

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

# MESSENGER

OCTOBER 2018 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



  
**BOUND TOGETHER:**  
*Clothed in Christ*  
COLOSSIANS 3:12-15

a new Christmas tradition  
the whole family can share

a children's advent devotional book

# 25 Days TO Jesus

Christy Waltersdorff  
Mitch Miller

Brethren  
Press



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

# MESSENGER

OCTOBER 2018 Vol.167 No. 8 [www.brethren.org/messenger](http://www.brethren.org/messenger)



Publisher: Wendy McFadden Associate editor: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford Web editor: Jan Fischer Bachman  
At-large editor: Walt Wiltschek Design: The Concept Mill

## 4 National Youth Conference 2018

Bound Together: Clothed in Christ

## 18 A legacy lives on in China

by Jeff Bach

## 22 Can we live together?

Reflection by Sandra Brubaker and  
the Living Letters Sunday school class

## departments

- 2 FROM THE PUBLISHER
- 3 IN TOUCH
- 20 BIBLE STUDY
- 24 REFLECTIONS
- 25 NEWSLINE DIGEST
- 27 YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS
- 28 LETTERS
- 31 TURNING POINTS
- 32 POTLUCK

## on the cover

Four members of the National Youth Cabinet celebrate during worship on Tuesday morning. Each day had a different T-shirt theme, and Tuesday was tie-dye. Photo by Glenn Riegel.



## From age to age

**S**eeing the crowds at National Youth Conference always gives me hope. How could it not? The atmosphere in Moby Arena is electric, as youth stream in from across the Church of the Brethren. This year, folks back home could log on to see parts of the conference via Facebook Live, which made it easy to sense the energy from afar.

Not all the participants at NYC are teenagers. Several hundred are advisors, volunteering a week or more to give their youth an opportunity to



WENDY MCFADDEN  
PUBLISHER

encounter God in a new way. These adult participants range in age from 20s to bona-fide senior citizens.

The Church of the Brethren held its first youth conference in 1954. That means that today those youth of yesteryear could be around 80. And their advisors could now be around 100. It's amazing how quickly the years add up.

We do have centenarians in the Church of the Brethren. In fact, it seems as if there are more than ever. That's quite likely, since the number in the population as a whole has been increasing. (One could argue that the Brethren are likely to have a higher percentage of centenarians because of all that good, clean living.)

Since there are more, MESSENGER has decided to add a section to Turning Points to mark the milestones of 100th birthdays. It probably won't be long before we prove that the Brethren are beating the national average (which is 2.2 per 10,000 people, according to the Pew Research Foundation).

But reaching a certain age is not the goal in life, of course. Whether you are the right age to attend this year's NYC or were the right age to attend in 1954, the aim is to be clothed in Christ. Young and old, we are bound together as followers of Jesus.

As the psalmist says:

O God, from my youth you have taught me,  
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.  
So even to old age and gray hairs,  
O God, do not forsake me,  
until I proclaim your might  
to all the generations to come (Psalm 71:17-18).

## How to reach us

### MESSENGER

1451 Dundee Avenue  
Elgin, IL 60120

### Subscriptions:

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

### Advertising:

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

### Editorial:

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

### Subscription rates:

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

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

For digital MESSENGER go to

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

Visit MESSENGER online at

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

MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Member of the Associated Church Press. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © October 2018, Church of the Brethren.

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

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

Printed on recycled paper (20% post consumer)



Courtesy of Frank Ramirez

## The White Buggy debuts

**B**rethren writer Frank Ramirez and composer Steve Engle have penned a new musical, *The White Buggy*, which premiered at the Round Barn Theatre at Amish Acres in Nappanee, Ind., Sept. 17.

Ramirez and Engle have been working on the production for four years. The musical provides “a more realistic vision of who the Amish are and what their lives are like in a world they gladly share with their ‘English’ neighbors but from which they stand out in marked contrast to modern values or lack of them,” according to a release.

The action centers on the workings of an Amish-Mennonite weekly newspaper. Various colorful characters help the story to unfold.

“Amish life never fails to surprise, delight, and challenge us,” Ramirez said. “The more you know the less you know. But one thing you can be sure of—the Amish prove that good things last.”



## Mount Wilson has an ‘uplifting’ baptism



Dave Sellenberger

**Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren (Lebanon, Pa.) has made an intentional effort** to reach out to its surrounding community, many of whom have not been part of a church. When one of those community members, Dave Witmer, decided he wanted to join Mount Wilson this past year, members of the congregation went to extra lengths to welcome him in.

Because Witmer has mobility issues stemming from an accident, climbing down into the baptistry was not possible, but he wanted to have a traditional baptism. So the congregation arranged to obtain a wheelchair that was “user-friendly in water” and rigged up a series of ropes that would allow the wheelchair to be lowered into the baptistry and lifted out again.

“It was very meaningful for him and for our whole congregation,” Mount Wilson co-pastor Jim Eikenberry said. “It was the beautiful fruit of our congregation’s work.”

## Worthington member has ‘can’-do attitude

**Each year, members of Worthington (Minn.) Church of the Brethren** receive creative, hand-crafted ornaments from Lyle Adolph, and the fame for his creative juices has spread into the community.

A recent article in *The Globe*, a local newspaper, chronicled Adolph’s latest project: making beautiful artwork out of recycled cans.

“I was sitting at the table after drinking my V-8 juice every morning, and I noticed all the cans left in the dining room,” Adolph, 90, said in the interview. “I thought, ‘There should be something we can do with these before they’re recycled.’

He decided to create a tractor, and did so using 270 cans. He took the tractor to the Nobles County fair, where it won a purple ribbon.

Adolph, a retired farmer and lifelong member at Worthington, told the paper that he’s thinking of a miniature windmill for his next artistic endeavor.

“That’s just a dream yet,” Adolph said. “It will be mostly out of used materials—maybe it will be next year’s project.”



Julie Burrier, The Globe of Worthington, Minn.

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.



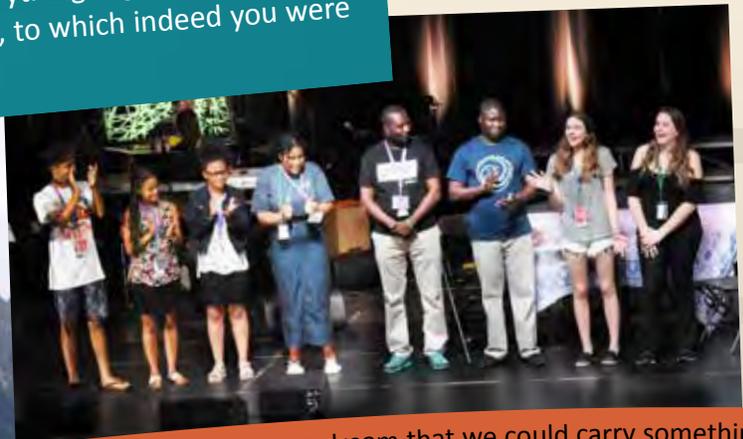
# BOUND TOGETHER:

*Clothed in Christ*

COLOSSIANS 3:12-15

National Youth Conference • July 21-26, 2018 • Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colo.

“Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.” —Colossians 3:14-15



Glenn Riegel

“It was a big moment when we crossed the border into Nevada.” —California “We have a dream that we could carry something



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel



Nevin Dulabaum



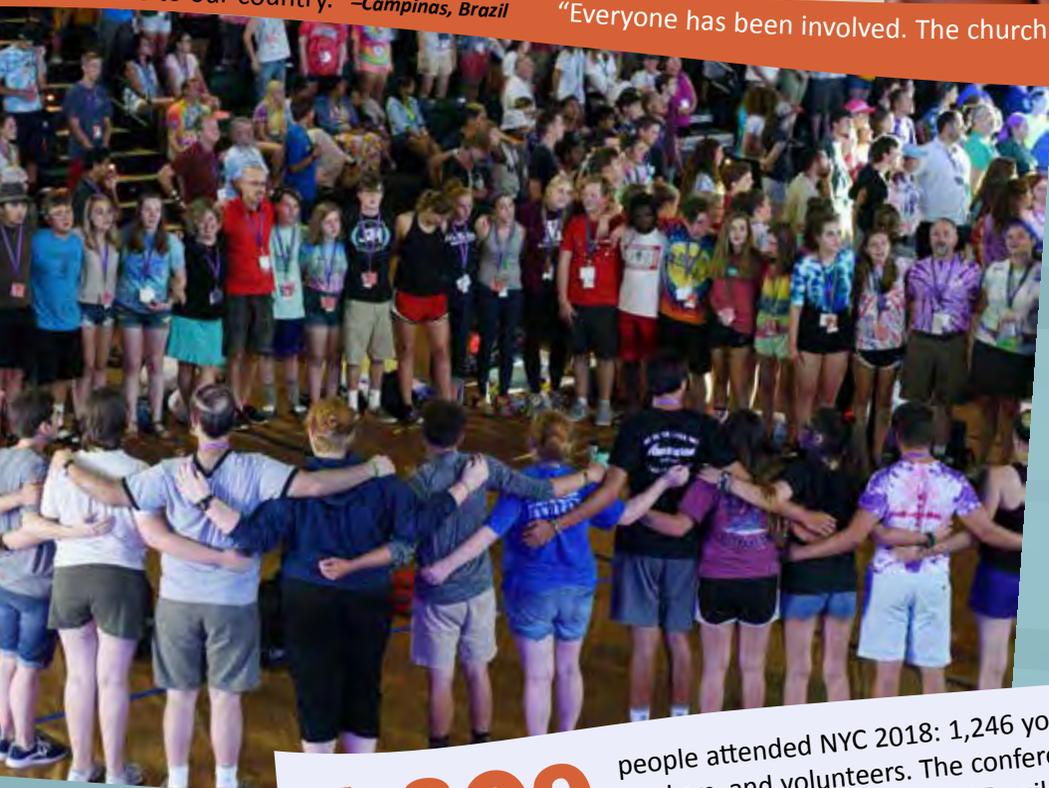
Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel

