A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a purple patterned top, reading a dark-colored book. The book's cover has the words 'HOLY' and 'LE' printed in gold. The background is softly blurred, showing green foliage and a window.

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

JUNE 2018 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

Women in ministry

SAVE THE DATE



glenn reigel

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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

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- 6 Allowed**
by Beth Sollenberger
- 8 The article I would like to write**
by Tara Hornbacker
- 11 My deep longings for women in ministry**
by Nancy Sollenberger Heishman
- 14 Samuel Sarpiya: Planter, pastor, peacemaker**
by Jan Fischer Bachman
- 16 Living parables: Annual Conference 2018**
by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford
- 19 Mission Alive celebrates our global church**
by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford
- 20 Can we live together?**
Essays by Jennifer Keeney Scarr, John Hartsough, Tom Laquidara, and Robert Vroon
- 24 Kidney donor found one pew away**
by Patricia Middleton

departments

- 2** FROM THE PUBLISHER
3 IN TOUCH
5 THE EXCHANGE
13 REFLECTIONS
22 BIBLE STUDY
27 NEWSLINE DIGEST
29 LETTERS
31 TURNING POINTS
32 POTLUCK

Outside looking in

Lately the Church of the Brethren General Offices have been getting a lot of hometown love. At 60 years old, the building is turning heads.

Last fall it was the first stop on a field trip to Elgin for the National Trust for Historic Preservation annual conference, held in Chicago. On a smaller scale, the building has been featured twice on the Open Elgin



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

architectural tour. And last month, the Church of the Brethren received a Mayor's Award from the city of Elgin to honor the preservation of the building and its furnishings.

The attention has some employees a bit bemused because this low-slung building of glass and steel and fieldstone is simply the place they work. Most did not know that they were sitting on Eames chairs and Knoll sofas, setting their cups on a Saarinen coffee table, checking the time on a Nelson clock, and passing Bertoia benches in hallways. They did not know that these are envy-inducing artifacts of cutting-edge design in the 1950s—and now valuable collectors' items.

The church leaders who developed the building weren't being extravagant. They were buying good quality of the day. They wanted a workplace that was sturdy, practical, and beautiful—guiding words that are preserved in the historical record of 1958, as architectural plans were being created.

The most dramatic part of the building is the chapel, whose thick walls are punctuated by jewel-like stained-glass windows. The elliptical lines of the chapel focus on the cross as symbolic of the centrality of Jesus. The walls of native granite boulders suggest the strength and ageless character of the Christian faith. The sky-light conveys openness to God. I've always loved that space, and research for these events has given me a keener understanding of its creation and meaning.

I learned from our architectural friends that the chapel's "floating" ceiling is a feature popular in mid-century buildings. But all that looking up caused me to notice that some of the tiny stained-glass windows are almost hidden by the ceiling. Why wouldn't they all be placed where they can easily be seen by worshippers?

And then, while we were craning our necks, a couple of us realized that those highest windows weren't there for us. The placement and proportions were for those looking from the outside. Windows let light in, and they also glow in the darkness.

Whether your space is a sanctuary for weekly worship or an administrative hub for ministries around the world, what does it look like to those outside your walls?

A large, elegant handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wendy McFadden".

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Revive us again



Courtesy of Carl Hill

Galen Hackman

Potsdam Church of the Brethren held annual revival services April 29 through May 1. This year was a little different, however. In cooperation with Brethren Press staff the church ordered materials from the Covenant Bible Studies series and prepared with a 10-week study of Galen Hackman's *The Prayers of Jesus*.

Almost everybody in the church got involved. Sunday school classes interrupted their scheduled lessons, and the congregation formed home groups for those not in Sunday school. Hackman exposed the congregation to familiar gospel stories of Jesus while giving new insights into the prayer life of Jesus. There were enthusiastic comments about this new way to look at Jesus and his prayer life, and how that motivates us to more intentional times of prayer.

The congregation also took other steps to plan and prepare. The youth collected change during the 10 weeks prior to the revival to pay outside musical guests to play during each night's service. A quartet from Salem Church of God shared their four-part harmonies. Seth Hendricks from Happy Corner Church of the Brethren played the piano, drums, guitar, and even had members of the congregation join in with percussion instruments that he brought along. Bluegrass musicians Curt Duncan and Mark Acton prepared for the revival preacher with some old-time favorites.

To make the week extra special, Hackman was the preacher. "To Be Like Jesus" was his theme as he preached about what it takes to become a real disciple of Jesus Christ. The takeaway: To be a true disciple one has to have a relationship with Jesus and his people, submit to God's word and kingdom principles, and reach out to others for the glory of God. —Carl Hill



Courtesy of Carl Hill

Seth Hendricks

A voice in the news.

Jordan Kirkdorffer made it onto #TeamBlake on *The Voice* in March. He grew up in the Church of the Brethren and has been a counselor at Camp Mack in Indiana. "So excited for Jordan," commented Dennis Beckner, pastor of Columbia City Church of the Brethren. Kirkdorffer "is making New Paris, Ind., so very proud!"



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.



Multiply love

Members of Happy Corner Church of the Brethren in Clayton, Ohio, were challenged by their pastors to find creative ways to use their gifts, resources, and ideas to build God’s kingdom. The project was titled “Multiply Your Love Through Us.” Each participant was given \$10, inspired by the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, and challenged to multiply that \$10 into something greater.

Some people baked, some people created art, some people made cards, some people offered childcare, and some people simply refocused their energy and resources. Not only was money raised, but connections were made. God’s kingdom was built through relationship and creative purpose.

Fifty envelopes of \$10 each resulted in more than \$1,500 for Brethren Disaster Ministries’ work in Puerto Rico. —Carrie Smith



Student activism in the church basement

Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo., hosted an after-school event March 14 where “dozens of Heritage High School students crammed into the basement,” according to the *Littleton Independent*. The event helped gun violence walkout participants “take their activism beyond schoolyard walkouts into actionable public policy.”

Pastor Gail Erisman Valeta organized a meeting between students and adults who could help them further their goals, including church member Tom Mauser, father of Columbine victim Daniel Mauser and a long-time gun control advocate. Also present were former state Senator Linda Newell and Jacob Sankara from north Denver’s Conflict Center, among others.

“Gun violence touches every single life, and we believe in the sanctity of life,” Erisman Valeta said.

Joining for love feast

South Waterloo Church of the Brethren and Ivester Church of the Brethren were among four Iowa congregations that observed love feast together on March 29. The Brethren joined with Payne AME Church and Jubilee United Methodist Church in a service hosted at South Waterloo. The service that included feetwashing, a meal of fellowship, and sharing of bread and cup communion was meant also to honor the spirit of Martin Luther King Jr. It was organized by the churches’ pastors: Thomas Flint of Payne AME, Abraham Funchess of Jubilee United Methodist, Paul Shaver of the Ivester church, and David Whitten of South Waterloo.

David Whitten





Cincinnati ‘The Queen City’

Location: Southwestern Ohio, on the banks of the Ohio River opposite Kentucky

Population: About 300,000

Attractions: The Cincinnati area has the nation’s second-oldest zoo, an aquarium (in neighboring Newport), numerous museums (including the acclaimed National Underground Railroad Freedom Center), two major professional sports teams (Reds and Bengals), and the Kings Island amusement park. The 21c Museum Hotel has a free contemporary art museum.

Food: Cincinnati is famous for its unique chili, often served over pasta with abundant shredded cheese. Gold Star and Skyline are the top vendors.

In the dairy department, Graeter’s Ice Cream (dating to 1870) is the local favorite. For unique grocery shopping, check out Jungle Jim’s.

Landmarks: The Roebling Suspension Bridge, connecting Cincinnati to Kentucky, dates to 1867 and is a local landmark. It was the prototype for the Brooklyn Bridge. The Ingalls Building, constructed in 1902, was the first concrete skyscraper built in the US. Today, the Great American Tower tops the skyline. The Carew Tower has an observation deck.

Claims to fame: Cincinnati is home to many top companies including Kroger, Procter & Gamble, Macy’s, and Fifth Third Bancorp. It has been

ranked among the top cities for food, art, green space, and livability. *Rain Man*, *Eight Men Out*, *Seabiscuit*, and *Elizabethtown* are among the notable movies filmed in the city.

Church connections: The Cincinnati Church of the Brethren is located northeast of downtown, at 950 Nassau St. Constance Church of the Brethren (Hebron, Ky.) and Stonelick Church of the Brethren (Pleasant Plain, Ohio) are also located within a half-hour of the city.

Sources: CincinnatiUSA.com, movoto.com, Church of the Brethren Yearbook, US Census, University of Cincinnati

Cincinnati, race, and the Freedom Center

Cincinnati has a mixed and often troubled legacy on race relations. On one hand, it has had race riots as recently as the early 2000s, been home to Ku Klux Klan demonstrations, and had other episodes of racial violence.

On the other, it was an important beacon of hope for the Underground Railroad during the slavery era, situated just across the Ohio River from Kentucky at the southern border of the Union, and is home—since 2004—to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and its important educational work. Today the city is almost evenly divided between white and black residents.

Visits to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center will be offered by Annual Conference (on July 6), and many of the age-group activities are going there as well. Walk-up tickets are \$15, with discounts for seniors and for children 12 and under. Located about six blocks from the convention center, near the river, it is open Tuesday–Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

Special exhibits running through Annual Conference look at “Confederate Currency” and “Confederate Memory: Symbols, Controversy & Legacy.” Seven regular exhibit areas and an introductory film are featured.



Women in ministry

Women in the Ministry

The Williamson Road Church of the Brethren asks Annual Conference through district conference of the First District of Virginia to grant to women full and unrestricted rights in the ministry.

Ira B. Peters, Moderator
Mrs. William Humbert, Clerk

Action of district conference: The conference voted to pass this query to Annual Conference.

Answer of 1958 Annual Conference: Request granted.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Voting at the 1958 Annual Conference

Allowed

by Beth Sollenberger

I was on my way to a Council of District Executives meeting

when MESSENGER called to ask me to write an article on the current situation regarding clergy women and the placement process in the Church of the Brethren.

For 60 years (slightly fewer than I have been alive), women have been allowed to be ordained in the Church of the Brethren. Allowed—a word I choose deliberately because some days I find it difficult to distinguish between the time before and the time now.

When my early mentor, Madolyn

Taylor, was called to preach, she had to make sure her children were cared for and her husband fed. After all those wife and mother commitments were covered, then she could, if a congregation was willing to listen to her, fulfill her God-given calling to preach. She was probably not paid unless someone had extra eggs to share.

When I graduated from Bethany Theological Seminary and was called to serve as a solo pastor, I needed to be an interim first, in case calling a woman might somehow damage the congregation either internally or in its reputation

in the community. It is one of my highest compliments that, after I served the Pleasant Hill congregation in Southern Ohio, they called Tara Hornbacker as their next pastor.

