

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

JULY/AUGUST 2018 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



Letters from camp

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you.
—Psalm 55:25

Puerto Rico Hurricane Recovery



sustained by **faith**

Despite hardships resulting from the 2017 hurricanes, the Puerto Rican Brethren continue to thank and to praise God.



strengthened by **hope**

Relief and recovery materials, sent by Brethren Disaster Ministries, were distributed to the Puerto Rican churches and supported their hope.



renewed by **servicing** together

There is much work to be done. By working together, homes and lives can be renewed.

Following Hurricanes Irma and María in September 2017, Brethren Disaster Ministries reached out to the Puerto Rico district with short-term relief funding and materials. The district and BDM have now developed a long-term home repair program to help church members and their communities recover. Your prayers and financial support are crucial to that recovery.

Give to the Emergency Disaster Fund.



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

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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On the cover

Gateway at Camp Emmaus
in Mount Morris, Ill.

Photos by Ralph Miner

Big ideas

Each year, some of my springtime is taken up with poring over the thousands of photos that have been added to the denominational photo archive and searching for the right words to tell the story of the Church of the Brethren. It's a story told through a written report, a shorter pictorial report*, an exhibit at Annual Conference, and a video report to Annual Conference delegates.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

What's especially clear is how today's ministries are the fruit of seeds planted many years ago. We ventured into North Korea in 1997. National Older Adult Conference began 25 years ago. Children's Disaster Services was born in 1980. The Church of the Brethren went to the Dominican Republic in 1979. National Youth Conference began in 1954. Young adults asked permission to launch Brethren Volunteer Service 70 years ago. Missionaries went to Nigeria 95 years ago. The publication that became MESSENGER began in 1851. The Brethren movement was born 310 years ago.

Ministries that we take for granted today were once someone's big idea. When we see how the accomplishments of the year are rooted in the fertile soil of the past, it makes sense that "continuing" is part of our Brethren vocabulary. We "continue the work of Jesus" (as our tagline says) by continuing ministries launched by the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us.

How are we writing the reports of years to come? Maybe 95 years from now, the church will recall that mission efforts in Venezuela and the Great Lakes region of Africa were formally approved by the Mission and Ministry Board way back in 2017. What else would we like that report to say? What seeds are we planting for tomorrow's yield?

In the meantime, check out "The Not-So-Big Church," a video that tells the story of this church with big ideas. You can find it at www.brethren.org/annualreport. That's where you can also download the full written report of the Church of the Brethren. As you watch and read, give thanks for seeds and soil. Give thanks for those who plant and for those who harvest—and for God who gives the growth.

*If you received this issue of MESSENGER as a subscriber, you also received the pictorial report, which doubles as a 2019 calendar. Extra copies are available upon request while quantities last.

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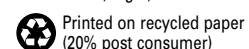
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Tori Bateman

Marching for immigrants

Eglise des Freres Haitiens, a majority Haitian Church of the Brethren congregation in Miami, Fla., in May held a march supporting immigrants. Pastor Ilexene Alphonse helped organize and publicize the event. Tori Bateman, a Brethren Volunteer Service worker with the denomination's Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, traveled from Washington, D.C., to be present.

The march focused on the TPS and DACA policies of the federal government and called for support for immigrants affected by those policies, in particular immigrants in the Haitian-American community. "If you would like to stand in solidarity with these marchers," says Bateman, "consider writing to your legislators to support the American Promise Act (H.R. 4253) and the SECURE Act (S. 2144), which would create a pathway to citizenship for TPS holders."

Pork roast for mission

Chiques Church of the Brethren near Manheim, Pa., hosted a pork roast dinner April 14 benefitting the Haiti Medical Project and Nigeria Crisis Fund. The dinner was by donation, with approximately 275 people dining in the Family Life Center and 200 people taking boxed meals home. Theme baskets and crafts donated by individuals and Sunday school classes were for purchase in a silent auction.

Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of Global Mission and Service, talked

about the church's involvement in Haiti and Nigeria. He told stories based from his personal experience in these two countries. The Peace of Mind band played a short concert of spiritual and secular songs with a message.

Chiques has sent three groups on mission trips to Haiti over the last few years. The members that have had this experience have become sensitive to the needs of the Church of the Brethren in Haiti, particularly their medical needs due to impure

water-related illnesses.

Four years of making pork has made the dinners profitable for these Church of the Brethren missions. This year's proceeds amounted to \$30,000. The total for three previous years and this year is \$135,000. The congregation works long and hard in making this fundraiser successful, but the attendance of the community and district churches brings an opportunity for everyone to share their generosity.

—Sandra Brubaker

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.



courtesy of Carol Hipps Elmore

Graduates are wrapped in hand-made quilts by Oak Grove Church of the Brethren. Pictured from left: Zach Harvey, Hannah Tyler, Bradley Greiner, and Hannah Bolender, with Carol Hipps Elmore, minister of youth and music.

Wrapped in quilted love

Oak Grove Church of the Brethren has wrapped its graduating seniors in love every year since 2015. During a recent Sunday celebration, senior high youth led worship, and this year's graduates each received a hand-made quilt.

“During the year, loving women in our congregation made each graduate a beautiful, individualized quilt,” reports Carol Hipps Elmore, minister of youth and music. “During the month of May, each person in the congregation was encouraged to tie one of the corner ties as

he/she prayed for that graduate. As each quilt was wrapped around a graduate, we said, ‘Go, wrapped in God’s love.’
 “I’m grateful for a congregation like that,” she says, “and for youth who accept that love and are ready to carry it out into the world.”



courtesy of Poetify

Philadelphia poet Pat McLean is crowned “queen for the day.”

Poetry to edify

“**Poetify**” or “**poetry to edify**” is an event that takes place on a monthly or bimonthly basis at Germantown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. According to the *Germantown Courier*, coordinators RuNett Ebo Gray and Victoria Peurifoy are known as “Partners in Rhyme.” Poetify in May celebrated one of Philadelphia’s popular poets, Pat McLean, also of Germantown, as “queen for the day.”

125 years in Anderson

Anderson (Ind.) Church of the Brethren celebrated 125 years June 22-24. The celebration began Friday evening with a concert by soprano Heather Lake Bays. It continued with a Saturday afternoon of storytelling with Jim Lehman, a well-known Brethren storyteller from Elgin, Ill., who told stories based on the life and times of the early Brethren. There were interactive events such as baking communion bread and quilting, as well as historic displays about the congregation. Pastor Spencer Spaulding spoke for the Sunday morning service, with music by voice and handbell choirs. —**Delora Roop**

“Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord.” —Ephesians 6:7a

“Brother moderator, you are putting Robert’s Rules of Order ahead of the New Testament.”

—Attributed to Dan West by Inez Long, who remembered West urging the 1948 Annual Conference to set aside its business rules to allow young adults to make the proposal for Brethren Volunteer Service

“When the young people stood up and cheered, the whole [1948] Conference was surprised. . . . The Holy Spirit was just so in evidence. It was just like Pentecost! Just like a football game! You could just feel the power of God in that place!”

—Alma Long, one of the young adults who helped form BVS

Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 1.

Happy birthday, BVS

It was 70 years ago this summer that Brethren Volunteer Service was born at the 1948 Annual Conference in Colorado Springs. The unusual scene on the business floor was recorded in *A Cup of Cold Water: The Story of Brethren Service*, by J. Kenneth Kreider: “With Conference approval, Ted Chambers (who was so short he had to stand on an orange crate in order to speak into the microphone) then presented a proposal from Brethren youth for a broad plan of volunteer service.”

The first BVS orientation unit was held that September at two locations: the Brethren Service Center in

Maryland and Camp Harmony in Pennsylvania. This summer, BVS is orienting Unit 319 at Camp Colorado July 29–Aug. 17.

Over 70 years, approximately 7,000 people have volunteered with BVS, serving at thousands of project sites in the US and around the world. Volunteers typically serve for a year in domestic assignments, two or more years in international assignments, working on one or more of the four BVS goals: advocating justice, working for peace, serving human need, and caring for creation.

The longest available project site, other than a Church of the Brethren

project, is Gould Farm in Monterey, Mass. A unique partnership for BVS is with EIRENE, a German organization founded in 1957 with the help of the Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. EIRENE sends European volunteers to serve in the US through BVS. Another key partnership is with Selective Service. BVS and the Church of the Brethren are among several churches and faith-based settings that have a “Memorandum of Understanding” to provide alternative placements for conscientious objectors in the event of a military draft.



courtesy of Brethren Historical Library and Archives and Brethren Volunteer Service

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Letters from camp

Spiritual formation in the great outdoors

Brethren Volunteer Service



Summer camp is a great place to get a one-week crash course filled with opportunities to grow. Campers develop new skills and abilities. It could be dealing with the frustration (or discovering the need for persistence) of starting a fire without matches. It may be digging deep inside themselves to create a poem for worship and discovering something about themselves and God. It's being courageous and trusting enough to jump off a 35-foot tower, or just being brave enough to smile and say "Hi" to a stranger, making a new friend. It's the give and take of working with others to make decisions as a group, discovering that the good of the body is as important as the good of the individual, and that community is what makes life fantastic! Kids grow in a variety of ways at camp, becoming better people.

—from the spring 2018 newsletter of Camp Blue Diamond, Hooversville, Pa.



Rock stars everywhere


When I was 12 my sister died, and I didn't really have anywhere to turn for answers. I started doubting God. While she was sick I had prayed fervently that if God healed her I would do anything the rest of my life to serve him—anything to save her. When she died, my 12-year-old mind said God doesn't really exist. Why would a loving God allow this to happen?

That summer I wanted to go to camp, because it was a place you could go to have a good time and swim. At that particular camp, each night the counselors came around and asked how the day was. The second night, when the counselor asked, "Do you have any questions?" I said, "Why would a loving God allow my sister to die when I had prayed that she would be healed?" At the time, of course, I was thinking she was an all-knowing person when in reality she was probably a 19-year-old who had no clue.