from here to our country." –Campinas, Brazil

"Everyone has been involved. The church is really serious." –Nigeria



Glenn Riegel

**1,809**

people attended NYC 2018: 1,246 youth, 471 advisors, and 92 staff, youth workers, and volunteers. The conference welcomed international Brethren from India Spain, Nigeria, and Brazil.

# CHOSEN

“Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” *—1 Peter 2:4-5*



Nevin Dulabaum



Glenn Riegel

“Put on love and let it bind us today. Put on love as harmony starts to fade. Let love lead the way come what may.”

*—from the theme song by Seth Hendricks*

“Being part of a small group makes me feel like people really care. They make me feel like everyone has open arms and cares.” *—South Carolina*



# Why I ride the bus

by John Reed

**Attending NYC is an incredible experience** for youth and advisors alike, but I believe the Virlina District bus trip was an integral part of that experience.

The bus was not simply a mode of transportation, nor was it just a sightseeing trip. If it were, I would choose to fly.

Rather, we spend six days in community with brothers and sisters from our district. We really get to know one another while praying, having devotions, singing, and playing games together. While it is wonderful meeting new people at NYC (especially in small groups), they often live in another state and it is hard to stay in touch. The people we meet on the bus are those we can continue to fellowship with regularly at camp or district events.

I have been to NYC twice (2014 and 2018) and I can honestly say that the relationships built on the bus trips are priceless—they will last a lifetime!

National Youth Conference is one of the church's best investments in our youth. Like our denomination as a whole, NYC has people with diverse theological back-

grounds. But it is amazing to watch our youth move beyond differences and focus on what unites us—Jesus Christ. They experience the grace of God in a way that is life changing.

As we work on a compelling vision for the Church of the Brethren, let us do the same; let us focus on Jesus as Lord.

John Reed, a member of Cloverdale Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., is a youth advisor in Virlina District.



Glenn Riegel



Nevin Dalabaum

“Being able to talk about the sermon and about things that you can easily overlook with all the activities.” —Virginia

“You are beloved, you are cherished, you are a treasure, and you are held tightly.”  
—Jeff Carter

## Small groups

were an important way for NYC participants to meet people from different places. In these small circles of conversation, they debriefed from sermons and workshops and reflected on how the week was going.



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel

**120** small groups

# LOVE EXTRAVAGANTLY

“What does it mean to be a neighbor? ... There’s inequality all around us. We have to pay attention to it because we live in a world where we will never know about it if we choose not to.” —Christena Cleveland

“The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ‘When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women...if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.’ But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live.” —Exodus 1:15-17



Glenn Riegel

“I loved learning about the world . . . and how Brethren are helping.” —Illinois “Connect 4 was very competitive, but after the game was over we came back

“Our God is calling us and inviting us and compelling us and insisting that we come to know him, and knowing him we will act in solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, the enslaved, and the exiled.”  
— Dana Cassell



Nevin Dulibaum



Nevin Dulibaum



Glenn Riegel

**5k run**  
Superheroes rose early on Sunday for a 6 a.m. 5K run/walk around campus.



Glenn Riegel

together. After it was done, we realized it was just a game." —Florida "What excites you about following Jesus?" —Question of the day for small groups



Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel

# Brethren Block Party

When a Viking, an Egyptian king, and a flamingo get together to eat ice cream, toss a chicken, and test their geography skills, National Youth Conference organizers call it a success.

This all happened at the Brethren Block Party, a fun way to learn about all the different organizations in the Church of the Brethren—and to get acquainted with others at NYC. There were 14 booths to visit. Plus, more than 1,600 cups of vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry ice cream and 100 popsicles were served.



Nevin Dulabaum

**1,600** cups of ice cream

# OFFER AND ACCEPT FORGIVENESS

“But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.” —*Luke 15:20b*

“My prayer is that the church can be the home that you run to, and that we as your family can run to you.”  
—*Eric Landram*



“What would a church that is making a difference in people’s lives and in the world look like?” —Question of the day for small groups “Instead of



## Witness

Youth had an opportunity to take part in a public witness activity each day, including witnessing against drone warfare, joining in a peace vigil, and planting “seeds of conversation.” Here they are signing a banner of support for Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). The banner is traveling around the denomination for more signatures and then is being taken to Nigeria.



Laura Brown



Nevin Dulabaum



Nevin Dulabaum



Glenn Rippey

instantly judging people, take time to listen to them. Just show love in general, especially in places where love is absent." —Maryland



"When we offer ourselves to Jesus, warts and all, we will hear him say, 'I see you and I love you.'"

—Laura Stone



Laura Brown



Nevin Dulabaum

**Workshops** Learn, discuss, make, move, sing: Workshop topics were as varied as love feast, hymns, Star Wars and theology, mental illness, racism, mission, drama, prayer journaling, autism, dance, discerning God's call.

**161** workshops

# TRUE PEACE

“And [Jesus] woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, ‘Where is your faith?’” *—Luke 8:24b-25a*

“I...beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” *—Ephesians 4:1-3*

“Locked inside our skin we live so far apart. What I would give to hear the beating of your heart.”  
*—A stanza of one of Ken Medema’s songs*



Glenn Riegel

“What will it take for us to be the kind of church that makes a difference in people’s lives and the world?” *—Question of the day for small groups* “By showing your

“To take a step closer to God means to take a step closer to each other. And to take a step closer to each other is to take a step closer to God.”  
*—Audrey and Tim Hollenberg-Duffey*



Nevin Dulabaum

“Jesus, if you’re listening, there are storms out there.... There’s racism, sexism, misogyny, and we too often don’t know what truth looks like.... There are storms inside that say we’re not enough.... I like to think that Jesus would stand and look at us and say, ‘Ah, I know you, you’re mine.’”  
*—Ted Swartz*



Nevin Dulabaum



Glenn Riegel

love for Christ and not hiding it. Then other people will know you are a Christian and you can have a discussion about it." —Pennsylvania



**1,536** people hiked in the Rockies



Nevin Dalabaum



Nevin Dalabaum

Glenn Riegel

# HELD TOGETHER

“Can we all agree that everyone deserves the grace of God?”

—Youth speaker Taylor Dudley

“We are joined in this journey together, clothed in the love of Christ.”

—Youth speaker Elise Gage



“Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.” —Colossians 3:14-15

“Share more love and respect for others.” —West Virginia

“Practice kindness till it becomes a regular habit.” —Maryland

“Spread love, not hate.”





Laura Brown

## Give and serve

**T-shirt diapers:** More than 1,800 T-shirts were given to be processed into diapers for use by Midwives for Haiti. Youth traced and cut patterns, and 230 diapers were sewn on location by volunteers from Northern Plains District. Monetary donations totaled \$394.

**Clean-up buckets:** 400 clean-up buckets were assembled for disaster relief by 397 youth and 3 youth workers in a service project sponsored by Brethren Disaster Ministries. Monetary donations totaled \$2,038.

**Canned food:** 700 pounds of canned food and other nonperishable food items and \$478.75 were donated in an offering for the Larimer County Food Bank.

**Children's day camp:** Over three afternoons, 305 children from the Larimer County area attended a day camp staffed by 502 NYC youth and adult volunteers.

**NYC scholarship fund:** \$7,040 was received in an offering to widen the welcome by assisting youth from the US and other countries who otherwise would not be able to attend NYC.



