick** completed an interim assignment as director of the Office of Ministry for the Church of the Brethren Nov. 10. He worked in the position for more than a year, starting June 22, 2016. He is retired from serving the denomination as a pastor and a district executive. He also is former staff for Brethren Volunteer Service.

**Debbie Eisenbise** concluded work with the Church of the Brethren's Congregational Life Ministries Nov. 8. She worked as director of Intergenerational Ministries for almost three years, starting Jan. 15, 2015. Her work included coordinating Inspiration 2017, last year's National Older Adult Conference, as well as

serving as staff for the Disabilities Ministry and connecting with the church's spiritual directors, among other responsibilities.

**Mark Hartwig** has retired as director of Information Technology for the Church of the Brethren, following more than 12 years of service. He began in March 2005 as a computer and applications specialist. In March 2007, he was promoted to the position of director of Information Services.

**Patrice Nightingale** has retired as manager of production for Brethren Benefit Trust. She joined the BBT staff May 5, 2008, becoming director of communications that October. In late 2011, she became manager of production. She provided lead-

ership in marketing, promotions, publications, electronic media, and copy editing.

**Margie Paris** is retiring Feb. 8 as program assistant in the Church of the Brethren's Office of Ministry. She has worked at the denomination's General Offices for more than 28 years, beginning in August 1989 as assistant *Yearbook* coordinator. In 1996 she became the *Yearbook* coordinator. In August 1999 she began in her current role. A key focus of her work has been facilitating daily operation of the pastoral placement system, working with district staff. She provided administrative support for the director of Ministry and facilitated support for the director's work with the Brethren

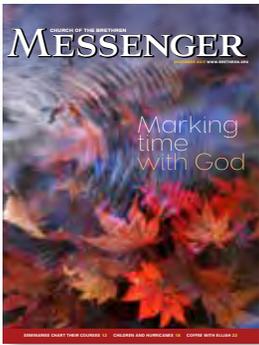
Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

**Brenda Reish** concluded employment as treasurer and executive director of business services at Bethany Theological Seminary Dec. 31, after 19 years of service to the school. When she began in August 1998, she served as business manager for both Earlham School of Religion and Bethany, as well as treasurer for Bethany, until 2002, when a separate business office was established for each school. As treasurer under three Bethany presidents, Reish was responsible for institutional finances as an internal auditor. During her tenure, Bethany received clean audits each year and the endowment grew from \$10 million to \$39 million.



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“IT IS AN EXCELLENT LOOK AT HOW OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD TIME AFFECTS OUR LIVING. I ALSO APPRECIATE ITS “TIMELINESS” IN BEING PRINTED AS WE LOOKED TOWARD A NEW YEAR ON OUR CALENDARS.”

### Timeliness

Please extend my gratitude to Eric Landram for his November article on “Marking Time with God.” It is an excellent look at how our attitude toward time affects our living. I also appreciate its “timeliness” in being printed as we looked toward a New Year on our calendars.

**Diane Mason**  
Moulton, Iowa

### What theology will be taught?

Thank you for the July/August cover story, “New Mission, New Methods, New Places,” by Jay Wittmeyer. He describes a partnership “to build a fairly large worship center to serve as a gathering site for theological training and conferences” in Ngovi, Democratic Republic of Congo. I would ask, what theology is to be taught? Who decides? A fundamentalist theology, in my opinion, can be worse sometimes than no theology at all.

**Charles Thomas**  
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

### CLASSIFIEDS

**Wanted:** Person experienced with either Montessori education or Children’s Disaster Services and who is willing to live in central Nigeria for a few months to encourage and guide untrained Nigerian teachers at Montessori for Peace, an interfaith Montessori preschool. Must be open-minded, flexible, and respectful of all people. Contact [MontessoriForPeaceInNigeria@gmail.com](mailto:MontessoriForPeaceInNigeria@gmail.com) to express interest, to learn details, and to initiate a discussion about possibilities.

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“IT OCCURS TO ME THAT GOD MUST ALREADY HAVE PLANNED FOR OUR DIFFERENCES, SO I PRESUME HE HAS VARIOUS HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN HEAVEN WHERE EACH GROUP CAN FIND ITS PLACE.”