That was a good chapter in my experience of being an ordained woman in the Church of the Brethren. The WIMs (Women in Ministry) of the district had a monthly luncheon, we seemed to be increasing in numbers and calls, and there was a sense that everyone's gifts for ministry were welcome, useful, and appreciated by the church. We seemed on our way to a

Glenn Riegel



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



**FOR 60 YEARS (SLIGHTLY FEWER THAN I HAVE BEEN ALIVE),
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BETWEEN THE TIME BEFORE AND THE TIME NOW.**

pastoral placement system focused on gifts for leadership, a good theological fit, and a healthy compatibility rather than an attention to the proper candidate's anatomy or orientation.

It is unclear to me what happened to that hopeful moment in our life together. Maybe it was only a figment of my limited experience in a contained geographical location with kindred colleagues. We were certainly reaping the affirmation of Joe Mason, a district executive who shared profiles with congregations based on the possibility of a good pastor/congregation relationship

rather than on declared gender requirements. Maybe we have succumbed to our culture, where boundaries get strongly declared and we grow less and less willing to consider an option outside our experience or comfort zone.

It is still fun to meet with a committee who has already enjoyed the gifts and leadership of both women and men, because they are ready to consider those individuals who might be the best pastoral match for their congregation. It takes stubborn persistence to help search committees think outside their tradition and experience

to call a clergy woman as a solo pastor or a member of a pastoral team.

So I traveled on to my meetings with district executives. It was, as always, good to be with my colleagues in ministry and see that both men and women are called to district leadership. By the end of our days together, though, it was disconcerting to recognize that only men were asked to lead in prayer, whether at the beginning of a meeting or a blessing for a meal. It appears there is still work to do. 

Beth Sollenberger is executive minister of South/Central Indiana District and interim executive of Michigan District.

The article I would like to write

by Tara Hornbacker

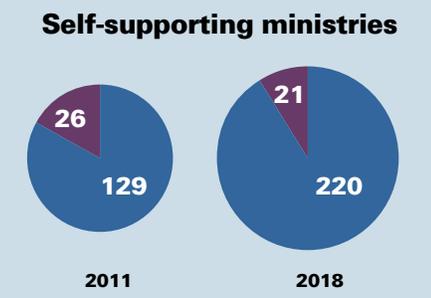
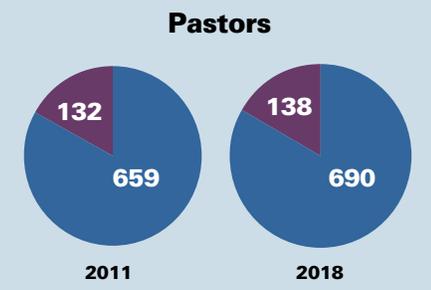
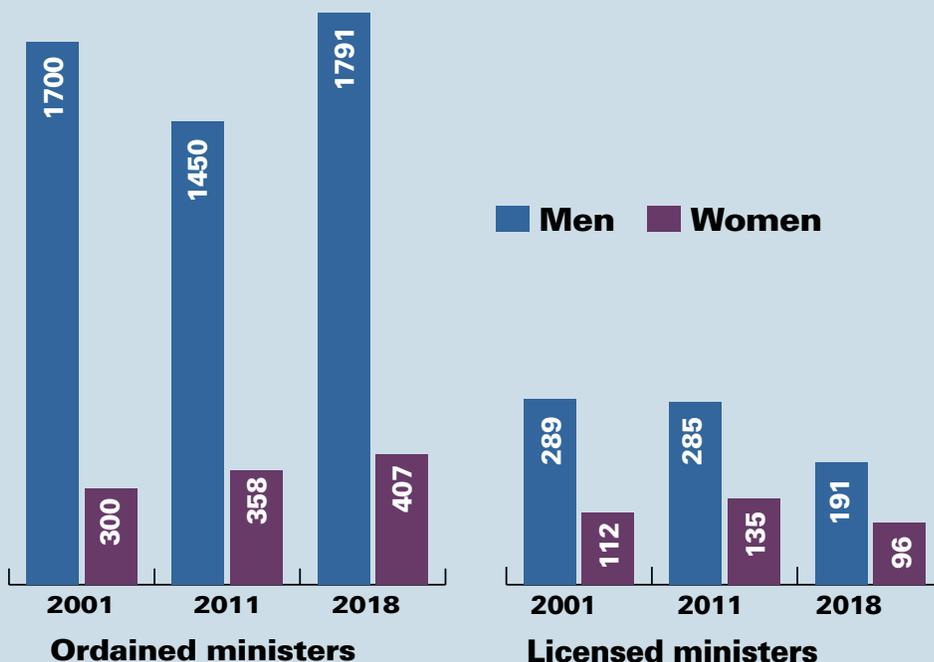
Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



I am sitting in my office at the seminary—which, by the time you read this, will no longer be my office, since I am retiring from Bethany Theological Seminary on June 30. This has been a year of “last times.” Those of you who have left positions or pastorates know all too well how bittersweet these times are. I am living into this with hope, and also some sadness.

I was asked to write an article about women in ministry and what has changed (or not) in the past decade since we celebrated the 50th anniversary of women’s ordination in the Church of the Brethren. I write in the

Ministry statistics



I HAVE HOPE FOR A FUTURE IN WHICH WOMEN AND MEN WILL EQUALLY LEAD THE DISCERNMENT OF THE MIND OF CHRIST IN CONGREGATIONS AND AROUND THE WORLD.

midst of looking back at my own experience of ministry and those of my sisters. I write from the perspective of serving 20 years on the Ministry Advisory Council, as well as being a pastor, church planter, and professor of ministry studies. I have had the privilege of observing a wide variety of women and men in ministry move through the educational processes of seminary and academy training and on to serve the church in many ways.

I would like to write an article that is all good news and promises. I would like to be able to say that, in the approximate 30 years since my own ordination, the experience of women

in ministry has become the same walk that our brothers experience. I would like to be able to say an unequivocal, unilateral equality of opportunity for women in ministry has been achieved.

That is the article I would like to write. It would not be the truth.

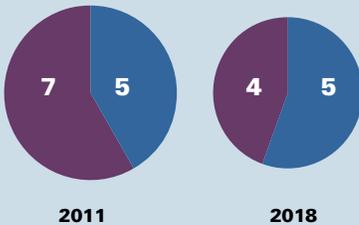
The painful truth is this: Our women graduates are rarely, if ever, called to lead larger, full-time congregations immediately following seminary. Many of our male graduates are. Men receive more interviews, have a greater selection of opportunities, and are placed sooner than our female graduates.

Our women graduates do find

appropriate placements following graduation; I don't want to imply that they linger for years on the steps of district offices. Yet women are rarely called as lead pastors in large congregations, even after having had years of experience as successful, seasoned ministers.

Many of our district executives have been proactive in placing women as interim ministers so that congregations might "get used to the idea" of women ministers. In the 1980s, there were district ministers who would advocate for women, and there were advances in the number of women pastors and persons in leadership.

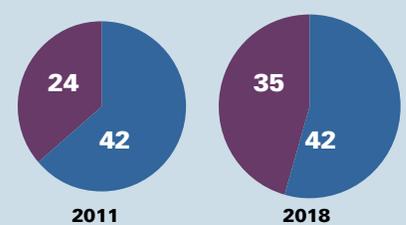
Seminary administrators



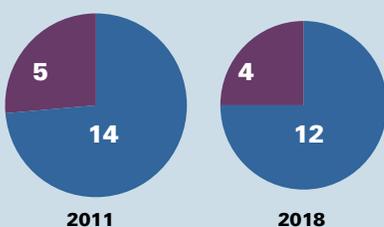
Staff (district, denomination)



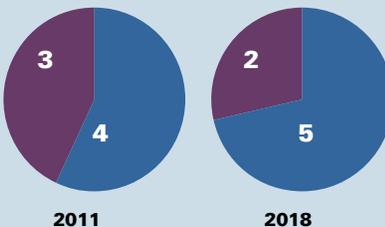
Chaplains



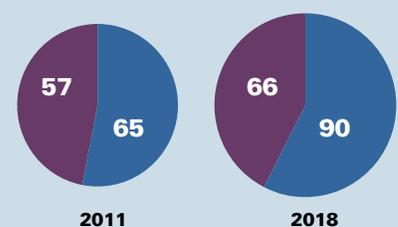
Teachers of religion



Missionaries



Specialized ministry

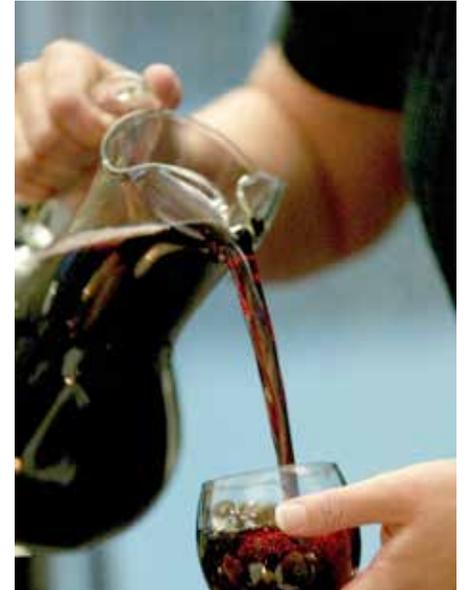


Women in ministry

Jay Wittmeyer



Chris Detrick



I WOULD LIKE TO WRITE AN ARTICLE SAYING THAT THEY WERE CORRECT — THAT THE STRUGGLE TO HAVE WOMEN’S CALL TO ORDINATION RECOGNIZED WAS OVER IN 1958. THAT IS THE ARTICLE I WOULD LIKE TO WRITE. IT WOULD NOT BE THE TRUTH.

Some of our daughters were raised in that era, and could not imagine that they would face any prejudice against their own call in ministry. Many women, early in this 21st century, felt that there would be no resistance to their ministry. I would like to write an article saying that they were correct—that the struggle to have women’s call to ordination recognized was over in 1958.

That is the article I would like to write. It would not be the truth.

The painful truth is this: Statistics show that the numbers of women who have sensed a call to ministry and completed a course of study remains nearly flat-lined, if not decreasing, in some districts. These same daughters who grew up being told that they could serve the church

as pastors find that they are harassed, belittled, and generally beset simply because of their gender.

The same church that called them to serve did not stand beside them. Rather, the church has abused its own daughters. Many younger women have not only left the ministry, they have left the church. I have heard their questions in my office: “Why should I put up with this from the church?” “Why should I stay in the church when my gifts and education are valued in the private sector? At least there, no one pretends women are equal!”