Glenn Riegel

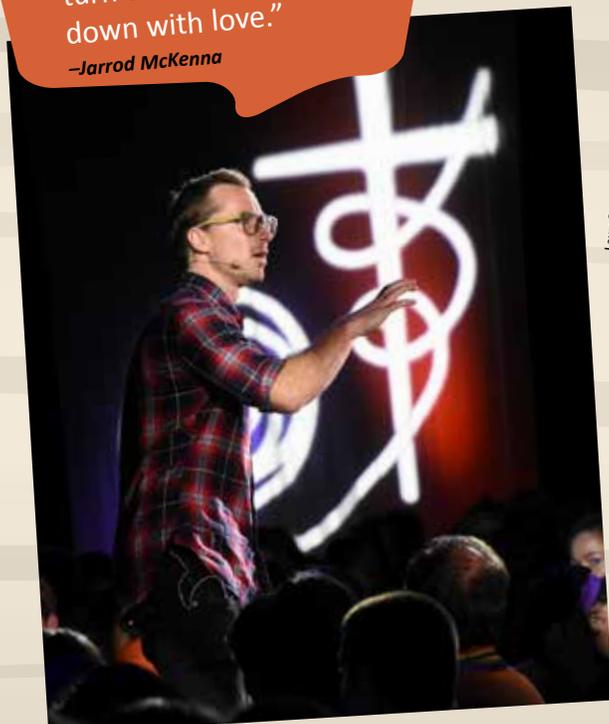
Go help each other." -India

"Reach out and do more for community. It all starts in community and spreads." -Pennsylvania



"Lord, would you send us out with tenderness to turn this world upside down with love."

-Jarrod McKenna



Laura Brown

Glenn Riegel



Laura Brown



Laura Brown

# EXPRESS GRATITUDE

“God doesn’t play favorites... True gratitude moves us to active compassion rather than comparison.”  
—*Michaela Alphonse*

“Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.” —*Luke 17:15-16*



Glenn Riegel

“Little things to encourage and to be there for one another, because they all add up.” —*Virginia*

“Be kinder to other people and

## What I Learned at NYC

“That no matter where you come from, you can make a difference somewhere.” —*Maryland*

“I didn’t know that it would be this easy to hear God and to see God with this group.” —*Illinois*

“That we should always forgive.” —*Ohio*

“I’ve learned a lot of humility. I’ve learned to put myself second and to listen to others because God will speak through me to someone.” —*Virginia*

“Never underestimate yourself and the love of God.” —*Illinois*

“Being accepting of everyone no matter what they look like. Make them feel welcome.” —*Ohio*

“Love and sharing between brother and sisters. The simplicity and humbleness that you see in the worship.” —*Spain*

“Have extravagant love and forgive others.” —*California*



Glenn Riegel



**Members of the National Youth Cabinet: (front, from left) Hannah Buck, Emilie Deffenbaugh, Haley Dulabaum, Carol Elmore, and (back) Connor Ladd, Nathan Hollenberg, Erika Clary, and Trevor Haren.**



**Kelsey Murray, NYC coordinator, and Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.**

Glenn Riegel

Nevin Dulabaum

Glenn Riegel

show compassion when people are upset. Be forgiving and just hang out with people." —Indiana

## Stay connected

How do you keep your connections to new friends across the denomination and ministries around the world? Start with your local church and district youth activities. Follow the Church of the Brethren online and offline. Get involved in one of the programs listed below.

### Do

- Workcamps
- Christian Citizenship Seminar
- Young Adult Conference
- Ministry Summer Service
- Brethren Volunteer Service
- Brethren Disaster Ministries

## Follow

Follow the Church of the Brethren online, subscribe to Newline, and read *Messenger* magazine.

Find social media links here:

<http://www.brethren.org/about/social-media.html>



*This section edited by Wendy McFadden and designed by Paul Stocksdale. The volunteer NYC press team, led by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, provided onsite coverage: Laura Brown, Allie Dulabaum, Mary Dulabaum, Nevin Dulabaum, Eddie Edmonds, Russ Otto, Frank Ramirez, Alane Riegel, Glenn Riegel. See [www.brethren.org/newline](http://www.brethren.org/newline) for all the NYC stories, photo albums, and videos.*

# A Legacy LIVES ON IN CHINA

ELIZABETHTOWN TOUR GROUP TRACES TRAIL OF BRETHERN HISTORY

by Jeff Bach

**A**s an Elizabethtown (Pa.) College tour group followed the trail of American and Chinese Brethren in China this past spring, they found that Christianity is alive there as that nation grows and addresses its 21st-century challenges.

Jeff Bach and David Kenley, professors at Elizabethtown College, led the May 12-28 study tour. Six Elizabethtown students and 12 non-students who are members of the Church of the Brethren traveled to learn about modern China and to trace the path of Brethren missionaries who served there from 1908 to 1951. Kenley teaches the history of modern China, while Bach teaches religion courses.

The tour, subsidized by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, began in Beijing with visits to the Summer Palace and Tiananmen Square and a tour through the Forbidden City, the administrative and residential center of Chinese emperors. The schedule also included excursions to the Great Wall and to the Temple of Heaven.

After four days in Beijing the group traveled 250 miles west to Shanxi Province in north-central China, where Church of the Brethren missionaries served. For five days, participants explored cities and villages where the Brethren built churches, schools, and hospitals and where Chinese members became pastors, teachers, nurses, and doctors who shared faith and Christian service. Along the way, tour group members made new friends with local residents.

After a night in the provincial capital of Taiyuan (where E. L. Ikenberry and Minor Meyers worked with the international YMCA and formed a small congregation), the group rode to Shouyang, the third Brethren mission station, opened in 1919. The local pastor, Elder Yin, and his wife talked about the small congregation there. Two of the group's participants—Ted Flory and his brother, Phil—found the stop especially meaningful. Their grandparents, Byron and Nora Philips Flory, and their father, Wendell



James Brubaker

Flory, once lived in the mission house that is still standing.

There were more sobering memories, too. Three Brethren missionaries—Alva and Mary Lou Harsh and Minneva Neher—were killed by Japanese soldiers in Shouyang in 1937 after the missionaries had been called to resolve a domestic dispute. Nearby, tour members also briefly visited Gwei Mei Liang, a 96-year-old woman who is the last living baptized member of the Church of the Brethren in China. James Brubaker expressed his joy at meeting this elderly Christian woman who had “connections with early Brethren mission work.”

Next the group traveled to Pingding, starting point of the Brethren mission in 1910. Eric Miller, a Church of the Brethren member originally from York, Pa., and his wife, Ruoxia Li, a native of Shouyang, made many of the arrangements in Shanxi. They work for the You Ai Hospital in Pingding, a private clinic founded by Dr. Li Youquan. Dr. Li adopted the name “You Ai,” meaning “fellowship of love,” which the Brethren used to translate the word “brethren.”

*Below, left: Jeff Bach speaks with 96-year-old Gwei Mei Liang, the last member in China baptized by the Brethren missionaries. Right: The whole group at the Chang Family Manor, a large compound formerly owned by a wealthy banker to house his business, his extended family, and some of his servants. It is near Taiyuan, in Shanxi Province.*



On two evenings at the hospital the group enjoyed cultural interchanges, including traditional Chinese music, calligraphy, and a presentation of art by Sun Xiangdong, an 82-year-old local artist. He described how he “grew up on American milk” provided by the missionaries during the Japanese occupation. Brenda Gish, one of the tour participants, commented on how proud she was of “Brethren brothers and sisters” who served sacrificially to help people like him.

In a special moment, Ted Flory joined Dr. Li in dedicating the new Flory Café in the You Ai Hospital. The Café is named in honor of the Florys who served as missionaries and one of their descendants, Mary Jo Flory-Steury, former director of ministry for the Church of the Brethren. The hospital also features the Harsh-Neher library, named for Alva and Mary Lou Harsh and Minneva Neher.

These cultural interchanges highlighted the warmth of Chinese friendship. Group members gave to the hospital copies of a 1935 silent movie filmed by Brethren about the mission and a film made in 1946 about the Brethren Service Tractor Unit (the Plowboys). While in Pingding, the group also visited a hospital that stands on the site of the original Brethren hospital and has exhibits about the Brethren work. On Sunday morning they worshiped with a Chinese Christian congregation who consider themselves spiritual heirs of the Brethren.

An excursion took the Elizabethtown group to Zhaobi, a village along the 80-mile road from Pingding to Zuoquan that Brethren missionaries helped to build as part of the famine relief work of 1920-1921. There the group visited a home where missionary Frank Crumpacker stayed and preached.

The group traveled on to Zuoquan, known as Liao Chou until it was renamed for a Communist army general in 1942. This town was the second mission station of the Brethren in China, opened in 1912. Tour participants were able to go inside the Church of the Brethren church building in Zuoquan, the only Brethren church building still standing. In 1940, Japanese soldiers arrested and killed 13 Chinese

Brethren here during their occupation of China.