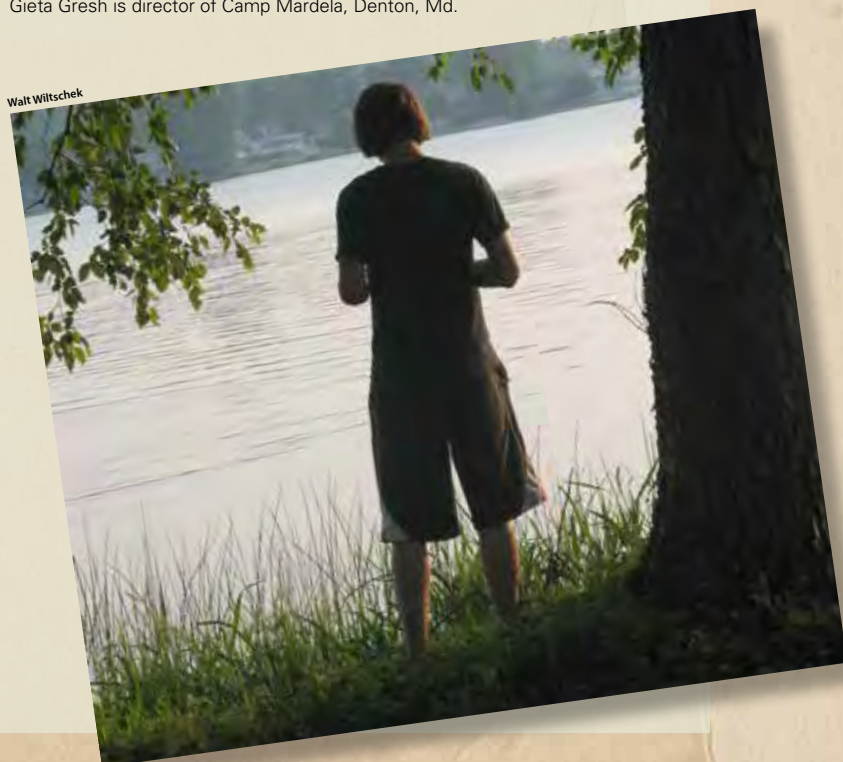
"Ummm, I'm not really sure, but tomorrow night I'll come back and give you an answer." She came back the next night and said, "I don't really know why. We can't explain why God would allow things like this to happen. But I am willing to walk through this with you. I'm going to write to you every week this year, and I want you to write back to me. I do believe God has a plan for your life, and I want to be part of it." She wrote a letter every week.

She and other people at that camp were what I call rock stars; they went beyond what it meant to be a counselor to really minister. She gave a lot of her time that year to follow up with me. It wasn't rocket science. She didn't have to have a theology degree, or be all-knowing of the Bible, or have evangelism training to minister to me. She simply wrote me letters.

Now, each summer during staff training I give the "rock star" speech. A few years ago, one of the kids was about to jump out of his seat while I was talking. He was overweight, and shared that when he came to camp he couldn't do a lot of the activities others were doing. "But every day, Fred would come and play chess with me. He taught me to play," he said. "He consistently came back to that picnic table and played chess time after time. It's not that something spiritual was going on, but what I saw was someone who loved Jesus and wanted to show that to me. He made me feel included and important."

There are a lot of rock stars out there. You just have to do what you know how to do, and see how God works in it. 

Gieta Gresh is director of Camp Mardela, Denton, Md.



Walt Wiltschek

Walt Wiltschek



Camp's theophilia effect


We're told that humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with the natural world. This is known as the *biophilia* effect. The concern for many people is that because children today are more interested in screens than they are scenes, they no longer possess this basic human tendency.

Such was the case with Benton. His camp registration forms listed him as having ADHD. A self-confessed gamer who preferred to be indoors, he admitted at check-in that he was easily distracted. When he couldn't focus on the task at hand, he'd quote jingles and memes from various media. He wanted you to be impressed by this feat as he sought attention from other campers and staff though often they were annoyed rather than impressed.

That was before he began working on starting a fire by using an ancient technology called the bow drill. That was before he began reading the stories the wildlife were telling by their tracks and signs. That was before he began breathing in the healthy compounds that the cedars and birches were releasing. That was before he would walk barefoot and visit his "Green Couch" every day, not only to connect with creation, but to be still and

quiet enough to listen for the *Ruach* (Spirit/breath) of God. As our week drew to a close, the jingles subsided. In their place were camp songs and bird call imitations, and he started quoting scripture verses. What emerged was a much quieter, more focused 14-year-old boy.

It wasn't until our closing circle that Benton shared something that continues to reverberate in my soul: "So much of my life is filled with distractions and clutter, and it makes it hard to connect with just about anything: friends, family, nature, and even God. And this week, for the first time in my life, I felt as though I was attuned to the rhythm of creation and with God. I can hear the Holy Spirit calling me to live a more authentic life of faith. My relationship with God and his creation feels more real now than ever. And should I sense my relationship with God needs restored, I know exactly where I need to go to find healing."

I felt his sense of *theophilia*, our innate tendency to seek the healing presence and love of God. That's why outdoor ministry may be more essential now than ever, when it comes to spiritual formation and discipleship to Christ. By appealing to our innate human tendencies to *biophilia* and *theophilia*, our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls are restored to our Genesis blueprint. 

Randall Westfall is director of Camp Brethren Heights, Rodney, Mich., and a member of the Outdoor Ministries Association board.

courtesy of Camp Ithiel



It is so rewarding to see young campers build

a community of love and understanding with each other as they experience the beauty of God's wonderful creation. It is learning to know God and Jesus—through a series of worship times, litanies, recreation, campfire, discussions, and many other activities—that allows these campers to grow a spiritual relationship with our Savior. . . . As staff, we don't always realize what kind of an impact camp has on campers, but when, years later, you receive that thank you letter that says camp was the most important part of their spiritual growth, it's then you know what camp is.

—Rosi Jones, former manager of Camp Colorado.



courtesy of Camp Wilbur Stover



Walt Wilschek



Angels, trumpets, and God's big love

Earlier this summer I served as a counselor for pre-junior camp at Camp Colorado.

It was my first time counseling since the summer of my senior year of high school, exactly 20 years ago. It was easy to re-enter the world of Camp Colorado, where I had attended church camp every year between 4th and 12th grades. I quickly recognized campers, because I had gone to camp with their parents. The buildings were the same, although thankfully the plumbing was updated. The food was just as delicious, and morning watch was held on the same glorious, sunny bend in the road.

The main difference was me. Now I am a mother. One of the 3rd-grade campers was my son. The energetic teenager leading the silly songs was a fellow McPherson College-ite, and I sat happily in the circle and sang along. I had new appreciation for how much energy it takes to lead a rousing rendition of "Let Me See Your Chubby Bunny" or "Shark Attack!"


One camper (I will call her Sarah) was dropped off by her grandfather. It was her first time to attend Camp Colorado, and she was very excited because her big sister told her it would be a lot of fun. She quickly gained a reputation for being "cool" and spent her bunk time whispering to her bunk neighbors. I had a hard time engaging with her in any genuine conversation. Although she was polite, she wasn't interested in participating in the efforts of other campers to be "caught being good" in order to earn coins for camp store purchases. I was starting to worry that the love of God we hoped to plant in her would not take root.

During the last campfire of the week, our director, Cindy, reviewed the questions of the week and the corresponding scripture answers. Sarah raised her hand for the first time. "What did you learn?" Cindy asked. Sarah quickly responded, articulate and clear: "I learned that if I pick favorites, I'm going to hurt someone's feelings. I learned that I should include everyone to be my friend." She concluded by putting her arms around the girls sitting on either side of her, cabin mates who were not in her inner circle when the week began.

Oh, angels and trumpets! Or more accurately, lightning bugs and popping camp fire logs! I wanted to run over and give Sarah a hug. Instead, I played it cool as she would have, and gave her a fist bump after the campfire. I thanked her for sharing and wished her luck to keep being a friend to everyone after she left camp.

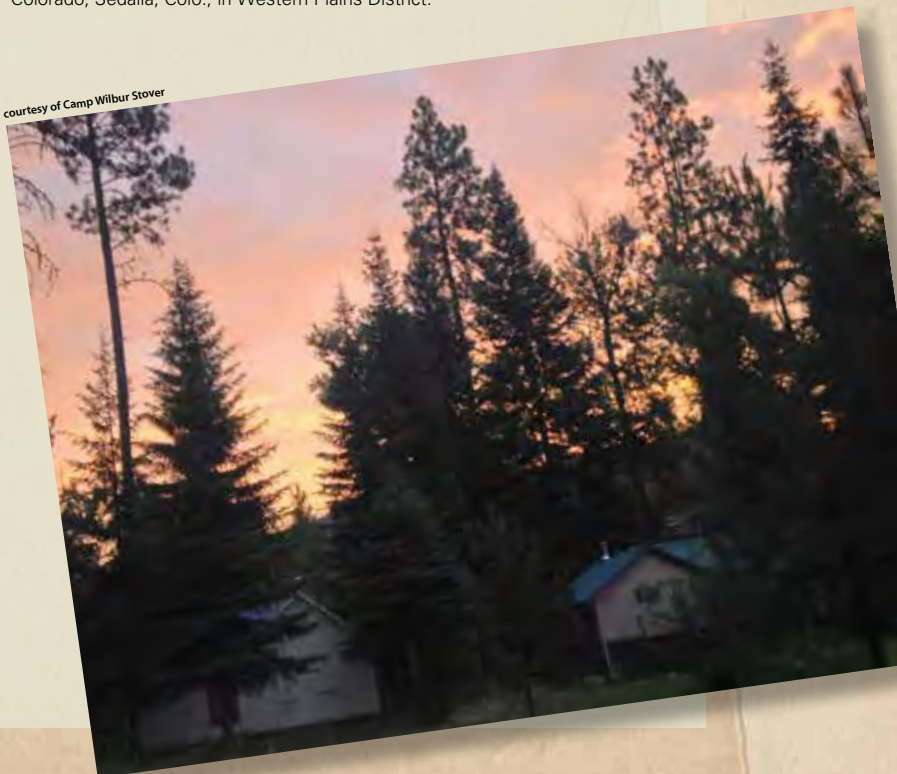
Sarah gave evidence to the truth that God's love is big enough, and it includes everyone. God is bigger than anything I can comprehend, as children understand so easily.

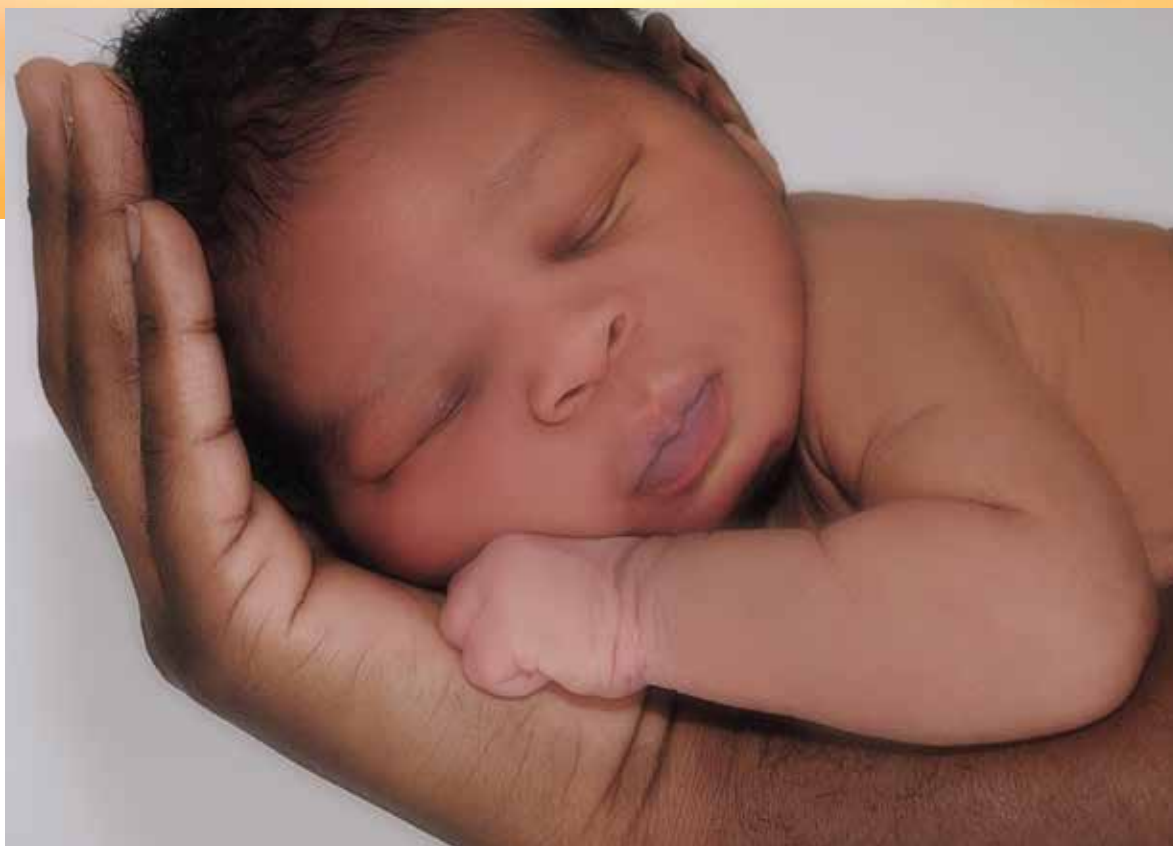
Now back in southwest Missouri, I make sure to ride my bike down one particular street on my way to pick up the kids from school because it is lined with pine trees. When there's no traffic, and the sunshine is just right, I can take a deep breath and be transported by that scent right back to the Colorado mountaintop where my soul is quiet, and my spirit is listening.