As I pack up the books from my shelves, I remember the gifted students I have been privileged to teach and accompany. I still hold out hope for the church because of those stu-

dents and because of some wonderful ministries being led by both women and men. There are glimpses of openness to all who have the gifts and graces for ministry. I have hope for a future in which women and men will equally lead the discernment of the mind of Christ in congregations and around the world.

We have a long way to go before gender issues are no longer a hindrance to the church. I hope that the next person to occupy this office lives to see the day when “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” 

Tara Hornbacker is professor of ministry formation, missional leadership, and evangelism at Bethany Theological Seminary.

My deep longings for women in ministry

by Nancy Sollenberger Heishman

From time to time I am asked about my experience as a female minister in the Church of the Brethren. Because my answer is a largely positive one, I am always mindful of how privileged I have been, and also how deeply I long for every woman hearing a call to ministry to have an equally positive journey.

As I reflect on that call, I vividly remember the Sundays in my home congregation in Annville, Pa., when my family and I knelt and rested our elbows on the seats of the hard, wooden pews. Commencing prayers that seemed to this little girl to last an eternity, brother Hiram Gingrich would always address “our kind, loving heavenly Father.” Preceding those heartfelt prayers were sturdy sermons by a number of plain-dressed preachers, building a solid biblical foundation in my soul.

As the Bucher sisters—Clara, Sallie, and Esther—taught me the stories of Jesus, my heart gradually opened to embrace the call to follow him. Having been nurtured in a congregation that transitioned from a plural, nonsalaried ministry to the salaried ministry dur-

ing my early childhood years, I find it marvelous to reflect on that same congregation’s full support of my call to ministry. They were willing to recognize a surprising movement of the Spirit in one whom they had not assumed would be called by God to the ministry.

Moving beyond my experience, I dream of what the Church of the Brethren would look like if every congregation created an environment in which not only men but also women would be equally and eagerly called to ministry. Here is a bit of what I envision and yearn for every young girl or woman who hears the Spirit’s call to the journey of set-apart ministry.

I yearn for them to experience:

■ Parents of the kind I was blessed with, who believe that their daughters can achieve absolutely anything to which God calls them and who support a call they might never have thought would ever come to their child.

■ Congregations that give attention to helping female youth develop their

gifts and abilities, thereby preparing them to hear a larger call on their lives.

■ Humble, faithful congregations that support the discerner’s call even if it’s “never been heard that way before,” honoring the Spirit which blows where and how and through whom it wills.

■ Pastors (especially men like Jim Tyler serving at the Annville Church of the Brethren when I heard God’s call to ministry) who respond with delight, curiosity, and enthusiastic support when women in their congregations find the courage to share a sense of call.

■ Denominational leaders who prayerfully challenge gifted women to offer their gifts to the church for the glory of God and their neighbors’ good.

■ Ministerial training programs such as Bethany Theological Seminary and the Brethren Academy’s district-based programs that address and equip the church to meet the unique challenges facing female ministers as they serve.

HERE IS A BIT OF WHAT I ENVISION AND YEARN FOR EVERY YOUNG GIRL OR WOMAN WHO HEARS THE SPIRIT’S CALL TO THE JOURNEY OF SET-APART MINISTRY.

Women in ministry

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



UNDERGIRDING THIS DREAM IS MY CONVICTION THAT EVERY PERSON WHOM GOD TRULY CALLS OUGHT TO EXPERIENCE A COMMUNITY SUPPORTIVE OF THAT CALL.

■ Congregations like the Wilmington Church of the Brethren, my first pastoral setting, that will interview and hire female pastors, even young, single, idealistic, less experienced ones just graduating from seminary, as I was back in the mid-1980s.

■ Male colleagues who recognize the perils women face in this #MeToo and #ChurchToo world and who step up as advocates for women in the workplace and in the church.

■ A denomination that intentionally calls women into leadership positions on every level, serving as agency board members, district executives, denominational staff, and moderators.

■ A church that actively confronts painful and anguishing problems

that affect women's ministry journeys, such as sexual abuse and domestic violence, unequal financial compensation, and oppressive attitudes that diminish the Spirit's pouring out of spiritual gifts into the lives of women.

■ A dramatic crumbling of the barriers, walls, and obstacles that diminish the calling of women, inevitably giving way under the power and force of the winds of the Holy Spirit.

Undergirding this dream is my conviction that every person whom God truly calls ought to experience a community supportive of that call, and that the unique needs experienced by clergywomen merit specific attention and response from the larger church.

Layers such as race, gender, and sexual identity; socioeconomic factors; and geographic and cultural formation increase the complexity of the call that women experience.

Given that reality, in the next 60 years of our history as Brethren, can we look forward to increasing the percentage of women among the credentialed ministers from 25 percent to at least 50 percent?

With all our heart and soul, let us labor together with God so that future statistics reveal a whole-hearted cooperation with the Spirit's activity, as God will "pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy. . . . Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:17, 21). 

Nancy Sollenberger Heishman is director of the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry.

What this pastor looks like

seriously started exploring my call into ministry while serving as an intern in my home congregation. I was very lucky to have both their male and female pastors as mentors that summer in 2007. I have a ton of respect for both pastors, and I appreciate the time they gave me during the internship. They answered my questions, gave me advice, and provided explanations. They gave me opportunities to serve and a chance to consider what ministry looks like.

Throughout my internship, the male pastor emphasized how important it was for pastors to dress professionally at all times. He wore a suit and tie almost every day and always when he preached. He was following in the footsteps of his mentor, who also wore a suit and tie when he entered the pulpit. Both men were highly respected in our congregation and were highly regarded leaders in the larger church.



MANDY NORTH

I wanted to earn the same respect my mentor has, so I wore suits every time I preached. I would rotate through three professional pantsuits for variety, but I made sure to wear a suit every time I preached, because that's what respectable pastors look like.

I didn't preach very often in those days because we had twins at home to care for. Learning about ministry was different for me because I was also learning about motherhood. My professional mentors helped me grow by answering questions about what we do as pastors. The twins, on the other hand, help me grow by asking questions about why I do what I do as a pastor, as a mother, and as a daughter of God.

One morning, years later, as I was called on to preach

again, our family prepared for Sunday morning and I put on my professional pantsuit. When my 7-year-old daughter saw me, she asked why I was wearing the suit instead of a Sunday dress like I'd typically wear. I informed her that I was preaching that morning and I explained the importance of dressing professionally on the Sundays that I preach.

She asked, "Why do you have to dress like a man to preach?"

Her question hit me like a ton of bricks. I don't have to dress like a man to preach as a woman. In fact, I need to dress as the real me in order to proclaim the real good news of the real Jesus Christ. I need to "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." And to do this, I need to "put off falsehood and speak truthfully" (Ephesians 4:24-25 NIV). The truth is that I am a woman and I can dress like a woman to preach.

For some women preachers, a pantsuit is perfect. It's practical, professional, and it works. For me, however, it doesn't represent who I am and who I want to be in front of my children. I want to be able to embrace who God has created me to be as a feminine woman in all aspects of my life and ministry, especially when I am preaching from the pulpit.

As more women are called into the preaching ministry, it's important for us to consider what a pastor looks like. A woman in ministry isn't going to be wearing a suit and tie. She will dress professionally. She will dress respectfully. And she will dress like a woman. Because we don't all have to dress like a man to preach like a pastor.

I learned this from my 7-year-old daughter, and I never preached in a pantsuit again. 

Mandy North recently became lead pastor at Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren.

I WANT TO BE ABLE TO EMBRACE WHO GOD HAS CREATED ME TO BE AS A FEMININE WOMAN IN ALL ASPECTS OF MY LIFE AND MINISTRY, ESPECIALLY WHEN I AM PREACHING FROM THE PULPIT.



Samuel Sarpiya

Planter, pastor, peacemaker

by Jan Fischer Bachman

Samuel Kefas Sarpiya starts things.
A Community Empowerment Center in Jeffreys Bay, South Africa.

The Youth with a Mission (YWAM) School of Humanities and Science from a Christian Perspective.

An information technology company.

A movie business.

In spite of many years of ministry and innovation, however, he never considered working within the church context until a pastor friend told him, “I think you would be a better church planter.” His initial response was, “No, never!”

A Nigerian proverb says, “It is one word of advice that one needs to give to a wise man, and that word keeps multiplying in his mind.”

Over time, “I decided to search what it was to be a church planter,” Sarpiya says. “I sent an email to the Baptists. I am still waiting for a reply 10 years later.”

He discovered the church planting website of Illinois and Wisconsin District and filled out the church planter profile assessment. Within an hour he received an email response. He soon discovered the connection to Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), which

“THERE IS A LONGING OUT THERE FOR THE BRETHERN WAY OF LIFE, THE SIMPLICITY, THE PEACEFULLY, THE SEEKING TO BE TOGETHER. THERE’S THAT BIG LONGING OUT THERE BUT WE AS BRETHERN TEND TO UNDERMINE THE IMPACT OF THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL WE CARRY BY REMAINING IN OUR OWN CLOISTER.” -Samuel Sarpiya

he had encountered in the city of Jos, Nigeria.

“EYN was hospitable to my ministry in Nigeria more than my own church. EYN displayed what it means to be compassionate followers of Jesus,” he says.

Sarpiya also had connected with Hillcrest School in Jos, even taking high schoolers on mission trips out of the country.

“It’s kind of coming back home for me,” Sarpiya says. “All along I have been Brethren, but I just didn’t know it yet!”

Within a few months of making contact with Illinois and Wisconsin District, the district flew him and his wife, Gretchen, to Wisconsin for an in-person church planter assessment. Shortly thereafter, in February 2009, the Sarpiya family moved from Hawaii to Rockford, Ill., in the middle of an extremely cold, snowy winter.

Now he is a church planter, and much more, including moderator of the Church of the Brethren’s 2018 Annual Conference. As co-founder of Rockford Community Church of the Brethren, Sarpiya has continued to start things—the Center for Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation (<http://nonviolencect.com/cnct>), and Mobile Lab Rockford (<http://mobilelabrockford.org>). But it wasn’t his energy, imagination, or even self-described “crazy personality” that led him to become a church planter. It was the words of someone who knew him. It was a call.

Samuel’s journey “back” to the Church of the Brethren went through three continents, many countries, and even an island or two. He grew up in Jos, where his mother and siblings still live. After graduating from the University of Jos with a degree in social work, he worked with Urban Frontiers Mission, traveling across West Africa, preaching and raising awareness. He describes it as a “Pauline journey—I go where I’m invited.” He spent time in Togo, Benin, Liberia, Niger, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, and Cameroon.

What sticks with him about this experience, 20 years later? “The world is continuing to migrate to the cities,” he says. “It’s fascinating how it’s exploding. So the church needs to be aware of what’s happening in the cities.”