The tour then visited the nearby town of Matian, former headquarters of the Communist 8th Route Army during both the Sino-Japanese War as well as the Chinese Civil War. The Brethren had a congregation and church building in Matian. The Communist General Zuoquan took over the church and its related buildings for his personal quarters and office. The tour group visited these buildings, although the church building itself no longer stands.

Also at Matian they visited a large, modern memorial museum for the 8th Route Army and saw over a dozen photographs taken by Howard Sollenberger, whose parents were missionaries. In 1938-1939 he took relief supplies to Chinese civilians and soldiers. Tour members noted the irony of seeing a Brethren pacifist’s photographs in a museum honoring the Communist army.

Next the group visited Pingyao and Xi’an. Pingyao is a well preserved, traditional walled city; Xi’an, an ancient capital of China, is the site of thousands of terra cotta soldiers buried by China’s first emperor.

The group spent the final two days of the tour in Shanghai, where Wendell Flory had administered the Tractor Unit of the Brethren Service Commission after 1946. The project was a shipment of tractors accompanied by 50 “Plowboys,” Brethren young men from farm backgrounds, to help with agricultural improvement. Those Plowboys included the fathers of two tour group members, Sandy Mason Cable and Lois Deaton. Ted Flory noted how meaningful it was to visit Shanghai, “the city of my birth and where my father worked as director of the UNRRA tractor unit in 1947-1949.”

All of the group members were impressed by the genuine warmth of the Chinese people throughout the tour and extended wishes for a peaceful future through mutual understanding. 

Jeff Bach is director of the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College.



3rd century, Catacomb of Priscilla, Italy, Rome.

# Good shepherd, good host

by Christina Bucher

**Crosses today commonly symbolize Christianity, but it was not always so.**

Early Christian artists portrayed Jesus as “The Good Shepherd.” In these early depictions, Jesus appears as a beardless young man carrying a sheep or goat on his shoulders. Through the centuries, artists continued to portray Jesus as a shepherd, often adding a beard, a longer hairstyle, different clothing, and, perhaps, a halo. Sheep and shepherds populated the ancient world, and these figures crop up frequently in the Bible. One of the most familiar passages is Psalm 23, known to many as the “Shepherd Psalm.”

## God as shepherd

In the biblical world, kings were called “shepherds” because they were expected to protect and provide for the people over whom they ruled. Good leaders—both in the ancient

world and today—look after their people the way good shepherds care for their flocks.

In verses 1-3, the psalmist speaks about what God as shepherd does. Because God provides for our needs, the psalmist says, “I do not lack anything.” God as shepherd guides and protects us. The first two Hebrew words of verse 3 can be translated in several ways. The noun *nepesh* can be understood as a person’s life, life force, breath, soul, or self. The verb is an unusual form of a root that means “return.” Together, the two Hebrew words suggest that God as shepherd “renews my strength” or “restores my soul.” This psalm expresses God’s support for people who are physically weak or whose health is failing, as well as those who feel overwhelmed by their circumstances and apprehensive about their futures.

Biblical writers often describe life as a journey. Just as we choose which road to travel, we make decisions about how

## Recommended reading

John Paul Lederach, "On Web Watching," Chapter 10 in *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

Nadia Bolz-Weber, "Sermon on Mermaids, Enemies, and the 23rd Psalm," *Sarcastic Lutheran* 4-22-2013. Patheos.com.

we are going to live our lives. In the remainder of verse 3, the psalmist signals that this poem is not a simple tale about a shepherd and a sheep, but rather, it reveals to us something about God, God's people, and the journey through life. The Hebrew word *tsedeq*, translated "righteousness," characterizes correct human decisionmaking in the Bible. It often means "doing what is right in God's eyes."

This psalm affirms that we are not left to our own devices, but rather, God leads and directs us. Hymn 352 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* captures well this portion of Psalm 23: "Gentle Shepherd, come and lead us, for we need you to help us find our way."

### God as companion

Psalm 23 is often called a psalm of trust or psalm of confidence, and in verse 4 the speaker affirms that God accompanies us even in our darkest hours. The first two words in this verse are "even though" or "even when." It is easy to express one's trust in God when life is going well, but when we hit rock bottom, can we affirm that God accompanies us on our journey? This psalmist does and, perhaps, can inspire others to trust God's presence in their lives.

When I memorized this psalm as a child, I learned the King James Version: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Many translators now think that the Hebrew phrase is best understood as "the darkest valley," rather than "the valley of the shadow of death." "The darkest valley" provides a broader range of situations than that of death.

The Hebrew word translated "evil" also has a broad range of meaning. It includes physical danger, harm, injury, as well as malevolent people, things, or situations. If we expand the range of this word's meaning, verse 4 underlines Psalm 23 as a psalm of trust in God that applies to many different situations. The Common English Bible moves in this direction: "Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no danger because you are with me."

### God as host

With verse 5 the psalmist shifts to a different metaphor to describe God as the generous host, who offers food and shelter to travelers. I have long been puzzled by the idea of sitting at a table to eat "in the presence of my enemies." What are my

enemies doing at this meal? Why doesn't God simply banish them from my presence?

Mennonite scholar John Paul Lederach applies this verse to the process of peacebuilding. Lederach suggests that sitting at table with our enemies can play a significant role in the peace process: "eating equalizes, humanizes, and creates a different space," so that something new can emerge between people who are at odds with each other.

Lutheran pastor and theologian Nadia Bolz-Weber gets right at the core of this verse in her inimitable way: "See, in the 23rd Psalm God does a counter-intuitive thing when it comes to our very real fear of enemies. God doesn't say 'Let's go smite them' and God doesn't say 'Let's analyze the data.' God says 'Let's eat!'"

These approaches to Psalm 23:5 challenge me to invite my enemies to lunch. They might also challenge congregations or church groups to organize ecumenical or interfaith meals. We can eat with enemies if we trust that God has set the table.

Hospitality imagery continues to the end of the psalm. As a good host, God bathes guests' heads in oil, offering healing from the rough elements. In the ancient world, good hosts protected their guests from harm. The Hebrew verb used in this verse often appears in connection to enemy pursuit. By contrast, the psalmist declares, "goodness and faithful love" [not enemies] "will pursue me all my days."

Although most English versions have "dwell" in verse 6, the Hebrew verb means "return." Continuing the metaphor of God as "The Good Host," the psalmist expresses a desire to return to the security of God's house, by proclaiming, "I will return to the LORD's house my whole life long." Just as people today often have favorite hotels (or favorite hotel chains), Psalm 23 names God's house as the preferred place to lodge overnight. But if we do, we should be prepared to sit at table with both friends and enemies. 

Christina Bucher is professor of religion at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania.

## Psalm 23 and music

The Scripture index in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* lists 15 hymns that allude to Psalm 23, including hymn 170, "The King of Love My Shepherd Is," which weaves together Psalm 23, the parable of the Good Shepherd (Luke 15:3-7), and Jesus' self-identification as Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18).

Although hymn 562, "*Nada te turbe*," does not explicitly quote Psalm 23, it expresses the same sense of calm trust in God. The words come to us from St. Teresa of Avila, a 16th-century Spanish nun and mystic. The English lyrics in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* are simple:

Let nothing trouble you.

Let nothing frighten you.

Whoever has God lacks nothing.



## A fisherman forgiven

by Sandra Brubaker

**I am impressed with the story in John 21.** The disciples have been hiding for a time following the crucifixion of Jesus, fearful of arrest because of their association with him. Christ has appeared to them on two previous occasions, and now they are getting restless.

Peter suggests, amid their grief and pain, that fishing may be a balm to their hurting emotions. They go at night because fishing was better at night. I wonder if it wasn't a bit more secretive as well. They are not successful; not one fish is caught.

As dawn is approaching, a man on the shoreline calls out, "Throw the net to the other side of the boat." They do so, and the net fills to the breaking point. Suddenly, John realizes that the Man on the beach is Christ himself. Peter, often impulsive, immediately jumps overboard and swims to the shore. He has a few moments with Christ without the other disciples.

I suspect that Peter has much on his mind. He has denied Christ three times, has witnessed that Jesus is resurrected, and now knows that he is indeed "the Christ." How does one forgive oneself for the denial of a

friend who now is undeniably the Messiah? Peter feels such remorse and probably finds it difficult to face Jesus one on one.

Jesus, the Son of God, the perfect example of love and forgiveness, offers Peter not only complete forgiveness, but unconditional love. So much love and forgiveness that he ordains Peter to organize "the church." Peter becomes the "rock" upon which the church is built, never to deny his master again.