I pray we all continue to listen for the Spirit, whether we are at home or lucky enough to be at camp! 

Elizabeth Lucore lives in Missouri and is a member of the board of Camp Colorado, Sedalia, Colo., in Western Plains District.

courtesy of Camp Wilbur Stover





Midwives of *mystery*

by Dana Cassell

***m*idwives show up just often enough in scripture** for us to know that their work would have been common practice in the ancient world: Rachel has midwives present when she

delivers Benjamin (Genesis 35) and Tamar's midwife is the one who discovers that she is carrying twins (Genesis 38).

The most well-known midwives in scripture are Shiprah and Puah, in

Exodus 1. The Egyptian pharaoh, bent on destruction of the Hebrew people, sends word that the midwives are to kill every male baby they deliver, but Shiprah and Puah boldly defy his command, keeping the babies alive.

ALL THREE MADE SURE I HEARD THAT BIRTH IS MYSTERIOUS AND DIVINE AND EXHAUSTING. THEY NAME THEIR WORK AS HOLDING SPACE, SHEPHERDING, SERVING, INTERPRETING, EDUCATING, AND ADVOCATING.

Their work plays an integral role in God's work to deliver Israel out of slavery: Refusing Pharaoh's command led to Moses' birth and survival, and Moses led God's people out of Egypt.

I started paying attention to the story of Shiprah and Puah because I was assigned the text for a sermon at this summer's National Youth Conference. The story is fantastic, but as I studied it I realized that I knew very little about birth work. What exactly would those midwives have been doing? Why was their work important?

Oh, and I was going to be preaching to several thousand high schoolers. How in the world do you share the gospel with youth when it hinges on the very intimate details of birth? So, I decided to seek help from the experts, and discovered that there are a host of modern-day women connected to the Church of the Brethren who are doing birth work.

For most of human history, women have given birth at home, surrounded by other women. The move from home birth to hospital births happened only in the mid-20th century in the western world. There are benefits to hospital births: complicated pregnancies and life-threatening conditions can be diagnosed, monitored, and treated in ways that weren't possible long ago.

But for the 90 percent of births that are within the range of normal, not requiring medical intervention, the move to majority hospital births can be detrimental to the health of both

mother and baby. In the US, nearly 30 percent of births end in cesarean section. By all accounts, this number is abnormally high. According to the National Institutes of Health, women who have doulas or midwives during labor lower their risk of cesarean section, need fewer pain medications, and require less medical intervention.

There are several kinds of birth workers, operating both within and outside the medical establishment. Midwives are care providers, performing physical assessments and monitoring a baby's health, and they are classified, certified, and treated differently in each American state. Doulas act as support people, offering prenatal education, assisting in creating birth plans, offering emotional support, and aiding in discernment about, for instance, when to go to the hospital.

I interviewed three doulas connected to the Church of the Brethren. These women span the political spectrum, but they are united in the belief that pregnancy is not pathological, that women's bodies are created with the ability to birth babies, and that the best way to support mothers is to make sure they are surrounded, encouraged, and reminded of their autonomy over their own bodies.

All three made sure I heard that birth is mysterious and divine and exhausting. They name their work as holding space, shepherding,



serving, interpreting, educating, and advocating. They had all served clients who differed from them significantly on questions of politics and religion, but with whom they nonetheless forged powerful spiritual connections.

Cindy Beard, from Summerdean Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., has been a doula for 15 years. She always loved babies and knew she wanted to be a mother—she has nine children of her own—but she happened into doula work when a friend invited her to be with her during the birth of her second child. Beard loved being part of her friend's birth process, and ended up training to become a certified doula.

Beard says the hardest part of her work is when she observes doctors not being completely honest or open with their patients—failing, for instance, to



ask or even inform the mother before performing an intense or invasive procedure. “Part of what I do,” she told me, “is to teach women to question things.”

Jennifer Seif, a Quaker who is active at Common Spirit Church of the Brethren in Wyoming, Mich., had similar reflections. After the “intensely transformative” experience of birthing her first child, she knew she’d been called into birth work. A trained doula since 2011, she has been involved with nearly 120 births, and is apprenticing to become a certified midwife.

“I don’t give medical advice,” Seif told me. “I help people research their options. What kind of questions do we

want to ask, what information do we need?” She acknowledges that medical personnel who work in hospitals see many medically complicated situations, and that experience certainly colors their perspective on maternal care and medical intervention. She and the midwives she works with, though, “come from a perspective of trusting our bodies, trusting that God has designed our bodies to give birth like this.”

Emily Davis is a former Brethren Volunteer Service worker. She was interested in birth work long before her BVS term, but her placement as a volunteer at Midwives for Haiti, a nonprofit that trains skilled birth attendants from rural areas and gets

them to women in need, confirmed her call to work in maternal health.

Things are different in Haiti, where 75 percent of births happen at home with community midwives. While women in the US face the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world, in part because of the overuse of intervention, Haiti’s maternal mortality rate can be traced to the *lack* of resources available for medical intervention.

But Haitian culture has advantages for women giving birth, Davis said. Because the culture is so communal, women are surrounded by family and friends before, during, and after giving birth. In the US, our culture of isolation often leaves women alone and without the community support that is vital with a newborn baby.

Beard agrees: “When we moved birthing to hospitals,” she said, “we lost the community support. In the old days, women giving birth would have been surrounded by women in the community. We don’t have that anymore.” She cites scientific studies that have shown that the simple fact of having another woman present in the room—not active or involved in any way, but simply present—lowers the complications of a birth. Birth workers spend their lives counteracting this American isolation, and it can be exhausting.

Still, each of these women has felt a deep sense of call to this kind of work. When I asked how their faith influences what they do, it was often hard for them to find words. I sensed that the entire process is filled with

“THERE IS NOTHING,” SAID BEARD, “LIKE SEEING A BABY TAKE ITS FIRST BREATH.” DAVIS TALKED ABOUT THE POINT IN EVERY BIRTH WHERE SHE EXPERIENCES A SUDDEN REALIZATION THAT “THIS IS BIGGER THAN MY LITTLE LIFE; THIS IS BIGGER THAN MY EXPERIENCE AND I CAN’T DO IT BY MYSELF.”

holiness, and to single out one part would be less than honest. The births are bathed in prayer—for the baby, for the parents, for the doctors or nurses at work. “There is nothing,” said Beard, “like seeing a baby take its first breath.” Davis talked about the point in every birth where she experiences a sudden realization that “this is bigger than my little life; this is bigger than my experience and I can’t do it by myself.”


For Seif, every birth is a miracle. She articulated another common thread in these conversations, that the experience of birth is deeply connected to the experience of death: “[Birth] is hidden away. Like death, it’s hidden away. It’s rare that we ever get to be part of a birth or a death unless it’s our own. But if people were there to witness it, it wouldn’t be as scary.” Birth workers talk about birth as a massive transition, and death is another one of these human transitions. Beard even mused that, once she wraps up her doula practice, she hopes to be able to become a hospice volunteer.

And what of my dilemma about preaching birth stories to teenagers? Each woman affirmed that one thing we need more of is clear, honest conversation about bodies and how they work. Beard is developing a course for pre-teen girls to learn about their bodies before puberty. Seif assured me that while birth is intense and can be scary, teenagers are nothing if not intense. They understand life’s natural drama, and they crave ways to understand it. I left the conversations with the firm impression that birth work is holy work and that all of us—maybe especially teenagers—need to hear more about it.

Davis summed up the profound nature of the work: For a woman giving birth, she said, “you’re connecting with these forces of

nature, your own body and the greater realities of the universe: you’re gonna need some help.”

That’s certainly true at birth, and I suspect it remains true for us throughout our own lives of faith. Praise God for birth workers, who

stand in sacred spaces, reminding us all that each of us is created, beloved, brought into this world through great effort and divine love. 

Dana Cassell is pastor of Peace Covenant Church of the Brethren, Durham, N.C. She is one of the speakers at National Youth Conference.

Ministry Summer Service

challenges Church of the Brethren college students and congregations/ministry sites to consider God’s call on their lives.

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Paul Munday

Evangelism in East Baltimore

by **Walt Wiltschek**

Walking around the spaces of GraceWay Church of the Brethren, and later sitting in his office, pastor Yakubu Bakfwash must say the word at least a dozen times over the course of a 90-minute interview.

“Blessed,” he says. “We’ve been blessed.”

In the year and a half since he came to GraceWay—a new church start in the port community of Dundalk, Md., on the outskirts of Baltimore—Bakfwash has seen God at work in a variety of ways. It’s been especially evident as he has sought to reach out to the diverse community surrounding the church, which is located on a residential street with a large middle school at the corner.

All those blessings, after all, were not meant just for GraceWay. They were meant to be shared.

Take, for example, the seven laptops that a friend of the church donated to the congregation, along with a large

flat-screen TV. Each Saturday morning a group comes in for a computer literacy class, and a new partnership with the Baltimore County Public Library will expand opportunities for free computer tutoring for adults and children in the community.

“The library has a vision to equip the community,” Bakfwash says. “For people who are not able to go to the library, now the library is in GraceWay.”

Many people who live in the blocks

surrounding the church don’t have computers or Internet access, he explains. Both introductory and advanced sessions will be available with the library’s assistance.

“We’ve been blessed with these resources,” Bakfwash says again. “So why don’t we open it up to the wider community? We have a good parking lot and a beautiful sanctuary. We have to use that to our advantage. This is what God has given us.”