Next, Sarpiya traveled to Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, primarily working with African immigrants. “We never used the term ‘modern-day slavery,’ but African immigrants were

promised a better career, then trafficked to Europe to be used as prostitutes and drug peddlers. My work was to help them to be reconciled to God and then back to their countries.”

While in Amsterdam, Sarpiya worked with people from YWAM, which led him to the Discipleship Training School in South Africa (where he met his wife, Gretchen). The training took place in Jeffreys Bay, a small coastal town reeling from the history of apartheid. By the end of his time there, he was doing reconciliation work among different races of South Africans, along with teaching computer skills.

The Community Empowerment Center became a lifeline. Then-Vice President Jacob Zuma visited the project; Sarpiya traveled with him, showing that “it’s possible to change a community,” he remembers.

The center took on a life of its own, and the Sarpiyas moved to Cape Town, then to the YWAM center in Kona, Hawaii. While in Kona, the Sarpiyas did community outreach on the Big Island with a “really marginalized community.” At the same time, Sarpiya pioneered the YWAM School of Humanities and Science from a Christian Perspective outside of Geneva, Switzerland. He would go to Switzerland for three weeks at a time. Also during this same period, he was appointed YWAM delegate to the United Nations, so he commuted to New York as well.

“This commuting life,” Sarpiya says, laughing. “Here I am as the moderator doing the same thing!”

He credits Gretchen for making it all possible. She provides stability for their three girls and holds the church in “behind-the-scenes ways nobody sees,” he says. The entire family works together on community outreach projects. “This is what we do as a family and as a church,” Sarpiya says.

Gretchen’s family in South Africa, along with Samuel’s family in Nigeria, provided the initial funding for their work in Rockford. “When we first came here, the district didn’t have resources to pay church planters,” Sarpiya says. “So we did fundraising in Nigeria and South Africa to be missionaries here.”

Sarpiya’s story challenges assumptions church members in the US may have. Are American Brethren the givers and senders or the recipients of outreach work? Are immigrants

people to learn from or “takers” in need of assistance?

In 2015, there were 3.8 million black immigrants living in the US, according to Pew Research Center analysis—more than 4 times as many as in 1980. The largest number from African countries were Nigerian: 226,000. Almost 60 percent of them had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with 33 percent of the general US population.

This year, Sarpiya earned a doctor of ministry in “Semiotics, Church, and Culture” from George Fox University in Portland, Ore., joining the four percent of the US Nigerian-born population with doctorates. By comparison, one percent

of the general US population have doctoral degrees.

Semiotics is “meaning-making, rather than letting the world define the church,” as Sarpiya describes it. “If we can stop pursuing our human agenda and letting the world define the church, we will see the impact God is longing to do through ordinary people from the Church of the Brethren,” he says.

“Sometimes we are lacking in passion for the consequential faith we have inherited from our founders, standing outside of society in opposition to the status quo.”

His message for the church? “God is bigger than our agenda.” 

“WE DON’T JUST WANT TO BE A HISTORIC PEACE CHURCH. WE WANT TO BE A LIVING, RELEVANT, CURRENT, MODERN, AND FUTURE PEACE CHURCH.”

—Samuel Sarpiya

Living parables Annual Conference 2018

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Annual Conference 2018 takes place at the Duke Energy Convention Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, on July 4-8. The theme is “Living Parables” (Matthew 9:35-38).

Moderator Samuel K. Sarpiya will be assisted by moderator-elect Donita Keister and secretary James Beckwith. Serving on the Program and Arrangements Committee are Founa Inola Augustin-Badet of Miami, Fla.; John Shafer of Oakton, Va.; and Jan King of Martinsburg, Pa. Chris Douglas is the Conference director.

In addition to business sessions, Annual Conference offers opportunities for non-delegates to participate in spiritual enrichment, earn continuing education credit, take part in family-friendly activities, and fellowship with Brethren from across the country and around the world. Daily worship services and business sessions are web-cast live. Go to www.brethren.org/ac for detailed information.

Delegates will address 11 new and unfinished items of business and receive numerous reports. Find the full text of business items at www.brethren.org/ac/2018/business.

New business

• Change in Delegate

Representation at Annual

Conference Recommended by the denomination’s Leadership Team (Conference officers, general secretary, and a representative of the Council of District Executives), these changes would increase the ratio of Annual Conference delegates to membership of congregations and districts. The ratio for congregations would increase from 1 delegate per 200 members to 1 per 100 members, and for districts from 1 per 5,000 members to 1 per 4,000 members. This would add five people to the Standing Committee of district delegates. The document explains, “Conversations around decreasing membership often lead us

to hold at arm’s length its realities and simply hope for ‘better times.’ The Leadership Team would rather actively walk with this current reality and seek ways to increase the vitality and effectiveness of Annual Conference.”

• **Vision for a Global Church of the Brethren** Adopted by the Mission and Ministry Board at the initiative of staff of Global Mission and Service, the document has been in process for some time. Those involved in its development include the Mission Advisory Committee and church leaders from several countries. Impetus came from a disconnect between polity and practice. An Annual Conference mandate for a global church is present in previous statements, but those call for international districts rather than the independent denominations that have developed. The new vision is for a global Church of the Brethren “as a union of autonomous bodies, a spiritual community bound together by a common passion to be followers of

Christ, a common New Testament theology of peace and service, and a common commitment to be in relationship with one another.”

• **Brethren Values Investing** This change to the Articles of Organization of Brethren Benefit Trust proposes the term “Brethren Values Investing” in place of “Socially Responsible Investing.”

• **Polity for Electing Brethren Benefit Trust Board Directors** This change to BBT Articles of Organization would require no more than two nominees for election of a director to the BBT board, replacing the current requirement for four nominees.

• **Polity for Electing the District Representative to the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee** To align polity with practice, the Leadership Team recommends changes regarding where the committee makes its recommendation about pastoral salaries and how the district executive member of the committee is chosen.

Unfinished business

• **Vision of Ecumenism for the 21st Century** This proposed new statement guides the denomination’s ecumenical witness in a time of increased religious diversity. It comes from a committee established as part of a recommendation in 2012 from an Interchurch Relations Study Committee. It states, in part: “We will continue to build and nurture positive relationships with other faith communities. In doing so, we strengthen a history of service and missions, disaster response and relief

ministries, and peace witness—nationally and globally. These relationships further our understanding of opportunities for mission and ministry, and they instill a cooperative readiness to act upon needs and areas of common concern when they arise.”

• **Vitality and Viability** This report originated with a query from Mid-Atlantic District on “Future District Structure.” The 2015 Conference returned the query but called a committee to study its concerns related to vitality and viability. The report takes into account the work of the Mission and Ministry Board and the 2017 Review and Evaluation Committee.

The report aims to articulate “matters of the heart,” and calls the church to “a time of renewal of relationships with our Lord and Savior and with each other,” outlining structure for a “Year of Sabbath Rest and Renewal.” The document identifies differences regarding human sexuality and approaches to scripture. It makes some specific recommendations for dealing with differing perspectives in the church and recommends a process “to ensure that congregations who may leave do so in an accountable, amicable, and gracious process . . . avoiding litigation.” It concludes with a series of five Bible studies.

• **Creation Care** This report comes from a study committee elected in 2016 to respond to a query from Illinois and Wisconsin District. The report focuses “on the charge given to us by Annual Conference by examining the impact of the use of fossil fuels and contributions to climate change on our brothers and

sisters around the world, and how Brethren can take action to reduce that impact.” Outcomes of the committee’s work include a website offering a series of resources related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, financial matters, faith and liturgical resources, and community action; and a commitment by the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy to coordinate a Brethren Creation Care Network. Detailed recommendations encourage Brethren “to integrate an understanding about the real cost of fossil fuels and climate change into every part of your life, as an individual, as a member of a congregation, and as a member of the denomination.”

• **Compelling Vision** A report from the Leadership Team reviews ongoing work toward a “compelling vision” to guide the Church of the Brethren. The process begins at this year’s Conference, where a full business session and a portion of a second will be dedicated to engaging attendees, followed by further opportunities in districts throughout this year. The recommendation is “that all new business for the 2019 Annual Conference be set aside so that the delegate body and other Annual Conference participants can focus their attention on the essential conversations that will lead to discerning the compelling vision that Christ intends for the Church of the Brethren.”

• **Amendments to the Bylaws of the Church of the Brethren Inc.** The Mission and Ministry Board recommends bylaws changes in response to the 2017 Review and Evaluation Committee. The changes would affect



“Living Parables’ is a foundational call to be involved with the ministries of Jesus. It calls us to work for peace, reconciliation, and transformation of all things, visible and invisible. As living parables, Christ calls us to learn how to share our lives in grace with others—and our sharing should be a source of grace for others. This kind of sharing is not about telling information, but being present in a world that so desperately needs to see Christ in action.”

Annual Conference 2018 theme statement: <http://www.brethren.org/ac/2018/theme.html>

Walt Wiltschek



the coordination of denominational envisioning; oversight of the Annual Conference office, director, and budget; membership of the Leadership Team; and some terminology. One amendment would update the name of Southern Ohio District to “Southern Ohio-Kentucky District.”

• **Denominational Leadership Gathering** Last year’s Review and Evaluation Committee recommended a gathering of denominational leadership every three to five years, and action was delayed for a year to do a feasibility study. The Program Feasibility Committee determined that current structures provide enough collaboration and that the cost is too high. The original recommendation returns to the floor this year for action.

Worship

Preachers for the 2018 Conference are moderator **Samuel Sarpiya**, pastor of Rockford (Ill.) Community Church of the Brethren, Wednesday; **Brian Messler**, pastor of Ephrata (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, Thursday; **Rosanna Eller McFadden**, pastor of Creekside Church of the Brethren, Elkhart, Ind., Friday; **Angela Finet**, pastor of Nokesville (Va.) Church of the Brethren, Saturday; and **Leonard Sweet**, the E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism at Drew University in

New Jersey, Sunday.

Offerings will be received for the Nigeria Crisis Fund on Wednesday; Church of the Brethren Core Ministries on Thursday; Puerto Rico hurricane response on Friday; assistance to the Batwa-Pygmy communities in the Great Lakes Region of Africa on Saturday; and funding of Spanish translation at Annual Conference on Sunday.

Pre-Conference activities

Theologian and author Diana Butler Bass is the speaker for the **Ministers’ Association event on “Gratitude: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks.”** Three sessions will be led by Butler Bass on Tuesday evening, July 3, and Wednesday morning and afternoon, July 4. See www.brethren.org/ministryoffice/sustaining.html.