The miracle of this passage is not the catching of fish; the miracle is the forgiveness of Peter.

I WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO EXTEND THAT KIND OF FORGIVENESS TO THOSE WHO HAVE BRUISED MY FEELINGS OVER MY CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THEOLOGY, OR MY FOLLOWING THE CALLING THAT CHRIST HAS PLACED IN MY LIFE.



# Where is Jesus in this situation?

by the Living Letters  
Sunday school class

**I t seems that currently we Brethren do not value our many common beliefs** in Christ as much as we focus on and give authority to those beliefs that are different. Often when we are intent on being most faithful, we are also most vulnerable to the power of darkness. M. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled* as well as *People of the Lie*, writes that good is life-giving while evil is that which takes life away. Will separation renew and energize or distract and deplete life from all of us?

Jesus said that no one can have two masters, referring to serving God or money. Any one of us could substitute our own other “master”—money, food, social media, power, the need to be right, the need to be in control—the list could go on and on. Can we let go of our second “masters” and trust the Spirit to let God judge our differences?

Though it may feel as if the current schism along social and theological differences has been separating us for far too long, it is imperative that we not rush into a separation that ultimately weakens our common witness to the peace, hope, love, and grace that is in Christ Jesus. 

This response from the Living Letters Sunday school class at Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren was submitted by Theresa Eshbach.

I would like to be able to extend that kind of forgiveness to those who have bruised my feelings over my conclusions about theology, or my following the calling that Christ has placed in my life. I would like those who disagree with me to be able to offer me forgiveness, too. I pray that all of us can forgive as Christ has forgiven, even when it hurts our pride and strips away at our ego. I pray that I can love as Christ commanded us—to love God with our whole being and to love those who are our neighbors.

As Martin Luther reflected, “The love that I have toward God is the same love that directs itself toward the neighbor.” We are not dealing, then, with two different loves, but the same love expressed in two spheres, equivalent in importance. May God find us to be shining examples of his love and harmony as we follow him and serve those in our own community of faith, our next-door neighbors, and our neighbors around the world. 

Sandra Brubaker is a member of Chiques Church of the Brethren, Manheim, Pa.

OFTEN WHEN WE ARE INTENT ON  
BEING MOST FAITHFUL, WE ARE  
ALSO MOST VULNERABLE TO THE  
POWER OF DARKNESS.



# Building a bridge

**A**s a child, I loved to explore our pasture near Mastersonville, Pa. There was an apple orchard in one corner with trees to climb.

Soft, grassy banks hung over a stream that had carved a path through the center. Here under rocks we would find crayfish and snakes (my brothers' favorites). Quiet pools of tadpoles provided days of intrigue as, through the green glass of a Mason jar, we watched them grow legs and other important frog parts. Best of all was the delicious smell and taste of meadow mint tea gathered there, especially when Mother added a can of 7-Up.

There were, however, places in that pasture where the tall grass disguised a marsh. If I was not careful in my haste to get to the creek or the orchard, my socks and shoes would become covered with mud. Once in, I had to slog slowly through it, fearful of the snakes and other yucky creatures hidden there.



DONITA J. KEISTER

Some have described the Church of the Brethren as stuck in a marsh-like quagmire, unable to find our way out to the fields of mission where God is beckoning us. How do we make our

way through? What is lurking there?

At Annual Conference in Cincinnati, delegates embraced a recommendation to suspend the introduction of new business for the 2019 Annual Conference, instead focusing on a discernment process intended to lead us to a "compelling vision" for our life together. Many left Annual Conference with a sense of cautious optimism—and even hopeful anticipation—that we are going to work on something that may help us find our way. We have been stuck too long in a quagmire of division and controversy.

From the moderator's perspective, I see the Compelling Vision Process providing a temporary island for us to stand on together in the middle of the marsh. I see the job of the Compelling Vision Working Group and the Process Team as one of gathering the building materials necessary to construct a bridge across the marsh to the dry ground where

we can move forward into God's pastures. There we can reclaim a fresh passion for the ministry that comes through the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

These precious building materials, graciously contributed from the heart, soul, and mind of people who care deeply about our church, will be collected through conversations all across the denomination. They will take place from Cincinnati in 2018 through Greensboro in 2019. We call all in every generation from youth to the oldest among us to sit around tables at district and denominational events, sharing and learning from one another.

In the fall of 2019, the Compelling Vision Working Group, with the assistance of the Process Team, will prayerfully engage in the construction of this "bridge." Delegates at the 2020 Annual Conference will be asked to affirm the design and construction, and agree to walk across it.

What will the bridge look like? I don't know. We don't have all the building materials yet, and we won't have them until the 2019 Annual Conference is complete. I'm trusting that God, our perfectly wise and loving Engineer, will have the plans stamped and ready, and that we will be spiritually prepared to read and follow them. I am not imagining this to be an easy plan, or a happily-ever-after panacea. I simply want it to be able to take us where God is leading.

Above all, I see this as a spiritual process for us. As individuals, within our congregations and districts and wherever we join in ministry as a denomination, we are being called to enter this place of sharing and discernment with a sense of holiness, anticipating God's movement in and through us.

I hope that we all will engage deeply in personal and community prayer. It is in this commitment to seeking God that we will be able to lay down our personal "bridge drawings" and any enmity toward one another. Only then will we be in a place to discern God's transformational plan that can lead us into the fields of ministry beyond. 

Donita J. Keister is moderator of the 2019 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. Learn how to join the conversation at [www.brethren.org/compellingvision](http://www.brethren.org/compellingvision).

WHAT WILL THE BRIDGE LOOK LIKE? I DON'T KNOW... I SIMPLY WANT IT TO BE ABLE TO TAKE US WHERE GOD IS LEADING.

## Brethren World Assembly examines ‘Crosscurrents’

**T**he Sixth Brethren World Assembly took place Aug. 9-12 at Winona Lake (Ind.) Grace Brethren Church. It was sponsored by the Brethren Encyclopedia Foundation with the theme “Brethren Intersections: History, Identity, Crosscurrents.”

The event, held every five years, gathers Brethren from various denominations tracing back to the original 1708 group in Germany. Roughly 150 Brethren came together to hear a range of speakers share their unique perspectives on the Brethren movement but also to break bread together, take bus tours, worship according to three very different Brethren traditions, and, of course, eat home-made ice cream three nights in a row.

Participants came from the Brethren Church, Church of the Brethren, Dunkard Brethren, Conservative Grace Brethren Churches International, Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Old

German Baptist Brethren, and Old German Baptist Brethren (New Conference).

Brethren Church scholar Dale R. Stoffer, described the slow change among Brethren to view cooperation with other Christians “not as a badge of shame but as a badge of honor.”

“We should not be fearful to cooperate with the Other,” Stoffer said, “but we dare not lose our unique sense of identity, a sense of our own otherness. The gifts of what Brethren may bring is a treasure that can only be given if we remain true to our own unique identity as Brethren.”

Archivist William Kostlevy of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives suggested that the Nigerian Brethren have had as profound an effect on American Brethren as the first Brethren missionaries had in Nigeria. Meanwhile, Bridgewater (Va.) College history professor Stephen Longenecker of the Church of the Brethren tracked the slow acceptance of the revival movement in America among the Brethren.

Frank Ramirez



Other Church of the Brethren speakers included Jeff Bach, director of the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College; Karen Garrett, managing editor of Brethren Life & Thought and coordinator of assessment for Bethany Theological Seminary; Bethany professors Scott Holland and Denise Kettering-Lane; Carl Bowman, director of survey research at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia; and Josh Brockway, director of spiritual formation for the Church of the Brethren.—Frank Ramirez

Glenn Riegel



## Districts begin conversations to discern the church’s vision

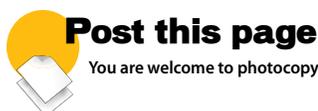
### The process launched at the 2018 Annual Conference

to help the denomination discern God’s call and develop a compelling vision to guide the church into the future is moving into a new phase this fall. Shaped by the conversations that took place at Annual Conference, the Compelling Vision Process Team designed a two-hour event to engage members in deeper conversation around

God’s call for the church.

These conversation events have already taken place in several districts, with others coming up or in the process of being scheduled. Districts will be publicizing all events as plans are finalized.

The process team is inviting and encouraging everyone to participate in an event. More details are available at [www.brethren.org/ac/compelling-vision.html](http://www.brethren.org/ac/compelling-vision.html).



**Post this page**

You are welcome to photocopy this page. For more Newsline stories and to subscribe to Newsline’s free email news service go to [www.brethren.org/news](http://www.brethren.org/news)

## Bethany Theological Seminary unveils new branding

**A** new logo, website, and graphic themes represent the culmination of work by members of the Bethany Theological Seminary community (Richmond, Ind.) to give the seminary a re-envisioned public presence. The new elements are appearing on printed and digital communication, marketing materials, and a completely redesigned website that features streamlined navigation, a focus on recruitment, and a series of new photos and video.