That infectious spirit pervades a variety of projects. The church has developed a new partnership with the local chapter of Youth for Christ. It is renting space to an African-American Baptist church. It has begun offering deaf interpretation services once a month thanks to a \$2,500 donation. Other gifts have included a drum set, oil for heating the building, and vocational training for the church’s youth.

Several of the gifts have come from a local family who see their gifts as an investment.



Paul Munday

“They are giving resources to help transform their community, which they’ve always longed would be transformed,” Bakfwash says. “They know we are in the community.”

Even a donated bike has been outfitted as an evangelism tool, bearing a sign to promote the congregation and carrying flyers to distribute in the blocks surrounding the church.

Paul Munday, a retired Church of the Brethren pastor who is serving as moderator of GraceWay, says he is continually touched and impressed by the work he sees unfolding in Dundalk.

“Yakubu and his wife, Diana, are circulating around the greater Dundalk community on a weekly basis, intentionally reaching out to strangers,” Munday says. “In other words, they are actively engaged in what is normally referred to as ‘cold calling’—reaching out to whoever the Holy Spirit leads in their path. The majority of the current worshippers at GraceWay have been reached through their bold and unapologetic witness for Jesus. . . . (Yakubu) reaches out to whoever is within reach, be it a waiter or waitress, or someone just passing on the street.”

Notably, too, the congregation reflects the diversity of the neighborhood. Seven nations were represented in the pews when GraceWay opened in February 2017, and at least 12—mainly from Africa—are present now. Worship is in English, but scripture often is read in several languages.



Paul Munday

Munday—formerly a pastor in Frederick, Md.—says the district has planted a number of new churches over the years, but never one that “intentionally aimed to reach an ethnic, multicultural constituency.” That was a hope of Mid-Atlantic District when it launched the new effort in Dundalk.

The red-brick church building where GraceWay meets actually has a long association with the Church of the Brethren. Built in 1951, it was home to Dundalk Church of the Brethren for many years. As demographics changed, though, the size of the church dwindled, and in 2016 the congregation made the difficult decision to close.

Weeks later, Bakfwash began his ministry as the district sought to breathe new life into the site. One member of the former congregation has continued attending GraceWay, while many other new faces have joined.

Bakfwash came with international experience and a passion for evange-


lism. Originally from Nigeria, he encountered the Church of the Brethren mission work there before moving to the US, first in the Dallas area and then to Chicago.

In Illinois he found an old friend from Nigeria—Samuel Sarpiya, now pastor of Rockford Community Church of the Brethren and moderator of Annual Conference. Bakfwash and his family began attending Rockford, and Sarpiya encouraged Bakfwash to become a church planter.

“I see ourselves as missionaries in what we call reverse mission,” says Bakfwash, who also is serving as director of church revitalization and multicultural ministry for the district. “The Church of the Brethren and others came to Nigeria, and we are beneficiaries. Without those first-generation missionaries our parents wouldn’t have been Christians. So we are here to give back what has been given.”

Now in Dundalk, his work is just beginning. He goes door to door, leaves flyers, then goes back and strikes up conversations. He hopes to build connections with the two schools located nearby. Looking around, he sees all sorts of possibilities.

“We’re still looking for opportunities,” Bakfwash says. “What we’re doing now is developing relationships, and that takes some time. When people take hold of it, it will blossom. I know it will.”

And the blessings will continue. 



Paul Munday



Paul Munday

OUTSIDERS

AND THE PATHWAY IN

by Karen Bradley

For almost a year, I have been writing to two felons. Starting the first correspondence happened quite by accident. He was a cell mate of my 28-year-old nephew, who was in prison in Oklahoma for drug convictions. This cell mate, a young Native American from the Creek tribe, is a father who is also in prison for drug-related offenses. He heard that my nephew had an aunt who was a professor at a university, and sent a letter asking if I could tutor him. I said no. But his request for help was

so sincere, I eventually agreed. I sent him a book by William Faulkner and we began writing back and forth about what he read.

A few months later, I came across the Death Row Support Project sponsored by the Church of the Brethren. I volunteered for this effort, having a long and heartfelt conviction about the inhumanity of the death penalty. The project responded that there was a need for someone to write letters to inmates who were not on death row but had long sentences. I was sent the name of a Mexican-American young

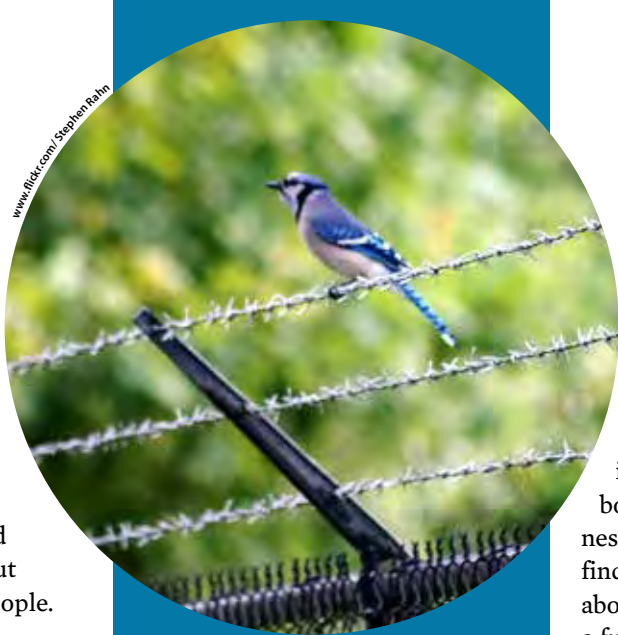
man in a California prison for drug convictions.

Friends often ask me what I write about. I guess as a sociologist I do talk to them about ways to gain some intellectual power over their life circumstances. But spiritually, I have come to follow the frame of Psalm 19.

Psalm 19

According to C. S. Lewis, Psalm 19 is one of the greatest poems within the Book of Psalms and, he says, it has “the best lyrics in the world.” Lewis suggests one reason we find ourselves so

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responsive to Psalm 19 is that the form of the poem speaks easily to us: six verses about nature, five verses about the law, and four verses that reflect a personal meditation.

Verses 1-6 speak of the pagentry of the sun and the moon in their steady cycles, and regard them as a universal witness about God's nature, accessible to all people. The psalm begins, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of God's hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge."

Verses 7-11 reflect on the Torah, or the law, as another source of revelation about the character and expectations of God. The law is a source of help to guide us on a straight path toward becoming wise, joyful, and good. "The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making the simple, wise."

At the end of the psalm, there is a reflection on the importance of knowledge about God. "By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

The psalm reminds us that there are two distinct paths to coming to know about God. In the first path, we see an image of God's presence in nature that is freely accessible to everyone. "Who can be deprived of the sun's warmth?" verse 6 asks. In the second section, we see a path to God through the truth held in the Torah—although I read this as truth held in religious tradition, that is, the Torah as interpreted and cared for by the rabbis and practiced by the community. The knowledge of God is held in the collective wisdom and practices around the law.

This is what religious communities do—create shared wisdom for their members, a wisdom that inevitably has boundaries that mark an inside and an outside to the group, what we do or don't do, what we believe or don't

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SIDEWALK CRACK.**

believe, and what we know.

The author of the psalm speaks as an insider to this world. There is gratitude for the religious knowledge found in the natural world and gratitude for the knowledge held in the religious community. In verse 12, for example, he asks, "Who can discern their own errors?" A religious community matters even as the majesty of God is evident all around us. The psalm suggests we need both.

The difficulty is that those truths are more available to those inside the faith than to those outside the faith. Consider all that you have learned from your own religious communities. Imagine trying to convey that community knowledge to a stranger. It would be difficult because the knowledge we come to hold in a religious community is thick, rich, and complex. You can't enter into it easily. It requires a slow process.

Two paths to know God

This leaves a gap for us to consider—the gap between God freely known as a universal, and God known through religious tradition.

In the correspondence with my incarcerated friends, I talk about both. I write about the small kindnesses and glimpses of the divine that I find in my everyday life. I tell them about a bird I saw or about a tree with a funny limb or how gleeful the gusty wind felt. I prompt them to look and find the universal beauty of God around them. It is always there, I write. Even in prison, maybe they can see the blue of the sky or feel the penetrating warmth of the sun or become aware of sprouts emerging from a sidewalk crack. As the psalm explains, these soundless words speak to God's presence everywhere. You just need to cultivate your ability to hear them.

I also write about the importance of belonging to a faith community. I tell them about a sermon that I heard or the gooseberry pie at a social or a hymn we sang. I say that a church home matters. I want to help them think about how to recreate their lives after they are released from prison. The rate of recidivism is very high, especially for drug offenses that signal likely drug addictions. The National Institute for Justice reports about 77 percent of offenders are rearrested within 5 years.

Change isn't easy. Some of us struggle to make even simple life changes—from eating less sugar to exercising more. It is difficult to reshape the grooves along which we have lived our lives. Imagine how these young men will struggle if they find themselves in the same situations and the same world view that gave rise to their original destructive decisions. It is essential that they find alternate social worlds to which they can belong—a new place where they can learn to think, to feel, and to act dif-

STRANGERS NEED A WAY IN, WITH REAL PEOPLE TO HELP THEM, TEACH THEM, LOVE THEM, AND GIVE THEM A PLACE TO ENCOUNTER DIVINE WISDOM.



ferently, with strong and clear support surrounding them. A faith community is a good place to provide that cultural and institutional support. Spiritually, we Brethren believe in the transformative and healing power of faith.

So, these are the mantras I give them: “Find beauty around you.” And when you get out, “Find a faith home.” “You need a new place to belong. It’s essential,” I write.

A faith home

But these words rattle my own conscience. Shortly before I began writing to these new friends, I moved from my small-town community to a nearby city. Since moving, I have been in search of a new faith community. At last count, I have visited or participated in events at a wide variety of faith communities—Brethren, Unitarian, Quaker, Buddhist, Episcopal, Methodist, Unity, and others—and I am still religiously homeless.

I visit. I worship. I stay for coffee. I sign up and attend events. I get a name tag. I try to figure out how to fit in—but, in truth, I still feel like an outsider. There is clear friendliness in each encounter. Even so, rarely has anyone beyond the official greeters

approached me. No one has called to invite me back, nor sent me an email, nor asked me to sit by them, nor invited me to lunch or a church event. They are kind, but I leave feeling on the outside.

For now, I slip home to my Church of the Brethren community in my former small town as often as I can, and I continue visiting new places. Eventually, the right opening will come for me.


But I worry about my incarcerated friends. What if they have as much trouble finding a way in?

My own expectations are a complicating factor. I grew up evangelical. The responsibility to bring others into the faith circle was strongly felt. If someone visited on Sunday, we would be at their house the following Wednesday night to thank them for coming, to invite them again, and to ask if there was anything else we could do to support them. We often called ahead and always spoke gently without pressure. My experience of evangelicalism was steeped in kindness.

I do understand the other faces of evangelicalism that can be aggressive or intrusive. I saw them too, and per-

haps that was a piece of my moving away from that faith group. I want to avoid that. I can appreciate the commitment to convey respect for individual choices and allow room for spiritual privacy. Letting people come to faith on their own is a reasonable, healthy, and modest position.