Dikaiois & Discipleship, a July 3-4 event combining a bus tour with group discussions, will focus on the history of race and slavery in the Cincinnati area, sponsored by Intercultural Ministries. “The Ohio River has long been a symbol: On one side slavery and on the other, freedom,” said an announcement. “Our history, as a denomination and as a nation, is just as interwoven with the complexities of race and racism. Of freedom and enslavement. Of oppression and injus-

stice.” The tour will visit the Harriet Beecher Stowe Museum and the author’s house where *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was written; stops on the Underground Railroad; site of a former slave market; sites connected with 2001 race protests; sites connected with William Bradley—a governor who spoke up in the Jim Crow era’ and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Though the tour is filled, go to www.brethren.org/congregationallife/dikaiois to be placed on a waiting list.

A tour to the **National Underground Railroad Freedom Center** is offered for nondelegates on the afternoon of July 6. Cost is \$15.

A group outing to see the **Cincinnati Reds play the Chicago White Sox** is Tuesday evening, July 3. Tickets are \$12.

Witness to the Host City

Donations brought to the Conference will benefit **First Step Home**, a treatment center that helps women rebuild their families as they break the cycle of drug and alcohol addiction. This is the only addiction treatment center in Cincinnati allowing children to live with mothers who are in treatment. Find a list of needed items at www.brethren.org/ac/2018/activities/witness-to-the-host-city.html. 



Mission Alive celebrates our global church

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

A vision for a global Church of the Brethren was the focus for Mission Alive, a gathering for mission-minded church members from across the US and around the world. The meeting was organized by the Global Mission and Service office and Mission Advisory Committee, and hosted by Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren on April 6-8.

Keynote presenters spoke from their experience of mission, their expertise in international contexts, and their work to “translate” the essence of the church in differing languages and cultures:

—**Alexandre Gonçalves** of Igreja da Irmandade (Church of the Brethren in Brazil).

—**Michaela Alphonse**, pastor of First Church of the Brethren in Miami, Fla., who has been a program volunteer with Eglise des Freres d’Haiti (Church of the Brethren in Haiti).

—**David Niyonzima**, vice chancellor of the International Leadership University—Burundi and founder of Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services.

—**Hunter Farrell**, director of World Mission Initiative at Pittsburgh (Pa.) Theological Seminary, who has had mission experience in Africa and Peru with the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Global Mission and Service executive Jay Wittmeyer led sessions outlining a vision for a global Church of the Brethren. The vision document was adopted by the Mission and Ministry Board and comes to Annual Conference this year.

Currently, Church of the Brethren denominations are established—or in process of forming—in the US, India, Nigeria, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Spain, Great Lakes region of Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi), and Venezuela.

It will be a hard but inspiring task to build a global Church of the Brethren, said Gonçalves. Identity will be a key factor, he told the gathering. “Identity matters,” he said, emphasizing the need to remember elements that define Church of the Brethren tradition. “When an individual or group loses its memory, it also loses . . . a sense of belong-

ing, sense of values and beliefs.”

He urged Brethren to gather around scripture and study it in community, citing communal discernment of scripture as key to maintaining an identity rooted in the traditions of Anabaptism and radical Pietism. These traditions call believers to be involved in peacemaking and to address the political issues of the time, and they lead to servanthood. “There should not be Christian mission without service to others,” he said, “because Jesus’ commission touches all aspects of life.”

Noting that the Church of the Brethren is experiencing a diversity of theology and practice in the US and internationally, he posed a difficult question: Do Brethren really share the same theological tradition and language? “What is the point of celebrating a global Church of the Brethren if many of the bodies do not manifest or do not want to . . . embrace the Anabaptist and radical Pietist views?” he asked. “We must show that our essence is the same. . . . It is time to sow the seeds again.”

The gathering also included a peace vigil, love feast, and workshops. The closing session gave international participants an opportunity to share their responses to the idea of a global church. Those who spoke were supportive, while acknowledging past mission mistakes and the difficulties of such a venture. Questions were asked about the nature of the global structure, how to finance it, and how leadership will be determined. In response, Wittmeyer explained that the vision document was reviewed by key church leaders in Nigeria, Brazil, and elsewhere, prior to its adoption by the Mission and Ministry Board. They affirmed its direction, he said.

If adopted by Annual Conference, the vision document will not create a global Church of the Brethren. That step is still far in the future, after each denomination makes its own decision to join in. Adoption by Annual Conference opens the possibility for invitations to all the denominations to come together to consider creating a global church structure. The document has potential to significantly change the mission philosophy of the Church of the Brethren, and is an opportunity for the US church to reconsider its relationship to the other denominations. **M**



One heart

by Jennifer Keeney Scarr

've always loved the story of the Samaritan woman who meets Jesus at Jacob's well

(John 4:1-42). I love how Jesus asks the woman to give water to him, and ends up giving living water to her. I love that even though there is no socially acceptable reason for these two people to be talking, Jesus and this woman hold the longest conversation in the Gospels. Even though she is a woman and he is a man. Even though she is a Samaritan and he is a Jew.

Samaritans and Jews held in common the Torah—Genesis to Deuteronomy. But over time, they experienced a schism. Some anchored themselves to the mountain to worship God—to high places from where the 10 commandments came. And others anchored themselves to the new temple Solomon built, believing God now dwelt only there. This is an oversimplification, to be sure. There were many other differences between the Samaritans and the Jews, but this is the one that I believe matters most for this particular passage. The Samaritans and the Jews, once one family of faith, are broken by differing theology. Sound familiar?

It's not unlike our fracturing denomination: One big Brethren family who hold the common story of eight radical people who baptized each other in the Eder River in Germany in the year 1708. One big Brethren family who practice communion, love feast, footwashing, anointing, and baptism—but are finding it difficult to navigate contrasting

understandings of sexuality, gender, and race.

When the Samaritan woman approaches the well, Jesus ignores all that would keep him from speaking to her and says, "Give me a drink." She too lets go of all the things that would keep her from speaking to him. The space is ready for a tough conversation. She says, "Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus replies, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. . . . [T]he hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Jesus takes the location of worship from a mountain and a temple into the realm of Spirit, and Spirit cannot be contained. God cannot be contained by a mountain or a temple or a single group's faith. God cannot be contained by any wall human beings erect—physical or spiritual. God is mighty, powerful, living water—flowing over us, around us, and through us each and every day.

What if we brought our key differences before Jesus today? What if we stood next to him by that well of living water and said, "Jesus, look, they believe this and we believe that." What would he say to us?

It might be something like this: "Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:23-25 NIV).

Sisters and brothers, we are not of one mind. Yet let us be of one heart, spurring each other on to love and good deeds so that living water may flow through each of us—and remind our denomination what hope feels like. 

Jennifer Keeney Scarr is pastor of Trotwood (Ohio) Church of the Brethren.



WHAT IF WE STOOD NEXT TO HIM BY THAT WELL OF LIVING WATER AND SAID, "JESUS, LOOK, THEY BELIEVE THIS AND WE BELIEVE THAT." WHAT WOULD HE SAY TO US?

The way the world works

by John Hartsough

I offer the following quotes for contemplation.

“The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves those around them will create community.” —Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

“We reduce great questions of meaning and morality to ‘issues’ and simplify them to two sides, allowing pundits and partisans to frame them in irreconcilable extremes. But most of us don’t see the world this way, and it is not the way the world actually works.” —Krista Tippett, *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living* 

John Hartsough is a member of the Manchester Church of the Brethren, North Manchester, Ind.

We must live together

by Tom Laquidara

The winds of change which bring divisions from social factors affect many denominations. Some of the dividing factors I have witnessed include the Vietnam conflict, the ordination of women, the acceptance and ordination of LGBTQ folk, racial integration, choices of church music, having a national flag in the sanctuary, the frequency of holy communion, footwashing, and clergy vestments.

In 1 Corinthians 10-11, Paul strongly urges unity among Christians during love feast and holy communion, no matter what social differences exist outside the church community. For me today, this means that, in the body of Christ, pursuit of anything other than Christ and his kingdom, is idolatry. Paul insists that we live together, worshiping and serving Christ. 

Tom Laquidara lives in Quartz Hill, Calif.

To leave or not to leave

by Robert Vroon

The church in America, including the Church of the Brethren, is all too often lukewarm, inward-focused, enculturated, and tradition-worshipping. Despite all that, it is still God’s chosen instrument for bringing in the kingdom (in its beginnings). So I am committed to the church. That commitment includes the task of calling the church to be the church, to continue the work of Jesus, to become like the church in the New Testament.

Of course, there are no perfect churches or denominations! They are all made up of imperfect people like you and me. If a congregation leaves the Church of the Brethren, it will end up in another imperfect denomination. Or it will become an independent church, which means it will become an imperfect denomination.

For all its flaws, the Church of the Brethren has a beautiful heritage, much of which is still reflected in our programs and practices. We can accomplish some things together that we could not accomplish if we split apart. Rather than jumping ship, wouldn’t it be better to stay and work for renewal? As the saying goes, bloom where you’re planted! 

A retired pastor, Robert Vroon is a member of First Church of the Brethren, Harrisburg, Pa.

Wilderness time

by Christina Bucher

Outward Bound and wilderness therapy programs today view the wilderness as a good location for self-improvement and behavior modification. Time spent in the wilderness engaged in challenging activities and separated from the distractions of modern life can have positive outcomes. Similarly, in the Bible, the wilderness functions as a place of both testing and revelation.

For the Israelites traveling to the land of Canaan, the wilderness serves as a place of testing. Abraham, Hagar, Moses, and Elijah all encounter God in wilderness settings. Jesus, too, is tested in the wilderness (Matthew 4:4), receives revelation there (Mark 1:9-11), and goes to the wilderness to pray (Luke 5:16) and to be alone (Luke 4:42).

Is it “wilderness” or “desert”? Some English versions (for example, CEV and GNT) refer to “desert,” rather than “wilderness” (as in NIV and NRSV). *Wilderness* refers to a region that has sparse vegetation and is mostly uninhabited. A *desert* is an area that is

sparsely vegetated because it receives little rainfall. Deserts are usually also wilderness areas, but a wilderness does not necessarily have to be a desert. In most cases in the Bible, the context suggests that the key characteristic is sparse population, rather than minimal rainfall, although the two factors are closely related.

Luke 3:1-17

One man frequently associated with wilderness living is the individual we know as John the Baptist (or John the Baptizer). Luke portrays John as a prophet who receives a communication from God in the wilderness: “The word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness” (Luke 3:2b).

John’s Feast Day

In the Roman Catholic tradition, all saints are remembered with prayers on their feast days. John the Baptist’s feast day is June 24. Brethren traditionally do not observe feast days, but John the Baptist is a man we Brethren can appreciate. John witnessed to Jesus as the Lamb of God, but he was a prophet in his own right, bringing a message that we need to “walk the walk” and not only “talk the talk.”