To guide the rebranding, Bethany contracted with 5 Degrees Branding, who began the process with interviews and surveys of employees, students, alumni, and Church of the Brethren leaders.

“A change in an institution’s outward appearance should spark interest in what is happening within its mission and program,” Bethany president Jeff Carter said. “Consistent with our historic values, Bethany’s new logo depicts the power of scripture read in community, with colors that represent growth and wisdom. Our new tagline—‘so that the world flourishes’—speaks to the hope of our mission while leaving room for individuals to live into the ways God is calling them to serve.”—**Jenny Williams**



So that the world flourishes

## Personnel notes

**Lisa Crouch** has been hired by the Church of the Brethren as associate director, Children’s Disaster Services, for Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) based at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. A graduate of Western Michigan University, she most recently worked at the Michigan Medicine Children’s Hospital as a child life specialist and was a CDS volunteer

during the 2017 hurricane responses. Crouch began her work Aug. 27.

**Kendal Elmore** announced his retirement as district executive minister of West Marva District effective Aug. 31, with compensation continuing through the end of the year. His ministry with the district began Aug. 1, 2010. In addition to his executive duties in West Marva, Elmore has been active with the

Council of District Executives, serving most recently as chair of the ministry issues committee.

**Shaye Isaacs**, executive assistant to the president at Bethany Theological Seminary, resigned effective Aug. 31. She has served Bethany in that capacity since August 2011, working with both current president Jeff Carter and former president Ruthann Knechel Johansen.



Global Food Initiative

## Global Food Initiative grants sow seeds

**T**he Global Food Initiative (GFI) of the Church of the Brethren has made numerous recent grants, supporting community garden projects in Illinois and Maryland, an agriculture conference in Haiti, an educational initiative of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), and continuing hurricane recovery efforts for farmers in Puerto Rico. The five grants made since June 1 total more than \$36,000 in aid.

The largest, and most recent of the grants—issued Aug. 6—will support Puerto Rican farmers who are still struggling to recover from Hurricane Maria, which devastated the island in September 2017. A sum of \$28,491 will enable long-term projects related to produce, livestock, and a hydroponic shelter.

## Emergency Disaster Fund grants

**The Church of the Brethren Emergency Disaster Fund** made several recent allocations supporting efforts on the Texas border and refugee work in the Middle East.

Two grants, the first for \$5,000 and the second for \$24,600, are funding Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) work as they respond to the crisis on the US-Mexico border. A CDS team was initially deployed to the area in late July, serving more than 75 children on its first day and 790 in its first two weeks. In addition to that initial work, the funds will support four-person teams this fall as they meet continuing needs and two trainers who will work to create a sustainable presence there.

A third grant, for \$40,000, is providing psycho-social support for Syrian refugee children through the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD), responding to victims of the ongoing Syrian civil war. LSESD began in 2011 and has become an important partner in the Syrian refugee response.

# To be or not to be?

by Laura Hay

**T**o be or not to be? To answer the call, to take the challenge, or to choose a more simple, less intimidating path?

A week before beginning my journey as youth peace advocate for the Church of the Brethren, I was terrified. I was petrified at the prospect of traveling the country alone, talking about a subject I wasn't sure I knew how to address, and feeling as if I wasn't worthy of the task for which I was called.

When I was packing up my room at home I found a box of temporary tattoos. I had gotten them at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival before my freshman year of college, and there was one tattoo left in the box: "To be or not to be?" It went on jet black and crisp; it almost looked like a real tattoo! The words were edged on my left shoulder blade, and it felt right. I didn't think of it at the time, but it was a question I had been asking myself 500 times a day since accepting the call to be the youth peace advocate. To be or not to be? (I'm a little angsty, but you know what, so was Hamlet).

In the first weeks, I had to learn that being the youth peace advocate is different than being on a travel team, and I was going to bring different things to the camps. Maybe I haven't brought the high energy skits and songs or the funny anecdotes that people might expect from the Youth Peace Travel Team. But I did bring other things, and I know that is different and valuable in itself.

These tattoos usually last

between one and two weeks. Believe me, I've gone through a whole box of them. But this question seemed to linger, staying planted on my left shoulder blade and in the back of my mind. To be? Can I do this? Is this a call I can handle, and will it be valuable for others? Or not to be? Who would I be if I let my anxiety about it take over?

At "senior campfire night" at Camp Emmaus in Illinois, every student stood up and said something very similar—about at first being afraid to come to camp, but as soon as they arrived, having those worries relieved.

That week, my temporary tattoo washed off and, with it, the question. During my week at Camp Emmaus, I found a place that was loving, accepting, and a safe place to express vulnerability. Seeing the seniors so vulnerable in their stories and seeing how much this place affects their lives was a moving and inspiring experience. Maybe that is a reason I feel brave enough to share this struggle with you. I feel safe.



I may not have anything profound to say. I'm not going to try to tell you how to be Brethren or the importance of peace or even the sequence of events that happened at camp. Instead I'll tell you: I know the answer to my question, and it has taken me as long (or longer) than the magnificent seniors at Camp Emmaus to find it. And the answer is this: Be. Follow the call. These campers have found a safe place where they feel heard and honored, and they have learned how to gift that to others. They gifted it to me!

Follow the call. I feel like I've gained a permanent home outside of a little town named Oregon, Ill. Even if I never get to come back, the mark that this place has made on my heart is far from temporary. 

Laura Hay is a member of Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren and is living in Fresno. She served as the youth peace advocate for the Church of the Brethren this past summer, visiting a series of camps and National Youth Conference.



*Laura Hay at Camp Pine Lake. Above: Youth at Camp Emmaus.*

## My midwife story

Reading “Midwives of mystery” (July/August) immediately brought to mind the story of Lydia, the midwife who delivered my brothers and me into this world. Mother was a terrific storyteller and shared this midwife story many times over the years.

Lydia was a short, stout lady with a shock of thick white hair loosely pulled back in a knot. When she came to our home to deliver me it was just routine for her, but she always made it special in some way.

When all was done and I was safely tucked into my mother’s arms, it was time for Lydia to go home. As she headed down the lane, she heard shouting. Here came four-year-old Eugene: “Lydia, Lydia, you forgot your baby!” Six-year-old Robert came running behind him: “Gene, it’s okay. Mother

says we can keep her!”

I’m sure Lydia wasn’t certified, but to those many mothers she cared for she was a gem!

**Penny Henry**  
Bedford, Pa.

## A story of two families

Thank you for continuing the wonderful selection of Brethren articles contained in each MESSENGER. This publication is the link that we in the distant places have that connects us as Brethren. Without it, we would have a much more limited view of what goes on in the church as a body.

In that regard, the responses to the question “Can we live together?” in the June issue promote thought as to where we are as a people. For me, I know that I need to continue to review the Scriptures in order to know myself.

Jennifer Keeney Scarr was right on

target with her comments regarding how Jesus would handle differing understandings of God’s word to us. This article is an excellent short story of two “families”—the Jews and the Samaritans, “once one family of faith,” now broken by “differing theology”—and how Jesus shows that we are to acknowledge each other’s existence as people. In further support of the Scriptures, she closes with a powerful statement that relates well to us today: “Sisters and brothers, we are not of one mind. Yet let us be of one heart.”

As a body of believers, we have much to offer the world. Let us not forget this.

**Leroy M. Keeney**  
York, Pa.

## Witnessing in Washington

A note of appreciation to Emmett Witkovsky-Eldred for the superb article

A MINISTRY OF SHARING | *to secure peace of mind.*

## Committed to Historic Values

**Brethren**  
MUTUAL AID AGENCY

**For over a century Brethren Mutual Aid Agency has been serving Church of the Brethren congregations and their members.** Today, we insure Brethren throughout the nation and at the same time, use our resources to advance the Church’s mission of Sharing and Caring. Brethren Mutual Aid Agency currently offers Brethren a broad range of insurance products to cover both church and individual property protection needs. When you insure with BMAA you will change the way you think about insurance providers.

For more information on our property insurance please contact us at:

**800-255-1243** | 3094 Jeep Road, Abilene KS 67410-6064  
Or on the web at: **maabrethren.com**

© 6/9/BMAA/F/H1

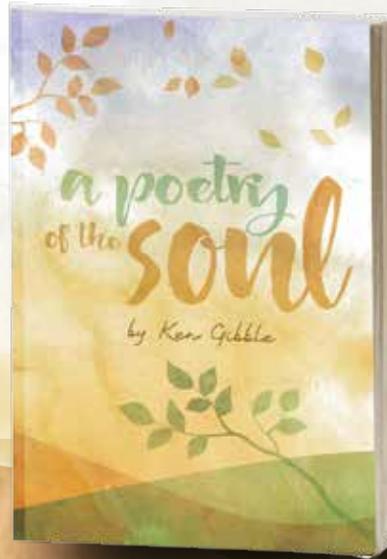
“Policy and Prayer” (May). I lost track of the number of times I read it to wrap my (old) mind around the variety of points made. The writing was easy to read, well constructed, with so much information, yet succinctly written.