### Regarding mansions

Responding to the November letter, “Which Mansion Would Suit?” it occurs to me that God must already have planned for our differences, so I presume he has various housing developments in heaven where each group can find its place. A suburb for

# TURNINGPOINTS

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

## New members

**Beacon Heights**, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Beth Crook, Amy Gall Ritchie, Miles Good, Georgean Johnson-Coffey, Donna Kline, Joel Kline, Amy Miller, Kristine Miller, Dennis Roth, Mary Roth, Allison Sampson, Andrew Sampson, Cooper Sampson, Jaque Wilson  
**Chambersburg**, Pa.: Barry L. Arendt, Jennifer Arendt

**Chiques**, Manheim, Pa.: Jeremy Haldeman, Dano Heatwole, Tara Heatwole  
**Columbia City**, Ind.: Condan Bradbury, Susan Bradbury, Elise Cormany, Vanda Cormany, Esther Norris, Alex Scharpenberg, Trevor Scharpenberg, Sue Warren  
**Covington Community**, Wash.: Sandy Alatorre, Bonnie Ballenger, Desiree Ballenger, Joyce Buck, Pat Edwards, Matthew Gentry, Morokat Gentry, Ann Grant, Bill Grant, Peggy Ives, Colin Kohv, Bruce Kolsky, Monica Koss, Richard Koss, Cathy Maunu, Kathy Padgett, Donna Pallitta, Gail Powell, Philip Robinson, Savannah

Rogers, Pam Rosa, Coralie Schrader, Curt Sims, Cher Stroy, Shirley Stubbs, John Veer, Marion Veer, Leslie Whitmarsh, Patty Zimmerman  
**Elm Street**, Lima, Ohio: Vicki Carter  
**Faith Community**, New Oxford, Pa.: Linda Nusbaum, Marty Nusbaum, Carrie Strinsky  
**Gettysburg**, Pa.: Anita Jacobs  
**Hatfield**, Pa.: Lynne Allebach, Rodney Allebach  
**Hempfield**, Manheim, Pa.: Jordan Fisher  
**Lancaster**, Pa.: James Forsha, Donna Ruth, Harvey Ruth  
**Lebanon**, Mount Sidney, Va.: Sandy Morris

**Lititz**, Pa.: James Gossnickle Batterton, David Raffensperger  
**Marion**, Ind.: Michael Alderson, Raylinda Crain  
**Monroeville**, Pa.: Tristan Lewis, Timothy Powell  
**Pine Creek**, North Liberty, Ind.: Carman Greenlee  
**Spring Run**, McVeytown, Pa.: Kim Maclay  
**Summerdean**, Roanoke, Va.: Lowell Stultz  
**Valley Pike**, Maurertown, Va.: Jason Gochenour, Nicole Gochenour, Betty Lutz, Wallace Lutz, Trevor L. Morris, Noah L. Steele, Sydney R. Stiefel, Clarence Thomas  
**Waynesboro**, Pa.: Shade Naugle  
**West York**, York, Pa.: Brian Allabach, Dawn Keefer, Merl Keefer, Kayla

McCauley, Tyler  
 McCauley  
**Woodberry**, Baltimore, Md.: Joe Byers, John Hunter, Angelo Pizza, Tom Winebrenner

## Wedding anniversaries

**Drawert**, Carl and Dolores, South Bend, Ind., 60  
**Flora**, Willard and Sylvia, Roanoke, Va., 55  
**Frey**, Charles and Floyann, Columbia City, Ind., 65  
**Grubb**, James and Rickie, Manheim, Pa., 55  
**Herr**, Paul and Thelma, East Petersburg, Pa., 68  
**Messick**, Robert and Marie, Manheim, Pa., 50  
**Starkey**, Duward and Helen, Roanoke, Va., 55

conservatives with subdivisions for literalists, for those who prefer rite and ritual and dogma, for Pentecostals, evangelicals, and all other conservative folks. Another suburb for liberals/progressives, with similar subdivisions for their people. And I suppose another one for those who don't fall within those parameters, including LGBT Christians.

He also may have other suburbs for those who belong to other religious faiths, who also plan to go to heaven, such as Muslims and Jews, as well as Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and perhaps others I haven't thought of. I wonder how high the walls will have to be to keep them out of the suburbs where they aren't welcome. Or maybe the Chosen Ones already have made it clear to God those people can't be included.

Even so, I wonder if heaven may have an interfaith suburb? Maybe we should check that out!