John the Baptist in the Wilderness by Gerritgen tot Sint Jans, Wikipedia.com

John is a prophet, but he also fulfills prophecy found in the book of Isaiah. John is “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness” (Isaiah 40:3). (Interestingly, Luke punctuates Isaiah’s prophetic message differently, locating the voice in the wilderness. Compare Isaiah 40:3 and Luke 3:4 to see the difference.)

When John says in Luke 3:8, “Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham,” he connects Israel’s story to the story of Jesus. Like the prophets of Israel and Judah, John announces that religious activity and biological connections do not automatically make one a follower of God.

Centuries before John, the prophet Amos had announced that God wants people to demonstrate justice and righteousness in their daily lives (Amos 5:21-24), and God either doesn’t want religious activity or wants religious activity to be accompanied by just and righteous living. Later, in Judah, Jeremiah had something similar to say (Jeremiah 7).

John’s message to his fellow Jews should resonate among Anabaptists, for whom it is not enough to be born into a covenantal community. Each person must decide for himself or herself if and when to commit publicly to follow Jesus.

In Luke 3:10-14, John issues a call to ethical reform. Three distinct groups ask, “What should we do?” First, John instructs the crowds, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.”

Second, John speaks to tax collectors, saying to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you” (Luke 3:13). Tax collectors were not well liked in New Testament times, because they collected tolls, tariffs,

and custom fees for the Roman rulers who occupied the country. They could easily abuse their position and charge more than the Romans required—keeping that little extra something for themselves.

Third, John replies to the soldiers, who were probably local mercenaries working for the Roman or Roman-appointed rulers. He instructs the soldiers, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages” (Luke 3:14). As local mercenaries in the employ of Roman rulers, soldiers had power that they could wield over people through threats and false accusations.

What does John say to us today? In an age of overconsumption, many of us have more than we need. John calls us to share what we have with those who do not have enough. In an age dominated by greed, John tells us not to seek our own financial security on the backs of others. In an age when people use any means they can to achieve power, status, and wealth, John warns us not to abuse power and to be satisfied with what we earn.

Finally, when some of the crowd speculates that John might be the Messiah they hope for, John turns the attention away from himself to point to one more powerful than he. The prophet brings a message, but he is not equal to the message.

Wilderness time

In her recent book *Seizing the Nonviolent Moments: Reflections on the Spirituality of Nonviolence through the Lens of Scripture*, Nancy Small advocates wilderness time. She writes that “the spirituality of nonviolence calls us into the wilderness.” Just as John was called into the wilderness, Small seems to suggest that we, too, enter the wilderness whenever we challenge assumptions that guide our society. For example, when we live simply in a

Recommended reading

Nancy Small, *Seizing the Nonviolent Moments: Reflections on the Spirituality of Nonviolence through the Lens of Scripture* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2015). Nancy Small is a hospice chaplain, spiritual director, and an ambassador of peace with Pax Christi USA.

society of overconsumption or when we advocate reconciliation in a society that demands retaliation, we enter the wilderness. She also suggests that wilderness time is not a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but a way of life.

The painting that illustrates this Bible study is a late 15th-century work by Geertgen tot Sint Jans, titled *St. John the Baptist in the Wilderness*. John looks pensive. To us, his posture might suggest sorrow, melancholy, or even a depressive state. A 15th-century audience would more likely identify John’s posture as one of deep contemplation. John has gone out into the wilderness to receive divine revelation. Although without human companions in this wilderness, John has the Lamb of God by his side. This painting might have served its owners as a devotional painting, one that encouraged their own prayer and meditation as they looked upon John’s contemplation.

Nancy Small identifies the wilderness as a place of testing. Will we accept the norms and priorities of our culture or will we follow the teachings of Jesus? Wilderness is also where we can go to *receive revelation*. As it did for both John and Jesus, wilderness time offers opportunity for solitude, prayer, and the possibility of an encounter with the divine. 

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



Kidney donor found one pew away

by Patricia Middleton

The chances of finding an exact match with an unrelated organ donor are one in 100,000, so when

John Hoffman needed a kidney, he was surprised to find a match in his church's 40-person congregation.

"That was unbelievable," Hoffman said. "That's just unheard of. It worked out great."

Hoffman had been diagnosed with pancreatitis, had his gall bladder removed, and found his kidney function was at 20 percent and dropping. His doctor told him it was time to look

for a kidney donor.

Patients needing a kidney transplant usually get one from a family member or have to wait around three years for a cadaver donor.

"I started this whole process in July 2016," Hoffman said. "I told our church and had several people volunteer; family members volunteered."

Through health screenings, blood typing, and tissue typing, some volunteers were disqualified. Wanting to help spread the word, Shana Leck, a member of Monitor Church of the Brethren with Hoffman, had her blood

drawn for testing as well.

"I put my name in and started the process myself just to get some information so I could tell other people about it," Leck explained.

Her blood sample was sent to St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, Mo., but there they hit an insurance hiccup and Hoffman had to change providers.

"He had to start the testing from ground zero," Leck said. "I think that set him back about four months."

Leck made weekly calls to see if Hoffman had been put on the waiting list for a kidney and when he was, she

“I WAS REMINDED TO LISTEN TO GOD’S GENTLE NUDGING AND BE WILLING TO GO, AS ABRAM, OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE.” —Shana Leck

gave permission for Kansas University Medical Center to access the results from the sample she had already given. She was surprised when her phone rang that afternoon with the news that she was a match.

“After being put off for weeks and months, I was not expecting that fast of a reaction,” Leck said. “I guess you could say I was in shock. I really didn’t think that was a possibility, but I think I knew right away that I would go through with it.”

Less than a week before she received the call, Leck participated in a Bible study with other members of her church.

“The combination of two scriptures and meditation time and the responses I and other people gave, it just hit like a brick,” Leck said. “I was going to do it, there was no question about it, and it was time to have some serious conversations with my family.”

Leck said her husband supported her decision and her children did, as well.

“I’m sure they had their own fears, but we let them know they could always ask questions and talk to us about it,” Leck said.

Save the date

For a kidney transplant, the donor chooses the date of the surgery. Leck knew it was time to tell Hoffman the good news.

“I sent him a Save the Date announcement with both of our pictures. It was really goofy,” Leck laughed.

“You can call it a miracle, you can call it a blessing—I was very grateful she was a match,” Hoffman said.

The surgery was scheduled for June 20, giving Leck time to enjoy her son’s graduation.

“We didn’t tell the public right away, because I didn’t want to be bombarded

with questions and I wanted life to be as normal as possible,” Leck explained.

Leck spent a day undergoing tests, talking to people on the transplant team, including case workers, psychologists, dietitians, surgeons, and an anesthesiologist, who answered her questions and evaluated her mental stability and physical fitness.

As they lay next to each other preparing for surgery, others from the church came and created a prayer chain around them.

“I imagine that’s fairly unusual,” Leck said.

Leck said Philippians 4:8 was a verse that was meaningful for her in that time.

“To have that scripture and the people that came in to visit pray with me

and for me, remind me of that scripture and say it out loud, was very powerful,” Leck said.

Hoffman’s new kidney was transplanted successfully. His old kidneys were not removed.

“My other kidneys will eventually just shrink to the size of walnuts and



A vital gift

Some background on my decision-making process: Monitor Church of the Brethren members were participating in the Vital Ministry Journey study in small groups. The Vital Ministry Journey is a resource provided by Congregational Life Ministries [now named Discipleship Ministries]. The study on Isaiah 43:14-21 set the stage. Verse 19 reads, “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”

Our family summers are never dull, usually full days of coaching tennis, mowing the cemetery, selling garden produce. So when the summer of 2017 began to open up, I wondered what it would hold. The following week of Bible study answered that question. Genesis 12:1-4 had me reflecting that opportunities come with faith and obedience. I noted that “Abram went, as the Lord told him,” though he had to follow one step at a time—the whole trip was not laid out for him from the beginning. I was reminded to listen to God’s gentle nudging and be willing to go, as Abram, out of my comfort zone. In the same night of study, we meditated and shared from John 15, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

The impact of these readings was much stronger than a gentle nudging; they were confirmation of the choice I had already made.

Ten months later, my body reminds me that recovery is still in progress. I tire quickly and still say no to many opportunities I would like to participate in. Although I know, in my mind, full recovery is coming, the mental fight to allow myself to rest is the biggest struggle. I am often humbled by the help of others, be it family or friends. But to witness John’s recovery—what a gift! —Shana Leck

“KNOWING THAT THE CONGREGATION, FRIENDS, FAMILIES, AND NEIGHBORS WOULD SUPPORT US WAS FABULOUS AND THEY DID. THEY FOLLOWED THROUGH.” —Shana Leck

they’ll never be useful again,” Hoffman explained.

Leck said the surgery went as expected and that the hospital staff were very attentive.

“I don’t recall that afternoon at all,” Leck said. “They said I would be up and walking that day. I was not. The following day was pretty rough, as far as pain goes.”

“The first several weeks were kind of rough, just like the doctors said it would be,” Hoffman said. “For me, it was a matter of balancing my body’s resistance to the kidney and the kidney’s ability to get used to my body and the tons of medication I have to take to make the two work together.”

When Hoffman had to go back to the hospital several times, several people asked Leck if she would be okay with her decision if he died from his body rejecting the kidney.

“In the moment, I was able to respond to all three people with honesty and say, ‘yes,’” Leck said. “I knew that rejection was a possibility. But thank God—literally, thank God—he’s doing well.”

Recovery

For both Hoffman and Leck, the biggest side effect from the surgery is a lack of energy.

“I yawn a lot,” Leck said.

Many volunteered to help Leck, doing house cleaning, providing rides for her children, harvesting her garden, and bringing meals.

“We did have an incredible amount of support,” Leck said. “Knowing that the congregation, friends, families, and neighbors would support us was fabulous and they did. They followed through.”

Donations covered Leck’s traveling expenses and all her medical bills will be paid by Hoffman’s insurance.

Still, recuperation has not been easy for Leck, who said she does not like to sit around.

“I picked up the broom and I couldn’t make the side-to-side motions because of the incisions,” Leck said. “I went to try to sweep the kitchen and I couldn’t.”

It will take six months to a year for both Leck and Hoffman to fully recover.

“I’ll be capable of doing anything I could before,” Leck explained.

Hoffman is now able to get back to ministerial work, visiting people in hospitals and nursing homes, thank to Leck.

“Shana’s one of the most trustworthy and honest people I know,” Hoffman said. “She has integrity. She’s a good friend, and not just because she gave me a kidney. She was a good friend before and after that.”

“Without a doubt, I’m glad that I did it,” Leck said.

For more information about becoming a kidney donor, visit the National Kidney Foundation <http://kidney.org> or call 855-653-2273. 

Patricia Middleton is a reporter for the *McPherson Sentinel* in McPherson, Kan.

A roller coaster ride

We would like to thank the many persons within the local, wider, and national church communities who have lifted us up in their prayers and supported us throughout the surgery and ongoing recovery.

The medical professionals state that a year’s worth of recovery can get one’s body back to almost what it should be in normal health. It’s been since June 20, 2017, and we both have had a roller coaster ride of recovery. The most common side effect of this type of surgery is the long-term advancement of strength and endurance. Getting tired easily is the norm, and frequent rest is a necessity. With the lower resistance to illnesses, it is an added caution to do one’s best to stay away from situations that could cause sickness. However, day by day the body builds more resistance and strength a little at a time.

This experience has been a blessing to both of us and provides added wisdom and knowledge about what others go through as they experience similar trials and needed support systems. The greatest support and ministry for those going through trials is simply listening.

We both continue our dedication to the Church of the Brethren and other ministries as we can. In other involvements, Shana works as often in her garden as she can, continues to make cheese and yogurt with the milk acquired from their own cow, and has taught workshops on those processes. I recently purchased a bicycle that can handle dirt roads and use it to help build up strength and endurance. I plan on attending Annual Conference this summer in Cincinnati, Ohio. —**John Hoffman**

Process team lays out road map for ‘compelling vision’

The Compelling Vision Process Team met April 17-19 at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill.

Kayla Alphonse, Kevin Daggett, Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, Brian Messler, Alan Stucky, and Kay Weaver joined with Annual Conference moderator Samuel Sarpiya, moderator-elect Donita Keister, and director Chris Douglas to form the nine-person team.

This group brought a diversity of gifts and perspectives as it worked to lay out a general roadmap for the development of a compelling vision for the Church of the Brethren. Pittman Gingrich was called to be chair, and will work in partnership with the moderator to lead the work of the team going forward.

The team looks forward to beginning the compelling vision journey at this summer’s Annual Conference in Cincinnati, where approximately three hours of business will be devoted to compelling vision conversations. The information gathered will guide additional conversations in many places where Brethren will gather across the denomination this fall and winter. The team is working with the Council of District Executives to provide opportunities in every district for as many Brethren as possible to contribute to the conversations. One of the first opportunities will be



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

The Compelling Vision Process Team: (from left) moderator-elect Donita Keister, Alan Stucky, director Chris Douglas, Brian Messler, Kay Weaver, moderator Samuel Sarpiya, Rhonda Pittman Gingrich (chair), Kevin Daggett, and Kayla Alphonse.

National Youth Conference, where the team is working in cooperation with NYC leadership to engage youth in conversations about their vision for the church.

What is heard in these conversations will be gathered and shared at Annual Conference 2019, where it is hoped that much of the business time can be devoted to listening to one another and continuing the work of

shaping the compelling vision.

The Compelling Vision Process Team will finish its work in the months following the 2019 Conference, as it works with the Compelling Vision Working Group (formed from members of the denomination’s Leadership Team and Council of District Executives) to eventually articulate the resulting vision to the whole church.

Personnel notes

Dan McFadden has resigned as director of Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) effective Nov. 2. He has worked out of the church’s General Offices in Elgin, Ill., for more than 22 years, since Dec. 1, 1995. With his leadership, BVS has navigated ongoing changes in the church, society, and culture that affect how young adults and adults serve. The move of the Workcamp Ministry to BVS in 2011 gave him leadership of the short- and long-term volunteer programs of the denomination. McFadden has coached, counseled, and supported more than 1,200 BVSers serving in communities across the US and many other countries. By the time his work with BVS ends, he will have supervised the BVS units ranging from Unit 220, winter 1996, through Unit 321, fall 2018. He plans to return to the social work field and join a private counseling practice.

NYC speech contest winners are announced

The winners of the National Youth Conference speech Contest will share their speeches with those attending NYC this summer in Fort Collins, Colo., on July 21-26. The National Youth Cabinet helped in choosing speech contest winners Elise Gage and Taylor Dudley.

Gage, a high school freshman, is a member of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren who enjoys science and hopes to pursue a career as a renewable energy engineer. She also is active in her school's athletics program, is an avid reader, and a creative writer.

Dudley, a rising sophomore at Ferrum College, is a member of Smith Mountain Lake Church of the Brethren in Hardy, Va. She is majoring in social work, which she hopes to pair with animal therapy. She is a collegiate swimmer, and spends her summers working as a camp counselor at Camp Bethel in Fincastle, Va.



Elise Gage



Taylor Dudley



The Elgin Heritage Commission Mayor's Award for Preservation for 2018 was awarded to the Church of the Brethren General Offices on May 1, at a ceremony led by Mayor David Kaptain at the historic old Elgin High School gymnasium. Receiving the award on behalf of the Church of the Brethren were general secretary David Steele, Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden, Global Mission and Service executive director Jay Wittmeyer, treasurer Brian Bultman, Office of Ministry director Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, and Nancy Miner, office manager for the General Secretary's Office, with retired staff member Howard Royer and News Services director Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford present to document the moment with this photograph.

Annual Conference 2019 forced to change locations

The Annual Conference planned for summer 2019 has been forced to change locations, according to director Chris Douglas. Unexpected delays with major renovations at the Town and Country resort in San Diego, Calif., where the Conference was to have been held, have forced this change. "Town and Country canceled our contract," she reported.

Douglas, the Conference officers, and the Program and Arrangements Committee have worked hard to identify an alternate location. Instead of San

Diego, the 2019 Conference will be held at the Koury Convention Center and Sheraton Hotel in Greensboro, N.C. It was "miraculous" that the Greensboro site had the right dates available and could accommodate the Conference on such short notice, Douglas said. Both locations have been used for previous Annual Conferences—San Diego in 2009 and Greensboro in 2016. Greensboro also will be the location for the 2021 Conference.

Douglas emphasizes that the Program and Arrangements Committee

remains committed to seeking western sites for future Conferences.

Dates of the 2019 Conference will remain the same as previously announced: July 3-7.

Although this location change was out of the control of the Annual Conference, Douglas has extended an apology to volunteers who had begun working on the 2019 Conference and to church members across the country who may have begun arrangements to travel to a southern California destination next summer.



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Music just as sweet

Bravo, brother Jonathan Emmons, for your article in March, "Leave Your Caves, O People of God." I love your organ and piano music, but keep this sweet music of your soul coming as well! What a breath of fresh air and welcome perspective.

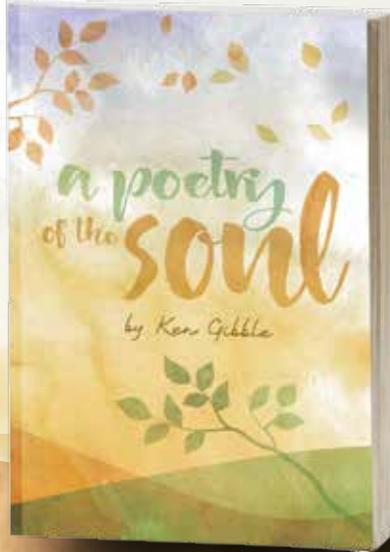
Thank you for suggesting and inviting a whole new kind of movement that several have been talking about and yearning for. And yet maybe it isn't so new at all. Perhaps it is simply advocacy for some of the essence of radical Pietism, our too long lost or ignored sister to Anabaptism. In response, I say, "Me, too."

Erin Matteson
Modesto, Calif.

A first

This is a first for us, after being loyal readers for more than 50 years, but we feel compelled to write after reading the

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LETTERS

excellent April issue.

We always enjoy the thoughtful article “From the Publisher.” Also noteworthy were Tim Harvey’s “Interview with a Police Officer” and Walt Wiltschek’s article “Gun Violence Up Close” concerning our congregation, Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren. We strongly agree with the article “Children and Violence,” an Annual Conference resolution adopted in 1999. We wish more could be done to implement this in the world!

Keep up the good work you are doing!

Woodrow P. and Doris Markey Ziegler
Middletown, Pa.

Church hypocrisy

I am amazed at the letters sent to MESSENGER about homosexuality. I thought that the Church of the Brethren was about peace and sharing

God’s love. Homosexual persons do not choose to be gay. Just as no one chooses their hair or eye color, most people do not choose the gender to which they are romantically attracted. People may choose behaviors, but not their sexual orientation.

Do all Brethren believe that divorced people should be forbidden to fully participate in the church? Jesus and the Ten Commandments prohibit divorce. The Bible also states that “women shall not speak in church” in Corinthians. Are there any lay readers or Sunday school teachers in the Church of the Brethren who are women?

Can’t the Brethren evolve with the rest of God’s civilization and creation? My mother is Brethren. My great-grandfather was a Brethren minister. I will not join the Church of the Brethren because of the church hypocrisy.

Sherry Hope
Baltimore, Md.

Missing research

In a recent letter, the writer claimed to have “spent a lot of time researching the medical aspects of homosexuality.” Well, he missed quite a bit.

It is clear that men who have sex with men remain the group most

CLASSIFIEDS

Warwick River Christian School in Newport News, VA, is seeking a Principal to begin Summer 2018. Established in 1942, WRCS offers full time Preschool – Grade 8 programs and on-site child care with annual enrollment of 100-200 students. Applicants must have a vision for Christ-centered education in harmony with the Mennonite Church, along with relevant experience in education and administration. If interested or for more information, contact Linda Clark, Business Manager at lclark@warwickriver.org or call 757-877-2941.

Have you always wanted to work in a bookstore? Brethren Press is looking for volunteers to assist in set-up, operation, and tear-down of the Annual Conference Bookstore in Cincinnati, Ohio. If you have interest and time to volunteer, contact James Deaton at jdeaton@brethren.org.

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heavily affected by new HIV infections. Data from 2015 states that in the US, gay and bisexual men account for 82 percent of new HIV diagnoses among all males and 67 percent of the total new diagnoses. The Centers for Disease Control says men who have sex with men accounted for 65 percent of the nearly 12,000 cases of

syphilis in the United States in 2007, and Hepatitis A and B disproportionately affect men who have sex with men. Research from the Royal Liverpool University Hospital in England has found that gay men 26 years and under are 15 times more likely to suffer from genital cancers than heterosexual men.

It is not phobic to point out these statistics; it is relevant. Actually, I prefer to go back a few thousand years to the book of Job. 28:28, "And to man he said 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.'"

James Revelos
Troy, Ohio

TURNINGPOINTS

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

New members

Ambler, Pa.: Austin Breisch, Luke Dummeldinger, Trent Dummeldinger, Ann Marie Geiger, Linda Walters, Hannah Wilson
Ankeny, Iowa: Jim Rice, Sherry Rice, Marlene Sanford, Brad Wonders, Martha Wonders
Brooklyn, First, N.Y.: Aisha Neri, David Rosario
Easton, Md.: Walt Wiltschek
Hagerstown, Md.: Teal Fullmer, Noah Gingrich, Jared Kees, Nicole Kees, Wilson Loy, Tina Mills, Dawn Raynor, Jennifer Ripple, Chris Spaid
Indian Creek, Harleysville, Pa.: Danielle Rostick, Stephen Rostick
Lancaster, Pa.: John Byers, Kelly Ober, Mike Ober
Lincolnshire, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Alberta Ilnicki, Fred Ilnicki, Lisa Lahr, Cheryl Thomas, Paul Thomas, Jonah Vorndran, Carol Williams
Lititz, Pa.: Matthew Bacon, Rick Balmer, Sarah Balmer, Sarah Challenger, Kyle Charles, Amos Cunningham, Dennis Kready, Sharon Kready, Clair Kreider, Louise Kreider, Carissa Lusk, Rose Raia, Sarai Raia,

Nancy Scholl, Rebekah Trovinger, Mu Mu Wa, Dylan Zimmerman
Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio: Lani Becker, Tony Becker, Samantha Benner, Emma Roar, Grady Roar, Bertha Rush, Jim Rush, Carlie Stutzman
McPherson, Kan.: Mallory Koelling, Lindy Reynolds, Ashlyn Shugart
Reading, Homeworth, Ohio: Hillary Feaster, Seth Feaster
Roaring Spring, First, Pa.: Dylan Cope, Tiana Eicher, Sierra Foor, Kasey Frye, Paige Glunt, Daniel Hammel, Sharon Hammel, Avery Smith
West Goshen, Goshen, Ind.: Chris Close, Patty Close, Kerry Johnson, Barbara Wilfong, Harold Wilfong

Wedding anniversaries

Allison, Gene and Phyllis, The Villages, Fla., 60
Brubaker, Kenneth and Martha, Manheim, Pa., 50
Dickensheets, Walter and Evelyn, Hanover, Pa., 70
Marker, Walt and Rebecca, West Lawn, Pa., 50
Schlabach, John and Charlotte, Hartville, Ohio, 50
Short, Denzel and Merna, Livonia, Mich., 60
Wright, Richard and Virginia, Roanoke, Va., 60

Deaths

Albright, Anne, 93, McPherson, Kan., Feb. 16
Anspaugh, Loretta Anne Merrow, 79, New Carlisle,

Ohio, March 4
Barnett, Elliott, 77, Wyomissing, Pa., April 6
Batalona, Remio, 88, Fort Wayne, Ind., Dec. 27
Benner, Gloria Joan Harrison, 85, Ashland, Ohio, March 23
Bomberger, Margaret Elizabeth (Betty) Mann, 95, Lititz, Pa., March 1
Bryan, Lucille S., 82, Lima, Ohio, March 2
Burns, Heather N. Zuercher, 39, Akron, Ohio, April 14
Collette, Charleen Davis, 72, Fort Wayne, Ind., Dec. 26
Critzler, Goldie Alice Simmons, 93, Fishersville, Va., March 28
Dodd, Paul Arthur, 62, Greensboro, Md., March 20
Faust, Robert, 95, Chambersburg, Pa., March 24
Forney, V. Marlene Rudy, 81, Lititz, Pa., March 5
Frey, Mary Susan Meyers, 92, Elizabethtown, Pa., March 28
Gleim, Ruth Rishel, 99, Emigsville, Pa., March 26
Griggs, Phyllis Irene Keener, 87, Ashland, Ohio, March 24
Kimes, Quay V. Crawford, 93, Homeworth, Ohio, Feb. 5
Kimmel, Naomi R. Claar, 96, Martinsburg, Pa., March 11
Kreider, Burnell E., 82, Paradise, Pa., March 18
Kreider, Samuel E., 92, Fairfield, Iowa, Jan. 1
Lautzenhiser, Glennis A. Oswald, 81, Hartville,

Ohio, March 12
Lopez, Louise, 89, Whittier, Calif., April 3
Lovett, Diana L., 61, Martinsville, Va., April 16
Martin, J. Ervin, 80, Gordonville, Pa., March 31
McCaughey, Edythe Virginia Landes, 87, Fishersville, Va., March 27
McCoige, Sally A. Laudeman, 79, Fort Wayne, Ind., Dec. 23
McVicker, Linda L. Carpenter, 70, Stoystown, Pa., March 15
Mohler, Arlene Knowles, 88, North Canton, Ohio, March 4
Phillips, Bobby L., 83, Roanoke, Va., March 28
Pollock, Paul W., 94, Palmyra, Pa., March 25
Senn, Ralph (Butch), 70, Louisville, Ohio, Feb. 25
Sewell, Laura Alice, 97, Portland, Ore., March 31
Sheaffer, Anna Mae McCorkle, 93, Hummelstown, Pa., April 16
Shriver, Anna G. Malone, 93, Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 17
Smith, Darlene Lois Prang, 88, Midland, Mich., Jan. 12
Snell, John R., 66, McPherson, Kan., April 2
Teach, Virginia, 84, Springfield, Ohio, Jan. 20
Torakeo, David, 89, Reading, Pa., March 31
Werstler, Hazel M. Eshelman, 96, North Canton, Ohio, April 2
Williams, Geneva, 92, Lima, Ohio, Feb. 28
Zimmerman, Roy E., 81, Lititz, Pa., Jan. 3

Ordained

Fletcher, Jonathan, Shen. Dist. (Valley Pike, Maurertown, Va.), March 18
Kelliher, Patrick, Shen. Dist. (Evergreen, Stanardsville, Va.), April 8
Nunn, Wilkie, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Downsville, Williamsport, Md.), April 15

Commissioned

Deel, Don, N. Ind. Dist. (Union, Plymouth, Ind.), Dec. 11
Miller, Pearl Ann, Mo. & Ark. Dist. (Warrensburg, Mo.), April 15

Licensed

Doman, William D., Jr., Shen. Dist. (Columbia Furnace, Edinburg, Va.), April 15

Placements

Asamoah, Angela, pastor, Bear Creek, Dayton, Ohio, Feb. 4
Carter, Jay, from pastor to senior pastor, Pleasant Dale, Decatur, Ind., Feb. 18
Hinton, Douglas, from pastor of youth and discipleship to pastor, Hempfield, Manheim, Pa., April 16
King, Kevin, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Frederick, Md.), April 1
Rissler, Quentin, from ministry team to lead pastor, Blue Ball, Pa., April 1
Weaver, Galen, from lead pastor to ministry team, Blue Ball, Pa., April 1

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Everyone knows that it's getting harder to call a pastor these days. If your congregation has been through a search process recently, you know how complicated it can be—how much time and



DANA CASSELL

energy it takes to create a profile, discern your congregation's needs, find the right candidates, interview them, pray for discernment, and call new pastoral leadership.

This spring, denominational statistics confirmed the complication: 78 congregations had what we call "profiles" in our placement system, meaning that they were actively searching for a new pastor. Only 26 pastors had profiles, meaning that they were actively searching for a congregation that would call them into a pastoral position. Seventy-eight openings for 26 candidates.

Those numbers are a little "soft." Not all congregations utilize the denominational placement system and not all ministers are ordained (a requirement to place a profile in the system). Additionally, pastoral placement isn't as simple as supply and demand: it is a delicate, prayerful process that takes into account relationships, geography, theology, and "fit."

It's a complicated process, so the situation might be brighter than it looks. But when those statistics were announced at a discernment retreat in April, two district executives in the room confirmed that the picture is actually much bleaker—more than 78 congregations are searching and fewer than 26 ministers are available.

How have we arrived at this place, where so many congregations need leaders and so few of our members are being called into leadership?

At Calling the Called, a discernment retreat hosted by the Shenandoah and Virlina districts this spring, Nancy Solenberger Heishman, director of ministry for the Church of the Brethren, said that she is deeply convicted that if we, as a denomination, were serious about naming and nurturing the spiritual gifts of the body of Christ, then God would

provide us with exactly the leadership we needed.

What would it mean to name and nurture *spiritual* gifts in our own congregations? Spiritual gifts are not the gifts we often think of when we think about call or vocation. Spiritual gifts are not individual talents like a willingness to speak in public, a musical ability, or a charismatic personality; instead, spiritual gifts are meant to be used for the building up of the body. Spiritual gifts aren't individual abilities designed for personal gain; they are evidence of the Holy Spirit at work among God's people. These gifts are scriptural: we find a catalogue of spiritual gifts in Romans 12 that includes gifts of prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy.

What would it look like if we began to notice, name, and nurture *these* gifts in our communities and our congregations? Often, congregations are very good at encouraging youth and young people in their vocational discernment. But when was the last time you told an adult sister how much you appreciated her gift of mercy? Have you ever encouraged someone older than you to continue using his gift of serving? What would it take for you to tell your friend from Sunday school that you see gifts of prophecy or generosity in her, gifts that have built up your own faith and contributed to the health of your entire congregation?

I think that Nancy Heishman is right: If we are serious about noticing, naming, and nurturing these scriptural, spiritual gifts among ourselves, God will provide us with the very leadership we need. It might not look the way we thought it would. It might not fit into our institutional systems and categories. It might lead us into new ways of doing church and being Christ's body together. If we pay attention to spiritual gifts, the ones bestowed upon our congregations and communities by the Holy Spirit, we may just find that we have exactly what we need in order to be Christ's hands and feet in the world.

Whose gifts have you noticed recently? How will you encourage them to continue using them for the building up of the body? **WU**

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

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AREN'T INDIVIDUAL ABILITIES DESIGNED FOR PERSONAL GAIN; THEY ARE EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE.

Praise the LORD!
I will give thanks to the
LORD with my whole heart.
- Psalm 111:1

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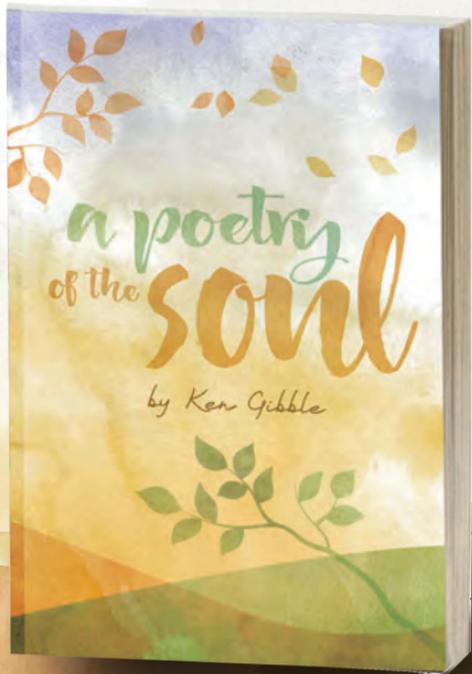
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