My desire was to absorb the full impact: the distinction of lobbying as a faith entity, the Church of the Brethren impact even as a Friends employee, the cooperation of several faith groups including those that are not Christian, the history of bearing witness to matters of faith and caring for neighbors and the good of all, the importance of both discernment through prayer and serving by doing, the art and skill of listening to all involved, especially those with whom we disagree. Well done! I give thanks for Witkovsky-Eldred’s calling to serve in this unique way.

**Emily Mumma**  
Lorida, Fla.

# A new collection of poems

by Ken Gibble



Poetic expressions that bring a clearer understanding of what it means to be human



**Brethren Press®**  
*This day.*

800-441-3712 • [www.brethrenpress.com](http://www.brethrenpress.com)

# HILLCREST

A Remarkable Retirement Community®



NEW FRIENDSHIPS AWAIT



Call us **today**  
to learn more about  
our unique campus  
and invigorating  
Southern California  
lifestyle

[www.livingathillcrest.org](http://www.livingathillcrest.org)

**909-392-4375**

2705 Mountain View Drive | La Verne | CA | 91750



LOVE YOUR LIFE



EXPERIENCE A TRUE COMMUNITY

Hillcrest residents pictured clockwise: Linda Hart, Beryl Fordyce, Gwen Carr, Pat Holt, Linda Short, Herb Holt and Bob Ratliff.

DSS #191501662; COA #069



## Continuing mission values

Thank you for your review of David Hollinger's *Protestants Abroad* (July/August). I am eager to acquire and read it, as it parallels the continuing experience of my family through generations.

It encapsulates the enthusiasm of Desmond and Irene Bittinger to carry the good news to Nigeria. That exposure so quickly transformed them to teachers at home through "missionary stories" and continuing church leadership toward understanding a broader appreciation of different cultures and religious viewpoints.

My formative years were influenced by Desmond's mealtime sharing of letters to the MESSENGER of resistance to those more universal visions.

We have faith that the good news vision will provide leaven to continue the distinctive Church of the Brethren

values and uniqueness in whatever new loaves emerge, and by whatever name.

**Richard Bittinger**  
Portland, Ore.

## Fed up with the divide

After being fed up with the divide of the church on the subject of the LGBT community, I scream from the top of my lungs, "Beware!" We can be guilty of choosing to enforce the letter of the law, yet then ignore some laws because we choose grace.

I can go to the New Testament and show how a woman is to keep silent in the church, yet I can go to the Old Testament and see God speaking through a donkey. In our time, clearly Christ's love and ministry comes through women. I can go to history books and show where Christianity separated from Judaism by worshiping

on Sunday and calling it the Lord's Day, even though God said, "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." Today we worship on Sunday and we're covered by grace, with no need to live to the letter of the law.

When it comes to the LGBT community, however, suddenly there is a letter of the law that some believe disqualifies them from God's love. Where, I ask? I can show numerous places where they fit in: the great commission; the greatest commandment in Matthew 7:1; Jesus ministering to outcasts because he himself was an outcast; "What you've done to the least of my children you've done unto me"; "He who is without sin, cast the first stone."

Our mission is to live Christlike lives and share Christ's love. It's inclusive, not exclusive. Remember the true mission, Brethren.

**Raymond E. Johnson**  
Oklahoma

## Retire with confidence

An Everence® annuity can help you prepare for a steady retirement income. With competitive rates and flexibility, you can feel good about your future, while helping congregations and nonprofits build their communities through church loans from Everence.

Talk with an Everence representative today!

everence.com/annuities  
(800) 348-7468



*Representatives are all licensed insurance agents of Everence. Insurance products are offered by Everence, the marketing name of Everence Association Inc., a fraternal benefit society. All products are not available in all states.*

2180852

## Giving her the credit

I enjoyed the articles on women in ministry in June. It was a female pastor who encouraged me into the ministry by mentoring and giving me opportunities to fill the pulpit and be the worship leader. This led to opportunities to fill the pulpit at other churches, and I recently was hired as a part-time interim at one of these, Ridgely Church of the Brethren.

I give this pastor all the credit for getting me this far. And to the churches who feel uncomfortable with female pastors, you have no idea what you may be missing!

Keep up the good work, MESSENGER!

**Ken George**  
Denton, Md.

## Our main business

An article in *Ministry Today* magazine about Charles Spurgeon [July/August 2018] quotes him as saying, "Our main business, brethren, is to win souls." Could it be that merely capitalizing one

word would suggest where the Church of the Brethren has gone wrong over the years? And as it now engages a Compelling Vision process?

**Ronald E. Keener**  
Chambersburg, Pa.

## After the dust settles

We don't hear anything about some things that I think are extremely important. Are we doing anything to teach Brethren how to cope with issues coming at us with lightning speed, such as gene manipulation? Think of all the

choices future parents may have! Does the church have guidelines for all of this?

Another example is artificial intelligence. The ethics of artificial intelligence is a subject at MIT. Ethics of a machine? Will it have a conscience? If it "sins," will it be held responsible? If the early Brethren preached against the Model T, what shall we say now?

On a different note, we have "dialogue" between left and right but are we hearing each other? I know a lot about the Brethren Revival Fellowship, but whose is the voice they hear? We now have a visioning committee in

place and I'm glad for it. They will try to get input from all sides. But we come from all kinds of backgrounds. Many Brethren assume that every other Church of the Brethren is just like theirs because they've never been in another one.

After the dust settles on our current uproar, will we have the energy and resources to turn and face other issues? They will be upon us, full-fledged.

Keep up your good work. I started reading MESSENGER about 75 years ago.

**John Eash**  
Hollsopple, Pa.

## TURNINGPOINTS

Please send information to be included in Turning Points to Diane Stroyeck, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-325-8039, ext. 327; dstroyeck@brethren.org. Information older than one year cannot be published.

## Centenarians

**Dadisman**, Avis E., 100, Chatham, Ill., April 11  
**Young**, Esther, 107, Hartville, Ohio, July 17

## New members

**Conestoga**, Leola, Pa.: Alayna Regitz  
**Hagerstown**, Md.: Jerry Ashby, Liz Ashby, Cheyanne Smith  
**Hanover**, Pa.: Matthew Jacobs-Womer  
**Harrisburg**, **First**, Harrisburg, Pa.: Melanee Hamilton  
**Hartville**, Ohio: Timothy Schafer  
**Indian Creek**, Harleysville, Pa.: Lila Bechtel  
**Lancaster**, Pa.: Allen Forbes, Jane Forbes  
**Lower Miami**, Dayton, Ohio: Janet Futrell  
**Mill Creek**, Port Republic, Va.: Carter Bowman, Peyton Bowman, Andrea Cline, Jimmy Hummel, Abrie Martin, Tate Martin  
**Mohrsville**, Pa.: Allen

Romano, Lillian Romano  
**Myerstown**, Pa.: Diana Majors, Karen Sanchez, Matthew Sanchez  
**Polo**, Ill.: Gregg Downs, Susan Downs, Kelsey Horton  
**Reading**, Homeworth, Ohio: Adam Stevenson, Beth Stevenson  
**Whitestone**, Tonasket, Wash.: Jimmy Dellinger

## Wedding anniversaries

**Fake**, Harry and Elizabeth, Palmyra, Pa., 68  
**Fishburn**, Alvin and Angie, Lawrence, Kan., 65  
**King**, Donald and Barbara, Lancaster, Pa., 55  
**Martin**, William and Alice, Wilmington, Ohio, 55  
**McCluggage**, Dan and Kathy, Ashland, Ohio, 50  
**Meckstroth**, Mark and Meta, Huntingdon, Pa., 55  
**Myers**, Philip and Gloria, Manheim, Pa., 55  
**Reichenbach**, Doug and Paulette, North Manchester, Ind., 50  
**Roher**, Dale and Goldie, Downers Grove, Ill., 60  
**Royer**, Dale and Phyllis, Lincoln, Neb., 65  
**Saufley**, Al and Phyllis, McGaheysville, Va., 60  
**Sheets**, Nelson and Martha Lou, McGaheysville, Va., 60  
**Shepler**, Roy and Martha,