Where is the real point of balance between these different ways of ministry to outsiders? I wonder if our efforts to not be forceful about faith lead us also to be overly passive in our embracing strangers. And if so, do we miss grabbing hold of the hands of those who may need us most? Perhaps they are the hands of felons who desperately need a new world to which they can belong? Probably there are many hands in need. Maybe it is my hand.

Strangers need a way in, with real people to help them, teach them, love them, and give them a place to encounter divine wisdom. How do we as faithful, modest people ensure that the intricate web of community that we cherish remains penetrable and fully accessible to strangers who need in too? 

Karen Bradley is a sociologist whose home congregation is Warrensburg (Mo.) Church of the Brethren.

Mission's unexpected outcomes

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

The Protestant foreign missionary project expected to make the world look more like the United States. Instead, it made the United States look more like the world,” writes David A. Hollinger in *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America*. The book is a detailed, academic, and ultimately fascinating examination of unexpected outcomes of the American mission effort of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Missionaries set out to preach the gospel around the world, but their experiences in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and elsewhere “flew back like a boomerang,” in the words of congregationalist leader Buell G. Gallagher in 1946. Returning missionaries and their children carried home new understandings of the world—and, indeed, of the gospel.

Missionaries are not shy people, and so they shared their insights widely. For many decades, the missionary slideshow was common fare in church basements across the US, providing colorful glimpses of the world for even the most isolated congregations.

Missionaries and their children didn't simply expand the awareness of Americans, they gifted the US with new knowledge and expertise in international affairs. The opportunity to become a missionary was prized and, as a result, many were highly educated and motivated. Their international experience enhanced their education and abilities, making them influential. Their children also had unique opportunities to learn intercultural skills.

Leadership development therefore was another unexpected result for churches that sent out missionaries, who often became church leaders. They also “became conspicuous players” in key sectors of society such as government, the diplomatic corps, the military, and higher education. To illustrate this, Hollinger reviews the lives of three famous Americans who were born in China in the late 1800s or early 1900s: publisher Henry Luce, novelist Pearl Buck, and journalist John Hersey. “All inherited the missionary imperative to make things right,” Hollinger writes. “All acted upon it in secular modes, but quite differently from each other.”

Hollinger acknowledges the common critique that many missionaries did contribute to colonialism and racism, but advocates for a more nuanced analysis. For example, some missionaries who were pacifists developed wide-ranging cri-


tiques of militarism, imperialism, racism, and nationalism that became foundational for reform movements that followed. In another example, mission-minded people in the 1930s “led many American Protestants to think globally just when the United States was in an intensely isolationist phase.”

American churches experienced positive and negative results from the mission project. Exposure to world religions prompted questioning of the uniqueness of Christianity. On the flip side, ecumenism became a powerful force as “the parochialism of denominational distinctives” was exposed. Appreciation for the equality of all people helped bring about reform movements—most of them secular—but those began to supplant the church's central role in US society. The civil rights movement is one example, and a chapter titled “Of One Blood” examines how missionaries contributed.

The Christian movement became more splintered, but the world saw unprecedented growth of Christianity in many countries, with indigenous churches developing in unique ways.

Several chapters dig deeply into particular mission experiences. “Anticolonialism vs. Zionism” focuses on the Middle East. A chapter tells of the “China Hands” who, after Pearl Harbor, advocated for a better understanding of the Communists in China at a time when the US supported the failing Nationalist government. “Toward the Peace Corps” traces its origins to International Voluntary Services and similar efforts, a reminder of claims that Brethren Volunteer Service also was an inspiration.

The book focuses on Asia and the large Protestant churches, with no mention of the Church of the Brethren. Pertinent questions are raised for our denomination, however, including how many church leaders emerged from our mission projects in India and Nigeria. Hundreds of American Brethren served there over several decades and, even today, former missionaries and missionary children still fill key denominational roles.

Quite correctly, we have moved away from 20th century-style mission. But without opportunity to gain church-based experience of the world, what will produce tomorrow's version of the “missionary cosmopolitans”? What comparable experience will provide leadership development for the church? 



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America*. Author: David A. Hollinger. Publisher: Princeton University Press. Publication date: 2017. Available from Brethren Press.

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'Welcome to McPherson, Tom'

by Tina Goodwin

McPherson College plays a prominent role in a newly opened exhibit at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. The exhibit features the story of how, around 1940, students raised money to help an 18-year-old refugee, Tom Doeppner, escape Nazi persecution and attend McPherson.

The exhibit, "Americans and the Holocaust," is a panoramic portrait of American society in the 1930s and '40s. Research began two years ago when the museum launched a crowd-sourcing project called "History Unfolded." Museum staff asked students, teachers, librarians, and history buffs to research local newspapers and determine what kind of information about Nazi Germany and the Holocaust that their communities could have found in that era.

Extensive documentation by Doeppner's granddaughter, Sarah Snow, including articles from the McPherson student newspaper, led museum researchers to Mary Hester, director of library services who oversees the college's archives. She helped the museum track down information from the school's archives and supplied an original copy of the student newspaper, *The Spectator*, that is on loan for the exhibit.

This exhibit comes at a critical time, according to the museum. A recent study found that two-thirds of American millennials could not identify Auschwitz, one of the concentration and extermination camps built and operated by Nazi Germany during World War II.

Rebecca Erbeling, a researcher for the exhibit, wrote about the McPherson story in an article for the *Kansas City Star*: "Undergraduates from at least 200 colleges and universities raised money to aid refugee students, many of whom were Jewish and in need of student visas to enter the United States. The 200-person student body at McPherson College, a small Christian school in McPherson, Kan., raised \$250 (about \$4,500 today) to support a refugee student."

She found a statement by an aid worker, "The student body of the college has raised this money at some sacrifice, since it is not a wealthy school, and they are looking forward to the arrival of a German student."

Doeppner was German-born and targeted by the Nazis for his Jewish heritage. According to his granddaughter's

Tom Doeppner, after arrival in Kansas, ca. 1940.

Courtesy of Ron Doeppner and Sarah Doeppner Snow.



research, students at McPherson were moved to take action after learning about the events in November 1938 known as


Kristallnacht—violent anti-Jewish protests throughout Germany and Austria.

"This was an action out of compassion, but also sacrifice and amazing coordination on the part of the students," Snow said. "Opa [what she called her grandfather] was in a very precarious position, so this scholarship and acceptance to a school in the United States was literally a life-saving invitation."

Doeppner had escaped Germany and joined his father in Holland when he asked the Quakers for help to immigrate to the United States. The American Friends Service Committee worked to get him admitted to McPherson. He struggled to obtain a student visa, since he technically did not have a country to return to after graduation.

"The acceptance and financial assistance to McPherson is what enabled him to get a visa, which is how he left Europe," Snow said. "Immigration was all about obtaining the ever-difficult visa. He was part of a small percent of refugees able to get the visa he needed and left Holland mere months before it was overtaken by Nazi forces."

Doeppner wrote an autobiography in which he remembered McPherson fondly, from his first simple greeting of "Welcome to McPherson, Tom," from Phil Myers, president of the student council, to adapting to a co-educational learning experience. "The student body, as well as the faculty, welcomed me with open arms," he wrote. "And whenever the immigration officials gave me a hard time—which occurred frequently—the college President went out of his way to assist me with recommendations and letters."

"There are three generations of my family that would not exist if McPherson did not offer Opa this chance," said Snow. 

Tina Goodwin is director of public relations for McPherson College.



I am no longer sure

by Tim Harvey

MESSENGER is bringing out into the open a question that is being discussed in congregations, in pastors' gatherings, and on social media: "Can we live together as a denomination, in the face of our current theological divisions?"

I am no longer sure.

There was a time when I was certain. Serving as moderator for the 2012 Annual Conference gave me a privileged view of the church that few have, a view that continues to this day. I have visited 21 of our 24 districts and preached in quite a few congregations. I've read church bulletins, newsletters, and bulletin boards. I witnessed the many creative ways we are "Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together" in the midst of a culture that is much less interested in Christianity than we commonly think.

Perhaps curiously, I don't believe it will be our division over LGBT inclusion that might cause our downfall, if for no other reason than the church has been here before. Whether it was the inclusion of Gentiles in Acts 15 or the way Brethren stayed together during the US Civil War, Christians have always been able to figure out how to respond when people we consider outsiders begin showing evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in them.


But what we can't overcome is the contempt we have for one another. There are times when it is obvious that we don't like one another very much, and we're not interested in being the church together. We label one another "progressive" or "conservative" and write those persons off like a bad debt. Some may claim this is a false equivalency, but I see contempt coming from all sides. In our contempt for one another, we are surely trading our inheritance for a bowl of stew.

Is there a way forward? I believe there is, so long as

we're willing to work out a few things. My list is not exhaustive, and I've left off a few items that are more commonly mentioned in these discussions—the authority of Scripture, for instance—but I do believe we will at least have to resolve these issues as we debate our future:

- **Can we repent of our contempt for one another and recognize the pain our words and our labels cause?**
- **What does it mean to value *conscience* in a tradition that used to value *conformity*?** We cite conscience to disagree with Annual Conference authority, but I am not convinced that the old Brethren would agree. Maybe we should follow conscience more—but we should not so casually set conformity aside without more thought.
- **Are we a peace church?** Our culture is addicted to violence. What does it mean to follow the Prince of Peace in a society of mass shootings, legal abortion, the death penalty, and drone wars, to name a few?
- **Are we paying attention to our decline in congregational vitality?** Many congregations are moving from full-time to part-time pastoral programs. Nearly 60 percent of our pastors are within five years of retirement, and we are not calling enough pastors to fill these pulpits. Who will continue the work of Jesus in the next generation?

Do we have a future together as a denomination? Will we split, fracture into smaller groups of people we can get along with for now, or something else? I'm no longer certain. What I am certain of is that the Church of the Brethren practices our faith in a way the world desperately needs.

Maybe we should work on that for a while. 

Tim Harvey is pastor of Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va.

WHAT I AM CERTAIN OF IS THAT THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN PRACTICES OUR FAITH IN A WAY THE WORLD DESPERATELY NEEDS. MAYBE WE SHOULD WORK ON THAT FOR A WHILE.

Being is the key

by Denzel Short


I agree with Duane Grady, author of “When Our Church Is Broken” (April),

that the Church of the Brethren needs diversity. Our criticism and rejection of anyone who differs from us can only hinder the work of the church.

I have read Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew many times. Just recently, it was pointed out to me that Jesus’ entire Sermon on the Mount says nothing about how to believe. The message is entirely about *being*. Blessed are the pure in

heart, the meek, the peacemakers, the merciful; you are the salt of the earth, the light of the world; give to the needy, love your enemies, and don’t judge others—these are only part of Jesus’ instructions for being.

Any of the creeds used in other denominations are about belief. The Church of the Brethren has always taken the position that our only creed is the New Testament, and yet it is the different interpretations of the beliefs in these creeds that have caused the division in our denomination.

Maybe I am a dreamer, but I was wondering what might happen if our denomination would spend a year following Jesus as he taught us in his sermon in Matthew, putting our discussion of beliefs on hold. Other scriptures also could be valuable in *being* followers of Jesus. As members of the Church of the Brethren we would not forsake our beliefs, but we would not discuss or use them to prove others wrong who disagree. 

Denzel Short is a member of Living Peace Church of the Brethren in Canton, Mich.


JESUS’ ENTIRE SERMON ON THE MOUNT SAYS NOTHING ABOUT HOW TO BELIEVE. THE MESSAGE IS ENTIRELY ABOUT *BEING*.

Room at the table

by Carolyn Seilhamer

We are all God’s children and we must accept each person the way God made him or her. The Church of the Brethren will be a stronger force for good

and more able to do God’s work as we feed the hungry, visit the sick, and spread the gospel, and if we work together instead of trying to impose our set of beliefs onto others.

We need to focus on the bigger picture and allow the Lord’s work to go forward. There is room for everyone at our table. 

Carolyn Seilhamer is a member of Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren.

WE NEED TO FOCUS ON THE BIGGER PICTURE AND ALLOW THE LORD’S WORK TO GO FORWARD. THERE IS ROOM FOR EVERYONE AT OUR TABLE.



The good Samaritan (after Delacroix) by Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890). Wikipedia.com

On compassion

by Christina Bucher

In 1889, the Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) checked himself into a psychiatric asylum. Over the course of his yearlong hospital confinement, van Gogh produced around 150 paintings, including his interpretation of Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan.

Found in Luke 10:25-37, the parable of the good Samaritan is one of the best-known of Jesus' parables. However, this story may have become so familiar that it has lost some of its power. The phrase "good Samaritan" has become a cliché, a synonym for a person who is kind and helpful and an adjective used to identify anything from RV clubs to hospitals.

Van Gogh's painting

Can van Gogh's painting help us reclaim Jesus' parable as something more meaningful than a cliché instructing us to "be kind"?

In a mountainous and desolate landscape, two men occupy the foreground of van Gogh's painting. On the left, an open trunk, or chest, reminds us that the victim was robbed. Clothed in yellowish-brown garments, two individuals nearly disappear into the background. They walk away from the viewer. One of the men reads a book as he walks.

We might expect the central scene to be painted in somber colors, but van Gogh has used vibrant blue, gold, and red

Recommended reading

John Dominic Crossan, *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus* (HarperCollins, 2012). Crossan emphasizes that the parables communicate Jesus' message about love, justice, and peace.

Amy-Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* (HarperOne, 2014). Levine argues that we too often tame the radical parables of Jesus, and she tries to restore their provocative message.

to portray the Samaritan and the injured man. The Samaritan struggles to lift the man—suggesting that compassion requires effort. Van Gogh’s focus on the two main characters and his use of bright colors place the Samaritan’s compassionate action in the foreground. The artist seems to say, “Notice the brilliance of this man’s compassionate act.”

As I study van Gogh’s painting, I ask myself, “Where am I in this picture and where *should* I be?” To explore the parable further, I raise two questions:

- Why do the two men pass by without offering help?
- What can we learn for today from this parable?

Historical context

Because Jesus identifies the three travelers as priest, Levite, and Samaritan, it seems important to understand those identities in their historical context.

In the time of Jesus, Jewish priests were religious leaders trained to conduct worship at the Jerusalem temple. They taught and interpreted the religious traditions of Judaism, and they were well-regarded members of society. Levites also served in the temple, but had different responsibilities, and are thought to have been second-rank priests.

As both John Dominic Crossan and Amy-Jill Levine explain, this parable follows a traditional storytelling pattern: two failures are followed by a dramatic success. When hearing a story about a priest and a Levite, says Levine, ancient readers would have expected the third person to be an Israelite. Jesus’ identification of the third person as a Samaritan would have shocked his audiences. Why? Who were the Samaritans in the first century?

By the time of Jesus, Samaritans and Jews viewed each other with suspicion and enmity. Both groups viewed themselves as the true descendants of the ancient Israelites. Both groups observed the beliefs and practices found in the Pentateuch. Both made offerings to God. But they had different versions of the Pentateuch, and they worshiped God at different temples. (Samaritans worshiped at Mount Gerizim and Jews worshiped at Mount Zion.) Samaritans and Jews agreed more than they disagreed, but the points of disagreement had turned them into enemies.

Most New Testament texts share this negative evaluation of Samaritans. Jesus instructs the twelve not to enter any Samaritan town (Matthew 10:5). In one village, Samaritans refuse to welcome Jesus and the disciples (Luke 9:51-55). Recognition of the historical enmity between Jews and Samaritans is key to understanding Jesus’ parable as a story that challenged his first-century audience. In the parable, the religious leaders who know they should act with compassion fail to do so. Instead, someone not expected to show compassion sees the man and responds to him with compassion (v. 33). He tends to the man’s injuries, takes him to an inn, pays for the man’s care, and promises to return (vv. 34-35).

Why do the priest and Levite pass by without helping the

Charter for Compassion

In 2009, Karen Armstrong founded the Charter for Compassion, a global movement that promotes the idea that a more compassionate world is a more peaceful world. Learn more at charterforcompassion.org.

If you want to use Karen Armstrong’s book *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* (Random House, 2010) in a group setting, find a downloadable facilitator’s guide from the San Antonio Peace Center at peacecenterbooks.com.

victim? Readers today often attribute concerns for ritual purity to the priest and Levite, but Levine explains that there would have been no impurity involved in touching someone who is “half dead.” And, if the priest and Levite discovered the victim to be dead, they should have covered the corpse and gone for help. Attributing their inaction to a concern for ritual purity is a way of distancing ourselves from the priest and Levite in the story, when we should, instead, see ourselves in them.


Contemporary application

The parable omits a reason for the religious leaders’ inaction; however, we may want to ask, “What prevents *us* from acting compassionately?”

One possible answer has to do with ego. In his final speech, delivered in Memphis on April 3, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. commented on this parable. According to King, the priest and Levite walked on by because they thought of their own wellbeing: “What will happen to me if I stop to help this man?” The Samaritan, however, thought of the wellbeing of the man: “What will happen to this man if I do not stop to help him?”

We can easily look down on the priest and Levite as being uncaring or misguided in their religious piety, but, if we dig deeper into the parable, we discover that its challenge is two-fold. First, Jesus’ parable teaches us to “dethrone ourselves from the center of the world,” as Karen Armstrong puts it. More than single actions, compassion becomes a way of life for those who consider the wellbeing of others.

Second, Jesus’ parable challenges us to check our sense of superiority. In *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, Armstrong explores the shared commitment of the world’s religious traditions to compassionate action. She challenges us to set aside differences in belief in order to focus on shared commitments to compassionate living. Growing into a compassionate life demands more from us than being kind and helpful when it is easy or convenient to do so.

As we in the Church of the Brethren work toward a compelling vision for how we will continue the work of Jesus, we would do well to keep this parable before us. 

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



Manchester students huddle around a monument commemorating the first baptismal service by the Church of the Brethren in 1723 at Wissahickon Creek, Germantown, Pa.

MU Students Tour Brethren Heritage

This winter, eight Manchester University students found out just how deep the Church of the Brethren's roots extend into MU's mission by taking part in a Brethren Heritage Travel Course during January session.

"Some had no prior experience with the Church of the Brethren and some had extensive experience," said University Pastor Bekah Houff, who accompanied the students along with Katy Gray Brown, associate professor of philosophy and peace studies. "Most of them knew little about Brethren history."

They accumulated plenty.

In Germantown and Lancaster County, Pa., they discovered how the Brethren's commitment to peace brought persecution during the Revolutionary War. In the Shenandoah Valley they learned about John Kline, the traveling Brethren preacher martyred by Confederate sympathizers during the Civil War. They went through training for the Heifer Project, begun by Manchester grad Dan West, and visited the Dunker church on the Civil War battlefield of Antietam.

"We hope to do this trip again," Houff says.

Learn more about our Brethren roots at www.manchester.edu/religious-life.



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www.manchester.edu

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www.bridgewater.edu

Elizabethtown College
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www.juniata.edu

University of La Verne
www.laverne.edu

Manchester University
www.manchester.edu

McPherson College
www.mcpherson.edu

Bethany Theological Seminary
www.bethanyseminary.edu

BCA Study Abroad
www.bcastudyabroad.org

Bethany Seminary graduates 16

Sixteen graduates were honored at Bethany Seminary's commencement activities for 2018.

Receiving a master of divinity were **Steven P. Fox** of Farmersville, Ohio; **Mycal C. J. Gresh**, Denton, Md.; **Katelynn E. Heishman**, Keezletown, Va.; **Timothy S. Heishman**, Keezletown, Va.; **Patricia A. Kapusta**, Corning, N.Y., with a ministry focus in pastoral care; **Sarah M. Neher**, Overland Park, Kan., ministry focus in youth and young adults; **Shayne (Chibuzo) T. Petty**, Shreveport, La., emphasis in intercultural leadership and Certificate in Intercultural Biblical Interpretation; and **Susan L. Smith**, Lutz, Fla.

Receiving a master of arts were **Karen M. Duhai**, Richmond, Ind., concentration in theological studies; **Charlotte D. Loewen**,

Mountain Lake, Minn., concentration in Brethren studies; **Jonathan A. Prater**, Rockingham, Va., concentration in theological studies and Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination; **Brody Rike**, Eaton, Ohio, concentration in biblical studies; and **Rudolph H. Taylor III**, Blue Ridge, Va., concentration in biblical studies.

Kyle A. Remnant of Cincinnati, Ohio, received a Certificate of

Achievement in Theological Studies.

Martin Jockel-Giessen from the State of Hesse, Germany, and **Kindra S. Kreislers** of Saginaw, Mich., received a Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination.

The activities in Richmond, Ind., May 4-5 included a worship service led by the graduating class, an evening banquet, and an academic ceremony with guest speaker Russ Matteson, district executive minister for Pacific Southwest District.



Bethany Seminary graduates celebrated commencement in May: (back from left) Rudolph H. Taylor III, Kyle A. Remnant, Jonathan A. Prater, Timothy S. Heishman, Steven P. Fox, Martin Jockel-Giessen; (front from left) Patricia A. Kapusta, Charlotte D. Loewen, Katelynn E. Heishman, Karen M. Duhai, Sarah M. Neher, Mycal C. J. Gresh.

'New and Renew' urges risk-taking

On May 16-19, Brethren from across the country met at Bethany Seminary for "New and Renew: Revitalize, Plant, Grow." The denomination's church planting and church development conference for 2018 was sponsored and organized by Discipleship Ministries (formerly Congregational Life Ministries).

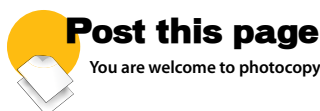
Two keynote speakers encouraged participants to risk finding God's mission for them. Orlando Crespo said, "We can't be the incarnation—Christ did that. We can be the embodiment of Christ." Christiana Rice used the metaphor of a midwife, "God crying out for a new thing to be born."

Bethany dean Steve Schweitzer led Bible study on "Risk and Reward in Scripture," addressing nine specific texts. He closed with a question for himself and others: "What am I willing to risk?"

In addition, there were a variety of workshops, and an Intercultural Dinner with Annual Conference moderator Samuel Sarpiya.



Dave Solihengger



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Cheyl Barnhart-Coyford

Districts promote conversation about biblical authority

What kind of authority does the Bible have for us?" asked Karoline Lewis at "Biblical Authority Conversations," an event sponsored by the midwestern districts April 23-25. Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching at Luther Seminary, she joined Jason Barnhart, director of Brethren Research and Resourcing for the Brethren Church, as keynote speaker. Facilitating table conversation and giving background on Brethren heritage and practice were Bethany Seminary professors Denise Kettering-Lane and Dan Ulrich.

The meeting was planned by district executives Beth Sollenberger, Kevin Kessler, Torin Eikler, Kris Hawk, and David Shetler. Also supporting the event was the Ministry Excellence Project. About 100 ministers and lay people attended.

"It's one thing to say the Bible has authority . . . but what kind?" Lewis pressed the group that gathered at Hueston Woods in western Ohio. Often what happens in conversation around biblical authority is dominance of an unquestioning

attitude characterized by the statement, "The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it." Lewis noted this as "a circular argument," and invited the group to ask why and how the Bible is authoritative.

Barnhart led a session on cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias, noting that many pick up attitudes about the Bible from popular culture and inevitably "read the Bible through those lenses," he said. "The problem comes when our biases aren't checked."

At the end of two days of intense conversation, some consensus seemed to emerge: The Bible is important to Brethren. The Bible has a lot to teach us today. Reading and studying the Bible together with others is crucial to our faith.

Some questions rose to the top as well: Are disagreements in the church still about biblical interpretation, inspiration, and authority? Or are they about how we have allowed the culture to dictate the way we approach the Bible?

Personnel notes

Todd Bauer's contract with Brethren Volunteer Service as Latin America coordinator ended in May. BVS is reevaluating how it coordinates its work in light of lower numbers and tightening budgets. Bauer served in the position for nearly 11 years, since July 2007. Previously, he was a BVS volunteer 2001-2006 in Ixtahuacán, Guatemala, working with a Catholic church and Trees for Life.

Kathy Fry-Miller retires in September as associate director of Children's Disaster Services. She began leading CDS Feb. 1, 2014. During her tenure, CDS has responded to more disasters than in any similar period, and carried out a special response in Nigeria. She has led an expansion of volunteers, developed new partnerships, and secured new grant funding. Representing CDS and the church on policy and procedure writing groups and at national levels, she has

become a recognized leader in child and trauma recovery.

Mark Lancaster's role at Bethany Seminary changes Aug. 1 when he begins as assistant to the president for strategic initiatives. He has been executive director of institutional advancement since July 2015. He also begins Aug. 1 as part-time director of the Brethren Heritage Center in Brookville, Ohio, a research and educational facility focusing on the history and genealogy of bodies that share the heritage of the Brethren movement that began in 1708 in Schwarzenau, Germany. Lancaster will be the center's first salaried director.

Leadership of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes is in transition following the resignation of executive director **Ralph McFadden**. He began as executive director in January 2015, and retires at the end of July. **Dave Lawrenz**, who

recently retired from leadership of Timbercrest, a church-related retirement community in North Manchester, Ind., begins as executive director in mid-July. The fellowship is a collaborative ministry of 22 retirement communities related to the Church of the Brethren.

Former mission workers **Carolyn and Roger Schrock** are in South Sudan for two and a half months of volunteer service with the Brethren Peace Center in Torit. They will train agronomists and work with the Eastern Equatoria Farmer's Association.

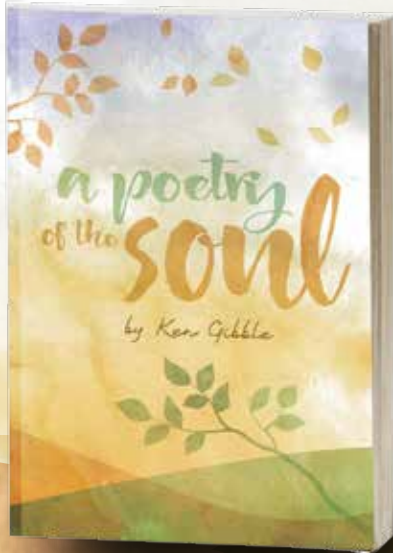
Ed Shannon has begun as retirement planning consultant for Brethren Benefit Trust. He has been a retirement plan specialist for Converge Retirement, holding a degree in Human Resources Management from Judson University. He is a member of First Baptist Church of Elgin.

“PERHAPS SOMEDAY WE’LL BE MORE IN AGREEMENT. MEANWHILE, LET’S FOCUS ON CONTINUING THE WORK THAT JESUS BEGAN OF FEEDING THE HUNGRY, CLOTHING THE NAKED, AND GENERALLY HELPING THE POOR.”


Follow time-tested tradition

I find it difficult to understand why we can’t get beyond fighting over the homosexual issue. One of our basic Anabaptist practices, dating back to the 16th century, has been to study the Bible together in small groups and prayerfully discern what it says to us in any partic-

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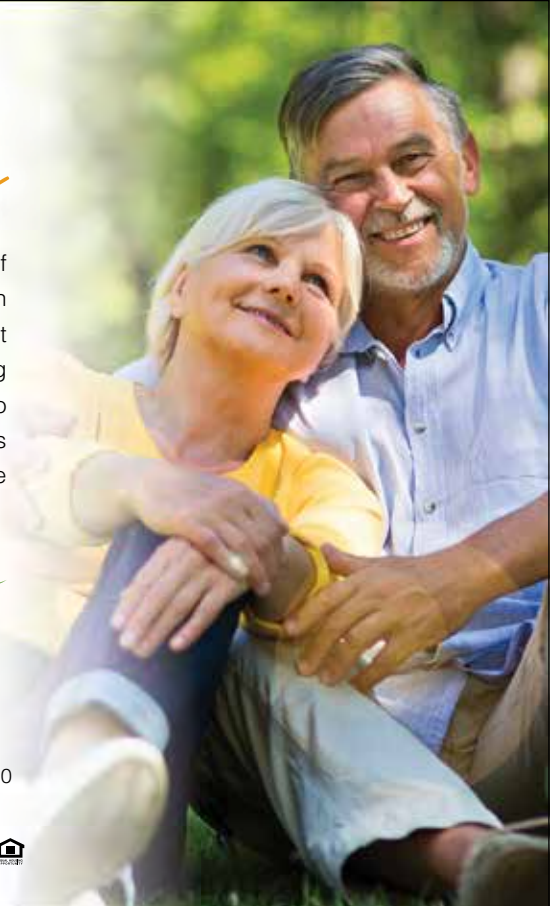
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ular situation—or as we like to say, seeking the mind of Christ.

It is abundantly clear that we will not reach agreement anytime soon on whether Brethren pastors should unite LGBT couples in marriage, or whether homosexual people should have leadership roles in our churches. Therefore, let us heed our ancient, time-tested tradition of letting each group and congregation decide for themselves how to handle this issue.

Perhaps someday we'll be more in agreement. Meanwhile, let's focus on continuing

CLASSIFIEDS

Traveling this summer? Not near a CoB? Have friends and family who want a Brethren community? JOIN US FOR WORSHIP FROM WHEREVER YOU ARE! The Living Stream Church of the Brethren meets online every Sunday at 5:00pm Pacific/8:00pm Eastern. Each worship is recorded if you want to view later. Our congregation has no building yet includes participants throughout US and the world. Find out more, login, or see previous services at www.LivingStreamCoB.org. Questions? Email contact@LivingStreamCoB.org.

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the work that Jesus began of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and generally helping the poor.

Dave Fouts
Maysville, W.Va.

Interesting and important

Thank you for these interesting and important articles in the April issue:

Tim Harvey's "Stranger or Neighbor?" and his interview with Ronald Robinson of the Roanoke City Police Dept.; Emmy Goering's "No Longer Strangers"; Walt Wiltschek's "Gun Violence up Close"; and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford's media review of the book *Bullets into Bells*, especially the quote from Samaria Rice.

The "elephant in the room" seems to be that many people believe God makes or allows everything to "happen for a reason," and so they fear that opposing gun violence would mean opposing God. They apparently do not know a God of love.

Charles Thomas
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

TURNINGPOINTS

Please send information for *Turning Points* to Diane Stroyeck, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8059, ext. 327; dstroyeck@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

Centenarians

Frey, Esther, 100, Mount Morris, Ill., April 29
Miller, Galen L., 100, Wenatchee, Wash., Jan. 7

New members

Bethany, New Paris, Ind.: Gabrielle Armstrong, Deb Peterson, Krista Wagler
East Fairview, Manheim, Pa.: Angie Jurisson, Enno Jurisson, Bill Rohrer, Lorie Rohrer
Fraternity, Winston-Salem, N.C.: Chase Davis, J L Davis, Rachel Hodges, Joshua Stutzman
Freeport, Ill.: Candy Mettner, Tim Mettner
Goshen City, Goshen, Ind.: Mirya Holley
Ligonier, Pa.: Darlene Rummel, Lee Rummel
Mohrsville, Pa.: Louis Boyer, Clarence Edmundson, Patty Lutz, Bob Marko, Tracy Marko, Florence Sienkiewicz, Linda Wesner
Plymouth, Ind.: Mike Faylor, Matthew Finney, Jolene Manns, Xavier Russell, Ashley Sauer, Aaron Woodcox
Rossville, Ind.: Stephanie Adkins, Rick Hall, Marissa

Heath, Gary McKee
White Oak, Manheim, Pa.: Emma Cassel, Ava Negley, Mason Negley, Kenya Snyder

Wedding anniversaries

Langdon, Nelson and Lorraine, Myersville, Md., 65
Nelson, Robert and Ferald Grey, Winston-Salem, N.C., 67
Pletcher, Virgil and Marcheta, Lake Forest, Calif., 70
Renner, Edward and Bonnie, Myersville, Md., 55
Strickler, Duane and Carol, Falling Waters, W.Va., 55
Tankesley, Jere and Doris, Lancaster, Pa., 55

Deaths

Alleman, Wilma Jean Mongold, 90, Palmyra, Pa., May 9
Baughman, Max Leslie, 82, Somerset, Ohio, April 21
Berrier, Jimmy, 78, Winston-Salem, N.C., April 2
Bihn, Jean M. Davis, 91, Pemberville, Ohio, May 15
Bollinger, John Calvin, 83, North Manchester, Ind., Jan. 21
Brougher, Linda Gashaw, 69, Somerset, Pa., May 14
Burkholder, Donna Bowman, 91, Avon, Ind., April 22
Crumley, Johnny B., 72, Polo, Ill., May 18
D'Amico, James Vincent, Sr., 93, Harrisburg, Pa., May 4
Davisson, Glen Harding, 95,

Modesto, Calif., Nov. 21
Eash, Florence E. Bement, 91, Elkhart, Ind., Nov. 14
Ebling, Anna Kathryn Schwaninger, 85, Easton, Md., April 16
Erisman, Mark S., 80, Dayton, Ohio, May 12
Fitz, Samuel S., 64, Hershey, Pa., May 13
Fogelsanger, Donald Herbert, 84, Chambersburg, Pa., May 24
Hawbaker, Ruth L. Meyers, 97, Chambersburg, Pa., April 15
Heisel, Doris Helen Eller, 84, Modesto, Calif., April 26
Henicle, Carol Ann King, 73, Waynesboro, Pa., May 15
Hershey, Reba H., 93, Manheim, Pa., April 3
Holtry, Clarence W., Jr., 84, Shippensburg, Pa., April 9
Hostetler, Jerry W., 85, Somerset, Pa., April 9
Ingle, Jeremy W., 37, East Berlin, Pa., March 31
Judd, Joseph Wayne, 82, Bridgewater, Va., Feb. 14
Keim, Robert E., 92, Tucson, Ariz., April 20
Leckron, Roy F., 95, Waynesboro, Pa., April 29
Longenecker, Dorothy, 98, Huntingdon, Pa., April 24
McKinnell, Letha Miller, 89, York, Pa., May 30
Morphew, Beulah May Montel, 98, Indianapolis, Ind., Feb. 22
Muhlnickel, Betty Busenburg, 89, Goshen, Ind., April 8
Noffsinger, Walter John, 82, Continental, Ohio, March 6
Pifer, Virginia L. Trackler, 99, Holland, Ohio, May 14
Reed, Patty Thomas, 85,

Winston-Salem, N.C., March 9
Roush, Dwight W., 93, Elkhart, Ind., Oct. 22
Small, Fred, 87, Sacramento, Calif., July 23, 2017
Tosten, Harry W., 85, Shippensburg, Pa., March 15
Wampler, Eva Irene Wagner, 81, Huntingdon, Pa., April 7
Wenger, Robert Glenn, 57, Newport News, Va., April 9
Williams, Richard P., 90, Goshen, Ind., Dec. 30
Young, Betty A., 87, Orrstown, Pa., April 2
Zimmerman, H. Dale, 88, Wernersville, Pa., May 2

Ordained

Saturday, Michael, W. Marva Dist. (Asher Glade, Friendsville, Md.), April 29

Commissioned

Pennington, R. Wayne, Sr., Virilina Dist. (Hopewell, North Prince George, Va.), April 29

Licensed

Allebach, Lynne, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Hatfield, Pa.), April 29
Berumen, Marcolfa, Pac. S. W. Dist. (Los Banos, Calif.), June 3
Berumen, Rigoberto, Pac. S. W. Dist. (Los Banos, Calif.), June 3
Hornsby, Donna, Virilina Dist. (First, Roanoke, Va.), June 3
Nace, Jamie, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Lancaster, Pa.), May 20

Placements

Barker, Jeffrey, chaplain, Children's Hospital, Wenatchee, Wash., May 28
Crandall, Jonathan, from youth pastor to pastor of spiritual formation, Pleasant Dale, Decatur, Ind., May 1
Deel, Don, pastor, Union, Plymouth, Ind., May 21
Deffenbaugh, Barron, pastor, Twenty-Eighth Street, Altoona, Pa., May 14
Fike, Lisa, from pastor, Greensburg, Pa., to pastor, Woodland, Astoria, Ill., June 1
Fink, Teresa, interim pastor, Parkview, Lewistown, Pa., June 1
Foley, W. Leonard, from associate pastor to pastor, Pleasantdale, Fincaastle, Va., June 1
Franklin Woodard, Emma Jean, from interim pastor, Daleville, Troutville, Va., to interim pastor, Jones Chapel, Martinsville, Va., June 1
Grady, Brandon, from director of caregiving to pastor, Black Rock, Glenville, Pa., May 1
Poteat, Eric, interim pastor, Koontz, New Enterprise, Pa. and Waterside, Woodbury, Pa., April 15
Reinhart, Mary Etta, interim pastor, Florin, Mount Joy, Pa., April 23
Schoenberger, David, director of ministry, Dunning's Creek, New Paris, Pa., May 6
Stiles, Laurie, from interim pastor to pastor, Stoners-town, Saxton, Pa., May 20

Winsome living

was in the High Library at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College the other week doing research for a 150th anniversary history of Chiques Church of the Brethren. I was perusing the papers of prominent



DON FITZKEE

Chiques minister Samuel Ruhl Zug, who served as elder-in-charge at Chiques from 1885 to 1910, when I came across his 1889 daybook. There, on January 1, Zug had recorded a list that I immediately recognized as baptismal instructions.

I recognized it because I had in my files a remarkably similar list penned by Elder Benjamin G.

Stauffer, who led the congregation from 1942 to 1955. Sometime in the late 1950s he passed his list on to a newly called minister named J. Becker Ginder, who would go on to become moderator of our free ministry congregation and a positive influence in my life.

Separated by 70 years of history, the instructions for new members had scarcely changed. Members were forbidden from going to war, taking oaths, using the law without the church's permission, joining secret societies, and dressing fashionably. They were encouraged to attend worship and other meetings of the church, especially council meeting.

There were a few changes: Zug specifically mentioned the evils of picnics, shows, fairs, life insurance, and sleigh bells. By Stauffer's era, ethical concerns had shifted to drinking and smoking. But both lists centered largely on behaviors—what Christians should and shouldn't do.

Of course, the baptismal vows themselves did require converts to confess belief in Jesus as “the Son of God who brought from heaven a saving gospel,” so behaviors weren't all that mattered (although the second and third questions about “renouncing Satan” and “being faithful unto death” also dealt more with actions than belief). I'm sure both Zug and Stauffer held orthodox views on any number of theological topics, and that they cared deeply about right think-



ing. But, judging from their baptismal instructions, they believed it was even more important for new converts to understand right living.

We could accuse these old bearded Brethren of legalism and focusing on externalities rather than matters of the heart. But their penchant to define the faith by how we live still rings true for me today, even though my list of ethical concerns would differ somewhat. The “fruit test”—the extent to which our lives tangibly demonstrate qualities such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control—still seems to me one of the best measures of a genuine faith.

I am much more attracted to a well-lived life than to a well-argued viewpoint (although the two certainly aren't mutually exclusive). At times I have encountered people in the larger church who, according to their views, could be my adversaries. But when I get to know them and see the quality of their living—which I deem to be more Christlike than mine in many ways—it gives me pause. I also have encountered people whose views align more closely with mine, but who repel me by how they advocate those views. (I know I frequently am guilty of this myself.)

I have had enough of these experiences that it makes me wonder whether, instead of trying to out-argue each other, we might better resolve some of the differences among us by living winsome lives and seeking to outdo each other in good deeds. I think S. R. Zug and B. G. Stauffer might agree with me. *W*

Don Fitzkee is former chair of the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board and a member of Chiques Church of the Brethren in Manheim, Pa.

INSTEAD OF TRYING TO OUT-ARGUE EACH OTHER, WE MIGHT BETTER RESOLVE SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES AMONG US BY LIVING WINSOME LIVES AND SEEKING TO OUTDO EACH OTHER IN GOOD DEEDS.

Suggested date: Sept. 16

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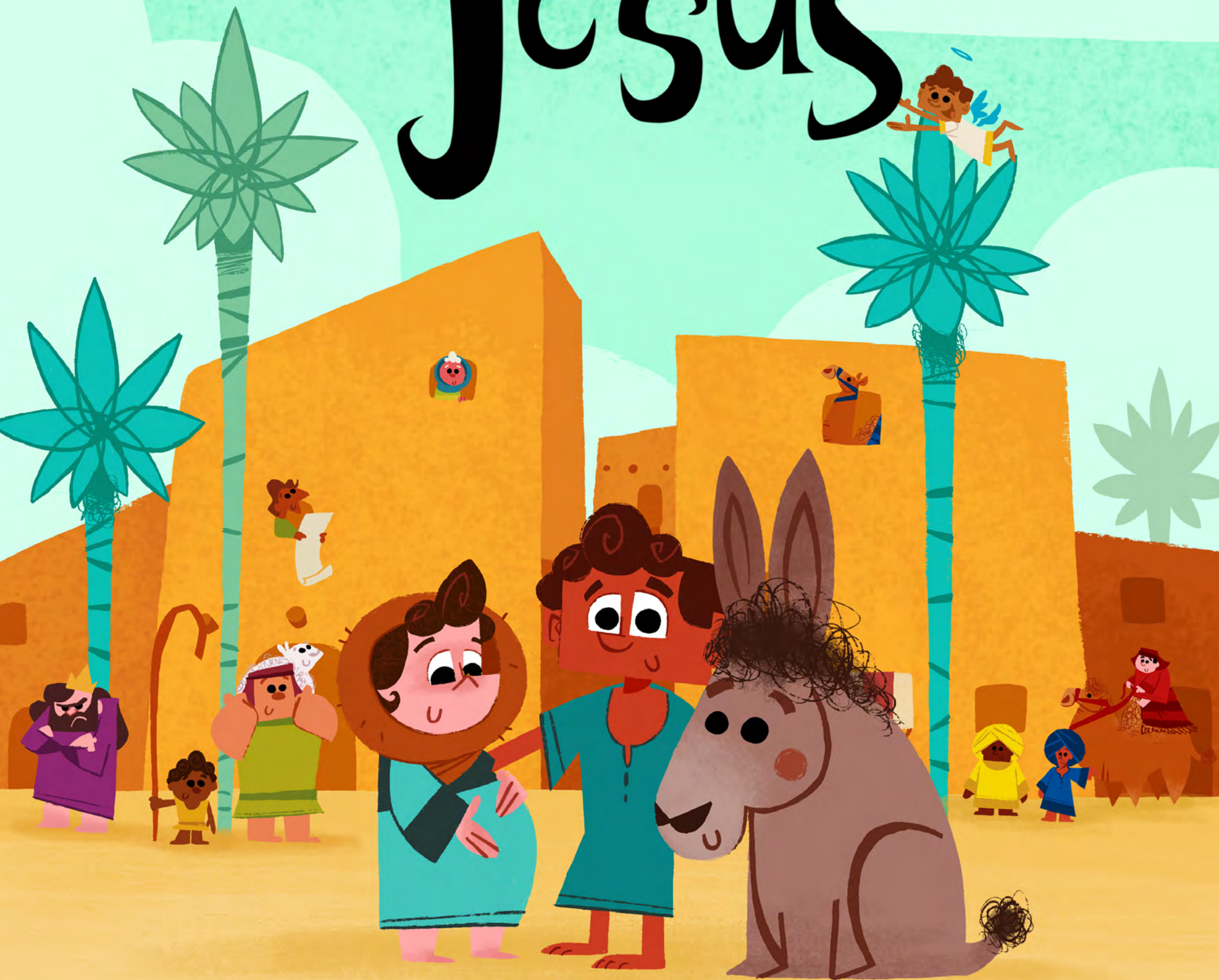


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