**Horace Huse**  
Toledo, Ohio

## Called to a career in Nursing ...

*"After enduring the stress of being a firefighter/paramedic, I decided to train for another career where I could continue to help people - and chose to pursue nursing."*

*Toxicology nursing utilizes Anne's previous experience as part of a Hazardous Incident Response Team. Community Paramedicine, a relatively new discipline, combines aspects of nursing with the interaction of EMT.*

*Anne is exploring both of these areas as each will keep her in contact with patients, helping those who would benefit most from her expertise.*

Anne Johnkin  
Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren



## Can the Church of the Brethren help?

The Nursing Scholarship program is available to members of the Church of the Brethren enrolled in an LPN, RN, or nursing graduate program. **Application deadline is April 1.** Application materials are available at [www.brethren.org/nursingscholarships](http://www.brethren.org/nursingscholarships).



Church of the Brethren

**Stump**, Carl and Gladys,  
Roanoke, Va., 72

### Deaths

**Brallier**, Nancy E. Wallace,  
87, Kennett Square, Pa.,  
Oct. 25

**Cox**, James, 78, Salem,  
Va., July 10

**Domer**, Elizabeth Mae, 87,  
Hartsville, Ohio, Oct. 7

**Dooley**, Robert, Jr., 78,  
Roanoke, Va., June 29

**Forry**, Erma Bell, 95,  
Lancaster, Pa., Oct. 1

**Hammond**, Janice Anita,  
60, Thornville, Ohio,  
Oct. 3

**Herron**, Stephanie  
Starkey, 52, Roanoke,  
Va., Aug. 12

**Huber**, Lucille, 77, Lititz,  
Pa., Sept. 19

**Kelly**, Ernest, 87,

Westernport, Md.,  
Sept. 15

**Lehman**, Henry, 101,  
Manheim, Pa., Nov. 10

**Lehman**, Wilbur, 94,  
Manheim, Pa., Oct. 30

**Lewis**, Keith, 56,  
Westernport, Md., Oct. 20

**Madeira**, Ronald, 79,  
Carlisle, Pa., Sept. 21

**McCary**, Theresa Anne,  
103, Arlington, Va., Nov. 1

**McEntire**, Thomas M., 71,  
Lower Gwynedd, Pa.,  
Nov. 6

**Michales**, Betty Brogan,  
91, Salem, Va., Jan. 30

**Moorehead**, Ray, 87,  
Westernport, Md.,  
Sept. 17

**Neher**, Lorene, 90,  
Cabool, Mo., Sept. 14

**Nolley Markle**, Doris  
Kathryn, 90, Staunton,  
Va., Aug. 25

**Petry**, Mary Elizabeth, 98,  
Austin, Tex., Sept. 19

**Place**, Lelia Whisenand, 99,  
Compton, Ill., Nov. 11

**Shepley**, Jean, 70,  
Stoystown, Pa., Oct. 29

**Shoemaker**, Alice Joan  
Shaffer, 85, North

Canton, Ohio, Sept. 11

**Summy**, Miriam, 87,  
Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 9

### Ordained

**Gibbel**, Joel, Atl. N. E.  
Dist. (Lititz, Pa.), Oct. 15

**Underkoffler**, Gerald, S.  
Pa. Dist. (Shippensburg,  
Pa.), May 21

### Commissioned

**Scott**, Wayne W., N. Ohio  
Dist. (Eden, Canton,  
Ohio), Oct. 29

**Turpin**, Brian W., Virgina  
Dist. (Pleasant Valley,  
Floyd, Va.), Nov. 5

**Licensed**

### Licensed

**Miller**, Richard, S. Pa.  
Dist. (Buffalo Valley,  
Mifflinburg, Pa.), Aug. 27

**Pariseau**, Charles, W.  
Marva Dist. (Mountain  
Dale, Bruceton Mills, W.  
Va.), July 30

**Pariseau**, Charles, W.  
Marva Dist. (Mountain  
Dale, Bruceton Mills, W.  
Va.), July 30

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Marva Dist. (Mountain  
Dale, Bruceton Mills, W.  
Va.), July 30

### Placements

**Brumbaugh**, Glenn, from  
pastor, Williamsburg, Pa.,  
to pastor, Olympic View,  
Seattle, Wash., Nov. 1

**Grossnickle-Batterton**,  
James, pastor of spiritual  
care, Lititz, Pa., Oct. 20

**Hanks**, Brandon, from pas-  
tor of teaching to pastor,  
Drexel Hill, Pa., Nov. 1

**Heinlein**, Christopher,  
from pastor, Bannerville,  
Pa., to pastor, New  
Enterprise, Pa., Nov. 1

**Nichols**, Mark, pastor,  
Quakertown, Pa., Oct. 18

**Pariseau**, Charles, pastor,  
Mountain Dale, Bruceton  
Mills, W.Va., Aug. 8

**Pennington**, R. Wayne,  
from interim pastor to  
pastor, Hopewell, North  
Prince George, Va., Oct. 8

**Roberts**, Debbie, pastor,  
Sunnyslope, Wenatchee,  
Wash., Oct. 15

**Row**, Michael, pastor,  
Bethel, Carleton, Neb.,  
Nov. 11

**Scott**, Wayne E., from inter-  
im pastor to pastor, Eden,  
Canton, Ohio, Oct. 1

**Whitmore**, Kevin, from  
interim pastor to pastor,  
Buck Creek, Mooreland,  
Ind., Nov. 5

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# Simple and irresistible

**I**n the weeks that come after Christmas, we think and read a lot about the first few years of Jesus' life. There's probably no more stunning detail than when King Herod orders every infant boy in and around Bethlehem to be killed in an attempt to thwart Jesus' revolutionary life at the very beginning. It's no wonder that we mark Advent as a season of anticipation—clearly,



EMMETT  
WITKOVSKY-ELDRED

Jesus was born into a world that desperately needed the principles of peace and justice that he would teach and the transformational love that he would bring.

It's 2018, and our world is still aching to know Jesus. Years after it began, we're grappling still with the worst refugee crisis since World War II. In Yemen, hundreds starve each day and dozens more die from the worst recorded cholera outbreak in human history, the bitter fruits of a war and blockade prosecuted by Saudi Arabia with support from the United States. Meanwhile, the prospect of a nuclear war feels closer than it has for

establishment in his day was among his most ruthless opponents. But today, billions of Christians claim to love Jesus. If they love him enough to listen to him and obey, that could mean billions of hands pulling at the knots of injustice and billions of feet standing with people on the margins.

It's the church—not freedom from persecution, not viral technology, not near-universal literacy, or a Bible in every hotel nightstand—that should give us confidence that the world really can be transformed by Jesus.

Of course, it's also the church that so often seems to be the biggest obstacle. As a human institution, how many times have we been sidetracked by greed, by selfishness, by fear? How often have we been seduced by power? How often have we been lulled into complacency by comfort and privilege? How often have we tarnished Jesus' name because we chose to be oppressive or violent or unconcerned with our neighbors?

Even though the church has fallen short so many times before, I still have faith that this institution can be a vessel of hope for the world. That's because I see it every day: peacebuilders who put themselves in harm's way to transform violence, servants who place themselves with the

EVEN THOUGH THE CHURCH HAS FALLEN SHORT SO MANY TIMES BEFORE, I STILL HAVE FAITH THAT THIS INSTITUTION CAN BE A VESSEL OF HOPE FOR THE WORLD.

decades, and deep divisions within our domestic politics make it hard to agree on what's true, let alone bear witness to it. That same pall of division is difficult to ignore within the church, including our own denomination.

But if those circumstances seem daunting, bear in mind the odds that were stacked against Jesus. Born into poverty, persecuted from the moment he took his first breath, Jesus was raised under the heavy yoke of a tyrannical regional government, itself the satellite of a brutal empire with a zero-tolerance policy for political subversion. Jesus didn't have the tools that we do. He didn't have a First Amendment to protect his right to share his message. Forget about social media, Jesus was a millennium and a half ahead of the printing press—not that most of his contemporaries could even read.

Maybe most significant of all, Jesus didn't have a church to be his hands and feet. To the contrary, the religious

marginalized and downtrodden, moral movers who challenge unjust systems, churches that give sanctuary, build community, and teach people about Jesus.

We're not going to solve the world's problems in 2018. We're not even going to solve this denomination's problems. But we can do more to build Jesus' kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, bearing the confidence of faith and expecting that things really can improve. We have to trust Jesus enough to obey him. We have to love Jesus enough to love the least of those among us. And we have to make the message of Jesus as simple and irresistible as it was when he built a movement two thousand years ago: love God and love others as we love ourselves. **W**

Emmett Witkovsky-Eldred is a member of Hollidaysburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and attends Washington City Church of the Brethren in Washington, D.C. A recent graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, he is a Young Fellow at the Friends Committee on National Legislation. He also runs DunkerPunks.com and is a host of the Dunker Punks Podcast.



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—Kevin Kessler, Illinois/Wisconsin District Executive, writing in the district newsletter



Church of the Brethren



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*—Ephesians 3:20*

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*Suggested offering date: March 18, 2018*



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