Wabash, Ind., 78  
**Stinebaugh**, Vernon and Angela, Lancaster, Pa., 76

## Deaths

**Ball**, Charmaine, 82, Goshen, Ind., Jan. 2  
**Barr**, Cleona, 91, North Manchester, Ind., May 24  
**Beam**, Catherine Charlotte Crawford, 91, Mount Crawford, Va., May 31  
**Bolinger**, Rosemary Brubaker, 86, North Manchester, Ind., July 22  
**Croy**, Garry, 72, Nappanee, Ind., Sept. 6, 2017  
**Eby**, Devon, 85, Nappanee, Ind., May 18  
**Elliott**, Rusty, 50, Goshen, Ind., March 8  
**Frederick**, Juanita May Petry, 92, Goshen, Ind., Dec. 21  
**Henery**, Janice Sue Lisk, 69, Rushville, Ohio, Aug. 5  
**Hollinger**, Kathryn R. Freeman, 92, Manheim, Pa., July 25  
**Holsopple**, Ronald Edwin, Sr., 71, Greensburg, Pa., July 27  
**Landes**, Benjamin Ray, 78, Bridgewater, Va., July 30  
**Linn**, Mary E Carruthers, 95, Shippensburg, Pa., July 26  
**Mockler**, Donald E., 87, Elkhart, Ind., July 30  
**Munnich**, George, 60, Ashton, Ill., April 16  
**Nesemeier**, Keith Paul, 81, Polo, Ill., Feb. 1  
**Pentecost**, Caroll Grossnickle,

79, Greens Fork, Ind., July 16  
**Phillips**, Edna Foley, 83, Roanoke, Va., Aug. 14  
**Sayler**, Adrian, 87, Saint John, Kan., Aug. 6  
**Shank**, Sallie Ann Fitzgerald, 77, Ashland, Ohio, June 11  
**Slater**, Eva Kathleen Rhoades, 89, North Manchester, Ind., June 16  
**Snyder**, Sue Ellen Cushen, 81, Murfreesboro, Tenn., Aug. 16  
**Stevenson**, Oneida Mae Kephart, 91, Hagerstown, Md., July 7  
**Tosten**, Sarah Elizabeth, 76, Shippensburg, Pa., July 3  
**Van Deventer**, Beulah, 95, Hemet, Calif., July 11  
**Wagoner**, Deborah Sue Hoffman, 62, McPherson, Kan., Aug. 14  
**Wallace**, Homer Eugene, 88, Des Moines, Iowa, July 28  
**Walter**, Doris Weldy, 79, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 10  
**Wickert**, Esther Wirth, 91, La Verne, Calif., May 8

## Ordained

**Bell**, Amy, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Meadow Branch, Westminster, Md.), Aug. 19  
**Slusher**, Jessica, Virgina Dist. (Bethany, Boones Mill, Va.), Aug. 12

## Licensed

**Clift**, Ryan, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Mount Wilson, Lebanon,

Pa.), July 22  
**Fuska**, Chris, W. Pa. Dist. (Shade Creek, Ridge, Hooversville, Pa.), July 22  
**Henshaw**, Benjamin, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Tyrone, Pa.), July 22  
**Robinson**, Brian, Shen. Dist. (Evergreen, Standardville, Va.), July 29

## Placements

**Fletcher**, Michael, from interim pastor, Glendale, Calif., to interim pastor, Modesto, Calif., Aug. 1  
**Gendy**, Joseph, pastoral team, Light of the Gospel, Staten Island, N.Y., June 24  
**Henshaw**, Benjamin, ministry leader to pastor, Tyrone, Pa., July 22  
**Hileman**, Raymond, interim minister to pastor, First, Saint Petersburg, Fla., July 25  
**Keller**, Jeffrey, from youth director, Lititz, Pa., to youth and young adult pastor, Mechanic Grove, Quarryville, Pa., Aug. 6  
**Peterson**, Deborah, interim pastor, Wabash, Ind., Aug. 1  
**Thomas**, Richard Wood, Sr., from pastor Oak Grove South, Rocky Mount, Va., to pastor, Red Oak Grove, Floyd, Va., Aug. 15  
**Weber**, Thomas, from pastor, Akron, Pa., to pastor, Florin, Mount Joy, Pa., Aug. 1

# Feeling your pain

**A**t three feet high, my bed is not one that I can easily fall into. Thankfully, it came with a nice two-step stool. But at night I rarely know where the stool is sitting. At least once a month, I kick that stool in the dark.

Toes are funny things. It is amazing how I am brought low by the slightest pain in even the smallest toe. For the life of me, it seems like their only real use is to find that step stool in the middle of the night.



JOSH BROCKWAY

In 1 Corinthians, Paul invoked the image of the human body to describe the church. An eye, he said, cannot look at the foot and say, “I don’t need you.” In the chapters just before, Paul chastised the Corinthian church for the ways they celebrated the Lord’s supper together. It seems that the social hierarchy had crept into the practices of the church.

Aristocrats sought seats of importance, while others went away hungry. The Corinthians undermined the very nature of the church’s feast with the ways they were treating one another.

After describing the unity of the Holy Spirit among the believers and the gifts of the Spirit, Paul turned to the image of the body to help the church understand how they are connected. Each believer has something it does for the body. Each one has an integral role to play in how the church functions. Even the littlest toe has a gift to offer the church for it to function completely. The church is an organic whole with many parts.

We can forget how profound Paul’s ancient metaphor is. The body is uniquely stitched together. Like my stubbed toe in the dark of night, when one part of our physical bodies is hurt, the rest of the body hurts with it. As the pain shoots up my foot, to my leg, and finally to my brain, all my normal faculties diminish. I lose my balance. My vision narrows, and my breathing speeds up. I speak gibberish until the pain subsides.

Unfortunately, it seems as if the church has lost the ability to hear and feel the pain of its members. We have allowed the partisan media and political rhetoric of our society to break even the deepest bonds of the Holy Spirit. We have retreated into the confines of sameness so as not to hear the deep pain of our sisters and brothers. We posture and politic one another through practices of shame and coercion to avoid experiencing the real lives of others.

I’ve witnessed too many times when the pain of one is dismissed by another member of the body. Black and Latinx leaders try to name their fears and struggles within the body of the church only to be told by white leaders that their testimony is untrue or skewed. There’s pain when black leaders name the inequalities in pay and work opportunities and white folk dismiss it. There’s pain when Latinx leaders name that they fear interrogation or have to carry their passports to prove citizenship at any moment and white folk dismiss it. Sometimes white, rural poor name their struggles and are dismissed as reactionary nationalists.

We have forgotten that we are one body in our confession of Jesus as Lord, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That unity brings with it the grace of the individual gifts as much as it calls us to feel one another’s pain. We don’t get to have one without the other.

As Jarrod McKenna reminded our youth at National Youth Conference, we have become like the Levite and priest who walked on the other side of the road to avoid the pain and suffering of the man beaten on his way to Jericho. Our pious practices of respectability and partisan rhetoric stand between us like an impenetrable wall. We look away from the real fear and pain of others because it doesn’t fit within our worldview—a worldview that has been shaped by everything but the gospel.

If we allow ourselves to be shaped by the gospel, I will feel your pain and you will feel mine. Together we will be the body of Christ. 

Joshua Brockway is director of spiritual formation for the Church of the Brethren.

WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT WE ARE ONE BODY IN OUR CONFESSION OF JESUS AS LORD, THROUGH THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Suggested date: Dec. 16

# Joy: Giving thanks to God



Give thanks to the LORD,  
call on his name;  
make known his deeds  
among the nations;  
proclaim that his  
name is exalted.

- Isaiah 12:4

This special offering  
supports Core Ministries of  
the Church of the Brethren.

## Advent offering

Learn more and  
find worship resources at  
[www.brethren.org/adventoffering](http://www.brethren.org/adventoffering)



Give an offering today at  
[www.brethren.org/giveoffering](http://www.brethren.org/giveoffering)

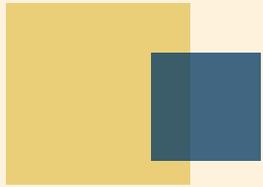


Church of the Brethren

Mission Advancement

*Your gifts do great things!*

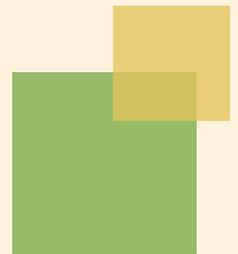
# Senior High Youth are invited to



**E**xplore **Y**our **C**all

**July 19-29, 2019**  
**at Bethany Theological Seminary**

Due to a generous grant, all participants will receive a full scholarship. Students pay for transportation to and from the event and a \$25 registration fee.



For information, contact [youthengagement@bethanyseminary.edu](mailto:youthengagement@bethanyseminary.edu).



**youth engagement**  
BETHANY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY